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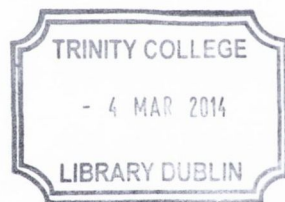
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PERMANENT REVOLUTIONARIES: THE I.R.B. AND THE
LAND WAR IN SKULL, CO. CORK, 1879-82.

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PH.D.
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN, TRINITY COLLEGE.

2013

FRANCIS RYNNE



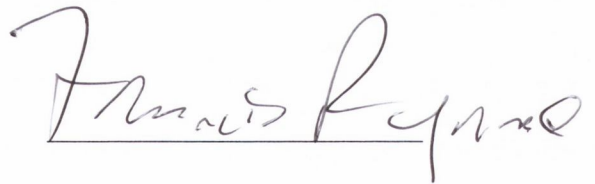
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A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Francis Rynne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Francis Rynne

SUMMARY

This thesis examines the Irish Republican Brotherhood at a grassroots level and its involvement in the Irish National Land League and the Land War, 1879-82 in Co. Cork with an emphasis on the grassroots organisers in West Cork. It is a micro study that centres on the village of Ballydehob and grassroots activists in the Skull Poor Law Union. The political thought of Fenianism is examined and this thesis shows that one important aspect of the Land League in West Cork was its efforts at fomenting conditions for a revolution. It also shows that American influence on the Land war was not confined to its leaders like Parnell and John Devoy but that organisers were sent to Ireland to reinvigorate the I.R.B. in the remotest parts of the country even earlier than the compact between Parnell and Clan-na-Gael. It shows the Co. Cork Land League branch was an IRB front that sought to proselytize their revolutionary doctrines of separation from Britain.

It also shows how closely connected to Parnell these grassroots leaders were. A new perspective of the history of the I.R.B. emerges which contradicts some basic assumptions in the standard historiography of the area. It further examines the *habeas corpus* suspension measures introduced to combat the Land league and shows how both membership of the Land League and violence increased following the arrest of two of the Ballydehob branch's senior figures.

Other themes explored include, the appeal of the Land League to protestant tenants, the Orange institution and the government reaction: the *habeas corpus* suspension measure introduced in 1881. The role of the clergy is also examined and it is shown that where there was no clerical opposition to Fenianism, the Land League and its I.R.B. organisers were hugely successful in rallying the people to their cause.

A new understanding of the American influence on the Land War emerges as it is shown that Irish emigrants were sent back from America to organise and help take over the I.R.B. whose leadership were set against actively supporting the Land War. In the case of Co. Cork it may be seen that the Land league organisers helped sideline the I.R.B leadership and also the moderate Home Ruler in the county. Three of the grassroots leaders studied were elected to parliament in the 1885 general election.

This study involved a box by box examination of the Chief Secretaries registered papers, the Queen v Parnell evidence that was used in the trial of Parnell and others in late 1880 and 1881 and files relating to the Protection of person and property (Ireland) Act 1881, at the National Archive of Ireland. Newspaper sources, contemporary publications and memoirs, as well as, privately published material was examined. US foreign relations documents relating to arrested Land Leaguers was also researched.

The conclusions reached show that micro studies such as this one may offer a fundamental new understanding of the politics of the time and help draw new conclusions that will need to be taken into account in any re-examination of the national and international leaders of the new departure.

Submitted with this work are two databases, one of a data base of the names of the all the people arrested under the provisions of the Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act, 1881, with details of arrest dates and releases dates and the crimes they were suspected of committing.

Source: N.A.I., Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act 1881, List of all persons arrested under the Act, box 1

The other is a list of the names of the members of the Ballydehob branch of the Irish National Land League, their landlords names, names the landlord's agents, the tenants rents and the Griffith Valuation of their holdings.

Source: N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, membership book of the Ballydehob Land League branch which is contained in box 9

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the help of the staff at the National Archives of Ireland and the National Library of Ireland for their help and assisting my researching this work. I must thank the National Library of Ireland for allowing me to use a photograph from their collections and to quote from their newspaper archives.

I have made extensive use of the records and documents available at the National Archives of Ireland and they and other cited works are listed in the footnotes and in a more general way in the Bibliography. Furthermore the National Archives of Ireland have given permission to publish image such as Land League.

This thesis would not have been possible without the help, support and patience of my supervisor, Dr William E. Vaughan, not to mention his advice and unsurpassed knowledge of contemporary Irish History. The good advice, support and friendship of my other lecturers during my studies at Trinity College, including Eunan O'Halpin, Sean Duffy, Ciaran Brady, Joseph Clarke, Ann Dolan, and David Fitzpatrick, who have been invaluable on both an academic and a personal level, for which I am extremely grateful. I am also indebted to R.V. Comerford for urging me to explore the Americans involved at the grassroots level of the Land War.

I am indebted to Ciaran Wallace for his help and advice regarding the use of databases for historical research.

I would like to acknowledge the academic and technical support of Trinity College, Dublin and its staff. The library and computer facilities of the University have

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Eve Morrison, the late Peter Hart, Donnacha Seán Lucey, Peter Rigney, James McConnel, Brian Casey and John Borgonovo have also been invaluable by sharing their support and knowledge with me.

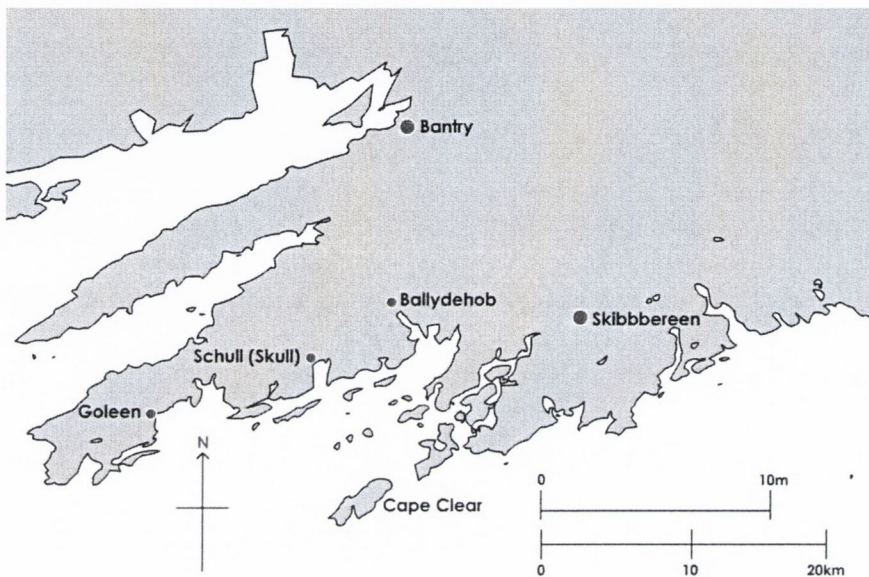
Lastly I would like to thank my parents, May Anne and David, my brothers John, Michael and Matthew and sisters Jane and Mary for their support through this long period.

I dedicate this work to my son William and my partner Dr Yvonne-Marie Rogez.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One – Fenian Orthodoxy	23
‘The Real Father of Fenianism’ James Fintan Lalor	28
Michael Davitt and James Fintan Lalor	37
Land League Slogans and propaganda	41
Land League posters and placards.....	41
Chapter Two —The end of normal politics: The February 1879 Cork by- election.....	47
Starvation in Skull	54
Memories of the Great Famine.....	61
Richard Hodnett	65
Parnell’s return from America in March 1880	68
The Land League arrives in West Cork.....	72
The Catholic Clergy and the first meeting at Ballydehob	93
National and International press reports.....	122
The I.R.B. and Parnell in Cork.....	123
Conclusion.....	133
Chapter Three—Permanent Revolutionaries: The I.R.B. and the Land War in West Cork.....	137
Ballydehob Land League Branch	146
Powder and ball	150
Standing up to the Land League: the Case of Michael Hegarty	156
Cocking a Snook	159
Breaking the Land League	161
Henry O’Mahony: portrait of a Land League leader.....	163
Participation in the democratic process.....	171
The Visit of Anna Parnell.....	172
The Arrest of Richard Hodnett.....	174
The Agitation builds and the Arrest of Henry O’Mahony	177
Membership of the Ossianic Society	181
Reaction to Hodnett’s Arrest	183
The West Cork Uprising.....	188
Arrest of Richard Hodnett Junior	193
Recruitment to the Ballydehob Land League	195
The Unrepentant	199
The Ballydehob Case.....	200
John O’Connor at <i>The Times</i> /Parnell Special Commission 1889	206
Conclusion.....	210
Chapter Four—Protection of person and property	215
The Appeal of the Land League and the ‘Liberal Dilemma’	215

The appeal of the Land League to protestant tenants in Orange strongholds and the Orange Order's backlash.....	222
Protestants and the Land League in Ballydehob.....	227
Habeas Corpus Suspension: protection of Persons and Property	231
Protection of Person and Property Act: West Cork	232
Recruitment to Ballydehob Land League Branch.....	236
Postscript.....	237
Conclusion	241
Conclusion	243
Appendix of Illustrations	255
Bibliography.....	271



Map 1 – West Cork

West Cork showing Ballydehob, Skull, Goleen, Bantry and Skibbereen



Map 2 – Ireland

Ireland, showing the area of Map 1 in box

INTRODUCTION

This is not a study of the agricultural economy of West Cork in the Land War nor is it a social study of the Land League. The starting point of the research that comprises this work was something that might have been said to have all been done before by greater historians such as T.W. Moody, R.F. Foster, R.V. Comerford, Paul Bew, Margret O'Callaghan and, indeed, F.S.L Lyons: the involvement of the I.R.B. in the first phase of the Land War in Ireland from 1879-82. In order to effect a new understanding of the period it was first necessary to have a *tabula rasa*, and in order to do that it became evident that, not only did the enquiry have to seek new subjects for research it would also have to take a somewhat unorthodox approach in modern historiography.

The starting point of research for this thesis was the collection of documents in the National Archives of Ireland relating to the Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act, 1881. Having, for a minor thesis, researched the similar but more honestly named, *Habeas Corpus* Suspension (Ireland) Act 1866 which was enacted to thwart the first wave of Fenian activity in Ireland. It seemed logical that a quest for Fenianism in the Land War should begin with a review of the documents relating to a *habeas corpus* suspension measure adopted during the Land War. If the authorities suspected advanced Nationalism and advanced Nationalists at that time, at least some of them would have been on the receiving end of the power afforded to the authorities by the provisions of the P.P.P. Act, namely the power to arrest and detain people without trial if they were reasonably suspected of committing a crime in a proscribed district in Ireland between March 1881 and August 1882. In the file boxes relating to the P.P.P. Act there are 127 Memoranda of Arrests files which detailed the arrests, reason for suspicion and supporting documents relating to some of the 927 people arrested under the act. One file

related to Richard Hodnett of Ballydehob, West Carbery, Co. Cork. The district was of interest as it was only short distance from Skibbereen, where the Chief Organiser of the Irish Republic, James Stephens, who was one of the founders of the Irish Republican or Revolutionary Brotherhood, the Irish arm of the Fenian movement, in the late 1850s, recruited some of the most diehard and extreme members of the organisation.

A further collection in the National Archives of Ireland is the collection relating to the trial of the Land League President and MP, Charles Stewart Parnell and others including Michael Davitt which took place in late 1880 and ended in the acquittal of all the defendants on 24 January 1881. The trial attempted to stop the Land League agitation by cutting off its head but, as is detailed in Chapter Four, it proved unsuccessful as Parnell and other founders of the Irish National Land League were acquitted. Printed reports of land meetings in Ballydehob and nearby Skibbereen, as well as a poster for that Skibbereen land meeting, featured in this collection, which had been compiled for the prosecution case against Parnell and his fellow Land League leaders.

A third collection in the I.N.A., the Irish National League [I.N.L.] papers, included even more material on Ballydehob, including a printed brief compiled by the police under the heading 'the Ballydebob Case' and a host of letters and documents seized by the police in 1883 detailing activities in Ballydehob during the early phase of the Land war. The latter collection was compiled for the *Times*/Parnell Special Commission and much of it was read into the record of the Commission that sat in 1888 and 1889 and which sought to prove Parnell and dozens of Irish MPs involvement in a criminal conspiracy. The latter collection includes a membership book of the Ballydehob Branch of the Irish National Land League and a list of all the persons arrested under the P.P.P. Act which are attached to this thesis as databases. The

resulting analysis of the former is contained in Chapter Three and the latter in Chapter Four of this work. What drew attention to the documents relating to Ballydehob and West Cork, in these three sources, was that in relation to Ballydehob there were barely any references to Fenianism, and no definitive link was presented regarding Fenianism and the village. Yet the village had been highlighted in three separate government efforts to stop and, or, discredit radical nationalist agitation in Ireland between 1880 and 1888. As will be seen in Chapter Four there was a great hesitancy on the part of the government to put Fenianism at the centre of public debate during the Land War.¹ The investigation into the Ballydehob branch of the Land League that this thesis follows was undertaken in an attempt to understand why such an insignificant place should have received such attention from the authorities especially when there did not appear to be any substantial evidence of I.R.B. activity presented to support its inclusion. One potential identifier for I.R.B. men was the speeches that were made at Land League meetings, meeting of the Skull Poor Law Board of Guardians which Richard Hodnett sat on. With no immediate evidence of I.R.B. activity, which the presence of files relating to Ballydehob in the three collections discussed above indicated should exist, it was necessary to look at potential identifiers of I.R.B. membership or adherence to its core beliefs. The I.R.B. was an oath bound secret society and as is noted in this work members were forbidden from discussing their I.R.B. activities in public. In order to assess the political thought that formed Fenian orthodoxy and the origin of the Fenian interest in land agitation was undertaken in order to assertion the political background of the speakers. Chapter One examines the origins of Fenian orthodoxy and propaganda while and Chapter Two examines the language used by speakers at various meetings reported on by the police and in local and national newspapers and the placards that

¹ The various items in the collections discussed above are not individually referenced here as they are referenced repeatedly throughout this work in Chapter Two, Three and Four.

advertised Land meetings. By comparing the findings of Chapter One with the speeches and posters discussed in Chapter Two it is clear that I.R.B. advanced National separatist beliefs were held by many of the speakers and organisers of the Land League in Co. Cork.

Founded in 1620, Ballydehob, located in the Barony of West Carbery in Cork's West Riding, was part of the Skull Poor Law Union.² Ballydehob is nine miles west, south-west of Skibbereen and twenty-nine miles west of Clonakilty. The district was remote and difficult to police due to its terrain, rugged coastline and history of agrarian violence and faction fighting.³ During the famine of 1822, Richard Griffith was commissioned to build a road through the Mizen Peninsula to afford the authorities easy access to an area said to harbour 'Whiteboys, smugglers and robbers'.⁴ Police were stationed in Ballydehob in 1823, six years before they were introduced in London.⁵ The district was greatly affected by the Great Famine and in 1846 was 'even more wretched than Skibbereen'.⁶ In early 1880, the district was again in a deprived state, with incidents of nakedness due to poverty being reported in the Skull district.⁷

Though Skull was the official name used in reference to the village and for example the name of the poor law union centred on the town, the Irish name, Schull, used today, by the Irish speaking local people and also by those with nationalist sympathies in the area in the nineteenth century. The area and village are referred to using both spellings in this thesis and where in quotations is the spelling used by the speaker or writer cited.

² Patrick Hickey, *The Famine in West Cork* (Cork, 2002), p. 14.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., pp 52-6, p. 50.

⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶ Ibid., p. 161.

⁷ *West Cork Eagle*, Mar. 6 1880.

In Lewis's 1837 *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, Ballydehob was said to have derived:

its name from its position at the confluence of three streams, whose united waters are crossed by a handsome stone bridge, below which they expand into a small but secure haven, near the termination of Roaring Water bay. It consists of a long and irregular street containing about 100 houses, some of which are large and well built; and is rapidly increasing in size and importance, particularly since the formation of the new road, which has made it a considerable thoroughfare, aided by its propinquity to the copper mines of Cappach and the slate quarries of Audley's Cove and Filemuck, which renders it well adapted for business. Fairs for horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, and pedlery are held on Jan. 1st, Feb. 2nd, March 12th, Easter Tuesday, Whit-Tuesday, June 29th, July 15th, Aug. 15th, Sept. 8th, Oct. 10th, Nov. 1st, and Dec. 8th.⁸

Lewis noted there was a Wesleyan Methodists church, a Catholic Church, a Kildare Place Society school, a catholic school for girls and boys and a branch of the Skull dispensary.⁹ The Skull district was 'exceedingly wild and uncultivated' with 'large tracts of bogs.'¹⁰ The area has a rugged coast line with long inlets and there is a series of small hills to the west of the village towards Mount Gabriel, which stands at 1339 ft. (408 m.).

As has been noted, the Mizen Peninsula had strong connections with the nascent Fenian movement in the 1850s. In May 1858, it was in Skibbereen that the Chief Organiser of the Fenian Brotherhood, James Stephens, came across a revolutionary body organised as the Skibbereen Literary and Phoenix Society.¹¹ Ten years earlier, in 1848, Stephens and other Young Irelanders had secured the assistance of Skibbereen solicitor McCarthy Downing in effecting their escape to France.¹² Among the members of the Phoenix Society recruited to the I.R.B. were Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and

⁸ Entry for Ballydehob, Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* (2 vols, London, 1837), i, p. 132.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Entry for Skull, Ibid., ii, pp 517-8.

¹¹ Fitzmaurice RM to Lord Naas, 27 Dec. 1858, National Archives of Ireland, [N.A.I.] Irish Crime Records [ICR] 16, Fenian Police Reports, box 1; Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's Recollections 1838 to 1898* (New York 1898, Guilford, CT, 2004), pp 149-50; Joseph Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Republican Brotherhood* (New York 1906, Shannon, 1969), p. 26.

¹² Fitzmaurice to Naas, 27 Dec. 1858, N.A.I., ICR, 16, Fenian Police Reports, box 1.

Mortimer (Morty) Moynihan. By the end of 1858, the Phoenix Society in Skibbereen had been infiltrated by Daniel Sullivan (Goula).¹³ McCarthy Downing acted for members following their arrest and at their 1859 Cork trial.¹⁴ However, the close-knit and secretive nature of the community is indicated by the fact that, despite infiltration, the police failed to identify men from Ballydehob reported to have been ‘involved in the Bantry and Skibbereen Societies’.¹⁵ One of the architects of the new departure compact between advanced nationalists and parliamentarians like Parnell, John Devoy, believed the Phoenix trials, which centred on Skibbereen, were a boon for the nascent revolutionary movement and ‘instead of frightening the young men of Ireland, really advertised the Movement, and helped in its recruiting later on’.¹⁶ This study shows that the people recruited in the 1850s and 1860s were still active during the Land War. These are the permanent revolutionaries that the title of this thesis alludes to. The term ‘Permanent Revolution’, coined by both Marx and Engels and mostly associated with Leon Trotsky has been co-opted here and is used to designate I.R.B. men who never gave up their cause and continued to organise and await opportunities from which their Irish nationalist revolution could emerge. In reference to the national movement, T. W. Moody noted the dilemma that Land League founder Michael Davitt faced in trying to balance his role as a tenant right advocate and his membership of a secret revolutionary organisation: ‘the incompatibility between his public inculcation of moral force with his secret approval of supplying tenant farmers with the means of using physical force was

¹³ Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, ‘The Fenian Movement: An Account of its Origin, Progress and Temporary Collapse’, *Brooklyn Eagle*, 14 June 1885.

¹⁴ Fitzmaurice to Naas, 27 Dec. 1858, N.A.I., ICR. 16, Fenian Police Reports, box 1; O’Donovan Rossa, *Recollections*, pp 216-29.

¹⁵ Sub Inspector Humphreys to Inspector General R.I.C., 4 Nov. 1858, N.A.I., ICR, 16, Fenian Police Reports, box 1.

¹⁶ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel. The Fenian Movement, its Origins and Progress, Methods of Work in Ireland and in the British Army. Why it failed to achieve its Main Object and Exercised Great Influence on Ireland’s Future* (New York, Shannon, 1969), p. 31; F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London, 1973), p. 127; Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 20.

never resolved.’¹⁷ This is perhaps because many of those driving the Land League revolution at both a grassroots and leadership level were in fact seeking to create a fertile ground for a revolution that would merge from agrarian agitation with national separation from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Chapter One details the origins of this concept, in the writings of James Fintan Lalor and the endurance of Lalor’s political thought in practical terms during the land agitation of the later nineteenth century and as inspirational material down to the Easter Rising of 1916 and throughout the revolutionary period in the first decades of the twentieth century. It must be noted that Sean MacEoin, a senior I.R.B. in the early 1920s, said that the organisation disbanded in 1924 and all funds on hand were transferred to a ‘Wolf (sic) Tone Memorial fund’.¹⁸

Chapter Two and Chapter Three trace the organisation, formation and suppression of the Land League in Ballydehob and the local, national and international attention and connections the committee founder and certain members had in the period. It is evident from that the initial organising of a Co. Cork Land League committee in Cork city in early 1880 was an undertaken by men associated with the I.R.B. in order to undermine moderate nationalists and Whig Home Rulers and take control of the Home Rule party’s political machine. Likewise, when the Land League was organised in West Cork later in 1880, this same I.R.B. cadre were deeply involved. When studying the I.R.B. the farther one moves from a top down approach the harder it is to find evidence of I.R.B. membership. Evidence that the two main grassroots leaders in Ballydehob, Richard Hodnett and Henry O’Mahony, were I.R.B. was constructed by a variety of

¹⁷ Moody, *Davitt and the Irish Revolution* (1982), p. 381. Davitt was removed from his position as representative for the north of England on the I.R.B. Supreme Council on 18 May 1880 but he continued to be a member of the I.R.B. Re. his continued membership of the I.R.B. Moody cites *New York Herald* 12 August 1880, *ibid.*, p. 403.

¹⁸ MacEoin papers, University College, Dublin, Archives, P151/1772.

methods. In both cases they had a geographic connection to Skibbereen and indeed as a lad Henry O'Mahony was an apprentice a few doors from where O'Donovan Rossa had a shop while Hodnett had been a member of the Ossianic Society, joining the same day that which familiarity with leading Fenians based in New York also joined. Though the society had aristocrats and unionist members it held an appeal for Fenians as its purpose was to translate Fenian myths and legends that existed in old manuscripts. O'Donovan Rossa and Mortimer Moynihan were also members. In a conference paper based on this research presented in 2008 at a conference marking the 150th anniversary of the founding of the I.R.B. much of the evidence relating to Hodnett and O'Mahony regarding their I.R.B. membership was speculative. Indeed there could be no conclusive way of proving membership based purely on speeches and the collective action of the community noted in Chapter Two and three in reaction to their arrests. At that conference another participant was Niall Whelehan who was then undertaking a Ph.D. which focused on the Fenian dynamite campaign in the 1880s. Whelehan later undertook archival research in the USA examining the O'Donovan Rossa papers held by the Catholic University. In the course of his research he discovered proof that Henry O'Mahony was in receipt of funds from O'Donovan Rossa in the mid-1880s, both a personal payment and money that was given to the families of imprisoned dynamitards. This connection provides proof beyond a reasonable doubt, if not absolute certainty, as to O'Mahony's I.R.B. membership.¹⁹ In the case of Richard Hodnett over several decades he maintained connections with admitted I.R.B. men such as John O'Connor from Cork and Patrick O'Hea, a Skibbereen based solicitor who with Hodnett launched the Land League in West Cork. As is discussed in the thesis the standard view of John

¹⁹ Frank Rynne, 'Redressing historical imbalance: the role of grassroots leaders Richard Hodnett and Henry O'Mahony in the Land League revolution 1879-82' in Brian Casey (ed), *Defying the Law of the Land*, (Dublin, 2013); Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900* (Cambridge, 2013), pp 270-1.

O'Connor in various works was that he left the I.R.B. before taking part in the Land League, this was based on his own evidence given at the *Times* /Parnell Special Commission in 1889. This thesis shows that O'Connor was not truthful in that evidence, what he may have been intimating was that he was not in a particular branch of the Fenian movement but it is clear from the research presented that O'Connor was an I.R.B. leader in Cork until at least the end of 1882 and was involved in organising a 'Vigilance Court' in Cork in that year. A similar 'Vigilance Committee' was associated with the Dublin-based Invisibles who murdered the chief secretary and under secretary of Ireland in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, in May 1882.

Another factor which indicates I.R.B. involvement and direction of the Land League in the Skull Union was the choice of targets of denunciation, rent strikes, intimidation, and shooting attacks. The analysis of Land League posters and speeches in Chapters Two and Three prove that the Land League in the area sought to proselytise the local population with separatist and advanced Nationalist rhetoric. It is noted that the local branch also sought to usurp the functions of local government by operating courts, the functions of the police through the enforcement of their dictates by means of boycotting and physical attacks, and , indeed, they successfully took over the local taxing body the Skull Poor Law Union at the elections for the board of guardians on 25 March 1881. The main targets of the Land League were those landlords who lived in the area who were also magistrates or justices of the peace and those in their employ including the postmaster at Ballydehob, Richard Daly. These men represented government authority in the area and, as such, when trying to convince the local population that the government was not omnipotent in the face of a resurgent I.R.B. were repeatedly humiliated and indeed shot at or in the case of Robert Swanton actually shot. As well as the two resident members of the Swanton family George and Robert,

Samuel and Abraham Jagoe who acted as agents for the absentee landlord James H. Swanton and Richard Henry Notter. Notter and the two Swantons resident in the union Robert and George were by virtue of being justices of the peace, *ex-officio* members of the poor law board.

The Notter family had immigrated to the area in the 17th c. from Germany and been involved in relief efforts during the famine.²⁰ Seven of the nine people who died of dysentery on his land during the famine were protestants.²¹ According to the National University of Ireland, Galway, Landed Estates Database: 'Richard Notter, of Skull, owned almost 600 acres in county Cork in the 1870s while James Lane Notter owned over 700 acres at the same time.'²² However the family had lost a considerable 1500 acres in 1858 which was sold by the Encumbered Estates Court.²³

The Swanton's held 10,563 acres of land in West Carbery.²⁴ However, the two residents targeted by the Land League at Ballydehob had holdings of 660 acres in the case of George and 1,160 in the case of Robert.²⁵ According to the Landed Estates database:

The Swanton's were a Methodist family who were heavily involved in industrial projects in West Cork in the nineteenth century. The estate of James H. Swanton amounted to over 6000 acres in county Cork in the 1870s. Other family members also held estates of 1,000 acres or more in the Ballydehob locality. Both James and Anne Swanton were among the principal lessors in the parish of Kilcoe, barony of

²⁰ Hickey, *Famine in West Cork*, pp 16-7, p. 199, p. 234.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.192.

²² Entry for Notter, National University of Ireland, Galway, Landed Estates Database, (<http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/estate-show.jsp?id=2494>) , [retrieved 12 Nov. 2013].

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Land owners in Ireland: return of owners of land of one acre and upwards in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland, showing the names of such owners arranged alphabetically in each county, their addresses ... ; to which is added a summary for each province and for all Ireland / presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, reprint of 1876 edition* (Baltimore, 1988). p.135.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

West Carbery, at the time of Griffith's Valuation. Robert Swanton was leasing townlands in the parish of Skull at the same time.²⁶

The Ballydehob Land League branch members rented from dozens of different landlords, yet it was only the above and a Miss Hungerford who came in for the special attention of the Land League at Ballydehob.²⁷ For example Lord Bandon who held considerable property in the area was never mentioned at Land League meetings.²⁸ This indicates that the local government officials were deliberately targeted in order to prove that the revolutionaries were in the ascendant and that a key factor in the Land War in Skull was the furtherance of an advanced Nationalist agenda. In order for the people to move in that direction they needed to be shown that people from their own community could also exercise the state functions.

In his 1978 study, *Land and the National Question 1850-82*, which covers the covers a thirty two year period and ending with the three years that this thesis assesses, Paul Bew makes one mention of Ballydehob, the village in West Cork on which this work centres. This mention relates to protestants who supported the Land League.²⁹ He also has two references to John O'Connor, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Land League organiser in Co. Cork. In relation to O'Connor, Bew states that the Cork city Land League which was the organising body for the county had in 1880 simultaneously purged both of ultra-moderates and extreme Fenians from its ranks.³⁰ As will be seen in Chapter Two below this is not a correct reading of affairs in Cork in 1880. The events referenced occurred at the time the Land League was preparing to roll out its agitation the remotest parts of the county. Whereas there was a split in the Cork I.R.B. in the

²⁶ Entry for Swanton, N.U.I., Galway, Landed Estates Database, (<http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/estate-show.jsp?id=2379>), [Retrieved 11 Nov. 2013].

²⁷ Membership book of the Ballydehob branch of the Irish National Land League, National Archives of Ireland, Irish National League papers, contained in box 9.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question, 1850-82* (Dublin, 1978), p. 198.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 128.

summer and early autumn of 1880, this study shows that, the I.R.B. men who remained in, and indeed, organised the Land League in Cork, were no less extreme in their views and actions than those like Supreme Council member Charles Guilfoyle Doran who lost control of the Cork I.R.B. at this time. The League ‘ultra-moderates’ were indeed purged, however this was done publicly, at pistol point while they were trying to enter carriages conveying both the national leaders of the movement including Matt Harris, Charles Stewart Parnell and the coming men, the local Cork organisers. As will be seen in Chapter Two, none of these national and local leaders interceded on the part of the assailed moderates whose crime had been to condemn, at a Land League meeting, the capture of arms from the ship *Juno* that summer. It is noteworthy that Bew’s ‘ultra moderates’ in reported comments detailed in Chapter Two were likely also part of a secret body, or indeed the same one as those ejecting them: I.R.B. Referencing such a detail in no way devalues Bew’s monumental work which remains a standard text book for the period. However it does highlight the value of local, or more particularly, micro studies such as this one. The ability to focus on a few individuals operating in a small geographic area and look from the bottom up at the interaction with political players and events can lead to a substantial revision of core interpretations and assumptions contained in standard historiography. This point was made forcibly by the late Peter Hart in 2008 at, ‘The Black Hand of Republicanism: the Fenians and History’, conference held in Belfast to mark the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Irish branch of Fenianism, the I.R.B. Hart noted, in reference to a paper derived from early research that is comprised in this thesis, that to get beyond the national, top down studies was essential in order to truly understand the appeal and activities of a secret

society like the I.R.B. In fact, he stated that the future of the historiography of the area lies in micro studies such as the work that is presented in this thesis.³¹

From early in the history of Fenianism the movement had the ability to mobilise moderates in defence of a Fenian cause while they would not have supported Fenianism itself.³² This was evidenced in the wake of the suppression of the *Irish People* newspaper and the trials that followed in 1865-66. Public opinion mobilised around the prison treatment of Fenian convicts and led to the formation of an amnesty movement in the later 1860s.³³ Michael Davitt would be the benefit from this movement in the late 1870s and was let out of prison early, in 1877, on a 'ticket of leave' from a fifteen year jail sentence for arms offences to be met the next days by MPs.³⁴

Alvin Jackson noted that Fenian movement fed off the 'widespread respect accorded to the Irish revolutionary tradition' generating its own 'popular revolutionary culture'.³⁵ This is certainly evidenced in the rhetoric and indeed actions that both lead up to and followed from the I.R.B. organising of the Land League agitation in West Cork. R.F. Foster states that the compact between Fenians and Home Rulers during the Land War, 'was an alliance between the land movement and Home Rulers' and was designed to use 'the tenant question as a general forward policy; it was not a separatist plot between the I.R.B. and the Parliamentary Party'³⁶ this may well have appeared to be the case when looking at the period from the top down rather than from the bottom up. Foster notes that John Devoy was 'disingenuous', yet perhaps the truth of the matter

³¹ Peter Hart speaking at the conference wrap up roundtable, 21 June 2008 at 'The Black Hand of Republicanism: the Fenians and History: a conference marking the 150th anniversary of the founding of the IRB', Queen's University Belfast and University of Ulster 20-21 June, 2008. This conference was organised by James McConnel and Fearghal McGarry.

³² R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1990), p. 393.

³³ Frank Rynne, 'Focus on the Fenians, the *Irish People* trials, November 1865 – January 1866', *History Ireland*, Vol. 13, No. 6, Nov./Dec. 2005, pp 41-6; Moody, *Davitt*, pp 120-21, pp 175-77.

³⁴ Moody, *Davitt*, pp 77-9, pp 146 -7, p. 180, p. 187.

³⁵ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998* (Malden, Massachusetts, 1999), p. 95.

³⁶ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p 404.

and it is certainly evidenced in this thesis is that the Fenians were a revolutionary movement who used many different devices and actions to further the cause that mattered most to them, the separation of Ireland from the United Kingdom. This work shows that Fenians could recourse to sublimation, and present themselves in different organisations and in different guises when it suited their aims. This is perfectly evidenced by John O'Connor's claims to have left the movement prior to the Land War and indeed the activities of returned Americans like Henry O'Mahony, T.P. O'Connor, James L. White and others who returned to Ireland well before the Land War in order to re-establish the I.R.B. As is noted in the conclusion of thesis there is strong evidence that John Devoy was one of the instigators of that policy. That being the case the disingenuousness of Devoy was a lot greater than Foster ever imagined, for while he was working with Parnell on the establishment of agitation based on the land in what is known as the new departure Devoy had already started sending agents to Ireland in order to use such a compact for purely revolutionary purposes.

In recent years there have been various studies of the land question and indeed the Land League agitation at a county level. These studies have covered varying periods of time from in the case of Walter Walsh's study of Kilkenny dealing with the same 32 years that Bew covered at a national level.³⁷ Sean Lucey narrows the timeline to cover 14 years 1872-86 in Co. Kerry, while Fergus Campbell covers the later period for the whole west of Ireland from 1891-1921. J.W.H. Carter's study of Queen's County narrows the time frame to roughly the same three year period focused on in this thesis.³⁸ These county studies provide an excellent resource for historians as the breath of their investigations encompasses the social and economic conditions as well as political events and outcomes.

³⁷ Walter Walsh, *Kilkenny the Struggle for Land, 1850-1882* (Thomastown, 2008), passim.

³⁸ J.W.H. Carter, *The Land War and its Leaders in Queen's County, 1879-82* (Portlaoise, 1994), passim.

The focus of this thesis is Fenianism at the grassroots level and explores the separatist's rhetoric, orthodoxy and modes of action and the interconnections testing the consistency and transportability of these to and from a county, national and international level. Fergus Campbell notes that in the late 1890s, one of the factors that aided James Lynam securing the support of farmers and 'secret society men' throughout Galway was his Fenian background. Like Henry O'Mahony of Ballydehob and James L. White, who is discussed in the conclusion to this work, Lynam had returned from the USA in the 1870s in order to organise I.R.B. activities and was active in the Land League and the subsequent plan of Campaign.³⁹ Seán Lucey, notes that the early clerical hesitancy in getting involved in the Land League in Tralee was likely due to the involvement of 'Fenian and I.R.B. figures in the Tralee League'.⁴⁰ Chapter two of this study shows that the catholic clergy in West Cork were absent from only the very first Land League meeting at Ballydehob on 12 September 1880 and by the next Land meeting held at Skibbereen later that month they had decided to follow their flock and not only stood on the platform but in one case gave a speech which could easily have been delivered by a physical force separatist. In criticism of two major recent works on Fenianism, Matthew Kelly's *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* and Owen McGee's *The IRB, The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Féin*, Lucey notes that both works concentrate on 'the intellectual, political and prosopographical development of Fenianism' have scant there analysis of the relationship between the I.R.B. and agrarian violence.⁴¹ Chapter One of this thesis deals with the origins of Fenian orthodoxy on the Land question which was drawn on when the revolutionary

³⁹ Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005), p. 35.

⁴⁰ Donnacha Seán Lucey, *Land Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland: the Case of County Kerry, 1872-86* (Dublin, 2011), p. 83.

⁴¹ Lucey, *Land Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland*, p. 96 citing Owen McGee, *I.R.B. from the Land league to Sinn* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2005) and Matthew Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* (Woodbridge, 2006).

party sought to break out of the shadows and lead a national and international movement the basis of whose success was as reliant on the village level organising as much as the international support that the I.R.B. could draw on. This international support transferred to the micro level not just through the promises of funds in order to persuade small farmers to support then League but also in the form of personal sent from the USA to organise localities in preparation for the Land League revolution. As noted in Chapter Three this international help may also have involved the supply of dynamite or perhaps even a fully constructed bomb through the connections maintained by the returned American from Ballydehob Land League, Henry O'Mahony. Lucey notes that the agrarian violence known as Ribbonism, was not extant in Kerry. He further notes that violence and agrarian outrage increased after the formation of the Land League.⁴² However J.C.R. Carter points out the unreliability of the police figures in this regard noting that reported crime increased as police numbers did and also that policemen spent so much time attending meetings and writing reports on them that they did not attend to other duties.⁴³ Yet it is undoubted that agrarian violence increased during in late 1880 when the Land League advanced branches into the remotest parts of the country. In Co. Kerry, the first murder associated with the land agitation occurred on 30 March 1882.⁴⁴ Carter points out that though threatened with violence, landlords in Queen's County escaped being the victims of actual violence.⁴⁵ Carter notes that the Bishop of Ossory wrote a pastoral letter in which the cleric warned that the Land League was 'a mere mask for fenianism', which was read to congregations on 2 May 1880.⁴⁶ However, Carter failed to explore the activities of the I.R.B. or Fenians in Queen's County during the period of his study. Walsh notes Devoy's report on the state

⁴² Lucey, *Land Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland*, pp 95-7.

⁴³ J.W.H. Carter, *The Land war and its leaders in Queen's County*, pp 254-5.

⁴⁴ Lucey, *Land Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland*, p.108.

⁴⁵ Carter, *The Land war and its leaders in Queen's County*, pp 259-60.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.65.

of Fenianism in Ireland compiled in 1878-9 which noted a weak organisation in Leinster and Munster and that in Kilkenny relatively peaceful conditions may have been due to the denunciation of the Land League by Bishop Moran who called the Land League executive “‘atheist”, “Protestant”, “socialist” and “Fenian””.⁴⁷ However Walsh’s treatment of Fenianism is generally confined to its denunciation by the Catholic Church and attempts by the Church to brand the Land League as a Fenian front. Indeed Walsh says that: Unlike the ‘Young Irelanders and the Fenians’ who waited for foreign intervention on their behalf ‘the League thrived on the “fall-out” from economic depression and growing landlord/tenant dissatisfaction at home.’⁴⁸ The problem with Walsh’s analysis is that he failed to look at the I.R.B. in the way that they need to be in order to understand the Land War and the organisation of the Land League at the grassroots level. Though he references the 800 Land League branches in America and poses the question, in reference to the national leadership of the Land League, ‘[...] to what extent were the Fenian cadres in America influencing the entire operation of the land war in Ireland?’. He does not attempt to address that question to the subject of his research the struggle for land in Co. Kilkenny.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Walsh states that the ‘Fenian leadership’ of the 1860s did not see the ‘importance of the agrarian struggle as a means of connecting ordinary people [...] advance their political endeavours, something Walsh contends was left to later parliamentarians and revolutionaries.’⁵⁰ In several regards Walsh’s assumptions that there was something distinct between the Land League agitation at a local level and Fenianism are in error. Chapter One of this thesis shows how the land question was one which the early Fenians did take account of and indeed they evangelised the land solutions proposed by, Young Irelander, James Fintan

⁴⁷ Walsh, *Kilkenny the Struggle for Land*, p. 274.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

Lalor. Fenians such as, the Trinity educated, protestant, Thomas Clarke Luby, and indeed Charles Kickham, later president of the I.R.B. Supreme Council, did this in the I.R.B.'s newspaper *Irish People* (1863-5). Though Kickham would later oppose official I.R.B. participation in the Land League, chapter two and three, and four illuminate the complex nature of *e facto* Fenianism at the grassroots of the agitation. The American question is addressed in chapter three and in the conclusion and shows that Devoy and other factions of Fenianism maintained a direct influence right down to the village level of I.R.B. organising for the Land War. This work shows that the I.R.B. was reorganised by returned Americans in order to prepare for the land agitation and what they hoped would follow, a revolution. Of the three books discussed above that deal with the Land war at a county level only Sean Lucey's deals in any serious way with the I.R.B. in the Land War. In one case he cites an article which presented early findings from the research that makes up this thesis. It may be the case that a micro study such as the one that follows raises question and a offers proof of the true nature of the Land League and the land agitation which followed it. The issue of the I.R.B. at a grassroots and a county level is so fundamental to understanding the Land War that it must be addressed in any future study of the Land League and the Land War at a micro or county level. However, just as this thesis focuses on political history and ideology, Walsh's focus is on agriculture and the organisation of land agitation and Carter focus on a wider range of topics, from landlord and tenant relations, economics, and the government response. Sean Lucey's study of Kerry concentrates on both agricultural and political themes and regarding the latter is closer to this study than the other two works invaluable studies by Carter and Walsh. By focusing on the political and organisational issues with a poor law union as the geographical centre from which to look outwards this study elaborates and adds new perspectives on national events that have been dealt with extensively by

F.S.L. Lyons and T.W. Moody in their studies of Parnell and Michael Davitt. However, neither Moody nor Lyons detail the lead up to Parnell's election as MP for Cork in 1880 in the way this work does. In Chapter Two it will be seen that an electioneering machine had begun to infiltrate the Farmer's Club which was the traditional bastion of moderate Home Rulers. The political changes detailed, contrasting the Co. Cork by-election in February 1879 and the general election of 1880 indicate that radical forces had determined to wrest political control of the Home Rule party away from Whig Home Rulers and moderates of all shades. As noted in Chapter Four three of the grassroots county organisers who aided in this were elected as Parnellite MPs in 1885.

In Chapter Three it is shown that, whereas under normal circumstances public order offences such as common assault on a policeman would have been normally punished with a small fine, after the Land League agitation had necessitated military intervention in West Carbery, such offences were met with prison sentences and arrests had to be effected by police backed up by marines. Given the propaganda that was used at the outset of the establishment of the Land League in West Cork, the fact that the agitation drew the authorities into a pattern of draconian reaction, the latter's reactions served to prove the propagandists point, that the people were being ruled under an arbitrary, 'Oligarchs sway'.⁵¹

R.V. Comerford's most recent assessment of the Fenian movement notes that 'orators and pen bearers' joined in the 'rhetorical discourse on "Fenianism"' ⁵² From the late 1860s Fenianism came to represent 'national resurgence and self-assertion, the fight for freedom, self-reliance, republicanism and brotherhood' ⁵³ All these elements appear

⁵¹ Poster for Skibbereen land meeting 26 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 1.

⁵² R.V. Comerford, 'Fenianism: the Scope and Limitations of a Concept', James McConnel & Fearghal McGarry, (eds), *The Black Hand of Republicanism* (London, 2009), p. 180.

⁵³ Ibid.

in the I.R.B. cadre examined in this thesis. Comerford suggest that it is problematic to denote a ‘package of supposed ideas, attitudes and policies’.⁵⁴ He warns that making ‘idealist assumptions’ are a ‘menace to discourse on political life past and present’.⁵⁵ Yet, as is shown in Chapter One and elsewhere in this study it was the pen pushers and orators, the package of ideals, and the idealist notions that kept the movement alive and its cadre determined through periods when the movement had been thoroughly routed by police action or public indifference. The revolutionary ideals continually emerge during the course of this thesis in the recorded speeches, propaganda and public statements of the I.R.B men who led the Land War in Co. Cork and indeed down to the revolutionary period in Ireland from 1913-23. The fraternal aspect of the Fenian movement was another factor for the movement’s endurance. Like David Fitzpatrick, Comerford correctly identifies the I.R.B as being akin to Freemasonry, and an organisation that fulfilled a social and self-help function for its sworn members.⁵⁶ Indeed, John Devoy notes where and by whom people were sworn in his book *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* which indicates the importance of that ritual in the membership of the organisation, though Devoy in his later years also noted that the oath ‘kept many good Nationalists from joining the organisation’.⁵⁷ It is the fraternal nature and its rural location, where an informer would have been informing in a district where neighbours relied on neighbours, that is the most likely reason for the inability of the police to identify the I.R.B. in Ballydehob. It is clear from their continual use of the Ballydehob Land League in trials and commissions and according its members the benefits of the government *habeas corpus* suspension measures in 1881, that the

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.181.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ For Professor David Fitzpatrick I reference an occasional under-graduate senior freshman course I took at Trinity College, Dublin, in 2004-5, ‘Fraternity in Irish History’ which covers Freemasonry, Ribbonism, the Orange Institution and the I.R.B; Comerford, ‘Fenianism: the Scope and Limitations of a Concept’, & McGarry (eds) *The Black Hand of Republicanism*, 183.

⁵⁷ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, p.333, p. 119.

authorities knew something was going on but it proved illusive to them. At the *Times/Parnell Special Commission* one police man said Ballydehob was the ‘political centre of the West.’⁵⁸ As is noted in this work, he never elaborated on what he meant but it was obvious that the village of Ballydehob and the activities of the Land league in West Cork were viewed by the police as a special threat. This is borne out in Chapter Four with the analysis of time spent in prison of those arrested under the P.P.P. Act. Both Richard Hodnett and Henry O’Mahony spent more than three times the national median incarcerated.

This work not only adds to the understanding of the organisation of the land League in Cork county as a whole, by charting the development of the Co. Cork organising committee, it show that West Cork and the Skull Union had a regional importance in the re-emergence of the I.R.B. in the county. It shows that despite divisions and fracturing the I.R.B. consolidated around and used the Land League to take control of the constitutional political machine of the Home Rule party. In that respect it also casts new light on national politics and how grassroots organisers ensured Parnell’s success in the following years. Indeed three of Co. Cork personages discussed became Parnellite MPs in the general election of 1885. It also opens new lines of inquiry for future studies of the trans-Atlantic Irish revolutionaries and especially a new focus on returned Americans whose orders came from New York Fenians rather than the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. This latter point fundamentally changes the standard view of the origins of the Land War and indeed the resurgence of the I.R.B. in Ireland in the late 1870s and into the 1880s. Furthermore it shows that in order to convince the people of West Cork that they could achieve independence the I.R.B. used the Land League to degrade, humiliate and sideline the old order of landlords while also attempt

⁵⁸ *The Times*, 6 Dec. 1888.

to show the inefficacy of the government by usurping powers normally reserved to it, the police and the courts.

CHAPTER ONE – FENIAN ORTHODOXY

In order to assess the influence of Fenianism on the Irish National Land League and the Land War it is necessary to trace the influences and ideas that formed what may be termed Fenian orthodoxy. One of the principle problems, and indeed errors, in assessing a secret revolutionary society is the necessity or, perhaps more correctly, the tendency to look at facts that can be established rather than at the ideological influences which formed that society's particular set of political beliefs. Though the name of an organisation may change over decades and personnel may change, it is the ideas and ideals which form the basis of the movement's belief system that enable its adherents to be identified. It is common for the term Fenian and Fenianism to be used to describe the early period of the secret society from the mid-1850s until the late 1860s. These years sandwich the Fenian movement between the nascent developments of Irish revolutionary societies in the USA in the mid-1850s and the failure and suppression of the movement following the failed rising in Ireland in 1867 and the routing of what Leon Ó Broin termed the *Fenian Fever* which gripped Great Britain and Ireland from 1865 until 1868.¹ However it is ahistorical to consign Fenianism to these dates. Whereas by the late 1860s the nomenclature of Fenianism had changed, it must be borne in mind that the Fenian Brotherhood of the United States was never called the Fenian Brotherhood in Ireland. In 1855 the organisation which led to the formation of the Fenian Brotherhood was called the Emmet Monument Association.² This movement was organised by Michael Doheny, John O'Mahony and 'other exiles of the Forty Eight movement'.³ However, the first Irish-American militant revolutionary movement had been formed in 1848, prior to the rising in Ireland of that year, and its first priority was

¹ The phrase is the title O Broin's 1971 book detailing the early years of Fenianism see Leon Ó Broin, *Fenian Fever: An Anglo American Dilemma* (London, 1971), *passim*.

²² Joseph Denieffe, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood* (Shannon, 1969), p. 1.

³ Ibid.

the weekly drilling of members and their training in military skills. This organisation was called the 'Irish Republican Union'.⁴ When James Stephens founded his organisation on St Patrick's Day 1858, it was called the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood and later the Irish Republican Brotherhood.⁵ When John Devoy, a recruiter of British military in Ireland into the ranks of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, was, in 1871, released from prison and exiled to the United States he found an organisation there that was styled Clan-na-Gael.⁶ This organisation was founded in order to heal rifts between various factions of Irish-American extreme nationalism. However Clan-na-Gael was also plagued with splits, personality clashes and power struggles. Yet it was to endure, as evidenced by the fact that 45 years after he first joined Clan-na-Gael, Devoy was still a prime mover in the organisation and encouraging rebellion in Ireland. He played a role in the Easter Rising in 1916 and Clan-na-Gael's influence was also brought to bear on the Irish Republican Brotherhood into the 1920s.⁷ As will be shown below, the movement that can be generically referred to as The Fenians emerged, in part, directly from a secret society formed by James Fintan Lalor in 1848. That society, which appears to have had no official title, was an off-shoot of what is called the Young Ireland movement. However, Lalor's was a purely revolutionary movement which sought to overthrow the Act of Union of 1801, which united Great Britain and Ireland into a new state called the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, through force of arms. One of Lalor's platforms was the mobilisation of tenant farmers and a complete change in the nature of land tenure in Ireland. It is clear that the bedrock on which

⁴ Ibid., p. v.

⁵ Ibid., p. 25; John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel, The Fenian Movement its origin and progress. Methods of work in Ireland and in the British Army. Why it failed to achieve its main object but exercised great influence on Ireland's future, Personalities of the organization, the Clan-Na-Gael and The Rising of Easter Week, 1916* (New York, 1929, Shannon 1969), pp 19-20.

⁶ Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, p. 205 '[...] refugees from Dublin, Cork and Limerick formed the backbone of Clan-na-Gael, which was started almost simultaneously with the reorganization of the I.R.B in Ireland and Great Britain'

⁷ Ibid., pp 458-65; Peter Hart, Mick: *The Real Michael Collins* (London, 2005), p. 266; David Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland's Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2003), passim.

rested a continuously fractious and ever regenerating revolutionary movement among Irish republicans from the mid-nineteenth century was based on ideology rather than either mass support or practicality. Cadres repeatedly devised historical and political narratives from which they expected revolution would eventually spring. The Fenian movement formulated rhetoric that remained remarkably consistent from the 1850s down to 1920s.

The 1916 Proclamation of Independence, read outside the GPO and at the Hill of Tara on Easter Monday 1916, stated:

In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the last three hundred years they have asserted it to arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State.⁸

However six rebellions in 300 years did not indicate that every generation was willing to assert its 'right to national freedom' through force of arms.⁹ Such outbreaks were quite rare and the three military risings that occurred in the nineteenth century were poorly planned and executed with neither hope of success nor the potential to inspire a popular revolt against the government. Yet they cannot be dismissed merely because of their lack of military success. In the forty-five years after the 1803 rising led by Robert Emmet there was no organised attempt at an open rebellion in Ireland. Both the 1798 rebellion and the 1803 rising were inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment and embodied the republican principles of the French and American revolutions. Yet republicanism was by no means a universally accepted doctrine in Ireland. It is quite difficult to determine whether Irish men and women had any interest in such lofty ideals

⁸ *Proclamation of Independence 1916*

(http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Taoiseach_and_Government/History_of_Government/1916_Commencements/Proclamation_of_Independence.html), [retrieved 28 Nov. 2011].

⁹ *Ibid.*

following the suppression of Emmet's rebellion. Between the 1820s and 1840s there were mass movements led by Daniel O'Connell who sought a peaceful resolution of two issues. The first was Catholic Emancipation, which was achieved in 1829. The second was the repeal movement, which sought the repeal of the Act of Union (1801) and the restoration of an Irish parliament but not total independence from Great Britain. Therefore it is clear that republicanism and total independence from Britain were not foremost in Irish political thought in the first half of the nineteenth century.

It is possible to get a sense of the dilemma faced by idealists and revolutionaries from the writings of Young Ireland writer, poet and activist, Thomas Davis. In 1841, Davis wrote an essay that asserted Ireland would not be ready for freedom until it had rediscovered its own history and culture. Davis believed that promoting a national identity distinct and separate from Britain was a necessary precursor to national independence. In his essay 'The History of Ireland' he noted: 'If Ireland were in national health, her history would be familiar by books; pictures, statuary and music [...] These are the pillars of Independence.'¹⁰ It is obvious that Davis felt that there was a dearth of knowledge about Irish history among Irish people and thus there was a lack of feeling or interest in Irish independence amongst the population. Sixty-one years after his death in 1845, *Pádraig Pearse*, in an article written just before the 1916 Easter Rising, used quasi-religious republican rhetoric to place Davis on the highest pedestal and ascribed him a place among the four evangelists of Irish republicanism. For Pearse, the other three evangelists were Wolfe Tone, John Mitchell, and James Fintan Lalor.

¹⁰ Thomas Davis, 'The History of Ireland', in idem, *Thomas Davis, selections from his prose and poetry* (London, Dublin, Belfast, 1891), p. 84.

In 1919 Desmond Ryan said of Pearse 'For him Tone, Davis, Mitchel and Lalor were the Fathers of The Church of the Irish nation.'¹¹ He further noted:

Tone's AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Mitchel's JAIL JOURNAL, the essays of Davis and Lalor, and the vast historical library which had grown up around '98, '48, '67, he studied and assimilated just in the same manner as he had formerly made Cuchulainn and the Fionn cycles, ancient and modern literature, his own.¹²

For Pearse this progression from myth and legend to the intellectual and actual pursuit of revolution was facilitated through and by his membership, firstly of The Gaelic League, and secondly of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Pearse was singing from a hymn sheet little different from the firebrand editorials written by I.R.B. founders Thomas Clarke Luby and Charles Kickham in their editorials for the organisation's newspaper *Irish People* between 1863 and 1865. The *Irish People* published in Dublin gave voice to what was or would become Fenian orthodoxy.

Davis, Mitchell and Lalor were part of the Young Ireland movement. Unlike, William Smith O'Brien, the aristocratic leader of the 1848 Young Ireland rebellion, Mitchel and Lalor were extremists who defined a sense of injustice, and in Mitchel's case, ascribed the Great Irish famine to acts of genocide by the British government.

Pearse's Fenian Irish republicanism idealised and promoted Tone as a gentleman general, true to Ireland and giving form and spirit to the ideals of a Jacobin republicanism. Emmet was the idealist who took up a rebellion without hope of success but achieved his place amongst the evangelists through the legacy of that rebellion, devoid of any chance of consummation, and his speech from the dock as a man condemned to death. Mitchel articulated a sense of injustice in his book the *Last Conquest of Ireland (perhaps)* which was first published in 1861 in which he liberally

¹¹ Desmond Ryan, *The Man Called Pearse* (Dublin, 1919), p. 96.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp 4-5.

quoted from Her Majesty's government statistics and added his own a vitriolic interpretation of them to further a thesis of the Irish famine (1845-49) being a genocide. Mitchel's assertion that the Famine was a genocide caused by the 'English government' allowed the Irish republican rhetoric to assimilate and propagate the Famine as a recent incident in the cannon of British injustice that demanded remedy.¹³ However, James Fintan Lalor may seem a more obscure figure to be foisted to the top of the mast of Republican 'sainthood'. Yet, it was from him and his ideas of revolution that Pearse and his generation of Fenians gained the most. It was Lalor's direct followers who created the Fenian movement and the Fenian orthodoxy. It was his ideas that paved the way for advanced Nationalists to emerge in the late 1870s and early 1880s, espousing a populist cause, which led to the creation of The Irish National Land League. The Land League established an administrative and organisational machine along governmental lines fifty years before the First Dail of 1919-21.¹⁴

'The Real Father of Fenianism'¹⁵ James Fintan Lalor

D.N. Buckley, in his 1990 study of James Fintan Lalor, argued that Desmond Ryan and John Devoy both overstated Lalor's influence on the Fenian movement. Buckley while referencing the fact that John O'Leary and Thomas Clarke Luby, who were founders of Fenianism, built up the movement from the secret society founded by Lalor following the failure of the 1848 rising, states that Lalor's influence on Fenianism was only 'slight'.¹⁶ However, Devoy in his *Recollections of an Irish Rebel* stated that the revolutionary group that Lalor founded remained intact after his death and 'was merged with the Irish Republican Brotherhood by James Stephens in 1858, 'James

¹³ John Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (perhaps)* [1860], ed. and introd. Patrick Maume (Dublin, 2005), p. 219.

¹⁴ The First Dáil (1919-21) was established in January 1919 by candidates elected as MPs in the December 1918 general election who refused to recognise the UK parliament as the legitimate government of Ireland and declared Ireland an independent republic.

¹⁵ John Devoy, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, p. 17.

¹⁶ D.N. Buckley, *James Fintan Lalor: Radical* (Cork, 1990), p. 89.

Fintan Lalor might be said to be the real Father of Fenianism, as well as the Land League'.¹⁷ Buckley did acknowledge that Lalor's influence on the Land War was crucial. However, Buckley failed to give Lalor's influence on Fenianism and Fenian influence on the Land War its correct place. While the Land War may have been a product of a broad church of revolutionaries and parliamentarians, it was Fenian or Nationalist in its character and most of its leaders and, more importantly, its grassroots organisers were controlled by or were themselves Fenians. If prior to the 1916 Rising, *Pádraig Pearse*, a leading member of the I.R.B. was citing the influence of Lalor on Irish nationalism, Lalor obviously previously had and indeed still held a crucial intellectual significance for Fenians. Regardless of the nomenclature, the I.R.B. in 1916 was a direct successor of or, indeed, were merely Fenians. Buckley failed to note the direct lineage of Lalor's influence stretching from his comrades who were the founders of, or early members of, the Fenian movement down to Pearse and the revolutionaries of 1916 through the I.R.B. Marta Ramón, in the introduction to the most recent edition of Lalor's writings states that nationalists interpretations turned Lalor's call 'to repeal the Conquest' into a war cry.¹⁸ Lalor's ideas formed the orthodoxy of Fenianism as developed by the writers and editors of *Irish People*, leading to the adoption of the land issue and Lalor's ideas surrounding it by sections of the Fenian movement in both the USA and Ireland in the late 1870s. Lalor, a hunchback, was described by Charles Gavan Duffy as being 'deaf, near sighted, ungainly and deformed'.¹⁹ Duffy in his *Four Years of Irish History 1845-1849* stated that that of all the men in the 1840s who 'preached

¹⁷ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 17. Note Devoy incorrectly gives Lalor's year of death as 1853 in fact he died 27 December 1849.

¹⁸ Marta Ramón, 'Introduction', James Fintan Lalor, *The Faith of the Felon and other writings*, (Dublin, 2012) p. 23.

¹⁹ Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland and 1848* (Cork, 1949), p. 111; Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four Years of Irish History: 1845-1849: A sequel to Young Ireland* (London, 1883), p. 464

revolutionary politics in Ireland' Lalor was the most 'original and intense'.²⁰ His writings advocated eschewing participation in parliamentary politics or reform and sought to mobilise people around a resource and cause which stood below their feet: the land itself. Denis Gwynn noted Lalor was an innovator who urged 'propaganda [...] in favour of agrarian revolution'.²¹ The use of propaganda was something at which the early Fenians and the Fenians involved in the Land War were adepts. Though Lalor's letters could be rambling, key phrases proved powerful as copy for banners years after his death in 1849. 'The land of Ireland for the people of Ireland to have and to hold from God above who gave it', was adopted into the more streamlined Land League slogan 'The Land for the People'.²² In a letter to John Mitchel in June 1847 Lalor outlined his desire for a *tabula rasa*, which scorned a nationalist movement concerned with constitutional representation and the common law and introduced a highly emotive contra formula for Irish independence. In his effort to negate the 'conquest' Lalor's solution was to completely ignore it.²³

In his first letter to *The Nation* in January 1847 Lalor declared his disdain for the Repeal movement: 'I will never give one shilling, or give my name, heart or hand, for such an object as the simple repeal by the British parliament of the Act of Union'.²⁴ Lalor would have nothing to do with an organisation that limited itself to mere Repeal. He saw the potential of the Repeal movement to be a much more potent vehicle, which could strive for complete independence from Great Britain. The engine which should

²⁰ Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four Years of Irish History*, p. 464. This is also quoted in Gwynn, *Young Ireland*, pp 132-133.

²¹ Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland*, p. 129

²² Frank Rynne, "'This extra parliamentary propaganda': Land League posters', *History Ireland*, Vol. 16, No. 6, Nov./Dec., 2008, pp 38-41. Note: available online (<http://www.historyireland.com/volumes/volume16/issue6/features/?id=114213>), [retrieved 1 Sept. 2011].

²³ James Fintan Lalor to John Mitchel, 21 June 1847, in L. Forgharty, (ed), *James Fintan Lalor: Patriot and Political Essayist (1907-1849)*, (Dublin, 1918), p. 44.

²⁴ James Fintan Lalor to Charles Gavin Duffy, 11 Jan. 1847, *ibid.*, p. 2.

drive this movement he felt was the land question: 'A mightier question is in the land – one beside which Repeal dwarfs down into a petty parish question.'²⁵ Lalor felt if his suggestion as to the battle ground was chosen, Irish separatists would not be merely 'asserting old principles' nor be a 'humble and feeble imitator and follower of other countries – but an original inventor, propounder, and propagandist, in the van of the earth, and leading the nations'.²⁶ Furthermore, he asserted that by organising and agitating on the issue of land tenure, 'Ulster would not 'be on her flank' but on her side'.²⁷ In this Lalor may have been prophetic, as the Land League initially had appeal in Ulster, where the rhetoric of Irish nationalism was conveniently discarded, so as not to alienate the Ulster unionist tenants who were mobilising around the land question.

In his next letter to *The Nation* Lalor proposed an association between the landlord and the occupier. In this letter he notes 'the failure of the potatoes crop and consequent famine is one of those events which come now and then to do the work of ages in a day, and change the very nature of the entire nation at once'.²⁸ If his argument was intended to garner the support of the Irish landlord class, his contention that the French revolution 'took France to the sun – gave her wealth, and victory, and renown – a free people and a firm peasantry' was sure to repel support from that class. Lalor's 'Proposals for an Agricultural Association between the Landlord and occupier' was not intended to convince landlords of anything. Denis Gwynn described it as having a tone that was 'openly defiant though he adopted a conciliatory form'.²⁹ Lalor implied that if landlords did not 'throw their lot in with the Irish peasantry' they would not have a

²⁵ Ibid., pp 2-3.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ James Fintan Lalor 'A New Nation, Proposal for an Agricultural Association between the Landowners and Occupiers, addressed to the Landlords of Ireland,' 19 Apr. 1847, Forgarty, *James Fintan Lalor*, pp 8-9.

²⁹ Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland*, p. 130.

second chance to become ‘the national aristocracy in a new social constitution’.³⁰ It was a skilfully disguised piece of revolutionary rhetoric. While he stated that the landowners should lead a social revolution, he claimed that social anarchy existed while government and guidance did not.³¹ In April 1847, Lalor seemed ready to acknowledge that the landowners of Ireland did indeed ‘own her soil’. However, he pointed out that political rights were less important than social rights.³² Lalor felt that the disintegration of society caused by famine, ‘the visitation of God in the order of nature’, had returned to the people an original right ‘the right of establishing, and entering into a new social relationship’ beyond the strict confines of written law.³³ In this way Lalor’s argument allowed later generations to conceptualise a path to independence that needed no reference to parliamentary or constitutional rights but rather based on the *de facto* rights of occupancy and the whim of the majority to reject the old order and then protect their declared interests. Lalor never regarded ‘Irish landowners as the natural leaders of the people’.³⁴ However, his seeming to engage them in his discursive plans shows Lalor’s truly inscrutable nature and his seminal ability to behave as a true revolutionary with an eye on the prize and his tongue firmly in his cheek. These traits of revolutionary rhetoric often evade academic scrutiny. As will be shown below, mistruth and subjugation of truth are as much part of an Irish revolutionaries’ arsenal as parish stumps, guns and the popular causes which they exploited for the good of their cause.

By June his rhetoric had hardened and his message was less equivocal. In a letter to John Mitchel outlining the reasons he would not be allowing his name to go forward at the Convention, Lalor asserted that he had:

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Lalor ‘A New Nation, Proposal for an Agricultural Association between the Landowners and Occupiers, [...]’ 19 Apr. 1847, in Forgarty, *Lalor*, p. 12.

³² Ibid.

³³ Lalor, ‘A New Nation,[...]’ 19 Apr. 1847, in Forgarty, *Lalor*, p. 13, pp 13-14.

³⁴ Denis Gwynn, *Young Ireland*, p. 131.

[...]nothing to do with the landlord – and -- tenant question, as understood. The question of the tenure by which the actual cultivator of the soil should hold his land is one for an Irish Parliament. My object is to repeal the Conquest—not any part or portion but the whole and entire conquest of seven hundred years – a thing much more easily done than to repeal the Union.³⁵

Lalor now felt that the ownership of the land did not rest in the hands of the landlords but rather:

That the absolute (allodial) ownership of the lands of Ireland is vested of right in the people of Ireland – that they, and none but they, are the first landowners and lords paramount as well as the lawmakers of this island – that all titles to land are invalid not conferred or confirmed by them –and that no man has a right to hold one foot of Irish soil otherwise than by grant of tenancy and fee from them, and under such conditions as they may annex of suit and service, faith and fealty etc., these are my principles.³⁶

In this letter, Lalor demonstrates both his strong ego and unfaltering belief in the right of the people to self-determination. He declared that he never saw the landlords as ‘a part and portion of the people’.³⁷ Indeed Lalor said he recognised them as ‘aliens and enemies’ who he ‘solicited to join with and *become* part of us, and of a new Irish nation – as a “foreign garrison” whom I required to be a “national guard” before it would be too late. *It is now too late.*’³⁸ Though advocating a further appeal to this class Lalor felt that such appeals should be done through acts and the ‘argument of PREPARTION’.³⁹ However, for landlords willing ‘to recognise this right of the Irish people, brought to recognise this island –Queen, I would grant new titles.’⁴⁰ Perhaps it was this canon that allowed Charles Stewart Parnell, a landlord from Co. Wicklow, to comfortably lead a movement 30 years later, which sought to replace his own class with peasant proprietors. Lalor believed that the landlords could be brought to accept his principles

³⁵ James Fintan Lalor to John Mitchell, 21 June 1847, in Forgarty, *Lalor*, pp 43-4.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

and indeed 'Independence' by proving to them that the 'owners *de jure*' were 'the owners *de facto*.'⁴¹ He also believed the landlord 'garrison' could not resist the will of the people thus directed and that should Britain attempt to save them 'there should be resistance and defence'. He advocated a trained disciplined force to resist such intervention and stated 'I want a prepared, organised, and resistless revolution'.⁴²

Between 25 and 27 May 1848 John Mitchel was tried and sentenced to 14 years transportation under the Treason Felony Act and the his newspaper *United Irishman* suppressed.⁴³ These events hardened Lalor's resolve for a no compromise assertion of an Irish right to independence based on peasant proprietorship. In June 1848, in his first letter to *Irish Felon*, Lalor asserted 'Not to Repeal the Union, then, but to repeal the Conquest', he wanted to 'found a new nation and raise up a free people, and strong as well as free, and secure as well as strong, based on a peasantry rooted like rocks in the soil of the land.'⁴⁴ In the same letter, Lalor put it bluntly: 'The soil of Ireland for the people of Ireland, to have and to hold from God alone who gave it'.⁴⁵ T.W. Moody noted that 'The combination of the land question with the question of national independence, of tenant right with nationality, which Lalor urged, was only realised in the land war 1879-82'.⁴⁶ However, in the years between his own death in 1849 and the outbreak of the Land War Lalor's assertions, aspirations and uncompromising stance was both borrowed and promoted by the Fenian movement, becoming a cornerstone of Fenian orthodoxy. This was not a chance happening. In 1881 John Devoy speaking of

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., p. 45.

⁴³ Brigitte Anton, 'Mitchel, John (1815-1875)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edition, Jan 2008 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18828>), [accessed 31 July 2009]; R. V. Comerford, 'Lalor, James Fintan (1807-1849)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15906>), [accessed 31 July 2009].

⁴⁴ James Fintan Lalor, *Irish Felon*, 24 June 1848, quoted in Forgarty, *Lalor*, p. 59.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁶ T.W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846-82* (Oxford, 1981), p. 36.

the Fenian movement remarked: ‘The early members were mainly brought into the movement by men who had kept alive a remnant of the organisation started by James Fintan Lalor in, 1849, and the destruction of the foreign landlord system was one of the cherished objects of the majority.’⁴⁷ According to Moody the founders of Fenianism believed that ‘to pursue particular national objectives before self-government had been won would be a dangerous deviation’.⁴⁸ However, the founders of Fenianism did use of Lalor’s themes in their propaganda. Marta Ramón has noted that, in 1855, eight years prior to the establishment of the *Irish People*, Thomas Clarke Luby had launched a short lived newspaper called *Tribune*. In its third issue an editorial commenced:

*All the land of Ireland belongs to the People of Ireland, in aggregate, to be distributed and made use of just so as best may serve happiness, prosperity, peace and security of the People of Ireland. [...] But the Land itself is the Nation’s alone, and the Nation may, when it likes, resume every acre of it for the purpose of re-distribution.*⁴⁹

This statement is the missing rhetorical link between Lalor and Fenianism and clearly indicates that Luby’s *Tribune* evangelised Lalor’s creed. The capitalisation of the ‘P’ in people is separatist code and the ‘People of Ireland’ conflates to the ‘Nation’ which can take back the land any time it wishes. This concept was precursory and informed the Fenian idea that land distribution would follow independence. The first and most difficult undertaking was to actually motivate and mobilise the people to such an end.

⁴⁷ Devoy, John, *The Land of Eire: The Land League its Origin, Progress and Consequences preceded by a concise History of the Various Movements which have Culminated in the Last Great Agitation, with a descriptive and Historical Account of Ireland From The Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York, 1883), p. 3.

⁴⁸ Moody, *Davitt and the Irish Revolution*, p. 40.

⁴⁹ *Tribune* (Dublin) 17 Nov. 1855 quoted in Ramón ‘Introduction’, Lalor, *The Faith of the Felon and other writings*, p. 47.

In 1863, when Luby worked at the *Irish People*, the Fenian idea for a resolution of the land question was Lalor-inspired peasant proprietorship.⁵⁰ However, unlike Lalor, but in line with the *Tribune* editorial, the early Fenians proposed that a settlement of the land question would result from, rather than being a means to, achieving national independence. An 1863 editorial in *Irish People* demonstrated their thinking: the only way for us to settle the land question is to win national independence. Then the people could establish a peasant proprietary.⁵¹ Like, Luby and John O’Leary, another senior figure at *Irish People*, Charles Kickham, could trace his radicalism back to 1848.⁵² In September 1865 Kickham wrote an article for the I.R.B. newspaper, *Irish People*, entitled ‘Priests in Politics’ warning:

Our beautiful and fruitful land will become a grazing farm for the foreigners’ cattle, and the remnant of our race wanderers and outcasts all over the world, if the English rule in Ireland be not struck down. Our only hope is revolution.⁵³

On the same day that this article was published in the *Irish People*, detectives from G division of the Dublin Metropolitan Police suppressed the paper and began to arrest the leaders of the movement. Lalor’s ability to transcend and ignore legal, parliamentary and proprietary concerns and to advance theoretical revolutionary codes and his idea that the ‘man in the frieze coat’ was somehow a party that was needed for success, laid a prophetic path for later separatists to follow.⁵⁴ The enduring spirit of Fenianism was not based on a universal sense of injustice, it was based on a cadre who were stubborn in their beliefs and indoctrinated with unyielding ideals. One source of this stubbornness was certainly the writings of James Fintan Lalor. However beyond ideology, one key to the endurance of Fenianism was its ability to organise not just in

⁵⁰ *Irish People*, 23 Nov. 1863, quoted in *ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² R.V. Comerford, *Charles J. Kickham: A Study in Irish Nationalism and Literature* (Portmarnock, 1979), pp 21-2.

⁵³ *Irish People*, 15 Sept. 1865.

⁵⁴ James Fintan Lalor to John Mitchell, 21 June 1847, in Forgharty, *Lalor*, p. 45.

revolutionary cabals but in civil society through their infiltration, usurping or founding of organizations in civil society such as protest movements such as the Amnesty Association, The Irish National Land League and The Gaelic Athletic Association. The Irish National Land League was in theory an open movement but it utilised all the I.R.B.'s organisational capacity, its propaganda skills and its shadowy potential creating a political revolution far more potent than any military rising. Writing about the winter of 1878-9 in his 1881 book *The Land of Eire* John Devoy further linked the feeling and fears of the people to the year that Lalor began writing down his creed of revolution by land reform.

The ghastly memories of '47 were revived, and all Ireland was in a sullen and gloomy mood. A new generation had grown up that would not tamely submit to what their father had patiently borne during that terrible period, and to a great extent they were *organized*.⁵⁵

Michael Davitt and James Fintan Lalor

Moody noted that 'Hatred of the land system was in Davitt's blood' and more importantly that it was 'part of his Fenian tradition'.⁵⁶ Davitt in his evidence to the Parnell Commission stated that he had not read 'Lalor's revolutionary doctrine until 1880'.⁵⁷ In his closing speech to the Parnell/*Times* Special Commission Sir Henry James representing *The Times* referred to the evidence of Michael Davitt in relation to the land proposals of James Fintan Lalor: 'Mr Davitt states that he had not seen Mr. Fintan Lalor's proposition at the time he commenced to submit his views to the Nationalists of America, but he admits now that, whether he had seen Lalor's proposals or not, the propositions are identical or nearly so.'⁵⁸ When pressed on whether Lalor's 'scheme in connexion with the land had been to make the land question in Ireland the

⁵⁵ Devoy, *The Land of Eire*, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 208.

⁵⁷ See footnote 3 in *ibid.*,

⁵⁸ *The Special Commission Act, 1888, Report of the Commissioners appointed by the Act reprinted from The Times, also the full Report of the Judges and Full Index*, (4 vols, London, 1890), iv, p. 192.

basis whereby to secure national independence', Davitt replied 'I think so'.⁵⁹ It is clear from this that, though Davitt had not read Lalor, he had come to believe in his doctrine, which proves that Lalor's influence on Fenianism was so fundamental that it was absorbed into the revolutionaries' core beliefs without some of them even being aware of it.

At the time of the Land War, early member of the I.R.B, former secretary of its Supreme Council, committee member of the Irish National Land League and M.P. from 1880, J.J. O'Kelly was not as equivocal as Davitt was in the late 1880s.⁶⁰ In 1889, Sir Henry James quoted the following report of a speech given by Kelly: 'The Land League was the instrument by which great social change would be worked in Ireland; it was more it was harbinger of the political future which was behind. For his own part [Kelly's] his connexion with that movement would not end until the foreign flag had left the country for ever, or else until they were lying under it.'⁶¹ In 1881 Kelly clearly associated the aspiration of national independence with the Land League. The idea of devoting Fenian resources and the I.R.B. organisation in Ireland and Britain and the various Fenian factions in the U.S.A. to the land question was extremely contentious amongst the hierarchy of global Fenianism. The president of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. Charles Kickham firmly opposed the idea, this despite his being one of the authors of *Irish People* editorials advocating tenant ownership. Kickham and most of the Supreme Council believed in 1879 that the land question should take a back seat to the issue of national independence.⁶² These divisions in the hierarchy of the Fenian movement would continue but grassroots adherence of I.R.B. members was sanctioned

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Owen McGee, 'O'Kelly, James Joseph', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2012).

(<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6833>), [retrieved 1 Sept. 2013].

⁶¹ *The Special Commission Act, 1888, Report of the Commissioners* (4 vols., London, 1890), iii, p. 731

⁶² Moody, *Davitt*, pp 279-80.

and the I.R.B. cadre was instrumental in organising and proselytising of the Land League.

Despite the Supreme Council's refusal to back the New Departure and the assertion that hatred for the land system may have run through Davitt's blood, the idea of using land tenure and agitation on the basis of peasant proprietorship was in fact firmly established in Fenian orthodoxy, through both the influence of Fenian founding leaders such as Luby, O'Leary and O'Mahony, and also through the open propaganda efforts of the early Fenian movement *The Irish People*. Though the circulation of the *Irish People* was moderate, estimated at 8000 copies of each issue, when the paper was suppressed on 15 September 1865 the national and international press were greatly occupied with all matters relating to the Fenians.⁶³ The arrest and subsequent trial of leading Fenians afforded the state an opportunity to demonise them and their ideals. Conversely it afforded the Fenian movement an unprecedented platform for the dissemination of propaganda. In his study of political violence in Ireland Charles Townshend argued that Fenianism's power 'resided as much in rhetoric as in facts'.⁶⁴ During the Special Commission which tried the Fenians arrested in connection with the *Irish People*, evidence was repeatedly presented against prisoners which amounted to articles and editorials from *Irish People*. The case against editors and manager of the *Irish People* was based on the contents of the paper.⁶⁵ Thus what was deemed by the prosecutors to be seditious and treasonous material from the paper was read into the court record and reported in other newspapers. During his trial in 1865 Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa attempted to read a 'file of the *Irish People* for the whole term of its

⁶³ Matthew Kelly, 'The *Irish People* and the Disciplining of Dissent', in Feargal McGarry and James McConnel (eds), *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2009), p. 34.

⁶⁴ Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance since 1848* (Oxford, 1883), p. 35.

⁶⁵ Kelly, 'The *Irish People* and the Disciplining of Dissent', p. 34.

existence!'.⁶⁶ He claimed legal right to read the contents of the newspaper, only compromising by not reading the advertisements. The Attorney General called the reading of such material under cover of a defence in a public court 'an outrage on public justice.'⁶⁷ Mr Justice FitzGerald expressed the hope that the articles to be read would not be published in the newspapers as they were 'not fit for publication'.⁶⁸ Such observations could only have created a greater interest in the contents of the articles. While *Irish Times* did not give any indication as to the contents of the articles, *The Freeman's Journal* quoted comments from the prisoner which gave an ample précis of at least one Fenian's opinion. Insisting that the *Irish People* did not wish to take the land from any man, O'Donovan Rossa asserted in reference to an article for 17 September 1864, 'Ireland for The Irish': 'Now the last sentence in that article speaks of ridding the land of robbers, and of making every man the owner in fee-simple of his own land and cottage. I would observe on it that it does not express any desire to take the land from any man'.⁶⁹ As fee simple was a form of freehold, holding land under such title along with a 'cottage', amounted to peasant proprietorship. Thus, O'Donovan Rossa reduced the ideas of James Fintan Lalor and land tenure to a simple sentence or sound bite as a belief of Fenianism. Whereas it is difficult to assess how deeply such words or indeed, such an idea, penetrated into the general consciousness, amongst those sympathetic to or involved with Fenianism they would have been well remembered. Though Michael Davitt claimed the idea as his own devoid of direct influence from the doctrines of Fintan Lalor, at least two other leading Fenians were also able to stake claim to the formula also. One of the reasons for this was the fact that the idea of linking land tenure

⁶⁶ A.M. Sullivan, *New Ireland* (2 vols, London, 1877), ii, p. 159; *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser*, Dec. 13, 1865.

⁶⁷ 'The Fenian Conspiracy', *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser*, 13 Dec. 1865.

⁶⁸ *Irish Times*, 13 Dec. 1865.

⁶⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Dec. 1865.

with national independence regardless of its origin was by the late 1870s part of the main stream orthodoxy of Fenianism carried forward from the movements early days.

Land League Slogans and propaganda

One clear indication of the direct connection between Fenian propaganda, Young Ireland, the founders of Fenianism and the Land League was the choice of slogans which the Land League adopted. The impact and, more importantly, the overt promoting of slogans that had rebellious and separatist connotations is evident in even the Land League's membership card: 'Ireland for the Irish' from Thomas Davis and an extrapolation from Fintan Lalor's 'The land of Ireland for the people of Ireland' to 'The soil of Ireland for the people of Ireland'.⁷⁰ In June 1864 the *Irish People* leader stated 'Give the Irish Soil to the People of Ireland and we are content'.⁷¹ Today's internet users use capitalisation of an entire sentence or posting to denote shouting or anger. In the nineteenth century changing 'people' to 'People' or land to 'Land' also rendered a whole different meaning and intention. Thus, in the late 1870s and early 1880s 'Land for the People' was separatist revolutionary code, much greater than the sum of the individual words *sans* capitalisation. Such a tiny change in typography held for those who knew the code, or were learning it, an indication of the intentions of those using it thus.

Land League posters and placards

A banner at a Land League meeting in Co Mayo in June 1880 bluntly stated 'Give Us our Land or Else'.⁷² Another banner at the same meeting had the words 'The Dawn Of Freedom'.⁷³ At Ballyleague Co Roscommon on 20 June 1880 banners read

⁷⁰ Thomas Davis 'The History of Ireland' in Thomas Davis, *Selections from his Poetry and Prose* (London, 1970), p. 84.

⁷¹ *Irish People*, 11 June 1864.

⁷² Report of Land Meeting, Killasser, Co Mayo, 13 June 1880, N.A.I., Queen v Parnell papers, box 2.

⁷³ Ibid.

‘Down with Oppression’ and ‘Emmet 1803’.⁷⁴ The sentiments expressed on these banners evoked republican ideology and Robert Emmet’s rebellion. In demanding ‘our land or else’ it is likely the whole of the land rather than a farm that was being sought. On many of the posters, advertising land meetings the words God Save Ireland was printed in huge bold letters on the bottom. This was a reference to the Fenian ballad commemorating the Manchester Martyrs. However posters for land meetings in areas that had a large protestant population such as Dunkaneely (Dunkanilly) Co. Donegal did not bear the republican nationalist slogans.⁷⁵ Even one for Carndonagh Co. Donegal calling a meeting to commemorate American Independence did not evoke the purely Fenian sloganeering of ‘God Save Ireland’.⁷⁶ While a poster for a meeting at Athy on October 10 1880 had the Davis phrase ‘The Land for the People’ at the top and ‘God Save Ireland’ at the bottom.⁷⁷ Where Davis quotes appeared in banner headlines on posters, ‘God save Ireland’ was usually printed on the bottom. There are numerous examples of Land League posters in the National Archives of Ireland holdings Queen v. Parnell papers. Examples from Cahir 19 September, Skibbereen 26 September 1880, Athy 10 October 1880, Sligo 20 November 1880, all feature this combination of headlines.⁷⁸ A poster for Ballintaffy likens the tenants to slaves and urges revolution stating ‘Black Slaves of the east would revolt’.⁷⁹

As will be seen in Chapter Two and Three below, the speeches made at Land League meetings also evoked the separatist rhetoric of Mitchel and were infused with quotes from Davis. The national and local platforms and points of contact with large

⁷⁴ Report of Land Meeting Ballyleague, Co. Roscommon, 20 June 1880, N.A.I., Queen v Parnell papers, box 2.

⁷⁵ Poster for Land League Meeting Dunkeaneely, Co. Donegal, 29 July 1881, N.A.I., CSORP 1881/25411.

⁷⁶ Poster for Land League Meeting Carndonagh Co. Donegal, 4 July 1880, in Queen v Parnell papers, box 2.

⁷⁷ Poster for Land League Meeting, Athy, 10 Oct. 1880, N.A.I., Queen v. Parnell box 2.

⁷⁸ N.A.I., Queen v. Parnell, box 1 & 2.

⁷⁹ Poster for Land League Meeting, Ballintaffy, 3 May 1880, N.A.I., Queen v. Parnell box 1.

numbers of people which Land League meetings afforded separatists were utilised to their fullest extent by republicans and advanced Nationalists to create a sense of national identity based on, or inspired by, the ideas of Lalor, Mitchel, Davis, Tone, and Emmet. Whereas Davis in the 1840s felt that national identity needed to be created, in the intervening years, between his death and the Land War, the I.R.B. had, through its newspaper *Irish People*, and other campaigns such as the Amnesty Movement of the late 1860s, created their own orthodoxy, which through the Land League, they brought to the widest of audiences. The widespread reporting in local papers throughout the country of their meetings, both mass meetings and their weekly branch meetings helped push that message along with the demands for peasant proprietorship, tenant rights and social justice. During the Puck Fair in 1880, RIC Constable Thomas O'Rourke arrived at the village of Kilorglin, Co. Kerry on 11 August and saw a banner depicting a goat painted green on both ends. On a platform the goat picked to be 'King of the Puck' was decked out in green ribbons and laurels.⁸⁰ The 1880 'Puck Fair' was chosen by moderate Land Leaguers for the first Land League meeting in Co. Kerry which was addressed by moderates, Timothy Harrington and A.M Sullivan. Harrington claimed that "the land for the people of Ireland" was no "revolutionary cry" in order not to scare off the larger and more conservative farmers.⁸¹ The goat event was included in the gathered evidence to try Parnell and the other Land League leaders in 1880. It may be assumed that painting a goat green on both ends was an anomaly, yet, despite the moderate tone of Harrington, it was noted by the authorities as being a separatist advanced Nationalist statement. The implied speech in this light-hearted pageantry was not illegal but it implied sedition to the police constable who observed it.

⁸⁰ Report of Thomas O'Rourke, Sub Const 32, 416, Wed. 11 Aug. 1880, Killorglin Co Kerry, N.A.I., Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

⁸¹ Donnacha Seán Lucey, *Land Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland: the Case of County Kerry, 1872-86*, (Dublin, 2011), p. 59.

From the 1840s until the Land War, there were successive efforts to forge a national identity and a cause to rally people to in order to further a sense of alienation with the status quo and foment a sense of nationhood that would be entirely separate from Britain. Despite his hesitancy in the late 1870s to embrace the land issue as a vehicle of national independence, Charles Kickham had in fact helped meld that concept to the advanced Nationalist or Fenian orthodoxy in the mid-1860s. However, it was likely that Luby who had introduced the creed of Lalor into that orthodoxy through the pages of *Irish People*. The fact that despite its small circulation *Irish People* articles gained a wide circulation due to the publicity afforded by the trials of its staff in 1865 is hugely significant. Despite later misgivings about any movement being given precedence to the cause of armed struggle, the musings of I.R.B. men in the nascent period of the movement may have engrained in the minds of young adherents. If Davis was correct in stating that Irish freedom would follow a development of a separate national identity through history and art, so too would such an end require the development of natural and ever-present enemies within. In this regard Lalor's formula as advanced by the I.R.B. in the 1860s had a resonance that the urban members of the movement may have not fully grasped but which the rural cadre would have seen immediately. The fact that Land League propaganda took on board and refined the slogans of Davis and Lalor with the mindset of Mitchel may not have been Davis's intention but the remorseless publicity that the simple phrase 'Land for the People, Ireland for the Irish', and the concept of land ownership leading to independence gained was vitally important. In this regard it is not surprising that on the eve of the 1916 Rising Pearse should have chosen Tone, Davis, Mitchel and Lalor as his four evangelists of nationalism, for it was their political thought as synthesised by the Land League-I.R.B. grassroots and propagandists that opened the path to his own revolution.

One of the aspects of the Land War that was most prevalent was its propaganda wing. In this regard from a goat at the Puck fair to placards on village walls, it helped create and foster a sense of otherness and remoteness to authority that fostered a separatist identity.

CHAPTER TWO —THE END OF NORMAL POLITICS: THE FEBRUARY 1879 CORK BY-ELECTION

Between 1879 and the autumn of 1880, the nature of politics and public demonstration in Cork underwent a radical change. In early 1879, a by-election was necessitated by the death, in February, of Thomas McCarthy Downing, a Skibbereen solicitor close to the Young Ireland movement who was defence counsel for the Phoenix society in 1859, who had died on 10 January.¹ The Phoenix Society provided many of the original members of the nascent Irish Republican Brotherhood. However, the candidate selected for the Home Rule ticket was not from a seasoned nationalist background. Though McCarthy Downing's son-in-law wanted to stand, the chosen candidate was Col. Colthurst, a former British army officer who was a convert to Catholicism and had clerical backing. By winter 1879-80, new potential for a grass roots revolution was emerging in Co. Cork and across the country. By the time of the general election of April 1880, Col. Colthurst's candidature, though eventually successful, faced opposition from a new ascendant political class which had its roots within the secret advanced National party and the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Having built up its grip on local bodies such as the Cork Farmers' Club, utilising the ascendant Parnell and the advance of the Irish National Land League into remote districts, these revolutionaries soon usurped the political influence of more moderate Home Rulers and the most extreme elements of their own brotherhood. In early 1880, and certainly in the 1880 general election in Cork, both the moderate and advanced Nationalist forces were able to muster a great deal of support. However the clergy's influence, which assured Col. Colthurst his candidacy and election in 1879, was seriously challenged by April 1880. Parnell succeeded in being elected for Cork city despite opposition from elements of the clergy led by the Bishop of Cork. The

¹ *The Eagle and County Cork Advertiser* [*West Cork Eagle*], 18 Jan. 1879.

leadership of the Cork Farmers' Club, which had a pivotal influence in both choosing candidates and electioneering, was challenged by a Cork Land League branch which was tasked with organising the county for Parnell and the new departure political compact between Fenians and parliamentarians. As will be seen below, the Cork Farmers' Club, which had chosen Home Rule candidates for previous elections, was essentially hollowed out from within by the I.R.B. until it was eventually wound down to allow the Land League a complete grip on nationalist politics and agrarian organising in the county. Through the summer of 1880, hardliners associated with both the I.R.B. and the new departure compact between Parnell, Michael Davitt and the American wing of the I.R.B., Clan-na-Gael, organised the Land League in West Cork. As the Land League became a national and international force, a group of hard-core I.R.B. men sought complete control of the movement and their efforts to win the hearts and minds of ordinary people for revolution became evident in remote areas of West Cork. This was neither accidental nor spontaneous. It is clear that, having designated the Land League as a vehicle to promote republican nationalist separatist ideology, the grassroots and the local leadership of the I.R.B. sought to organise and maintain control of a nationally and internationally publicised movement to promote their own agenda and ideals. The Land League served the design of committed activists not only to overwhelm potential opposition in their own ranks but also to negate or co-opt the influence of the clergy and political and socially respected individuals on platforms in order to forward their advanced Nationalist rhetoric in front of thousands of peasant farmers and labourers at land meetings. The advent of these meetings in West Cork heralded the short but swift descent or ascent—depending on the observer's viewpoint—into the Land War that would claim lives and farms and utterly change the shape of local politics in the county.

This chapter charts the course of that change, starting with the election of the Whig Home Rule candidate, Col. Colthurst, in a by-election which pitted him against his young nephew, standing for the conservatives. The election showed that the key factor for the electorate and the clergy in West Cork was the cause of tenant-rights rather than religious adherence. However, it was clear that, in 1879, the clergy had a great deal of influence in the choice of candidate and chose one as far removed from the revolutionary movement as was conceivably possible. It was initially in the face of clerical opposition that the Land League was born in Cork. Maintaining control of the movement was not a foregone conclusion in 1880. Throughout that year, utilising the undoubted hardship that existed, well-spoken and combative political leaders stepped from obscurity and were accorded the prestige of close association with national political figures such as Parnell, Tim Healy and the rising star of the hard-line parliamentarian Fenian nexus, John Dillon. In greater Cork county and in Cork city, Edward Farrell, John Heffernan and John O'Connor emerged as forceful leaders. In more remote districts like West Carbery, articulate men, such as Richard Hodnett from the village of Ballydehob, took the lead and introduced an I.R.B.-led Land League into the western districts of the county. Their basic message—an appeal to support political agitation for tenant right and peasant proprietorship—was intended to promote a separatist and nationalist imperative leading to revolution. Whereas the I.R.B. was shackled by its Supreme Council and their unyielding orthodoxy of shunning constitutional politics, the local cadres were adept at maintaining a course which absorbed the political energy of their communities—and even their clergy—to their cause under the banner of the Land League. It is clear that, in the early phase of their political ascent, the I.R.B. forged opportunities from genuine grievances backed up by their organisational and propaganda skills and their ability to use the threat of force—

and actual force—against their political enemies within the broader nationalist community. From this base, they sought to unsettle and usurp the role of government and humiliate and sideline key local figures such as those who represented government control and held offices in the judiciary as well as being local landlords and land agents. By the autumn of 1880, their efforts had been extraordinarily effective as the government was immobilised while attempting to find a course that would check the threat posed by proponents of revolution embedded within a mass movement advocating the populist programme of tenant rights.

In January and February 1879, a parliamentary by-election in County Cork to fill the seat left vacant by the death of Thomas McCarthy Downing was contested by two members of the Colthurst family.² The Colthursts were noted for ‘having spent more than their rental income on relief works’ during the Great Famine.³ The election pitted Colonel David LeTouche Colthurst, who had ‘dared to become a convert at once to the Catholic faith and the national cause’, against his nephew, Sir George Colthurst, running as Conservative candidate.⁴ On the last Sunday of January, the Catholic clergy held mass meetings throughout the county, condemning the Conservatives for ‘bringing forward Sir George Colthurst’.⁵ The count took place on 17 February and Col. Colthurst was elected with a majority of 6130 votes (out of 8,157) to his nephew’s 2,027.⁶ On 25 February the defeated Sir George was honoured at a banquet hosted by the Earl of Bandon at the Imperial Hotel in Cork City, where one hundred of his friends toasted the ‘gallant pluck’ with which Sir George had contested the county.⁷ Sir George responded to the toasts stating that if the assembled ‘thought that the late election was free,

² *The Nation*, 25 Jan. 1879; *West Cork Eagle*, 18 Jan. 1879.

³ R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 330.

⁴ *The Nation*, 1 Feb. 1879

⁵ *West Cork Eagle*, 1 Feb. 1879.

⁶ *Irish Times*, 18 Feb. 1879.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 Feb. 1879.

unbiased and independent opinion of the electors, *they should be discouraged*'.⁸ Colthurst stated his defeat was in fact 'in consequence of the sacred name of religion having been imported into the contest and used as an electioneering cry to stir up religious fanaticism'.⁹ It was true that the Catholic clergy of the county had rallied the electors. At a meeting in Schull after Mass on Sunday 25 January, the parish priest, Fr Murphy, first dealt with the matter of religious education, claiming that Sir George would interfere with the Catholic education of Catholic children, while Colonel Colthurst supported 'denominational' education.¹⁰ However, Fr Murphy's main emphasis was on the land question and not religion. He stated that 'by far the greatest question' for the assembled crowd was 'tenant-right' which Col. Colthurst had 'promised to strenuously advocate'.¹¹ He noted that having put his name forward a fortnight earlier, Col. Colthurst's candidature was unanimously supported by the Cork Farmers' Club. Fr Murphy was reported to have said that 'There is no farmer present who would not wish to have his land at a fair valuation and not be at the mercy of the landlord, who—as the law at present stood—could expel him for a trifling compensation from the home where perhaps his forefathers lived and died'.¹² He pointed out, in contrast, that Sir George was a young man 'only a few days past his teens', did not support tenant-rights and did not 'wish to deprive the landlords of the power they so unmercifully exercise'.¹³ The other issue which Fr Murphy raised was the question of self-determination, stating that Col. Colthurst supported Home Rule and wished 'that the Irish should have the right to manage their own affairs as all nations

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Irish Times*, 26 Feb. 1879.

¹¹ *WCE*, Saturday, 1 Feb. 1879.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

have'.¹⁴ The cleric noted that Sir George, on the other hand, was against Home Rule, wishing 'to remain forever connected to England'.¹⁵ That the clergy should advocate tenant rights and Home Rule, especially so when the candidate they were supporting was a member of the establishment, was no surprise

In early 1879, Lord Bandon and his young protégé could have been forgiven for taking solace from their defeat being due to the Catholic clergy stirring up the electorate on religious grounds. In truth, the fertile rhetoric of the coming revolution had been succinctly raised during the election campaign by the parish priest of Schull, amongst others.¹⁶ However, Col. Colthurst had not merely been the beneficiary of the support of the clergy due to his conversion to the Catholic faith and his support for denominational education. Others who might have challenged him for the nomination stood aside and allowed him a clean run at the seat. On 18 January 1879, a meeting of county electors was convened under the auspices of Cork Farmers' Club in order to select the Home Rule candidate for the seat at Westminster vacated by the late McCarthy Dowling.¹⁷

Competing for the nomination was McCarthy Downing's son-in-law, F.D. McCarthy. However, after both prospective candidates had addressed the meeting and answered questions from the floor, McCarthy withdrew his candidature at the request of a supporter, D.B. O'Sullivan B.L., in order not to cause 'any dissension'.¹⁸ While McCarthy had mentioned his late father-in-law's support for the amnesty of O'Donovan Rossa in the late 1860s, there was nothing overtly seditious about the meeting. At one point, Edward Farrell of Queenstown asked Colthurst whether he would step aside if a

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Schull is the Irish name for the village and district and was favoured by Nationalists while, the official name, Skull, was used by the government.

¹⁷ *The Nation*, 25 Jan. 1879; C. J. Woods, 'Downing, Timothy McCarthy', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009). (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a2746>).

¹⁸ *The Nation*, 25 Jan. 1881.

tenant farmer were to throw his hat into the ring, to which Colthurst replied he would if the candidate was the popular choice. Colthurst discussed tenant rights, calling for the Ulster custom and the 3 Fs.¹⁹ If, in February 1879, Lord Bandon and his circle had not shrugged off Col. Colthurst's victory on religious grounds, they might have been better prepared for the events which began in their districts from the autumn of 1880. These events would challenge their way of life, their incomes and their ability to maintain a functioning government. Col. Colthurst, a moderate Home Ruler, had effectively campaigned on a tenants' rights platform which would soon become the rallying point of a revolution.²⁰ Within eighteen months, Farrell and another person who had attended the selection meeting, Skibbereen solicitor Patrick O'Hea, would become important figures in the Irish National Land League in Cork county and West Cork, respectively.²¹ O'Hea was the son of Dr Patrick O'Hea from Clonakilty and was educated at 'Gayfield, a college affiliated to the Catholic University' in Dublin.²² He was admitted as a solicitor in 1875 and was the nephew of John McCarthy, who was the Bishop of Cloyne, the Catholic diocese that comprised most of Co. Cork, from 1874 until his death in 1893.²³ Patrick Maume incorrectly states that Patrick O'Hea was the brother of the nationalist cartoonist, "'Spex" John Francis (sic) O'Hea', however, according to the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 'Spex' was John Fergus O'Hea. the son of the Young Ireland barrister, James O'Hea, and was from Kinsale, while the *Biographical Dictionary of Cork* states his place of birth was Clonakilty, like Patrick O'Hea.²⁴ The

¹⁹ Ibid. Note the 3Fs were Fair rents, fixity of tenure, free sale of the tenant's interest in their holdings.

²⁰ Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, the Story of the Land League Revolution* (London, New York, 1904), *passim*; T.W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish revolution 1846-82* (Oxford, 1982), *passim*.

²¹ Ibid. Note in *The Nation* report of 25 Jan. 1881 O'Hea is incorrectly named as P. O'Shea.

²² Entry for Patrick O'Hea (1852-1925), *A Biographical Dictionary of Cork* (Dublin, 2006), p. 249.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Patrick Maume, review of Feaghal McGarry and James McConnel (eds), *The Black Hand of Republicanism Fenianism in Modern Ireland*, (Dublin, 2009), *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 144, November 2009, p. 658; Carmel Doyle, 'O'Hea, John Fergus', McGuire, Quinn, (eds) *D.I.B.*, (Cambridge, 2009). (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6797>).

cartoonist's father, James O'Hea, was also the crown prosecutor for Co. Cork from 1849–82, and for Co. Limerick from 1860–82.²⁵

By March 1881, the landlords in the Conservative party were living in a proscribed district where *habeas corpus* had been suspended and the tenants had been organised, where they refused to pay rents and were in a form of revolt against not just the landed elites but also state institutions. This necessitated military protection for landlords, their agents, bailiffs and even the police. The year 1883 would see D.L. Sullivan defending the soon-to-be executed Timothy Kelly, who was accused of being an Invincible involved in the Phoenix Park murders of Ireland's most senior civil servant and its chief secretary in May 1882.²⁶

Starvation in Skull

In other local studies of the Land War evidence of the extreme hardship endured by the tenants and labourers and the fear of famine at the beginning of 1879 have been noted in the prelude to the Land war. Even in Co. Kilkenny, with its good agricultural land, local papers noted the distress throughout the whole country.²⁷ In Queen's County appeals were made for relief in March 1879, due to the third year in a row with a failure of the potato crop.²⁸ In Co. Kerry a local newspaper reported that not since the Famine had conditions for the 'agricultural classes been so bad'.²⁹ In West Cork a case of death from starvation sensationalised the district and the case highlights the terrible misery that was suffered in the winter of 1878-9.

²⁵ Doyle, 'O'Hea, John Fergus', McGuire & Quinn (eds), *D.I.B.*

²⁶ T.D. Sullivan, *Recollections of Troubled Times in Irish Politics* (Dublin, 1905), p. 204.

²⁷ Walter Walsh, *Kilkenny the Struggle for Land, 1850-1882* (Thomastown, 2008), p. 250.

²⁸ J.W.H. Carter, *The Land war and its leaders in Queen's County, 1879-82* (Portlaoise, 1994), p.27.

²⁹ Donnacha Seán Lucey, *Land Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland: the Case of County Kerry, 1872-86* (Dublin, 2011), p. 42.

On 21 March 1879, an enquiry was held in the boardroom of the Skull Board of Guardians into the reported death of a woman, Nora Goodwin, from starvation. The enquiry was initiated following the receipt by the Skull Board and its Relieving Officer, Mr Baylis, of a letter of complaint from Constable Maurice O'Donnell, based at Crookhaven. The letter was forwarded by the indignant Chairman of the Board to the Inspector-General of the Poor Law Boards and found its way to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who referred the matter to the Local Government Board; the latter instructed Mr Burke, a Local Government Inspector from Limerick, to initiate the sworn inquiry. After five and a half hours of sworn testimony and discussion, it emerged that Goodwin's husband was employed by Isaac Notter, a Poor Law Guardian like his brother, Richard H. Notter. The Goodwins had received outdoor relief of between 1s and 2s 6d from the Board of Guardians and without application, at the suggestion of Isaac Notter. In testimony it was revealed that O'Donnell's original information was hearsay related to him by a schoolmaster named Mahony.³⁰ John Goodwin was a labourer and a general caretaker in the employ of Isaac Notter. He had a house and a piece of land from Notter and received 6d per day for his labour. He cultivated potatoes on his land but had a poor harvest in 1877 and by April 1878 he was taken ill. By November, his wife was also ill. They received outdoor relief and Isaac Notter provided soup, rice and rice pudding from his own house to the family. However, Mrs Goodwin remained unwell and existed only on milk and tea that her husband purchased. Mrs Goodwin refused to go into the Poor House and died in early 1879. There was some disagreement as to the level of relief offered to the Goodwins. Dr McCormack claimed he had reported them to be living in miserable conditions. However, what is noteworthy about the case is, firstly, the paternalistic nature of the relationship between the

³⁰ *WCE*, 22 Mar. 1879

employer, Notter, and his employee. Notter provided personal charity and secured financial relief from the Poor Law Board without the Goodwins applying. Secondly, the case illustrates the fact that one incident of reported starvation in 1879 could come to the attention of a great number of government offices and officers, from the local Poor Law Union's board to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and back down to the Local Government Board.³¹ Thirdly, it is noteworthy that it was the intervention of a police constable writing to complain to the local Board of Guardians which initiated the chain of events. By the end of 1880, and certainly once the *habeas corpus* suspension act had come into effect on 1 March 1881, the police's role was to protect the landlords rather than be overly concerned by the plight of the poor. Indeed the 1879 criticism by a police officer of a local body run by landlords would be unheard of by 1881. This indicates the seismic change in societal norms that the Land League and the Land War achieved or induced in remote localities.

The distress caused in Ireland by the poor harvest of 1879 was hard felt as the year drew to a close. As there were six or more months to go before the first potato crop of 1880 could be harvested, a sense of urgency and panic pervaded poorer districts of the country, of which the newly-formed Irish National Land League were cognisant.³² In December, Parnell noted that the people were on the brink of starvation in Castlereagh.³³ By January 1880, reports of people threatened with starvation and enquiries into deaths by starvation were common.³⁴ Indeed, on the coroner being unwell in Millstreet, Co. Cork, two local magistrates refused to open an inquest into the reported death of a man from starvation. The *Freeman's Journal* stated the reason for this was that when two magistrates presided over an inquest into a death from starvation

³¹ Ibid.

³² T.W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846-82* (Oxford, 1981), p. 329, pp 355-6.

³³ *Weekly Irish Times*, 13 Dec. 1879.

³⁴ *Weekly Irish Times* Jan 24, 1880; *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Feb. 1880.

in the district in 1847, a verdict of wilful murder was returned against the prime minister, Lord John Russell. According to the newspaper, the magistrates were fearful that a similar verdict could be returned if they allowed a jury to consider a similar case in 1879.³⁵

In the Skull Poor Law Union, which had a reported population of 13,139 in 1880, the privations of the winter of 1879-80 appeared, by the end of January, to have had the effect of uniting the community, farmers and landlords together, in their efforts to seek help in order to alleviate the suffering of the poor in their district.³⁶ The Board of Guardians of a poor law union comprised both elected and *ex officio* Poor Law Guardians. The latter became Guardians by virtue being resident in a poor law union and holding another public office such as magistrate or justice of the peace. Richard Hodnett, an elected Poor Law Guardian and later founder of the Land League in Ballydehob, was continually criticising the landlords for their inaction and avarice in the face of the people's suffering. Indeed it may have been his public harangues that forced the landlords's hand in seeking to borrow money from the government to commence relief works. On 13 January, at a regular meeting of the Poor Law Board of Guardians, a Guardian, D. McCarthy, J.P., expressed his concern about the 'distressed circumstances of the ratepayers', declaring that 'In a year of unparalleled distress the ratepayers should be protected, and relief given only to those who require it'.³⁷

Richard Hodnett earlier noted that:

The country is in a deplorable state; Why half the guardians in the union are not able to pay their rates. When this is the state of the guardians, what must be the

³⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 3 Feb. 1880.

³⁶ *Return of the loans applied for and granted in each of the various unions in Ireland scheduled as distressed, up to 7 Feb. 1880; also, return (in continuation of the above) of the loans applied for and granted in the various unions in Ireland since they were scheduled as distressed, up to 29 Feb. 1880*, H.C. 1880 (158) lxii.285 (ordered 29 Mar. 1880); *WCE*, 24 Jan. 1880.

³⁷ *WCE*, 24 Jan. 1880.

state of the poorer classes? In Ballydehob troops of men may be seen everyday idle and with nothing to eat, living on the expectation of the Cooshen Copper mine going to work shortly. The landlords of the country are in a great measure to blame for the destitution that prevails. They do not feel the misery themselves, and they look on callous hearted and apathetic, while their dependents are famishing with hunger.³⁸

Hodnett suggested that the landlords avail of the facilities offered by the Board of Works and get land reclaimed and piers built. However, the Chairman, Capt. Somerville, feared that the tenants would not pay the interest on the money if the landlords borrowed it from the Board of Works. On 20 January 1880, three days after Hodnett's comments were published in the *West Cork Eagle and County Advertiser*, the next meeting of the Board of Guardians was held. The meeting was attended by some 300 farmers and, according to the paper, these inhabitants of the Schull Union had risen 'manfully on Tuesday above a policy of slumbering inactivity'.³⁹

The *West Cork Eagle* better known as the *Skibbereen Eagle*, was a successful newspaper printed in Skibereen. The owner and editor, Frederick Peel Eldon Potter, founded the paper in 1857. The paper became internationally famous when Potter wrote an editorial in the early 1870s warning the Tzar that the *Eagle* was watching him and his expansionist manoeuvrings.⁴⁰ In 1871 Potter launched the short lived Cork Evening Echo, an attempt 'liberal and independent,' nationalist leaning paper that advocated 'home rule and the principles of the Tenant League'.⁴¹ In the typical colourful style of the *West Cork Eagle*, the meeting was presented using a reference to Thomas Davis stating 'the 'West's Awake'.⁴² However, the meeting was far from revolutionary in

³⁸ Ibid., 17 Jan. 1880.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Bridget Hourican, 'Potter, Frederick Peel Eldon', in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *D.I.B.*, (Cambridge, 2009). (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a7442>)

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *WCE*, 24 Jan. 1880.

character and those present included four Catholic clergymen and also the Church of Ireland rector of Holy Trinity Church, Schull, Rev. John Triphook.⁴³ The meeting, convened by Captain Somerville J.P., chairman of the Skull Board of Guardians, was characterised by a calmness and a seeming coming together of both the resident local landlords, justices of the peace and farmers, in order to discuss a circular from the Board of Works which allowed for a sum of £250,000. Poor Law Boards could borrow sums for 35 years, pay no interest for the first two years and carry out works that would employ the needy of the district. The government desire for ‘promoting and encouraging employment’ allowed for the Lord Lieutenant, on receipt, through the Local Government Board, of a representation from the Board of Guardians of a distressed district, to give permission for the convening of an extraordinary Baronial Session.⁴⁴ Any distressed Union could present for useful and profitable works such as ‘the repairing of any road or footpath; the lowering of a hill or filling a hollow on any road, the building, repairing or enlarging of any bridge on any road the cost of which shall not exceed £200’. Other necessary works, such as drainage, making footpaths, and repairing sewers and channels inside villages or towns, were also eligible.⁴⁵ It was also allowed that a new road could be proposed or an old road widened. However, the written permission of the owners and the occupiers was required for such a purpose. The final stipulation was that applications could only be considered for works that would be completed within six months. This constraint required them to be completed by 31 July 1880. This date was deemed to be too soon by all present and it was noted

⁴³ Ibid.; Web site of Kilmore Union of Churches (http://www.kilmoeunion.com/schull_2.html), [retrieved 24 July 2012].

⁴⁴ *WCE*, 24 Jan. 1880; T.H. Burke, Dublin Castle, 13 Jan. 1880, Enclosure (1) No 12, *Correspondence relative to measures for the relief of distress in Ireland 1879-80*, p. 19 [C.2483] [C.2506] H.C. 1880 , lxii, 175.

⁴⁵ Ibid; ‘Enclosure (2) No. 12 Schedule of Works for which application may be made at Extraordinary Baronial presentment Sessions, 1880’, *Correspondence relative to measures for the relief of distress in Ireland 1879-80*, p. 19 [C.2483] [C.2506] H.C. 1880 , lxii, 175.

that farmers would be unlikely to have their potatoes harvested by that date and so would be in distress.⁴⁶

Captain Somerville suggested that the best thing would be to form a committee from the present large gathering that was representative of the various districts in the Schull Union. Among the suggested works that should be considered were the widening of the road and building a 'footpath of uniform size from the village of Ballydehob to the church', extending Skull pier by 75 feet.⁴⁷ Richard H. Notter suggested that the hill at Ballydehob be cut and noted that the opening of roads was previously charged as county cess.⁴⁸ Richard Hodnett said of the cess: 'the poor farmers have to pay it all'.⁴⁹ Father Forrest, parish priest of Goleen, suggested that the landlords be asked permission to carry out drainage works. Hodnett pointed out that of the 66 landlords owning land in the union only '8 or 9 were residing in it'.⁵⁰ The Chairman, Capt. Somerville, asked 'What do you say about asking the landlords consent' to which Richard Notter replied: 'The time for relief would have expired before you would get an answer'.⁵¹ After much discussion about the way to proceed, with Hodnett suggesting that it would be necessary to apply to the County Surveyor, Mr Jackson, and have him inspect and report on all work that would be necessary, Isaac Notter told the meeting that he had been informed at a meeting with the secretary of the Duchess of Marlborough fund at Dublin Castle that the fund was not for providing employment but for relieving distress of the poor through purchasing food. He informed the meeting that Skull was as entitled to such relief as any other part of the country since there was 'great distress and sickness

⁴⁶ *WCE*, 24 Jan. 1880.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

amongst them, and unless immediate relief was given a famine would result'.⁵² To expedite an application to the government fund, it was suggested that a local resident, Capt. Thomas, visit Schull, Ballydehob, Crookhaven, Goleen and other parts of the union and present a report to the next meeting. The latter part of the meeting presents a stark insight into the plight of the people in the Skull Union. One Poor Law Guardian, J. Coughlan, received a loud cheer when he declared that the farmers were in as much need of relief as the labourers. Several speakers suggested that the farmers were in need of seed potatoes and should be supplied with these from Scotland and given meal to eat while their potatoes grew.

Memories of the Great Famine

In an area like Skull, such pronouncements and the idea that the inhabitants would need to wholly rely on meal raised the spectre of the Great Famine. By December 1846, the Mizen peninsula was completely ravaged by famine.⁵³ According to the *Cork Constitution* 'greater misery was reserved for Ballydehob. Here people are in a deplorable state dying in all directions'.⁵⁴ However, in 1846, one observer noted that the deaths occurred among a certain class of the people, 'labourers and beggars', while the 'country people generally never looked better' and were said to have supplies until the following May as they were eating their own grain and paying no rent.⁵⁵ In the year from September 1846 to Sept 1847, deaths in Schull were 1525 or 17.7% of the population while the Ballydehob district recorded 1569 mortalities, amounting to

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Patrick Hickey, *Famine in West Cork: The Mizen Peninsula, Land and People 1800-1853* (Dublin, 2002), p. 161.

⁵⁴ *Cork Constitution*, 29 Dec. 1846 quoted in *ibid*.

⁵⁵ Commissary Inglis to Randolph Routh, 23 Dec. 1846, *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers. Famine, Ireland* (8 vols, Shannon, 1970), v, p. 843 quoted in Hickey, *Famine in West Cork*, p. 162

18%.⁵⁶ Patrick Hickey argues that Marshall's *A return of deaths and emigrations in the western division of the Skibbereen Union, from the 1 September 1846 to 12 September 1847*, from where he took the data, may have underestimated the mortality rate in the district, which may have been conservative and might well amount to double the reported figures.⁵⁷ For some attending the meeting in January 1880, the Great Famine occurred in their lifetime. Joseph O'Driscoll, stated that he had collected the poor rates in the Union in '46, '47 and '48 [...] He could fearlessly say that the small farmers were as badly off now as then'.⁵⁸ He noted the farmers could get credit then whereas there was 'none now'.⁵⁹ The Notter family had immigrated to the area in the 17th c. from Germany and been involved in relief efforts during the famine, while Richard Hodnett had worked as an overseer on relief works in 1847 and Dr Sweetnam was a member of the relief committee and had attended the sick and dying in the district during the famine.⁶⁰

In light of the devastation wrought on the area during the Great Famine, it is not surprising that there seemed to be a consensus across the social, economic and religious divides in the Skull Union in order to forestall any return to famine. Such a coming together of denominations and classes was also evident in Queens County between November 1879 and June 1880 with 'shopkeepers, professional people and clerics of all

⁵⁶ A table 'Mortality in the Six Parishes (Sept. 1846-Sept 1847)' in Hickey, *Famine in West Cork*, p. 212. The other four parishes are Kilmore with 1,363 deaths (18.8%), Kilcoe, 228 (9.7%), Caheragh 1,321 (15.7%), Drimoleague 865 (15.7%), Drinagh 461 (18.4%). Source J.J. Marshall, *A return of deaths and emigrations in the western division of the Skibbereen Union, from the 1 Sept. 1846 to 12 Sept. 1847*, see *Cork Constitution*, 5 Oct. 1847 and *Southern Record* 5 Oct. 1847 and also Donovan, D., 'Observations on the peculiar diseases to which the famine of last year gave origin, and on the morbid effects of insufficient nourishment', Dublin Medical Press, xix, 1848, pp 67-68, 130-32, 275-78. Marshall's return is also discussed in P. Hickey, 'Famine, Mortality and Emigration: A Profile of Six parishes in the Poor Law Union of Skibbereen 1846-7' in Patrick O'Flanagan and Cornelius Buttmer (eds), *Cork History & Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1993), pp 890-94.

⁵⁷ Hickey, 'Famine, Mortality and Emigration: A Profile of Six parishes in the Poor Law Union of Skibbereen 1846-7', O'Flanagan and Buttmer (eds), *Cork History & Society*, p. 893.

⁵⁸ WCE, 24 Feb. 1880.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Hickey, *Famine in West Cork*, p. 16, p. 199, p. 104, p. 267, p. 145, p. 169.

denominations' forming relief committees.'⁶¹ Capt. Somerville noted he had received no reply to a memorial he had sent to the Duchess of Marlborough's Fund nor to a circular he had sent to 500 people in England seeking financial assistance. In light of this, he suggested that the only immediate solution would be to 'start a subscription list, and everyone give his mite'.⁶² The burden of such a subscription would fall upon the few landlords and wealthier people of the district, a fact that was bemoaned by Richard Notter, who complained that by starting a subscription '[...] we'd be paying out of our own pockets for the support of the tenants of absentee landlords.'⁶³ This promoted a retort from Richard Hodnett, who cited the example of an American gentleman who had given \$1000 to help relieve Irish distress. He asked: 'What are our Irish gentlemen doing? Nothing but receiving the rents.'⁶⁴ Notter's bemoaning may have been influenced by his own family circumstances as they had sold by the Encumbered Estates Court, which allowed for land which had been mortgaged and whose owners were unable to meet their debts to be sold on application of a creditor, in the aftermath of the Great Famine.⁶⁵ It was also the case that landlords including Notter paid five-eighths of the poor rates in Ireland and therefore as J.W.H. Carter noted found themselves anxious about being 'lightened of pockets' in an increasingly 'unsettled country'.⁶⁶

The meeting ended on a sombre note, with reports of extreme poverty in the district from Father Murphy PP of Schull saying that people were living on turnips and, on the islands, some were in a state of semi-nakedness and that without public relief works 'a crisis as painful as '48' would be upon the district soon.'⁶⁷ Richard Hodnett

⁶¹ Carter, *The Land War and its Leaders in Queen's County*, p. 30.

⁶² *WCE*, 24 Feb. 1880.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Entry for Notter, Landed Estates Database, National University of Ireland, Galway, (<http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/estate-show.jsp?id=2494>) [retrieved 30 Aug. 2012].

⁶⁶ Carter, *The Land War and its Leaders in Queen's County*, p. 31.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

might have been correct in suggesting that, to ensure loans, the union must first engage the county surveyor to conduct an examination of the district as to what works were required and to include his report as part of any application. His suggestion was rebutted by the Chairman and it was argued that a local resident with military experience could do just as well. Capt. Thomas was selected and he agreed to conduct a survey. In light of the poor return on their application for loans, this may have been an ill-advised course of action. By 7 February 1880, the landlords in the Skull union applied to the Local Government Board for loans totalling £1,353. However, they were granted less than 15% of that amount, a mere £200.⁶⁸ Between 7 and 29 February, they applied for a further £2,820 but received only £300, a mere 10.6% of what they sought.⁶⁹

By the month's end, only four committees of the Duchess of Marlborough's Fund were established in the County Cork: one at Skibbereen, with Thomas Somerville as chairman, at Skull with Capt. Somerville of the Prairie as chairman, at Bantry, with Mr Payne as chairman, and at Millstreet, with Mr James McCarthy O'Leary as chairman. These four committees were awarded £475 in the last week of January, which comprised the total amount awarded to Cork county that week.⁷⁰ In comparison, Co. Donegal received £1,225, Sligo £850, Galway £1,970, Leitrim £450, Mayo £1,850, Roscommon £900, Clare £1,085, Limerick £100, and Kerry £1,100.⁷¹ Though the exact figure allocated to the Skull committee is not reported, it is noteworthy that a charity may have contributed as much as a quarter of what the government granted in its loan scheme. In April a report from Hon. A. Talbot as to distress in Schull district was read at a meeting of Duchess of Marlborough's Fund trustees. Their advisor, Dr. Meredith,

⁶⁸ *Poor law unions (Ireland) loans. Return of the loans applied for and granted in each of the various unions in Ireland scheduled as distressed, up to 7 Feb. 1880; also, return (in continuation of the above) of the loans applied for and granted in the various unions in Ireland since they were scheduled as distressed, up to 29 Feb. 1880*, p. 5, H.C. 1880 (158), lxii.285 (ordered 24 Mar. 1880).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Irish Times*, 30 Jan. 1880.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

suggested ‘assistance in providing fishing gear for the locality might be obtained from the Committee of the Canadian Fund’.⁷² Though such a grant might have helped those engaged in fishing and the islanders, it would do little to arrest the future politicisation of the tenants on whom the Land League agitation in 1880 and 1881 was primarily focused. In July, a further £20 was voted by the fund to the Skull committee by the Duchess of Marlborough’s Fund.⁷³

Despite the apparent cross-community action in the Schull union in early 1880, by the autumn of 1880, Richard Hodnett put forward the failure of the government to award the amounts requested through the Local Government Board and at the Extraordinary Baronial Presentment Sessions as a reason why the people should have no faith in either the local landlords or the government.⁷⁴

Richard Hodnett

At the *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission, the then Sergeant Lang stated that Ballydehob was ‘the political centre of the West’.⁷⁵ Lang noted that Hodnett was popular amongst ‘his followers’ but was not called on to not elaborate what he meant by either statement.⁷⁶ He noted that Hodnett had been a Poor Law Guardian for some forty years and was a man of about sixty who had a small shop and was an agent for some properties.⁷⁷ Hodnett, by his own account, had been on the Board of Guardians of the Skull Poor Law Union for eighteen years in 1881, i.e. from 1859 or 1860.⁷⁸ The membership book of the Ballydehob Land League, which was seized by the police at the house of Henry O’Mahony in January 1883, does indicate that Hodnett was the

⁷² Ibid., 23 Apr. 1880.

⁷³ Ibid., 24 July 1880.

⁷⁴ *WCE*, 20 Nov. 1880

⁷⁵ *The Times*, 6 Dec. 1888.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *WCE*, 15 Jan. 1881.

agent for four properties belonging to Robert Swanton. Cornelius Driscoll, Michael Hurley, Cornelius Mahony and Patrick McCarthy. These were small holdings with the highest rental paid by O'Mahony of £15 12s. on land with a Griffiths Valuation of £10 11s. It is notable that Hurley was renting his land at slightly under the valuation paying £7 3s. for land valued at £7 15s. Given the later targeting of the Swanton's in speeches at Land League meetings in Ballydehob and also through the gun attacks by unknown assailants it may seem strange that Hodnett was an agent for Swanton land. However, it is possible the Robert Swanton who he was an agent for was not Robert Swanton, Ballybawn, Ballydehob, but another Robert Swanton who lived at Brade, Co. Cork.⁷⁹ In 1860 Hodnett was admitted to the Ossianic Society on the same day as a Thomas Swanton of Ballydehob.⁸⁰ (See Chapter Four) Grassroots leaders like Hodnett, who received national and international press during the Land War were soon forgotten nationally when the troubled period was over.⁸¹ However, Hodnett's role in the Land War is preserved in a local song that was sung by a pensioner, Will Mahony, at a senior citizens Christmas party held in Ballydehob in 1991:

T'was for public 'spaking'
And Landlord racking
That they brought Dick Hodnett
To Galway jail
There's loud lamentation
Throughout the nation
From the Giant's causeway

⁷⁹ Entry for Swanton, Landed Estates Database, N.U.I., Galway.

(<http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/estate-show.jsp?id=2379>) [retrieved 30 Aug. 2013].

⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, 9 Aug. 1860.

⁸¹ Frank Rynne, 'Redressing Historical Imbalance: the Role of Grassroots leaders Richard Hodnett and Henry O'Mahony in the Land League Revolution in West Cork, 1879-82', Brain Casey (ed), *Defying the Law of the Land: Agrarian Radicals in Irish History* (Dublin, 2013), *passim*.

To Cape Clear.⁸²

The works that had been granted funding in early 1880 were incomplete and seemingly idle by August 1880, allowing Richard Hodnett to propose a resolution at a meeting of the Skull Board of Guardians: 'That the Board call on the Local Government Board to induce the Lord Lieutenant to convene an extraordinary road sessions at Ballydehob, to complete the roads (relief works) left unfinished after the roads sessions of January last'.⁸³ Implicit in Hodnett raising such issues was the failure of landlords to do enough to relieve the poor in Ballydehob. The mood of the landlords was also strained by the autumn of 1880. In a late August meeting of the Schull Union at which Hodnett criticised the Board for not holding any special meetings since February and raised once again the spectre of the Great Famine. Richard Notter retorted 'there was a famine then, not a mockery of one as there is now'.⁸⁴ Notter went on to complain about people 'swarming all over the country with beggary'.⁸⁵ In August 1880, Hodnett was in fact about to raise the stakes considerably, beyond haranguing his fellow Poor law Guardians for the benefit of the readers of the *West Cork Eagle*. Within a month he would found the first branch of the Land League in West Cork.

It is clear that, in a very short period of time, the landlords and the Board of the Skull Union had commenced and concluded surveys and submitted applications to the Local Government Board. While this could be cited as proof that they were actively engaged in relief efforts as well as being concerned about the situation of the poor of their district, it was also possible to attribute their speedy actions to self interest for, as Richard Notter pointed out, the resident landlords feared that the support of the poor of

⁸² *Southern Star*, 14 Dec. 1891.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 21 Aug. 1880.

⁸⁴ *WCE*, 4 Sept. 1880.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

the union would fall on them through private subscriptions. It may also be that their public actions were in part a response to the pressure applied by Richard Hodnett, as reported in the *West Cork Eagle*. However, as desperate as the need may have been, it is clear that financial assistance from both charitable and government was inadequate and slow in coming. Despite the fear of many P.L.G.s that the rate payers could not afford to pay their rates and that the burden of relief would fall upon a small group of locally resident landlords, it is clear that efforts were made. Loans were requested for relief works. Capt. Somerville had written to 500 people in England seeking money, Isaac Notter had gone to Dublin to seek help from The Duchess of Marlborough's Fund, and Captain Somerville had formed a local committee of the fund. Yet, as another winter approached, the founder of the local Land League was continually raising their previous failed efforts and the legacy of unfinished and underfunded relief works.

Parnell's return from America in March 1880

On his return from America prior to the general election of 1880, when he ran for Cork city and three other constituencies, Parnell arrived in Queenstown harbour. Delegations made their way out to the White Star Line *Baltic* in tenders. At noon Parnell met delegations from the Land League, including Biggar, Davitt and Patrick Egan, and the Home Rule League, led by W.H O'Sullivan. Parnell delayed hearing addresses on board the ship as he wished to allow the delegation from the Cork Farmers' Club to be present. This delegation included Edward Farrell, who would later become president of the Cork Land League. Farrell was also part of the delegation of Queenstown inhabitants. Around noon, following a procession led by two bands and a green flag, the various delegations gathered in the ballroom of Queen's Hotel. Farrell said that Parnell was perhaps '[...] the best hated man in Ireland, hated by a certain

section but beloved by the Irish people'.⁸⁶ At 2 pm Parnell arrived by train at Cork and an address was presented by the 'Nationalists of Cork'.⁸⁷ Parnell thanked the Nationalists for their address and their decision to have a non-intervention policy in the election campaign, which had commenced. He informed them that in America 'both young and old were determined to uphold the cause which the Nationalists held, and were anxious to uphold in this country the right of Ireland to take her place amongst the nations of the earth.'⁸⁸ The cause of the Nationalists was the armed overthrow of what they termed English rule in Ireland. He would play the Fenian card later that evening when the Cork Farmers' Club hosted a banquet at the Victoria Hotel. In his speech, Parnell detailed his visit to America, noting that Toronto was the most Orange city in Canada and that O'Donovan Rossa had to run for his life there, to which a voice replied 'Cheers for O'Donovan Rossa'.⁸⁹ Parnell went on to say that one million dollars had been raised in the USA alone, which was only 'a drop to the sums that are ready to come if necessary'.⁹⁰ Parnell's public welcome by the Nationalists of Cork and his public comments regarding both their cause and one of their founders may have had some bearing on scenes that were reported two weeks later. On 30 March Parnell was nominated to stand for Parliament for the City of Cork.⁹¹ Despite clerical opposition to Parnell, led by the Bishop of Cork, Dr. Delaney, John Daly and Parnell were elected for the city on 5 April.⁹² Parnell's party considered running Andrew J. Kettle and Edward Farrell for the county, but selected just Kettle in order to oust Col. Colthurst.⁹³ John R. Heffernan and Farrell were both active on the day nominations were submitted at Cork

⁸⁶ *Weekly Irish Times*, 27 Mar. 1880.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Irish Times*, 1 Apr. 1880.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Freeman's Journal*, 6 Apr. 1880.

Grand Jury Rooms, where Parnell himself spent the day along with Kettle.⁹⁴ Again, there was clerical opposition to Kettle, a Parnellite and Land Leaguer.⁹⁵ Matters came to an undignified head just days later at a meeting of the Cork Farmers' Club held at the Corn Exchange for the purposes of endorsing the sitting MPs, William Shaw and Col. Colthurst, as candidates for Cork County. Seán Lucey in his study in this period for Co. Kerry noted that no Parnellite candidate was put forward for that county in the 1880 general election.⁹⁶ It is clear that the elections of 1880 pitted not just 'home rulers and anti-home rulers' against each other but, also, within the Home Rule Party a division existed between Whig Home Rulers and the Parnellites.⁹⁷ In 1879, Shaw had replaced Issac Butt as leader of the Home Rule Party and did not support the parliamentary obstructionism or land agitation espoused by the Parnellites.⁹⁸ Given such tensions, Cork was an essential battleground for the new departure's political wing. In support of their efforts locals using physical force were on hand. Parnell's secretary, Tim Healy, and John R. Heffernan had the doors barred to them but, with the assistance of 'his friends', Heffernan forced it open and they invaded the meeting.⁹⁹ The room, which had been closed to just twenty members of the Cork Farmers' Club, was quickly filled with 'farmers and roughs'.¹⁰⁰ Heffernan asserted that it should be open to the public, like previous such meetings.¹⁰¹ Mr Riordan, who had only two weeks earlier chaired the banquet for Parnell, left the chair, and it was taken by Edward Farrell, who attacked Col. Colthurst, asking him to stand aside in favour of Andrew Kettle.¹⁰² Riordan, who was roughly treated, hit Heffernan with a stick and had to be rescued from the mob by

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ *Irish Times*, 7 Apr. 1880.

⁹⁶ Lucey, *Land Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, p. 52.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 9 Apr. 1880.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *Irish Times*, 9 Apr. 1880.

Col. Colthurst. When Colthurst tried to respond, he was shouted down until James Lysaght Finegan, who had been in the French Foreign Legion during the Franco-Prussian War 1870-1, came forward saying, 'As an Irish soldier I would ask you to give a hearing to an English soldier'.¹⁰³ This was greeted by a loud commotion. Colthurst said he would retire from representing Cork if a meeting of the priests and the people decided to have a tenant farmer as a candidate.¹⁰⁴ Several voices called 'NO priests in politics, let the priests go with the people.'¹⁰⁵ Kettle declared that he had been asked to stand for many places and stood aside when a local man came forward, that he had written to Riordan, Farrell and Byrne to ask them to go forward and the three having declined, he stated that, 'for the rescue of Cork', he would have to go forward himself.¹⁰⁶ However, he said a month after being elected he would retire in favour of Farrell. A resolution was passed adopting Kettle and Shaw as candidates after which Tim Healy, Finegan and others made speeches. This meeting, with its scenes of disorder and violence involving two later leaders of the Cork Land League, John Heffernan and Edward Farrell, is notable for it indicates the pair were on the ascendant politically in Cork. Heffernan was quite willing to use violence to force what was obviously a preordained plan to oust Riordan from the chair and allow Farrell to manipulate the meeting and get the Cork Farmers' Club's endorsement for Kettle. On election day, anti-Colthurst posters declared: 'No flogger for us'; Parnell had previously criticised Colthurst for supporting the government rather than the 'active Irish party' at Westminster, where he voted for a continuation of flogging of 'Irish soldiers' in the army.¹⁰⁷ Highlighting Colthurst's role as an ex-army officer who favoured flogging through a poster campaign was bound was no doubt an initiative of the local I.R.B.

¹⁰³ John Denvir, *The Life Story of an Old Rebel* (Dublin, 1910), p.160; *Irish Times*. 9 Apr. 1880.

¹⁰⁴ *Irish Times*, 9 Apr. 1880.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 Apr. 1880; *Freeman's Journal*, 6 Apr. 1880.

rather than Parnell or Kettle. However, the incumbents Shaw and Colthurst retained their seats: Kettle lost second place to Colthurst by a narrow margin of only 154 votes, while Shaw headed the poll with 5,354 votes.¹⁰⁸ It is notable that, despite clerical opposition, Parnell was elected in the city of Cork, while in the county, the Parnellites failed to beat Colthurst in a contest between Whig and Parnellite Home Rulers. However, Farrell and Heffernan were soon to extend their influence and the Parnell/Fenian axis beyond their bases in Queenstown and Cork city by promoting the establishment of Land League.

The Land League arrives in West Cork

In the late summer and autumn of 1880, the national policy of the Land League was one of expansion, seeking to strengthen the organisation and develop 'its techniques of resistance'.¹⁰⁹ In furtherance of this policy, Land League branches were established in parts of the country that had previously had none. The expansionist policy of the Irish National Land League was partly a reaction to the failure of the government to pass a bill that would have deterred landlords from evicting tenants, as they would have been compelled to compensate those tenants in the most distressed parts of the country. On 18 June, the government, with some foresight and in the face of a proposed bill by John O'Connor Power, had sought to place a two-year moratorium on landlords exercising their legal right to seek the eviction of tenants for non-payment of rents.¹¹⁰ This, it was thought, would give them time to establish a committee to examine the workings of the 1870 Land Act and address the landlord and tenant legislation with a new Land Act.¹¹¹ The Compensation for Disturbance (Ireland) Bill would have allowed

¹⁰⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Apr. 1880. Note: Colthurst polled 3,584 to Kettle's 3,430.

¹⁰⁹ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 417.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 393-394; *A bill to make temporary provision with respect to compensation for disturbance in certain cases of ejectment for non-payment of rent in parts of Ireland*. H.C. 1880 (232), 427 (18 June 1880).

¹¹¹ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 393.

for a court to compel landlords to compensate tenants who were evicted in cases where the landlord had refused to reach terms or offer a reasonable alternative to a tenant whose non-payment of rent was due to distress, and who was willing to remain in possession and reach ‘reasonable terms as to rent, arrears and otherwise’.¹¹² The Skull and Skibbereen poor law unions were among thirteen unions in Co. Cork that were to benefit from the provisions of the bill.¹¹³ The bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on 26 July.¹¹⁴ However, to the uncontained glee of the *Irish Times* editorial writer, who noted that Lord Somerset called it a bill ‘for the eviction of landlords’, the bill was overwhelmingly defeated in the House of Lords sitting on 3 August.¹¹⁵ Some measure of the interest taken by the aristocracy in the bill may be adduced from the fact for that the final debate in the House of Lords three quarters of the seats were taken by ladies, including the later queen consort, Princess Mary of Teck, and ‘duchesses, marchionesses and countesses literally by the dozen’.¹¹⁶ It was reported that ‘ripples of light sparkled [...] from the wealth of diamonds with which they were adorned’.¹¹⁷ The *Irish Times*’ regular column ‘Our London Letter’, featuring social and political tit-bits, may not have been widely read by the tenants of Ballydehob. However, the newspaper reports of the defeat of a bill that would have helped stave off evictions in their union as a diamond-encrusted social occasion provided a stark contrast to their local paper’s reports of distress in the union, as detailed above.¹¹⁸ Though this defeat may appear to have been one not only for Gladstone but also for Parnell, O’Connor

¹¹² *A bill [as amended in committee] to make temporary provision with respect to compensation for disturbance in certain cases of ejectment for nonpayment of rent in parts of Ireland*, H.C. 1880 (271), 432.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

¹¹⁴ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 397; *Irish Times*, 27 July 1880.

¹¹⁵ *Irish Times*, 4 Aug. 1880; Moody, *Davitt*, p. 398, citing Hansard Third series, vol. cclv, cols 110-13; the defeat of the bill came in the early hours of 4 Aug. with the Lords sitting until 1.35 am. 51 Lords favoured a second reading (Contents) and 281 were against a second reading (Non-Contents 282) *The Times*, 4 Aug. 1880.

¹¹⁶ ‘Our London Letter’, *Irish Times*, 5 Aug. 1880.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Irish Times*, 5 Aug. 1880; *WCE*, 24 Jan. 1880.

Power and the parliamentary Land Leaguers, it was exactly what Davitt had hoped for.¹¹⁹ Davitt, in the USA at the time, rejoiced at the defeat of the bill, as he felt that another autumn, winter and spring would further attack the landlord system and, by implication, Ireland's connection to Britain.¹²⁰ Agitation for agitation's sake suited the advanced Nationalists, whereas any cooling of tensions in Ireland would offer respite for Gladstone and his government as they scrabbled to formulate new legislation to regulate landlord and tenant relations in Ireland. As will be seen below, during the summer and autumn of 1880, the Chief Secretary of Ireland and the Lord Lieutenant were wholly cognisant of the approaching danger that a further winter of agitation would bring. Whereas evictions were not widespread, they were destabilising as they carried with them an emotivity that could be tapped into and exploited by separatist Nationalists.

Following the defeat of the Compensation for Disturbance (Ireland) Bill, the Land League began to establish branches in remote rural areas of the country such as Killorglin, Co. Kerry on 11th August.¹²¹ On 22 August large public meetings for the establishment of Land League branches were held in small remote villages such as Ballingarry, Co. Tipperary, Seesiagh, Co. Donegal, where 10,000 people attended including 700 men marching under the commands of leaders, both Belclare and Killtullagh, Co. Galway and Fenagh, Co. Leitrim.¹²² On Sunday 29 August among the meetings held in remote parts were ones at Grangemockler, Co. Tipperary, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim and the first Land League branch was established in West Cork at Clonakilty.¹²³ The foundation of a local branch was marked by the holding of

¹¹⁹ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 397.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Irish Times*, 12 Aug. 1880.

¹²² *Weekly Irish Times*, 28 Aug. 1880. Note the newspaper misspelled Fenagh as 'Finagh'.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 4 Sept. 1880; Jeremiah Stringer, 'Clonakilty Co. Cork, Sunday, 29 Aug. 1880', N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

inaugural public meetings which provided county and national leaders the opportunity to address tenants, labourers and interested citizens in the remotest parts of the country. These meetings also afforded the opportunity for local leaders to rub shoulders publicly with national leaders, who in many cases were political celebrities. It is hard to calculate the effect that this had on the populace of remote localities, but attendance at many meetings was huge and the political theatre afforded a fair day-like atmosphere that, as will be seen below, was in many areas marked by profoundly separatist and advanced Nationalist displays and speeches. Furthermore, meetings in even the remotest parts of the country were often reported not only in the national press but also the international press. The effect of the strategy was to create local leaders who appeared to have, and indeed had, direct access and connections to some of the most famous and powerful nationalist leaders of the time. Against this formidable political theatre operating in the open, in public and in the micro geographical spaces of the remotest townlands, the government and the landlords had little by way of pageantry and political cache to present an alternative to The Land League as winter 1880 approached. The County Cork Land League began assenting to requests for the establishment of local branches in West Cork in August 1880. It is notable that this was a full two months before the Land League arrived in neighbouring Co. Kerry where the first meeting was held in August 1880 but did not result in the establishment of any branches.¹²⁴ Though a few weeks may seem to not be a great deal of time, as has been noted at the 1880 general elections, and also an *ad hoc* Land League had been established in Cork for the purposes of organising for the election and remained in existence. Therefore it is possible to conclude that Co. Cork had a more sophisticated I.R.B. organisation which could call on greater support that existed in Co. Kerry.

¹²⁴ Lucey, *Land Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland*, pp 59-60, p.66.

It is not clear if the County Cork committee of the Land League made an active decision to establish branches in the remote western regions of the county or whether the establishment of Land League branches arose from purely local initiatives. In September and October 1880, the Land League established itself in West Cork with a series of mass meetings and the formation of local branches. One explanation for the rapid expansion of the Land League in West Cork in the autumn of 1880 is that it was due to local I.R.B. activities. Earlier in 1880, James J. O’Kelly informed John Devoy that the ‘famine districts of the West of Ireland offer the best field just now for our activity’.¹²⁵ Publicly, it appeared as though the establishment of the Ballydehob Land League branch was a local initiative on the part of Richard Hodnett. Though not in Connaught, Ballydehob and Skull were in the hunger belt of Poor Law Unions, one of the areas which, as has been seen above, the government proposed should fall under the provisions of the failed Compensation for Disturbances Bill. Hodnett informed a meeting of the Cork Land League on 28 August 1880 that if they gave him permission to establish a branch of the league in Ballydehob, the Land League would soon be established throughout that part of the county. He informed the meeting that he had expected a branch to be formed in Skibbereen but that ‘there was some underhand influence at work there that prevented them’.¹²⁶ The most likely source of the underhand influence referred to by Hodnett was anti-Land League elements of the I.R.B.. As there are no minutes of local I.R.B. meetings extant, there is no direct record of the brotherhood’s involvement in establishing League branches in West Cork. There is an inherent difficulty in proving Fenian or Irish Republican Brotherhood activism when members were true to the oath of secrecy that membership demanded or if, as was suggested at the time, the I.R.B. used another organisation, the Land League, as a

¹²⁵ James J. Kelly (‘Blake’) to John Devoy, 11 Feb. 1880, *Devoy’s Post Bag, 1871-1928* (2 Vols, Dublin 1848 and 1954), ed. William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan, i, p. 488.

¹²⁶ *WCE*, 4 Sept. 1880.

repository for their own records.¹²⁷ In December 1880, Supt. John Mallon from the Dublin Metropolitan Police 'G' Division reported that the I.R.B. and Clan-na-Gael were using the Land League as a means of recruiting new members and as a repository for their own records. Mallon noted that written records 'were the greatest source of danger for a secret society' and could be 'kept as Land League papers with some degree of safety'.¹²⁸ Mallon also reported that John Devoy had ordered the Fenian centres or captains to join the League 'because nothing could induce the farming classes to join a patriotic movement'.¹²⁹ Though Devoy did not have the authority to order I.R.B. men in Ireland to join the Land League, he certainly had a great deal of influence over segments of the I.R.B.. There is evidence, that in the 1870s, Clan-na-Gael encouraged members to return to Ireland to help revive the I.R.B.. Though these activities may have been in tandem with the Supreme Council of the I.R.B., such activists would have been selected as promoters of the new departure at a local level.

The highest organisational level of the Land League in Cork was the county branch and its committee. This committee was led by I.R.B. men or supporters. The county chairman, Edward Farrell, and one committee member, Frank Harris, held meetings in October 1880 with I.R.B. Supreme Council member, Charles Guilfoyle Doran, and James Redpath, an American Fenian supporter and journalist who police reported made 'violent' speeches against the government.¹³⁰ As we have seen above, Farrell was also active in the Parnell and Andrew Kettle election campaigns in Cork city and County, respectively, as well as being a leading figure in the Cork Farmers' Club.

¹²⁷ Report of Supt. John Mallon, 'G' Division, Dublin Metropolitan Police, 2 Dec. 1880, N.A.I., Irish National League papers, box 9. This report details information received from a Mr. Bernard on the state of Fenianism in Ireland.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ RIC Head Constable Michael Fogerty to Inspector General Hillier 15 Nov. 1880, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21817. Fogerty mistakenly stated: 'Edmond' rather than 'Edward' but noted he was from the Cork Land League.

One of its most ambitious members was John O'Connor, who by 1879 assumed leadership of the I.R.B. in Cork City, was secretary of the County Cork I.R.B. and would soon be secretary of the Cork Land League Branch, as well as being described as the right-hand man of supreme council member, P.N. (Patrick Neville) FitzGerald.¹³¹ O'Connor had previously met John Devoy, who later noted that O'Connor, J.C. Flynn and P.J. Sheridan were among the I.R.B. men who had initially denounced the new departure but who later became prominent in the Land League.¹³² Historians have claimed that O'Connor was no longer in the I.R.B. when he became active in the Land League.¹³³ However, that is improbable. The claim that he was no longer an I.R.B. man is largely based on O'Connor's own evidence in 1889 before *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission, when he was a sitting MP. When asked if he were still in the I.R.B. when he was a Land Leaguer, O'Connor stated he had 'dropped out of the body' but that he had recruited active I.R.B. men into the Land League.¹³⁴ However, on 24 September 1881, O'Connor's correspondence, which had been smuggled out of prison, formed part of an I.R.B. internal report to Devoy by a fellow Cork I.R.B. man, T.H. Ronayne.¹³⁵ The report, brought to Ronayne by 'balloon post', informed Devoy that:

You met with him one time as Mr Whalen. The letter was smuggled out of prison, and is an interesting and judicious history of the LL [Land League] movement. I

¹³¹ Georgina Clinton, Owen McGee. 'O'Connor, John' *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, McGuire and Quinn, (eds), (Cambridge, 2009), (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6598>); District Inspectors Office, Cork, 'List of names of those who come under the provisions of the Protection Act', N.A.I., I.N.L., box 9; McGee, *The IRB*, p. 77.

¹³² John O'Connor, 9 July 1889, *Special Commission Act 1888, Report of the Proceedings before the Commissioners appointed by the Act* (4 vols, London, 1890), iii, pp 664-5; T.H. Ronayne to John Devoy, 24 Sept. 1881, in *D.P.B.*, ii, p. 101; John Devoy, *Michael Davitt from the Gaelic American*, (eds) Carla King, & W.J. McCormack (Dublin, 2008), p. 69. For discussion and the history of the Fenian new departures see T.W. Moody, 'The new departure in Irish politics, 1878-9' in H.A. Croone, T.W. Moody, and D.B. Quinn (eds), *Essays in British and Irish History* (London, 1949) and Moody, *Davitt*, 1st new departure 122-6, pp 133-4, 2nd, pp 250-58, pp. 261-6, 3rd, pp. 325-6, pp. 336-7.

¹³³ Georgina Clinton, Owen McGee. 'O'Connor, John' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *D.I.B.*, (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6598>).

¹³⁴ John O'Connor, *Special Commission Act 1888*, iii, p. 665.

¹³⁵ T.H. Ronayne to John Devoy, 24 Sept. 1881, *D.P.B.*, ii, p. 101.

presume that Davitt, Sheehy and he will be retained until the last moment. But such sacrifices must be made.¹³⁶

The fact that O'Connor, Sheehy and Davitt are referred to as sacrifices—presumably for the I.R.B.—is significant. It is noteworthy that Davitt was an I.R.B. man and the Sheehy referred to is Father Sheehy of Kilmallock, who was regarded as a Fenian by Clifford Lloyd, the Resident Magistrate, amongst others.¹³⁷ This would indicate that he was still involved in the I.R.B. in 1881. O'Connor's speeches in 1881 also indicate that he was still active in the I.R.B.. In early 1881, the authorities regarded him as one of the 'principal Nationalists of Cork'.¹³⁸ In 1889, John O'Connor told *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission that the word 'nationalist' in the early 1880s meant 'men of Fenian opinions and proclivities'.¹³⁹ In light of the continued connection to Devoy and the fact that O'Connor was I.R.B. supreme council member P.N. FitzGerald's right hand man, it is implausible that O'Connor was no longer active in the I.R.B. in 1880 and 1881.¹⁴⁰ It may be concluded that his evidence to the Special Commission was perjury.¹⁴¹ However, for O'Connor, who had joined the I.R.B. in the 1860s, his I.R.B. oath of allegiance taken to the Irish Republic would have superseded any oath made to a British court. Another committee member was John Heffernan, from Blarney, who was reported to be a 'land agitator' who made 'advanced' violent speeches against the government.¹⁴² The term 'advanced' referred to 'advanced Nationalist' or nationalism that was synonymous with Fenianism and with Fenians who

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ C. D. Clifford Lloyd RM to Lord Lieutenant, 9 June 1881 N.A.I., CSORP/1881/19293.

¹³⁸ District Inspectors Office, Cork, 'List of names of those who come under the provisions of the Protection Act' 22 Feb. 1881, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 9.

¹³⁹ John O'Connor, 9 July 1889, *Special Commission Act*, iii, p. 666.

¹⁴⁰ District Inspectors Office, Cork, 'List of names of those who come under the provisions of the Protection Act', N.A.I., I.N.L., box 9; McGee, *The IRB*, p. 77.

¹⁴¹ John O'Connor, *Special Commission Act 1888*, p. 665.

¹⁴² N.A.I., P.P.P. Act (1881), box 1.

were 'sympathetic to Parnell'.¹⁴³ As we have seen above, Heffernan was also capable of leading heavy mobs in violent confrontations at public meetings.

Before Richard Hodnett approached the committee of the Cork Land League in order to seek permission to establish a branch of the League at Ballydehob, he went to London, where he met Parnell. Though Hodnett told the meeting of the Cork Land League that he happened to be in London recently and met Mr Parnell, to whom he mentioned the necessity of establishing a branch in the west division of West Carbery,¹⁴⁴ Hodnett was not a man of means. Police described him as being a small shopkeeper and the agent to several small properties.¹⁴⁵ In light of this, it seems rather odd that one moment he should be agitating and advocating for the poor of his district at meetings of the Board of Guardians in Schull and at Presentment Sessions in the 'miserable structure called Ballydehob Courthouse' in remote West Cork, and the next holding discussions with Parnell at Westminster.¹⁴⁶ It is most likely that Hodnett went to London with Patrick O'Hea, a Skibbereen solicitor and later MP who also took a leading role in the Land League in West Cork. O'Hea said in his speech at the inaugural meeting of the Land League in Ballydehob, on 12 September, that: 'I was present in the House of Commons little more than a fortnight ago'.¹⁴⁷ O'Hea stated that he had been present:

[...] when a debate was made consequent on the speech of Mr. Dillon, the Member for Tipperary, for saying that he would like to see six hundred thousand farmers of Ireland, every one of them banded together, forming a cemented, solid body,

¹⁴³ Frank Callanan, "In the names of God and dead generations": Nationalism and Republicanism in Ireland' in Richard English and Joseph Morrison Skelly (eds), *Ideas Matter, Essays in honour of Conor Cruise O'Brien* (Dublin, 1998), pp 110-114; John O'Connor, *Special Commission Act 1888*, iii, p. 666.

¹⁴⁴ *WCE*, 4 Sept. 1880.

¹⁴⁵ Lang, *Special Commission Act*, i, p. 526; *WCE*, 4 Sept. 1880.

¹⁴⁶ *WCE*, 21 Feb. 1881

¹⁴⁷ Report of a land meeting at Ballydehob 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 4.

having power and might amongst them, and more than that he would be still more delighted to see everyone of them in possession of a rifle.¹⁴⁸

At the same meeting, Hodnett mentioned hearing the Chief Secretary of Ireland speaking and referring to the House of Lords rejecting a bill which tried to amend the land laws of Ireland and saying that Irish land laws were unjust.¹⁴⁹ The debate on Dillon's speech took place on 23 August and on the same evening Chief Secretary of Ireland Forster made reference to the Compensation against Disturbance Bill being rejected by the House of Lords and that it was framed to 'prevent unjust and unreasonable evictions'.¹⁵⁰ Though Hodnett did not accurately quote Forster, misconstrued his sentiments or failed to give the correct context to his statements, it is clear that both he and O'Hea were present in the House of Commons on the same evening. One of the most intriguing and important aspects of their presence in the House that evening was that Dillon's controversial speech was the subject of a lengthy debate. This debate may provide a potential explanation for Hodnett and O'Hea's visit to London at that time.

On 15 August in Kildare, John Dillon had made a speech in which he was reported as saying:

Let them get two active young men who were not afraid of anyone. Let these young men go to every farmer in the townland and see if he would join the League, and if any did not join when he got into difficulty they would leave him in his difficulty. If there was an attempt made to evict a man who had joined, the members would have a meeting called to denounce the landlord who should attempt to put him out, and the Land League would take care of him and see he did not starve. Thus it would be the duty of those organizers to tell how many men they would be marching to a meeting, and they would march like a regiment of soldiers. (Cheers) There was more effect in 200 men marching to a meeting than a

¹⁴⁸ Constable, Jeremiah Stringer, Ballydehob, 12 Sept., 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4. This is a printed police report of the speeches made on the day, prefaced with a brief description of the meeting.

¹⁴⁹ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

¹⁵⁰ Hansard, H.C., deb., 3s. cclv, col. 1874-1879 (23 Aug. 1880).

great deal of speaking. Such actions, if carried through the country, would make the landlords a great deal better. (Cheers), and the people had not been sufficiently made aware of its objects, but he would tell them what the League would do if the landlords refused them justice. After another six months or a year, when they had enrolled in Ireland, as he hoped they would before long, 300,000 members of the League, and if the Landlords persisted in refusing justice and in moderating their claims they would give out the word to the people of Ireland to strike against rent entirely (loud cheers) and to pay no more until justice was done to them. With 300,000 Irishmen enrolled in the National Land League, all the armies of England would not levy rent in that country.¹⁵¹

Though it was not explicit as to what kind of men would be termed ‘active young men’, it must be assumed in light of his references to marching and the idea that these organized men would be able to face down ‘all the armies of England’, that Dillon was making an overt call on the community to rally behind active I.R.B. men and engage in what the Fenian movement was famed for since the 1860s: drilling and learning military arts.¹⁵² The fact that Dillon felt that 200 men marching would have more effect than people making speeches is a clear statement that eschews debate or indeed a democratic process in favour of a militant and indeed militarised movement. The section of Dillon’s speech above was read into the record of the House of Commons by the Conservative MP Sir Walter B. Barttelot, Member for Sussex Western, who asked the Chief Secretary of Ireland what measures he would take ‘with regard to language which amounts to direct incitement to violence and organised rebellion’.¹⁵³ Forster replied that the Hon. member for Tipperary was taking advantage of the laws which protected freedom of speech and he thought that the member for Tipperary would be delighted by ‘a prosecution, in which, by taking advantage of our freedom of speech, the Government

¹⁵¹ Sir W Barttelot quoting a newspaper report in the House of Commons, 17 Aug. 1880, *Irish Times*, 18 Aug. 1880.

¹⁵² *Irish Times*, 18 Aug. 1880; *Freeman’s Journal*, 16 Aug. 1880; ‘But the most typical outdoor manifestation of Fenian camaraderie was drill and marching’ see R.V. Comerford, ‘Patriotism as a Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the Mid-1860s’, *Irish Historical Studies*, xxii, no.87 (Mar. 1981), p. 245; Evidence of Patrick Delaney, *Special Commission Act*, iii, p. 702. Asked: ‘What work was done by the Fenian organisation in 1878 and 1879?’ Delaney replied ‘Buying arms and drilling principally.’

¹⁵³ *Irish Times*, 18 Aug. 1880.

would fail, and I do not intend to give him the opportunity of bringing about that result.¹⁵⁴ Forster did say the Government was watching such speeches carefully, as was its duty. In reference to Dillon's speech he said: 'Its wickedness can only be matched by its cowardice – (cheers) – the cowardice of tempting excitable men in a way likely to induce them to break the law by speeches which were ingeniously framed to secure the speakers from being prosecuted'.¹⁵⁵ T.P. O'Connor MP for Galway asked for a few days' delay in order for Dillon to be present to answer for himself.¹⁵⁶ Dillon's speech in Kildare was an important historical milestone; Moody noted that he sought to dramatically raise the membership of the Land League to 300,000 and that he called for a strike against rent.¹⁵⁷ In his *Fall of Feudalism*, first published in 1904, the I.R.B. man Davitt noted that Dillon both urged young men to come to League demonstrations 'in military style' and broadly hinted at a rent strike.¹⁵⁸ F.S.L. Lyons viewed Dillon's speech as 'easily the most inflammatory speech which any responsible Irish politician had yet delivered during the Land League agitation'.¹⁵⁹ Lyons noted that Dillon had only just taken his seat in the House of Commons, having just returned from a tour of America with Parnell and was determined to play 'a central role in the land war'.¹⁶⁰ On 10 August he had issued a warning in the House that there 'might be bloodshed and massacre to come'.¹⁶¹ Though Tim Healy's biographer, Frank Callanan, opined that Dillon was not an I.R.B. man, on the same day (10 August), Supt. Mallon of the 'G' Division of the DMP reported that according to 'Trustworthy persons who know him, he (Dillon) fully agrees with J. Devoy's principles and is really a cool fenian, trusted by

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Note: Not to be confused with T.P. O'Connor, of Ardinana, Co Tipperary, who Edward O'Toole said was an IRB organiser. See Chapter Four below.

¹⁵⁷ Moody, *Davitt*, pp 419-20.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism in Ireland or The Story of the Land League Revolution* (1904, reprinted 2003), p. 269.

¹⁵⁹ F.S.L. Lyons, *Charles Stuart Parnell* (London, 1977), p. 133.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Hansard, H.C., deb.3s. cclv, col 786 (10 Aug. 1880) cited in *ibid*.

the American branch'.¹⁶² Dillon's biographer, F.S.L. Lyons, suggested that, having read the speech made just days after his report, Mallon may have wondered if '“cool” was the *mot juste*'.¹⁶³ Lyons noted that '[...] no direct connection between Dillon and the I.R.B. had ever been established' but that he had received, both in 1880 and thereafter, 'the respect of John Devoy and other “extreme men”'.¹⁶⁴ Lyons noted that Dillon's provocative speech starkly contrasted with Parnell's efforts to manage a potentially volatile and emotive response of young people to the 'explosive situation' in Ireland while engaging in a 'tactical battle' in Parliament.¹⁶⁵ Whereas Dillon was determined to make a name for himself, the fact that he had Devoy's respect and had recently returned from the United States where he had spoken along with Parnell at numerous meetings organised by Clan-na-Gael may indicate that he was willing to do so by using I.R.B.-style militaristic rhetoric. What neither Sir W. Barttelot nor Forster mentioned in the House on 17 August was the far more inflammatory suggestion that 'everyman in Ireland had the right to have a rifle if he liked'.¹⁶⁶ The report in the *Freeman's Journal* on 16 August indicates that, from the very moment he was introduced by chairman James Leahy MP, Dillon crested a wave of revolutionary sentiment, when a voice called for 'Three cheers for the son of John Dillon of '48'.¹⁶⁷ Dillon's father, John Blake Dillon, who had founded *The Nation* along with Thomas Davis and Charles Gavan Duffy, was a leading participant in the Irish Confederation in 1847 and was with

¹⁶² Frank Callanan, 'John Dillon', in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *D.I.B.* (Cambridge, 2009). (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a2603>); Conor Cruise of Brien, *Parnell and his party 1880-90* (Oxford, 1957), p. 30 see footnote 1 citing Supt. John Mallon, 10 Aug. 1880, 'Report on Irish National Land League', S.P.O, Irish Crime Records, i.e. N.A.I., ICR, vol. 1-4. Note on source that is N.A.I. ICR, 1-4.

¹⁶³ F.S.L. Lyons, *John Dillon, A Biography* (London, 1968), p. 38.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁶⁵ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 133.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1880.

¹⁶⁷ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1880.

William Smith O'Brien in 1848.¹⁶⁸ John Dillon began his speech by saying nothing gave him greater pleasure than to see 'them assembled in such numbers, which must strike fear into the enemies of the people and into the man who would dream of throwing a Kildare man out of his farm'.¹⁶⁹ He warned that no one should put their trust in the 'English House of Commons' or the 'Royal Commission', which would be made up of Irish landlords who were 'enemies of the people'.¹⁷⁰ He attacked members of what became known as the Bessborough Commission—Kavanagh of Borris, The O'Connor Don, Lord Bessborough and Lord Dowse—as they had 'the money of the English government in their pockets' and whose 'business it was to give a verdict against the rights of the people'.¹⁷¹ The former pair had recently lost their parliamentary seats under the new electoral rules allowing for secret ballot and were appointed by Gladstone to the Royal Commission.¹⁷² While Dillon spoke of organising farmers in order to create an atmosphere and conditions where no one would take over an evicted farm, indeed that such farms should neither be touched nor used for 'human purposes', he continuously used militaristic and separatist terminology and rhetoric. He warned that '[...] until the Irish people were banded together in an organisation fitted to win the battle for themselves', they could expect no justice from 'an English Parliament'.¹⁷³ While saying that people should join the Land League and every farmer should have the opportunity to become the owner of his holding, he asserted that their representatives could prevent the government from passing laws that would see them imprisoned for

¹⁶⁸ Brendan Ó Cathaoir 'Dillon, John Blake', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *D.I.B.*, (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a2604>).

¹⁶⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1880.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Patrick M. Geoghegan, Sylvie Kleinman, 'Kavanagh, Arthur Macmorrough', in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *D.I.B.*, (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a4381>); Bridget Hourican, 'O'Connor, Charles Owen O'Connor Don', in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *D.I.B.*, (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6655>).

¹⁷³ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1880.

organising themselves. However, the organising that Dillon advocated when the passing of coercive laws was obstructed would 'set the people free to drill themselves and organise themselves'.¹⁷⁴ This was reminiscent of the 1850-60s' I.R.B., which had an obsession for drilling and military formation.¹⁷⁵ Not only was this language designed to appeal to I.R.B. men and their supporters, it was language designed to turn the farmers towards the physical force nationalists and was, only, barely cloaked in the advocacy of tenant right. There can be little doubt that, in his Kildare speech, Dillon was also appealing to I.R.B. organisers and leaders at the parish level to organise the Land League in their locality. Whatever doubts physical force separatists may have had about the Land League, he sought to dispel them with his final comments in relation to coercion, 'that the people could take it out of the power of the police to arrest any man out after 8 o'clock'.¹⁷⁶ He continued:

They had the right to march to their meetings and to obey the commands of their leaders, if they chose to do so. They would see that every man in Ireland had a right to have a rifle if they liked. (Cheers) All he could say was that if the manhood of Ireland was not enough when they had their rights to win their freedom and put down landlordism then he should be ashamed to call himself an Irishman. Let the people of Kildare show during the coming autumn that neither dukes nor marquises nor any other lord could terrorise or intimidate the manhood of their great country.¹⁷⁷

In this final part of his speech, Dillon conflated the coveted aim of every I.R.B. man who subscribed to the cause, owning a rifle, with national freedom and an end to landlordism. He also alludes to a Jacobean form of Republicanism that repudiated the aristocracy. It is impossible to determine whether Dillon's relationship with the I.R.B. and Clan-na-Gael involved more than oratorical rhetoric and support for the new

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Comerford, 'Patriotism as a Pastime', *IHS*, xxii, no.87 (Mar. 1981), p. 245.

¹⁷⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1880.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

departure. He was determined to make a name for himself as an up and coming man. However, few speeches during the Land War were as hard line as his. Those that were as radical were made by known I.R.B. leaders.

Within a few weeks, the same rhetoric would have public airing in West Cork, where the oligarchy would be denounced on posters and banners and from platforms. Both historians and participants like Davitt noted that Dillon's speech was important in different respects, in light of the fact that two of the leading figures who would form the Land League in West Cork were both aware of it and also attended the debate which it precipitated in the House of Commons. Dillon's speech was a barely cloaked appeal to the I.R.B. and may be seen as having inspired the course and character of the West Cork Land League, which had its genesis into being in the immediate aftermath.

It is impossible to know whether O'Hea and Hodnett had planned their trip to London in order to be present when Dillon defended himself the following week, but it is clear that the two men from the remote West of Ireland had a unique experience during their sojourn in London. Having provoked the Chief Secretary of Ireland into attacking him and accusing him of cowardice, Dillon's speech 'precipitated a general debate on 23 August which overflowed into the discussion of the Irish police estimates the following day' and 'led to the only piece of obstructionism practised by the new party since the parliament reassembled'.¹⁷⁸ On 23 August, Dillon, Parnell and Forster were present in the House of Commons and the matter, raised again in debate, afforded the Cork pair an opportunity to observe their soon-to-be nemesis, the Chief Secretary in person. To be able to speak of this in the churchyard in Ballydehob and at meetings of the Cork Land League would have afforded them credibility, a talking point, and, more importantly, given them an air of importance and power. There is no information as to

¹⁷⁸ Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell*, pp 133-4.

the pair's exact reason for journeying to London or how Hodnett financed his trip. However the barely cloaked appeal to I.R.B. activists in Dillon's Kildare speech must be taken into account. A speech by an elected MP which appeared to endorse I.R.B. activists engaging in Land League recruitment and establishing bodies of marching men who would soon defeat, not just the landlords, but also England's armies, may have been interpreted as the genesis of a broad-based revolutionary movement. If this was how I.R.B. cadre in West Cork interpreted the speech, then it is possible that Hodnett and O'Hea were dispatched to London at their behest. It is clear that, immediately on Hodnett's return to Cork, he attended the Cork Land League in order to seek permission to organise the Land League in West Cork, and he was introduced to the meeting by John O'Connor, secretary of the Cork I.R.B..¹⁷⁹

On the evening of 23 August in the Commons, Hodnett and O'Hea were treated to a discussion of the merits of the use of buckshot by the police, a practice which Forster said would not be discontinued.¹⁸⁰ Buckshot had recently been introduced to Ireland to replace bullets if police were forced to fire on riotous crowds. Later, Dillon rose to address the Chief Secretary but took the opportunity to thank Sir Walter B. Barttelot for raising the question regarding his Kildare speech, as it had more widely publicised his advice to farmers than he could have done himself:

I should not lose this opportunity of thanking the hon. and gallant Baronet (Sir Walter B. Barttelot), who asked the Right Hon. Gentleman this Question, inasmuch as he has saved me a considerable deal of labour in Ireland; for, by directing the attention of the farmers of Ireland so markedly to the advice I have given them, he has published that advice more widely than I could possibly have done. More than that, he has earned the thanks of the National Land League, and of myself personally.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ *WCE*, 4 Sept. 1880.

¹⁸⁰ Hansard, H.C., deb., 3s. cclv, col. 1847-1860 (23 Aug. 1880).

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, col. 1871 (23 Aug. 1880).

The Cork pair were treated to a lengthy debate in which Dillon stated that Forster's use of the term wicked, was an 'intensely English' interpretation.¹⁸² Parnell noted that Forster misinterpreted how Irish people would have interpreted Dillon's words, asserting that they would have responded with a smile rather than the way Englishmen reacted, as they took an entirely different view for 'Englishmen were unnaturally influenced by the general tone of their newspapers'.¹⁸³ The facetiousness of the latter statement is emphasised by Dillon's first statement thanking Sir Walter B. Barttelot for more widely publicising his address to the farmers of Ireland. Forster noted 'that the speech was so ingeniously framed as to secure the speaker from being prosecuted' and that Dillon had actually encouraged young men and young farmers 'to march organized and for the purpose of doing an illegal thing'.¹⁸⁴ On the duty of organisers to organise men to march 'like regiments of soldiers', Forster said 'Marching in that organized manner for the purpose of preventing the legal execution of the law is breaking the law, and it will be the duty of the Executive Government to prevent it'.¹⁸⁵ Forster also quoted Dillon's most provocative statements as to the choice of holding arms and that Irish parliamentarians could obstruct coercive legislation, responding:

We do not believe the hon. Member will force us into a Peace Preservation Act, or a Coercion Act. But suppose we realize what the hon. Member and those who second him have said about the autumn and the winter, and suppose we cannot keep law and order without coming to Parliament for further powers. The hon. Member is fearfully misleading the people of Ireland if he supposes that this House would not give those powers.¹⁸⁶

The one requirement placed on Hodnett by the Cork Land League was that if he had to get a requisition signed by 'six tenant farmers of his district they could form a

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.; Ibid., col. 1929 (23 Aug. 1880).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., col. 1874-5 (23 Aug. 1880).

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., col. 1877 (23 Aug. 1880).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., col. 1878 (23 Aug. 1880).

branch of the league there'.¹⁸⁷ Hodnett had impressed upon the committee that the district was a very important one, as it had 30,000 inhabitants and a valuation of £30,000. T. Cronin commented that the inhabitants had only £1 a head to live on, to which Heffernan replied that they only had one shilling as the landlords took 'the other 19 shillings'.¹⁸⁸ Constable Stringer described the speakers, Edward O'Farrell, chairman of the Cork Land League, and J. O'Brien, a Cork publican, as being 'Nationalist'.¹⁸⁹ The speeches urged tenants to join the Land League and to take over no land from which a tenant has been evicted, but they also condemned oppression and tyranny. J.S. Enright a farmer from Ballincollig said 'when they became educated, they combined as one man and wiped the petty tyrants off the face of the Earth'.¹⁹⁰ Mr. Murphy secretary of the Dunmanway Land League branch, concluded his speech with the words: 'Go on in your masses, dense, resolute, strong to war against treason, oppression and wrong'.¹⁹¹ The speakers' assertions, reminiscent of revolutionary France, combined an advocacy of tenant rights with the aspiration to liberty. The following day, the Land League held its inaugural meeting in neighbouring Clonakilty.¹⁹²

On Saturday 11 September, an advertisement appeared in the *West Cork Eagle* for a:

Monster Land League Meeting at Ballydehob, On Sunday Next, Sept., 12, 1880 At 2 o'Clock. Men of West Carbery assemble in your thousands, and show our Rulers that the present Land Laws are the cause of Famine and Emigration, And declare your determination to live and die in the homes you were born in. The following as Deputation from Dublin and Cork Land Leagues, will address you:- Messrs.

¹⁸⁷ *WCE*, 4 Sept. 1880. Note In fact the population was over 13,000.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Report of Land Meeting, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, Sunday 12 Aug. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell and others 1880-1881.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Cressida Annesley, 'Boycott of William Bence Jones', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, Vol. 99, 1994, p. 6.

Kettle, Farrell, Heffernan, O’Hea, Brennan, Byrne, O’Brien, and Fuller. Down with Landlordism. GOD SAVE IRELAND.¹⁹³

As has been noted in Chapter One above, the language used in this advertisement links famine and emigration with the land laws and also equates elected representatives with rulers as though parliamentary democracy was little different from feudal serfdom. The last phrases ‘Down with Landlordism’ sitting above ‘God Save Ireland’ evokes the Fenian or advanced Nationalist sentiment that characterized many Land League posters in areas where such sentiments were likely to appeal to a public already sympathetic to them.¹⁹⁴ Given the attendance at the meeting, it must be assumed that the advertisement in the *West Cork Eagle*, which appeared only the previous day, was not the main method of publicising the event. Hodnett had sent letters of invitation to notables, including the local Catholic clergy, but it can be assumed that word of mouth was the main method used to publicise the meeting.¹⁹⁵ In that case, the advertisement was more a declaration and a piece of propaganda aimed at landlords, conservatives and others than an attempt to attract an audience. In this respect, it follows the shock tactics advocated by Dillon. Were the ‘Men of West Carbery’ to ‘assemble in their thousands’ it was sure to have an intimidating effect on the landlords, who were being portrayed as enemies of the people and the purveyors of starvation and emigration. Attendance in the thousands would sorely test the paternal relationship which appeared to exist in cases such as that of the Goodwin family.¹⁹⁶ Such a rupture in the balance of relationships between landlord and tenant, between the authorities and the majority of the people, was essential for the furtherance of the cause of separatist nationalism as well as the cause of tenant right or peasant proprietorship. Therefore, an

¹⁹³ *WCE*, 11 Sept. 1880. See illustration one in appendix.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 Sept. 1880.

¹⁹⁶ *WCE*, 22 Mar. 1879 and discussion above Chapter One.

attendance of any number of thousands was a signal that the balance of power was shifting in Ballydehob.

The police report of the meeting and the *West Cork Eagle* recorded relatively similar numbers in attendance on 12 September: 2,500 and 3,000 respectively.¹⁹⁷ According to the police reporter, Constable Jeremiah Stringer, ‘The persons present at it were principally the inhabitants of the parishes of Ballydehob and Skull, with a few from Kilcoe and Skibbereen, and two or three from Dunmanway’.¹⁹⁸ He noted that, ‘About half the numbers present were tenant farmers, the other half being labourers from parishes about’.¹⁹⁹ There were no bands and no banners were displayed.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, there were no reports of green sashes or rosettes or any other overtly nationalist symbols. The assembled crowd was reported to be ‘respectable, well-clad and peaceable’.²⁰¹ Stringer noted the presence of ‘a great deal [...] of women’ and the *Eagle* concurred that ‘a goodly number were of the fairer sex’ in attendance.²⁰² As this was the first Land League meeting to be held in the district, it is notable that it was attended by a large proportion of people from the Skull Union, which had a population of 13,139 according to the 1871 census, though it was reported that large numbers arrived for the meeting from Skibbereen.²⁰³ The importance of the Ballydehob meeting was two-fold: it was the first in the district and was well attended; and both the reporting of the meeting in the local paper and the speeches delivered set the tone and aspirations of the nascent movement in West Cork.

¹⁹⁷ Constable, Jeremiah Stringer, Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

¹⁹⁸ Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁰² Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁰³ General abstract of the numbers of marriages, births, and deaths registered in Ireland during the year 1880. HC 1881 [C.2894], xciv, 736; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1881.

The Catholic Clergy and the first meeting at Ballydehob

It is of note that no members of the clergy attended the meeting, though it was held on church property. However, the parish priest of Ballydehob, the aforementioned Rev. John Murphy acquiesced to the meeting being held on church land. In a letter to Hodnett which was read out, he said that, while he exhorted the attendees to moderation, he wholeheartedly endorsed the cause of tenant rights. Fr Murphy said that nothing was more unjust than to deprive another man of the fruits of his own industry and labours and indeed that anyone who would do such a thing did not know the golden rule laid down in the Gospel 'do unto others as you would wish to be done unto (you).'²⁰⁴ He said that he desired a happy and prosperous country and 'to see the farmers secure in their holdings, possessing the land at a fair rent, and that no man whatsoever should have it in their power to deprive them of the property created by their own industry and the sweat of their brows'.²⁰⁵ The police report abbreviated Fr Murphy's letter, noting that he also said that 'the law which tolerated such injustice should be obliterated, and a fair just enactments substituted and until something of the kind be done neither peace nor happiness can exist in the country'.²⁰⁶ The *West Cork Eagle* used the word 'abolished' rather than the more violent 'obliterated' used by Const. Stringer. Fr Murphy warned that, without such change, 'man would be opposed to his fellow man, there will not be that bond of charity and union that should exist which ought to subsist between us; acts of violence which we all should regret will be committed from time to time and our miserable condition will be prolonged from day to day'.²⁰⁷ In this Fr Murphy appears to assume that acts of violence would be the natural course should the present conditions persist. The police report that is extant fails to note

²⁰⁴ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁰⁷ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

the warnings of impending and indeed inevitable violence that would follow should the law not be changed.

Based on other shorthand reports that exist, it is unlikely that Constable Stringer edited this report himself. However, his original report does not exist and the official record quoted here is one which was prepared and printed as part of the prosecution case against Parnell and others at the end of 1880. The letter of endorsement by a minister of the church who noted that his flock would quite naturally resort to violence should law-makers not make fundamental changes to the land laws would not have aided the prosecution case against Parnell and the others. The purpose of the trial was to prove that the Land League leaders and their speeches were the cause of outrage and violence in Ireland. The importance of Fr Murphy's letter is that it indicates that he felt violence in the district was inevitable unless the land laws were remedied.

Despite Fr Murphy's support for the meeting and its aims, the other Catholic clergy of the district—Rev. James Brown PP, of Durrus, Fr W.J. Deasy CC, of Kilcoe, Fr D. Bernard CC, of east Schull, and Fr Patrick Dineen CC, of Goleen—also failed to attend this first meeting in West Carbery. It is likely they adopted a wait-and-see approach as to the character and course of events that would unfold. Whether this cautious approach was due to their knowledge of the locality and, in particular, the locals organising the meeting is impossible to ascertain. However, were it the case that the meeting was being organised by men associated with a secret society, the clergy may have been inclined to see what kind of public platform they would espouse at the first meeting of the Land League. The aforementioned clergy sent brief letters; however, the curate at Durrus, Fr Deasy, noted that the 'sufferings of the West Carbery tenants should be at last brought to public notice and the tyrannical treatment of their landlords

should be checked'.²⁰⁸ All the clergy named above noted that they approved of the object of the meeting.²⁰⁹

The *West Cork Eagle* presented the police presence at the meeting in a farcical light, noting that 'the police in all the outlying districts were brought in to enjoy the oratory, save for a brace of them who were engaged in the humane duty of protecting the famous Government note taker, Jeremiah Stringer'. Stringer was denied a place on the platform, as was Sub-Inspector Hume, who 'hammered away at his notebook when certain speakers threatened the immediate destruction of the citadel of landlordism'. The report stated that, 'the veteran originator of the movement, Mr Richard Hodnett' had 'first of all interviewed Mr Parnell in London and subsequently, the Cork Land League on the subject'.²¹⁰ On the platform were Hodnett, who took the chair, J. Collins, E. Farrell TC and Chairman of the Cork Land League, J. Heffernan, P. O'Hea, Thomas Fuller, chairman of Dunmanway Land League, P. Gallagher P.L.G., D. Gallagher P.L.G., P. Leahy, P. Cotter, M. Coughlan, M. E. Glanville, Charles Hegarty, J. Kearney, W. Good and unnamed others.²¹¹ Of these, Hodnett became chairman of the local branch, John Collins the secretary, and John Kearney, treasurer, while Michael Coughlan was on the executive committee which later also included Anthony Lavis, Henry O'Mahony, Michael Sullivan, Edward Roycroft Jr., Cornelius O'Driscoll and William J. Young, amongst others.²¹² John Kearney was the proprietor of Kearney's Hotel in Ballydehob.²¹³

²⁰⁸ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Membership book of the Ballydehob Land League see brown envelope marked Ballydehob Case, N.A.I., INL Papers, box 9.

²¹³ District Inspector Horne RIC, 20 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21038.

The first speaker was Richard Hodnett who said that the purpose of the meeting was to show the English government and the world in general that the system of landlordism would be tolerated no longer.²¹⁴ He noted that 10 years earlier the English Government had introduced a law to give the tenant farmers security but which was found to be insufficient. He noted that the system of landlordism had sent many a 'Lazarus into the bosom of Abraham' and that 'the tenantry of that union [Skull], in particular, had suffered in consequence of the unjust system of landlordism, and he knew in his own knowledge how many thousands of the poor went coffinless into their graves'.²¹⁵ He praised the member for Cork, Parnell, who, he stated, had been instrumental in getting relief for 1,220 people and getting thousands of pounds from the 'outside world' to feed the tenantry of Ireland.²¹⁶ The *West Cork Eagle* report was erroneous in asserting that it was Parnell who relieved 1,200 in the union; this was, in fact, relief that came through the Poor Law Board.²¹⁷ The next speaker was Edward Farrell, from Queenstown, chairman of the Cork Land League, in good circumstances and of good character.²¹⁸ In his report of an earlier land meeting at Clonakilty on 29 August, Jeremiah Stringer had noted that Farrell was also 'a Nationalist'.²¹⁹ Farrell proposed a resolution that the land laws of Ireland were ruinous to its prosperity and required immediate settlement and that peasant proprietorship was the best means to that end.²²⁰ According to the *Eagle*, he said he was glad so many had turned out in such a remote area and that it 'showed the interest they all took in a movement for the

²¹⁴ Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880; *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Jeremiah Stringer, 'Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880', N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ Jeremiah Stringer, 'Clonakilty, Co. Cork, Sunday, 29 Aug. 1880', N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

regeneration of Ireland'.²²¹ He was pleased that so many women were present as 'since the days of the siege of Limerick, the women were the staunchest friends of Ireland'.²²² This was a reference to the women of Limerick refusing Sarsfield and de Boisseleau's order to quit the city during the 1690 siege by William of Orange, following the Battle of the Boyne, referenced in such popular contemporary nationalist history books as A. M. Sullivan's *A Story of Ireland*.²²³ Farrell drew on the allegory to assert that they were all now engaged in a life or death cause. While he acknowledged that the landlord did have some interest in the land, he asserted it was 'not as much as he thinks as the land was put there by God'.²²⁴ He raised the spectre of the famine of '47, blaming the landlords and the Government. He claimed the Ulster custom existed in Ulster because 'each man acted a man's part' and no man became a traitor.²²⁵ He exhorted the people not to take a farm unjustly evicted and, if anyone did, they 'should give the black sheep a wide berth'. He said he '[...] would not advise them to tar and feather such a man'. In response a voice shouted to loud cheers, 'No, but we'll cut off his ears'.²²⁶ Farrell also urged the people to give up on the 'duty business to landlords' such as lending them horses or giving them gifts. He also proposed a system of peasant proprietorship to replace the current land system.

John Heffernan, organizer and committee member of the Cork Land League, was described by the police as of good circumstances and character, a farmer living near Blarney. It would later be noted that, though he had a 250-acre farm, he appeared to have no permanent residence, spending all his time travelling as an organizer of the

²²¹ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ A.M. Sullivan's, *A Story of Ireland* (Dublin, 1867), p. 438.

²²⁴ Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880. The edited police report omits this.

Land League.²²⁷ Only two weeks earlier, Heffernan had made a strident speech at a land meeting in Clonakilty where he stated that Bence Jones had cleared the land, creating ‘an Irish prairie’.²²⁸ This theme was one raised by Charles Kickham in the 1860s Fenian newspaper *Irish People* in an article ‘Cattle before Men’, which equated cattle rearing with membership of the landlord class and the mass clearances of the people.²²⁹ Hostility to such prairies was part of the I.R.B. orthodoxy. While Hodnett and Farrell had mentioned life and death struggles, the Williamite wars, landlords and land laws from the English Government being responsible for starving the people, Heffernan raised the temperature of the meeting by saying that that for three hundred years the landlords were a ‘race of idlers’, stealing every farthing from the people.²³⁰ He was quoted as saying that ‘wherever landlordism shows its unholy head, it should be struck down’.²³¹ The police report puts this more strongly and uses the collective voice: ‘We are here today to tell you that wherever landlordism shows its unholy head, to strike it down’.²³² This quotation infers that all the speakers agreed with such a proposition. Heffernan twice used references or quotations from Shakespeare, the first when he asserted that landlords spent their ill gotten gains in ‘the gaming halls of the continent, or on “the primrose paths of dalliance” in London, Paris or Berlin’.²³³ The second when he noted that they were like the Jew who must have his pound of flesh and that a friend of Ireland had said that Shakespeare would have cast the Irish landlord as Shylock but

²²⁷ ‘Memorandum of Proceedings, John R. Heffernan’, N.A.I., P.P.P. papers, box 1.

²²⁸ ‘Clonakilty, Co. Cork, Sunday, 29th Aug. 1880’, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers.

²²⁹ *Irish People*, 26 Aug. 1865. In an article about landlords demanding that the government cease cattle imports as there was a cattle plague in Britain, Kickham derides the landlords’ interest in their cattle whilst during the famine they ‘did not call upon the government to save them (the people)’.

²³⁰ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²³³ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880. NB ‘primrose paths of dalliance’ reference is William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I.3.50.

felt ‘he might fail to find positions for agents and bailiffs’.²³⁴ He did not care whether they were good or bad, the fact that they were idlers and thieves meant, regardless of the loss to the country that *The Times* or the *Constitution* might say they would be, they had to go and not come back.²³⁵ He asserted that the landlords must be ‘wiped off the face of the land’.²³⁶ Heffernan said that the seed they used and the food they ate for the last six months was provided by ‘their friends in America’ and urged farmers to make provision for themselves, and not the landlords, in the coming winter. If they did this, the landlords, now shivering in their boots, would be starved out. Heffernan singled out John E. Barrett of Bantry, who was the Earl of Kenmare’s agent, claiming that he had raised the rents of one man from the valuation of £14 to £46. In October, Barrett would publicly deny claims made against him, stating that he had one hundred and thirty tenants who could make a ‘complete refutation against the charges made against him of oppressive conduct towards tenants’.²³⁷ However, by October, Barrett’s life was in danger and he said ‘We carry our lives in our hands’.²³⁸ Despite being offered police protection, he felt that ‘if the taking of his life was meditated, the police would not save him’.²³⁹ In light of the fact that being denounced at Land League meetings could cause genuine fear and threats to be directed towards an individual, it is noteworthy that Heffernan went on to say the people must wipe out the landlords and ‘settle it as the French did’. Whereas he said that they wished to offer the landlords 20 years’ purchase price to buy them out, ‘in 1798, they (the French) gave them 20 yards of rope’.

²³⁴ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880. The police report varies slightly, posing the latter as a question and replacing agent with process server ‘I would like to know what he (Shakespeare) would have an Irish bailiff or process server’. Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²³⁵ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880 Note: *Constitution* refers to the *Cork Constitution*.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 Oct. 1880.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

However ameliorating this rabble-rousing, he stated that the people of England were liberty loving and, if Irish landlords were in England, they ‘would not stand an hour’.²⁴⁰

It is noteworthy that Heffernan also quoted the English historian and polemicist, James Anthony Froude, whom he termed ‘our friend’.²⁴¹ He noted that the Oxford fellow excused Irishmen who were opposed to law and order due to the ‘samples they have from time to time from Irish landlords’.²⁴² It is noteworthy that in the first chapter of *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, Davitt also quoted Froude: ‘In Ireland landlordism was tempered by assassination’.²⁴³ Despite this, it must be noted that Froude had an imperialist view of Ireland.²⁴⁴ Ironically, the Trinity College historian, W.H. Lecky, reviewing Froude in 1874, noted that despite his ‘denouncement of either Irish ingratitude or of Irish rebels’, Froude’s assertion that ‘it was only when ceasing to be Catholics that it was possible for the Irish to become loyal subjects to the British crown’ would be repeated in every Fenian newspaper.²⁴⁵ Froude’s paradoxical statements on Ireland were lost on many advanced Nationalists. Heffernan’s speech was articulate rabble rousing. There is no divergence between the two extant records in regard to his central theme being a call for the obliteration of landlords. His references to the French revolution and the killing of the landlord class are noteworthy as they were made in public and, indeed, he noted that his words were being recorded by a ‘government spy’.²⁴⁶

It may be assumed that the next speaker, Patrick O’Hea, was socially superior to the previous speakers in that he was a solicitor from Skibbereen (as was McCarthy

²⁴⁰ Report of land meeting at Ballydehob, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, p. 6.

²⁴⁴ Donal McCartney, ‘James Anthony Froude and Ireland: A Historiographical Controversy of the Nineteenth Century,’ *Irish University Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring, 1971), pp. 238-57, passim.

²⁴⁵ *The Nation*, 20 June 1874.

²⁴⁶ Ballydehob meeting, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE* 18 Sept. 1880

Downing, the recently deceased MP who had helped I.R.B. founder James Stephens escape to France in 1848).²⁴⁷ As has been noted, O’Hea had accompanied Hodnett to London and was present with him in the House of Commons on 23 August. Whereas the police reporter noted the character and circumstances of the other speakers, O’Hea was merely noted as being a solicitor from Skibbereen.²⁴⁸ O’Hea’s speech followed Dillon’s line and was unequivocal in its advocacy of arming the people. He proposed a resolution: ‘That we deprecate and regard with aversion the system of taking farms from which the tenants have been evicted; we pledge ourselves neither to take any such farms or to work on or till them as long as their rightful owners are out of possession,’ which was immediately resolved.²⁴⁹ He started by asserting that the taunt thrown out of late that the ‘West’s Asleep’ was belied by the demonstration where the men and women of West Carbery had shown that the ‘West is Awake’. Whereas the police report failed to record the quotation marks from Davis’s poem, the *West Cork Eagle* reporter was aware of the reference to Davis.²⁵⁰ Yet again at this meeting, O’Hea raised the famine memory of ‘47 and exhorted all to join the Land League. He condemned landlordism, which was ‘the rule of the vampire who had almost drawn the vitals out of the people and would continue to do so unless they banded themselves together to resist’.²⁵¹ Asserting that the system was ‘drawing the lifeblood from the heart out of Erin, but they were determined that “thus far and no further should it go”’.²⁵² O’Hea told them that their cause could no longer be ignored by the ‘Government of England’, for the active party representing Ireland in Parliament had shown in quite a regular and parliamentary way they could strike terror into the English Government.’ He then noted that one of that party who ‘he

²⁴⁷ Fitzmaurice RM to Lord Naas , 27 Dec. 1858, N.A.I., ICR 16, Fenian Police Reports, box 1.

²⁴⁸ Ballydehob meeting, 12 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁵¹ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁵² Ibid.

was proud to call a friend—the fearless member for gallant Tipperary—John Dillon’ was declared ‘cowardly and wicked for stating that he would see six hundred thousand of his countrymen in the possession of rifles’. A voice from the crowd shouted ‘We want them’. According to the *West Cork Eagle*, O’Hea said that if Dillon’s wishes were realised, the House of Lords would think twice about rejecting two Irish measures, the Registration of Voters and the Compensation for Disturbance.²⁵³ However, according to the police report, he said that he did not think Dillon’s language was wicked or cowardly and ‘this was manfully and ably disproved in the House of Commons; and the Irish party, for a period of six hours, were able to vindicate our countryman’.²⁵⁴ The police quoted O’Hea as saying that as the House of Lords was a chamber of landlords, they could expect little from it regarding Irish measures. He said that the men of Ballydehob should stick together and recalled John Ronyane (*sic*), the late member for Cork, saying that ‘[...] farmers required to be protected from themselves’.²⁵⁵ This reference was to Joseph P. Ronayne, the Fenian, and MP for Cork, who had organised Fenian-led displays in Cork in favour of France during the Franco-Prussian war, when the English establishment and *The Times* supported Germany.²⁵⁶ O’Hea said he was ‘a man whose memory must live hallowed and venerated, the honest and patriotic John Ronyane (*sic*)’.²⁵⁷ It is clear that, though Ronayne was elected for Cork in 1872, he was well known in the late 1860s and early 1870s to be a leading Fenian.²⁵⁸ One public meeting which he chaired in Cork in 1870 had all the characteristics of subsequent meetings of the Land League in West Carbery, including what Dillon had called for:

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ballydehob meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁵⁵ N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880. Note This was Joseph P Ronayne, MP for Cork until his death in 1876.

²⁵⁶ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 123; William Carroll to John Devoy, 26 July 1874, *D.P.B.*, i, p. 199; *Cork Herald* 25 July 1870.

²⁵⁷ N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁵⁸ Michael Hurst, ‘Irish Ballot Act of 1872’, in Alan O’Day (ed.), *Reactions to Irish Nationalism 1865-1914*, (London & Ronceverte, West Virginia, 1987), p. 125.

marching ‘under strict military discipline’.²⁵⁹ At that demonstration in Cork on 24 July 1870, Ronayne also referenced Sarsfield, whom Farrell had alluded to in his praise of the women of Limerick during the siege of 1690. O’Hea asked the men of Ballydehob and Skull to ‘stick to their true colours’ and ‘to organise’ and to join the League.²⁶⁰

Following O’Hea was Thomas Fuller, of the Dunmanway Land League. Fuller was described as being a ‘small landed proprietor’, holding a large farm of his own and ‘in a respectable position’ in good circumstance and character’.²⁶¹ However, in his speech he stated that he held land from eight different landlords. He complained that agents and landlords raised rents based on improvements made by tenants. He noted that, in his experience, they over-estimated the size of animals and used magnifying glasses that turned ‘a Kerry heifer’ into a bullock and increased rents on this basis.²⁶² He denounced idle landlords and said he would prefer to have the Government as a landlord and to pay them his rent²⁶³ He also hoped that the labourer would not be forgotten as they ‘are still worked harder’. The next speaker, Cornelius O’Driscoll, a farmer from Dunmanus and publican in Skull, proposed a resolution that ‘the condition of agricultural labourers in this country is deplorable and a disgrace to the 19th century’.²⁶⁴ This was no doubt appreciated by the large number of labourers in attendance. Next to speak was John Collins, a Ballydehob farmer of good character and circumstances.²⁶⁵ He praised Parnell and the current Irish Party at Westminster, who were ‘short of curs’.²⁶⁶ He stated that Parnell had provided them with ‘money, raiment,

²⁵⁹ *Cork Herald*, 25 July 1870

²⁶⁰ Ballydehob meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁶¹ Ballydehob meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²⁶² N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4; *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Ballydehob meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

and the seed that they were now seeing the benefits of.²⁶⁷ In a ‘forcible speech’, he said that the objects of the League were sure to be realised and proposed that a branch be formed in the district to be called ‘The Ballydehob branch of the League’²⁶⁸

The only voice that appeared disquieted at subjects other than landlords, England, or things English was Patrick Gallagher of Kilcoe, who, like Hodnett, was a Skull Poor Law Guardian. He asserted that he had decided not to speak at the meeting for, having been one of the people who had signed ‘the requisition’ to the Cork Land League, he had not been asked to propose or second a resolution. However, he felt it would be base not to speak as: ‘He was proud to see the people heart and soul in such a movement prepared to come forward in a manly and straightforward manner to assert their rights’²⁶⁹ He called on the ladies to make sure that their brothers, husbands and suitors joined the League.²⁷⁰ O’Hea, noted that the difference between Ireland 20 years ago and today was ‘3 million people’.²⁷¹ He then proposed that Farrell take the chair, and a vote of thanks was proposed to Hodnett. Heffernan seconding, asking the ‘[...] young women not to marry any man who was not a Land Leaguer.’²⁷² Farrell said that with an ‘[...] old man like him working so actively, he had great hopes in the young men before him’.²⁷³ The police quoted Farrell as saying:

You are very much indebted to Mr. Hadnett (sic), and also to Mr. Parnell, who desired him to do the work, for it would be ungrateful to have it passed by that in conversation between Mr. Parnell and Mr. Hadnett (sic), he (Parnell) advised him to apply to the Cork Land League to establish a branch here, for he wants to have

²⁶⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁸ *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ballydehob meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² *WCE*, 18 Sept. 1880. Note the police report states this it was Farrell who asked this see Ballydehob meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²⁷³ Ibid.

the Land League established here, for he admires the manly courage of the people of Cork, and they are determined to stand tyranny no longer.²⁷⁴

In this way, Farrell was pointing out to the people of a remote locality that their local leader had the ear of Parnell and that Parnell not only endorsed his work but also endorsed the Cork Land League. He also said that Hodnett was leading the ‘land war’ in Ballydehob.²⁷⁵ This war had not yet been declared and the first shots had not but would soon be fired. Though the period was to become known by participants and historians as ‘The Land War’, it was not generally referred to as such in 1880. If the object of the meeting was at least in part that of raising the status at once of the I.R.B. and the Land League, such recommendations would have implied that support for either or both enterprises was coming from the highest level of Irish political life. If Mallon was correct in his claim that Devoy thought nothing could induce farmers to join a patriotic movement, then the approach taken at Ballydehob was subtle and likely effective. It was a case of men associated with (and most likely leaders of) the I.R.B. in the county or district dangling the prospect of peasant proprietorship in an effort to exhort them to support a separatist agenda. If there was any doubt about the fact that an undercurrent of subtle I.R.B. propaganda was espoused at this first meeting in West Carbery, then Farrell’s final comments removed such doubt. He told an anecdote of a French sailor on a boat, who, on hearing of the Franco-Prussian war, ‘demanded of the captain to let him out at once to strike a blow in defence of his “bleeding country”’.²⁷⁶ The police report states this was a sailor who had landed at Queenstown and that Farrell continued asking the people: ‘Would an Irishman come home and fight for Ireland in a similar manner? No, because he has no country to fight for, but let him have a cause and a country to

²⁷⁴ Ballydehob meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

fight for, and we will have it'²⁷⁷ Hodnett then closed the meeting thanking the people for the kind manner in which his name had been received. He then quoted Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village':

Princes and lords may flourish, and decayed(*sic*),
A breath can make them, as a breath has made,
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.²⁷⁸

He declared Mr. Gladstone would make the land system '[...] tremble to its base, and on that day the hearts of England will rejoice that something has been done to secure the love of the Irish people'.²⁷⁹ A voice cried 'God bless you Mr Hodnett you filled many a belly of late' and the meeting closed in an orderly fashion.

The fact that there were no bands or banners or indeed priests may be connected; as we will see below, subsequent meetings in West Carbery would manifest all three. It would appear that a tone was being set at this first meeting. However, both Parnell and the immoderate Dillon were noted to be either acquainted with or friends of two of the speakers, respectively. Joe Ronayne, Fenian and later MP for Cork, was mentioned in an honorific light. English laws and England were held up in a grim light and an enemy within was held for vilification, ostracising and as a representation of all ills. The French Revolution was alluded to crudely and the defence of the French republic by a French citizen rather more directly. The key points may involve what local knowledge of Hodnett and his potential role as a revolutionary might have been extant. However, this is precisely the type of information that a truly covert revolutionary cell protected by its community would have guarded from landlord, policeman and magistrate. It is

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Oliver Goldsmith, 'The Deserted Village', lines 19-22. The slight misquote in the first line may be attributed to either an error on the part of Hodnett or the police reporter; it should read 'Princes and lords may flourish, and may fade'.

²⁷⁹ Ballydehob meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 4. This is not referenced in the *West Cork Eagle* report.

noteworthy that the police report that is extant formed part of the prosecution material for the subsequent trial of Parnell and other leaders of the Land League. This is significant. As will be seen below, other important material related to the Ballydehob branch was compiled for the *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission, which sought to link the Land League, Parnell—and indeed Parnellism—with crime and sedition. It was obvious to the authorities that something untoward had occurred in Ballydehob on 12 September 1880. They were rather vague as to its exact nature. It is clear that, without stating what was not actually there, they sought to highlight the tone, the assertion that rope be used on landlords after the fashion of the French Revolution. However, possibly the most revealing note of the whole meeting was Edward Farrell's assertion that Irishmen had no country but, if they banded together and to the cause, they would have one soon. In light of Hodnett's assertion that the Land League would spread forth from Ballydehob and that something underhand was holding it back in Skibbereen, then the events of the following month indicate that, whatever he was alluding to, the meeting in Ballydehob had the desired effect. In the western districts of West Carbery, after 12 September 1880, there was a fundamental change of fortune for both the Land League—and, indeed, the landlords and the local authorities—that would see the district become one of the least governable in Ireland.

F.S.L. Lyons noted that, in the Autumn of 1880, it may have been to Parnell's advantage at Westminster to appear to be the leader of a mass movement on the verge of revolution.²⁸⁰ As has been noted above, as well as alluding to revolutionary France and I.R.B. figures, the speakers at the Ballydehob meeting also promoted Parnell in the strongest terms. In County Mayo, the character of land meetings from the earliest days of the land agitation were of a far more radical nature than those that began the

²⁸⁰ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 136.

movement in West Cork. However, the display of green rosettes and banners was certain to give the perception that the local organisation was in line with the far more militant trend in Mayo. As such meetings were widely reported, it may be concluded that any meeting displaying even some of the trappings of a Mayo meeting may be deemed to be of a revolutionary character rather than pertaining purely to tenant right. An example of a Mayo meeting was one held on 7 March 1880 at Ballindine, near the border with Co. Galway. The police reported banners bearing the words ‘Be neither slaves nor knaves to landlordism’, ‘Irishmen Remember ‘98’, and ‘Vox Populi, Vox Dei’, while another bore the image of a man on a horse with the words ‘Sarsfield—No Surrender’. Houses were decked with banners such as ‘Land and Liberty for Erin’s Sons’, ‘Remember ‘98’, and ‘Land and Liberty is What We Want’. Contingents attended this meeting from several towns and parishes, including Ballinasloe, Ballyhanus, Balla, Dunmore, Claremorris, Milltown and Irishtown.²⁸¹ Twenty men with pikes marched at the head of a procession and a contingent of forty horsemen, a number wearing ‘green forage caps and nearly all’ wearing green sashes, under the command of J.W. Nally of Balla, marched through the town and around the platform.²⁸² Bands played and many in attendance wore green scarves, laurel leaves, shamrock wreathes or rosettes.²⁸³ When Rev. James Killeen proposed a resolution calling for self-government, Nally called for ‘Groans for Home Rule, Peasant Propriety is what we want’.²⁸⁴ When the priest declared that the latter would not come without the former, Nally is reported to have been cheered when he said ‘No honest man can enter Parliament. Remember

²⁸¹ File on the arrest and conviction of Patrick J. Gordon, N.A.I., CSORP 1881/26373 in (N.A.I., CSORP 1881/box 2739).

²⁸² Ibid. There is a potential for error in that it is likely that both P.W. and J.W. Nally attended the meeting. The *Irish Times* reported that a P.J. Nally attended and this is likely P.W. Nally, *Irish Times*, 8 Mar. 1880.

²⁸³ *Irish Times*, 8 Mar. 1880; *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 Mar. 1880.

²⁸⁴ *Irish Times*, 8 Mar. 1880. The *Irish Times* states J.W. Nally while the *Freeman’s Journal* states Mr. Nally (Balla).

physical force'.²⁸⁵ It is notable that, despite the presence of priests on the platform—and, indeed, despite being chaired by Canon Geoffrey Bourke, the meeting was preceded by a display of a quasi-military group of marching men with imitation pikes followed by men effecting to be cavalry.²⁸⁶ This defines the meeting as clearly I.R.B. and advanced Nationalist in character and contrasts greatly with the Ballydehob meeting, where there were no overt displays. However, the largest gathering in West Cork (indeed in all of County Cork, according to the *West Cork Eagle*), the inaugural meeting held in Skibbereen on 26 September 1880, was conducted both in the presence of Catholic clergy and also with a similar political theatre to the Mayo meetings such as the one described above.²⁸⁷

The police reporter, Thomas O'Rorke, who had arrived the night before, noted that on the Sunday morning he found:

[...] a large platform erected in a square off the main street, across the front of which was a strip of calico, on which was in black letters 'Ireland for the Irish. The land for the people. The husbandman who laboureth must partake of the fruits', with a green shamrock before and another after it. From the front corner of the platform floated a green flag, bearing which on both sides in yellow 'A harp—

²⁸⁵ Ibid. Note the *Freeman's Journal* of the same day omits this sentence but does quote Nally as saying 'Down with Home Rule, a peasant proprietorship'. *Freeman's Journal*, 8 Mar. 1880. It is likely that this was indeed J.W. Nally as he made similar advanced Nationalist public statements at Shule on the Mayo/Galway border, 1 Nov. 1880; see *Irish Times*, 2 July 1880 and at Swinford, Co Mayo on 4 July 1880 see Police report Swinford meeting, N.A.I. CCS papers, Queen v Parnell box 2; *Irish Times*, 5 July 1880.

²⁸⁶ Note: Bourke's presence in the chair at this meeting adds some new information regarding the controversy about the Irishtown meeting which arose due to Davitt's stating that the meeting was in protest at Bourke threatening evictions. See Moody, *Davitt*, pp 292-4 and Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, pp 146-7. Moody argued that the 'culpability' of Bourke that Davitt alleged was likely wrong, noting he was on a Land League platform in July 1880. This earlier meeting at which Bourke was chairman adds weight to Moody's assumption.

²⁸⁷ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880, other examples of Mayo meetings include one held at Swinford on 4 July 1880 under banners such as 'Down with the Land Robbers', 'The Land For People', 'Remember 98', 'Down with Landsharks', where cheers were called for 'Rory of the Hill'. See Swinford meeting, 4 July 1880, N.A.I. Queen v Parnell box 1; *Irish Times*, 5 July 1880.

God save Ireland'. And from the other front corner of the platform floated an American flag 'the Stars and Stripes'.²⁸⁸

Sub-Constable O'Rorke also soberly noted that from a house-top on the other side of the Main Street, '[...] floated a green flag' and that 'Contingents from the surrounding country, towns Aghadown, Ballydehob, Bantry, Caheragh, Cape Clear, Castletownsend, Dunmanway, Glandore, Leap &c., attended'.²⁸⁹ He reported two bands playing airs and before one a green banneret was carried on which painted in yellow were the words 'Union is our strength, God Save Ireland'.²⁹⁰ All the bandsmen and a great many of the people wore green rosettes.²⁹¹ According to the police report, 1,500 people attended the meeting.

The *West Cork Eagle* took a rather more vitriolic approach when reporting the Skibbereen inaugural meeting. Its chief correspondent, John Eager O'Mahony, was a relative of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's.²⁹² In 1887, O'Mahony moved to Tipperary where he worked for as the editor and manager of the Tipperary Nationalist and became involved in the continuing land agitation there, spending 'two periods in jail for his espousal of the cause'.²⁹³ The reporting of all the land meetings in West Cork at this time brimmed with colourful prose in praise of the patriotic and rejoicing at any overt nationalist displays. The *Eagle* began its report by declaring that if Skibbereen had appeared indifferent, slumbering, inactive, allowing 'unpretending Dunmanway', 'patriotic Clonakilty' 'and more surprising yet, the remote and barren, but strange to say vigorous Ballydehob to precede it', it was 'now past lethargy for, decidedly,

²⁸⁸ Sub-Constable Thomas O'Rorke, 'Skibbereen, Co.Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880', N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Entry for John Eager O'Mahony in Timothy Cadogan and Jeremiah Falvey (eds), *A Biographical Dictionary of Cork* (Dublin, 2006), p. 262

²⁹³ Ibid.

“Skibbereen was to the Front”²⁹⁴ The latter quote was taken from the poster for the meeting which had been placarded in the town. The printing was contracted to the publisher of the *West Cork Eagle*, Frederick Peel Eldon Potter’s, Eagle Steam Printing Works. The headline said ‘Ireland for The Irish’ followed by ‘Skibbereen was to the Front’ and announcing a Great Meeting to which Messrs. Parnell M.P., Finigan M.P., Dillon M.P., T.D. Sullivan M.P. &c. &c. had been invited and were expected to attend.²⁹⁵ The object of the meeting was ‘To consider the position of the Irish People with regard to The Land of Ireland!’²⁹⁶ In smaller lettering, it exhorted ‘Men of the Carberies assemble in the Numbers and Strength of your Manhood! Show that you have the spirit and aspirations of Freemen, and that you are determined no longer to be ground down under the Oligarch’s sway’.²⁹⁷ There is no doubt that the choice of terminology, pitting the men of the Carberies against government by the few, expanded the object of the meeting beyond just the land laws and into a more revolutionary realm. What could replace an oligarchy? Government of the many? ... democracy? ... a republic? As has been discussed in Chapter One above, such rhetoric was separatist in character and had the word ‘oligarchy’ not been in general use in Skibbereen prior to the placarding of the large posters around the town, then no doubt it was the subject of some discussion thereafter.

The three men accorded with being responsible for the meeting were Jeremiah Daly, a Poor Law Guardian, Patrick Spillane, a publican, and Patrick O’Hea, the solicitor who was in London with Hodnett.²⁹⁸ It is likely O’Hea who placed oligarchy in the lexicon of the West Cork Land League. The inclusion of the word on the poster

²⁹⁴ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880

²⁹⁵ Poster for Skibbereen land meeting 26 Sept. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 1.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1881; Lady Resident of Skibbereen to Lord Cowper, 7 June 1880, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/20424.

expanded the language used to advertise the Ballydehob meeting to include a republican character and object for the gathering. In police reports extant at the time of the Land War, the use of the word ‘Republican’ to refer to individuals is infrequent. Indeed, as has been noted regarding the Protection of Persons and Property Act Memorandum of Proceedings, references to Nationalists and advanced Nationalists were also uncommon. However, in regard to O’Hea, Sub-Inspector Hume of the RIC in Skibbereen, would later say that: ‘He is an active member of the Land League, of Republican tendencies, and has been known to say he “was a Fenian” but in such a way as to imply he has ceased to be one’.²⁹⁹ The *Eagle* reported that across from the platform ‘on Mr Spillane’s new building’ banners hanging triumphantly declared ‘Unity is strength’, ‘Faith and Fatherland’ and ‘God Save Ireland’.³⁰⁰ Spillane was also a band leader and, after some warming up by Fr McCarthy’s band, Spillane’s ‘ably discoursed some national tunes, and preceding the speakers to the meeting they rattled up the significant but inspiring strains of ‘The Rising of the Moon’.³⁰¹ ‘The Rising of the Moon’ is a ballad commemorating the United Irishman’s rising of 1798. From early morning, what was described as the ‘bucolic element poured into the town’, their ranks filled with ‘rosy-hued gaily-dressed maidens’.³⁰² Listed separately to these pastoral folk was the ‘large contingent from Ballydehob, and good and true friends amongst whom there was undeniably a wise man, sallied forth from Bantry, while Union Hall, Leap, Castletownsend,’ and other parishes ‘supplied large quota to the imposing assemblage’.³⁰³ As noted above, the police report also referred to these groups as contingents. The *West Cork Eagle* also noted that many wore ‘green favours’ and that amongst the crowd was ‘a patriotic damsel robed altogether in our own “immortal

²⁹⁹ Sub- Inspector Hume, Constabulary Minute, 17 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/20424.

³⁰⁰ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

green”’. It is notable that these contingents are referred to separately from the bucolic elements. This would imply that the former were organised groups, with green rosettes, as noted by the police and press, and distinct from individual farmers and labourers who had been drifting in for the meeting since early morning. Though it is impossible to ascertain, the reference to the damsel dressed entirely in green may imply a further piece of republican pageantry in the shape an Irish ‘Marianne’. The oblique reference in this report to a wise man may refer to James Gilhooly, who was later MP for West Cork and was part of the ten-man group of MPs who originated from the Bantry area called the ‘Bantry Band’.³⁰⁴ However he was also believed by the police to be the I.R.B. Head Centre for Bantry in 1867.³⁰⁵ Therefore, given the *West Cork Eagle*’s penchant for nationalist rhetoric, however subliminal, the appendage ‘wise man’ may be taken to imply a notable of the I.R.B. It can be stated with certainty that the approximately 1300-word descriptive preamble to the actual speeches that appeared in the *West Cork Eagle* sought to convey a meeting of a Nationalist character that was well organised and, furthermore, it belittled the policemen in attendance, deriding their note-taking skills and treating them as objects of humorous diversion.

The *West Cork Eagle* stated that: ‘Viewed in a representative and an influential light, “the cradle of revolution”, for that was Skibbereen’s appellation in by-gone days, surpassed any gathering of the kind held in the noble county of Cork’.³⁰⁶ There was a great deal of effort and preplanning involved in the Skibbereen meeting. According to Edward Farrell, the Skibbereen branch was the twenty-first established in Cork and would be one of the last.³⁰⁷ Efforts were made to ensure the clerical support that

³⁰⁴ See Note * re. ‘Bantry Band’ at bottom of page in Frank Callanan, *The Parnell Split, 1890-91* (Cork, 1992), p. 236.

³⁰⁵ Bridget Hourican, ‘Gilhooly, James Peter’, in McGuire and Quinn (ed.), *D.I.B.* (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a3473>)

³⁰⁶ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

manifested itself and also to ensure other respectable or at least political support from Poor Law Guardians and a medical doctor. Of the thirty five people listed as being on the platform six were clerics, ten were Poor Law Guardians from the Skull, Skibbereen and Bantry Unions, one was a doctor and one was a solicitor.³⁰⁸ It is notable that the two men who proposed the chairman, the Rev. P. Hill, were John Collins, from Ballydehob, and Patrick Gallagher, of Kilcoe, the P.L.G. from the Skull Union who had reluctantly spoken at the Ballydehob meeting as he had felt slighted at not being asked to propose or second a resolution. Since the meeting was organised in the main by Skibbereen men, the fact that the proposers were from Ballydehob and its environs accords Ballydehob a significance that was not commented on in either the police or the local newspaper reports. Having assumed the chair, Hill called on Patrick O’Hea—said to be the acting secretary of the meeting—to read the letters received.³⁰⁹ The first letter read was from the Bishop of Ross, William Fitzgerald, who noted that the request to attend included ‘terms so respectful’ to his late departed uncle Dr Keane, a previous incumbent in the bishopric whom he described as ‘self-sacrificing and patriotic’.³¹⁰ The bishop stated that need for an ‘immediate and radical’ change ‘in the land system of Ireland was acknowledged by the consensus of all unbiased opinions throughout the civilised world’.³¹¹ He further stated that anyone who advocated bringing about such changes by legitimate means ‘was rendering real and permanent service not just to Ireland but to the empire’.³¹² He exhorted those attending the meeting to moderation but also noted that

³⁰⁸ Rev. P. Hill R.C.A., and ‘Rev. S O’Brien C.C. Skibereen, Rev. J. Lyons C.C. do., Rev. T McCarthy R.C.A., Castlehaven, Rev. D O’Brien C.C. Union Hall, Rev. James O’Sullivan, C.C. Leap, Messers, John Dillon M.P., W Jennings M.D., P. O’Hea Sol., M Cullinane Bantry, W.H. O’Sullivan Bantry, J. Gilhooly Bantry, A. Clarke Bantry, J. Wiseman Bantry, - Donovan, Bantry, M. Healy, Lismore, D. Gallagher P.L.G., F O’Driscoll P.L.G., John M’Carthy P.L.G., J. Browne P.L.G., J. Buckley P.L.G., W. O’Driscoll P.L.G., P. Spillane, J. Daly P.L.G., J. Kearney, R. Hodnett P.L.G., P Collin, P , Leahy, J Doyle, F O’Leary P.L.G., M. Kellagher, M. E. Glanville, C. Collins, C. Driscoll &c &c’, *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880.

³⁰⁹ *WCE*, Oct. 2 1880.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *Ibid.*

anything spoken in violence or immoderation would weaken the cause and the tenant farmers, whom he said ‘all should seek to serve’. He issued advice that, by speaking accurately and firmly rather than exaggerating or making ungenerous personal attacks, they would get the public opinion of the world on their side.³¹³ He further stated that he trusted their ‘calmness, intelligence, and true patriotism’ not to do anything that could be used by the ‘enemies’ of their country to withhold their rights.³¹⁴ William H. (Whiskey) Sullivan MP, of Kilmallock, had been invited and sent regrets due to his speaking at Charleville that day. Both O’Hea and Spillane had sent out individual letters to people inviting them to attend. O’Hea entrusted several letters to T. D. Sullivan, who in reply called him ‘My Dear Pat’; he had obviously passed letters to both Parnell and Finigan but was unaware as to whether they would attend.³¹⁵ Sullivan noted the importance of the fact that Dr Fitzgerald, the Bishop of Ross, approved of the meeting. Spillane was the local secretary and letters from priests in local parishes were addressed to him, many of which wished the meeting success. Rev. Hill followed the reading of letters with a rousing speech in which notably decried the replacement of humans by bullocks as being ‘inhuman’.³¹⁶ He claimed that for five miles on the way to Castletownsend, there were only two or three farmsteads.³¹⁷ He advocated maintaining a large population on the land and denounced pastoral farming. This echoed the writings of Kickham in the 1860s and it would appear that, at least in part, he advocated the Fenian rhetoric and praised the patriotism of those attending the meeting.³¹⁸ At a certain

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid

³¹⁸ Sub-Constable Thomas O’Rorke, ‘Skibbereen, Co. Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880’, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

point in Rev. Hill's speech, the police reporter was 'crushed about for a few minutes and lost some of the priest's words'.³¹⁹

In many respects, the *West Cork Eagle* was correct in its reporting by mentioning Skibbereen's revolutionary past for the priests, politicians and influential locals who spoke at the meeting advocated radical changes, while ripostes from the audience advocated violence. The *West Cork Eagle* claimed that 6,000-7,000 people attended the meeting and, even taking the median between the police report (1,500) and the highest claim of 7,000, then there may have been 4,000 people at the meeting.³²⁰ The fact that the principal speaker was John Dillon, who was a rising political star advocating a radical militant approach, is extremely significant in assessing the true rationale and the forces at work behind the organisation of the Land League in West Cork.

Dillon's speech at Skibbereen was no less provocative and, indeed, possibly more radical and advanced in its separation doctrine than the one he gave almost six weeks earlier in Kildare. By the time he arrived in Skibbereen, he was cresting a wave of national and international press mentions and had attained the sort of notoriety, that placed him at the centre of the agitation, due to Forster's condemnation and the subsequent Commons debate. The latter led even moderate Home Rulers to rally to his defence in the face of the Chief Secretary's intemperate accusation of cowardice and wickedness.³²¹ He began by declaring that the people assembled were there to declare that they would not stop until they had destroyed the system that was ruining the country and that the people should have 'no terms' with landlordism. He disparaged

³¹⁹ Ibid

³²⁰ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880; 'Skibbereen, Co. Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880', N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³²¹ *The Times*, 24 Aug. 1880.

those who wrote letters to the papers asking for people not to attack the system in their campaign by asking what landlordism had ever done for Ireland?³²² ‘Nothing but tyranny’ a voice cried.³²³ To those who wrote saying that a crusade against landlordism was endangering the ‘nationality of Ireland’, he asked them to ‘name the landlords who are honourably known to the people for their work done in service of the country’. He could only remember four and stated that in the last seventy years there were only two: William Smith O’Brien and Charles Stuart Parnell. However were he to name the landlords who he asserted had taken

[...] their stand among the enemies of the people; who hunted the priests, who threw down the houses of the people, and drove out your relations and ancestors, I would keep you here till morning [...]. From the day that an English and foreign force first gave them a footing in Ireland, they have found on the side of oppression and injustice, and never on the side of the people.³²⁴

Thus, Dillon articulated an interpretation of the Land League slogan, which, as noted in Chapter One, was a construct from the writings of Fintan Lalor and, thus, Dillon’s ‘Land for the People’ was a nationalist and separatist doctrine to remove those enemies of the people, those befriended and imposed by England. This was not a directly stated objective of the Land League. However, Dillon’s oratory made it clear that this is what he felt they were all gathered to endorse. He stated that the banner raised in Mayo, ‘Down with Landlordism’, was being adopted by people all over Ireland with one identical platform; it must go down ‘before the voice of a united people’.³²⁵ In response a person in the crowd shouted: ‘We will raise the flag of Vinegar Hill.’³²⁶ Dillon said that in America he met a farmer who said he owned his farm right

³²² Sub-Constable Thomas O’Rorke, ‘Skibbereen, Co.Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880’, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³²³ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880.

³²⁴ ‘Skibbereen, Co. Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880’, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³²⁵ Sub-Constable Thomas O’Rorke, ‘Skibbereen, Co.Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880’, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³²⁶ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880.

through to the other side of the world.³²⁷ He further referred to the Mayo way in reference to a lease issued by a Mr Campion noting that ‘the Mayo way’ was for people to band together and offer what they considered a fair rent. However, regarding Campion, Dillon suggested paying no rent at all as he was rack renting, to which a voice replied ‘He’ll get lead’.³²⁸ In reference to the estate near Bantry and the aforementioned John E. Barrett, and what would happen in Mayo, Dillon was interrupted by shouts of ‘He’d be shot long ago’ and ‘We need a shooting gallery here’.³²⁹ The police report does not reference these outbursts, which may be explained by the fact that they were denied a place on the platform. Dillon made no comment to any of these threats of violence towards landlords and continued saying that, in Mayo, Barrett would have learned that ‘property has its duties as well as its rights’.³³⁰ When a further shout of ‘Down with land thieves’ was heard, Rev. Hill interceded saying ‘there is no use in that sort of thing’. Dillon referred to his previous advice, given at the Kildare meeting, that the ‘men of the country should come to meetings marching in order, and under the command of leaders’, which was greeted with great cheering.³³¹ However, he said that he did not propose the attacking of landlords or facing the R.I.C. in fields but, rather, he felt that it would show the landlords their earnestness and that landlords would understand their ‘strong determination’ if they went in disciplined order ‘and obeying the commands of leaders’.³³² He went on to say that the land question would be settled here in the fields and not in the English Parliament. In a parting shot at the institution of which he was a member, he said, ‘The English parliament has been your enemy ever

³²⁷ Skibbereen, Co.Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880’, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880.

³³⁰ ‘Skibbereen, Co.Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880’, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³³¹ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880.

³³² Ibid; ‘Skibbereen, Co. Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880’, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

since the day that Cromwell came over at its command'.³³³ By referencing Mayo, and the Mayo way, and by his exhorting the people to march and obey leaders, it seems likely that Dillon was openly advocating the I.R.B. without naming the organisation. The Land League in Mayo was openly militant and, as noted above, public meetings and utterances could not be mistaken for anything but I.R.B. posturing and proselytising. This was the character and form that Dillon hoped the Land League in West Cork would have. Whatever message the advocacy of adopting the Mayo way may have portrayed on the Sunday afternoon of 26 September, the Mayo way of that evening reported in the next morning's newspapers was the shooting dead of Lord Mountmorres near the county boundary between Galway and Mayo.³³⁴

The other speakers at the meeting were Dr. William Jennings, Rev. Timothy McCarthy PP, Edward J. Farrell P.L.G., John R. Heffernan, Patrick O'Hea, Thomas Fuller P.L.G., Jeremiah Daly P.L.G., Richard Hodnett, P.L.G., Timothy Murphy, John Collins and Patrick Gallagher P.L.G.. The tenor of the speeches was resolutely anti-English, with Fr Murphy saying the English parliament only looked after the interests the English people; when he reminded the people of the fable of the bundle of sticks, a voice cried: 'We will have rifles'.³³⁵ The priest chided against such talk and said that, with the priests and the people together, the 'English government could not crush them'.³³⁶ When he exhorted them to keep putting their faith in God, a C.C. Thornhill added 'And keep our powder dry'.³³⁷ When Farrell asked them to abolish all duty work, a voice was heard to say: 'We want a republic'.³³⁸ When Heffernan said that the landlords were holding conclaves without the presence of Government reporters, a

³³³ Skibbereen, Co. Cork. W.R. Sunday, 26 Sept. 1880', N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³³⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 Sept. 1880.

³³⁵ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880. The police report quote is 'We will take rifles'. N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³³⁶ *WCE*, 2 Oct. 1880.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

voice said: 'We ought to string them up'.³³⁹ It is not clear whether he meant the landlords, the police reporters or both. Patrick O'Hea, Jeremiah Daly and Timothy Murphy also used the slave metaphor, with Daly saying that black slaves in the USA had been better off than Irish tenants, while O'Hea stated 'The Irish farmers are slaves because they are under the landlords'.³⁴⁰ Murphy was one of two speakers to quote Thomas Moore 'Oh where's the slave?': 'Oh! where's the slave, so lowly, Condemn'd to chains unholy'.³⁴¹ Both Rev. Hill and he quoted the same line 'First flower of the earth, first gem of the sea' to loud cheering.³⁴² The preceding line in the latter melody is 'Wert thou all that I wish thee, great, glorious, and free, [...]'. Moore was a friend of Robert Emmet and it has been noted by P.J. Matthews that, in his lifetime, he offered both 'a sentimental portrait of Gaelic defeat to his British admirers while appearing to his Irish supporters as an active member of the nationalist revolutionary underground'.³⁴³ It is clear, in both the references to enslavement and the later use of Moore, that a Nationalist republican agenda was being espoused. If further evidence of this was needed, then it was clearly stated by Rev. Timothy McCarty, who said:

I am proud to see the honourable member for Tipperary, the son of the man of '48 (cheers for '48). Yes, and for the men of '65 – (cheers) – all united, and we are proud of them, in this assembly to demand your rights from an alien Parliament, the enemy of our race and country.³⁴⁴

In this, McCarthy was not only praising the rebels of 1848, among whom was Dillon's father, but also the men of '65. The Fenian Rising took place not in 1865 but,

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Skibbereen meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

³⁴¹ Skibbereen meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5; Thomas Moore, *The Works of Thomas Moore in 6 volumes, Melodies*, 'Oh where's the slave?', 6v, vol. iv (New York, 1825), p. 189

³⁴² Thomas Moore, 'Remember thee', idem. *The Works of Thomas Moore in 6 volumes, Melodies*, 'Remember thee', 6v, vol. iv (New York, 1825), p. 231.

³⁴³ P.J. Matthews 'Doing something Irish: From Thomas Moore to Riverdance', UCD Scholarcast Series 1: *The Art of Popular Culture: From 'The Meeting of the Water to Riverdance'* Series Editor P.J. Matthews, pp 3-4. (http://www.ucd.ie/scholarcast/transcripts/Doing_Something_Irish.pdf) (retrieved 21 Sept. 2012).

³⁴⁴ Skibbereen meeting, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

rather, in 1867. However, the first mass arrests of members of what was termed the Fenian Conspiracy took place from 15 September 1865. Amongst the first arrested due to their association with the I.R.B. newspaper, *Irish People*, were two men from Skibbereen, Morty Moynihan and Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, who were amongst the movements earliest members. These were the men of '65 who were cheered loudly by the crowd. By 1880, O'Donovan Rossa, then living in New York, was known to have established a 'Skirmishing Fund', the object of which was attacking England.³⁴⁵ Indeed, that Fund had helped fund the Land League. There can be no doubt that Rev. McCarthy was of very advanced Nationalist opinions, at the very least, given that he then declared that parliament was alien and an enemy of the Irish race and country.³⁴⁶

Richard Hodnett and John Collins of Ballydehob both spoke, the former decrying 'oppression and landlord tyranny', the latter evoking Lalor's separatist tenet that 'the tenant-farmers and labourers of Ireland, to assert their right of freedom in the soil that God gave us'. He felt sure that landlordism would 'totter down with a crash as the greatest structure of English misrule in Ireland.'³⁴⁷ Compared with the preceding speakers, their words seemed reserved and tame. However, the work begun by Hodnett in the previous weeks was progressing significantly. The Skibbereen meeting was a boon for new-departure I.R.B. men. However, it also held out the promise to any reluctant hardliners that the movement was concerned with removing the English influence in Ireland as much as it was concerned with the cause of tenant farmers and labourers.

³⁴⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, 14 May 1879; *Irish Times*, 19 July 1880.

³⁴⁶ *Irish Times*, 19 July 1880.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

National and International press reports

By founding a branch of the Land League in Ballydehob, the small group of men around Hodnett were accorded press mentions in both national and international newspapers. Given the remoteness of their village and the fact that less than 2,000 people were present, such exposure would have had the effect of startling and unsettling the local landlords. While telegraphy could be used by the government to communicate with local policemen and magistrates in the remotest districts, it also allowed for agitation meetings in those areas to be relayed to national and international papers. *Irish Times* reported the meeting both on the 13 September, when it listed the resolutions and noted that the meeting had clerical approval and was attended mostly by tenant farmers, and in its weekly edition on 18 September, which mentioned the meeting and the latter two points.³⁴⁸ *The Times* also reported the meeting, noting that the Government shorthand reporter was refused a place on the platform and saying it had been attended by strong farmers and that the resolutions were of the 'usual character', deprecating the land laws and calling for peasant proprietorship.³⁴⁹ Both *The Times* of London and *Irish Times* referenced O'Hea's statement that it was hardly worth the English government maintaining nine or ten thousand landlords at the cost of eleven thousand policemen for, if the land laws were changed, only one policemen per village would be needed.³⁵⁰ *The Freeman's Journal* and *Irish Times* mentioned Hodnett and the fact he was a P.L.G..³⁵¹ This was certain to have afforded Hodnett a certain amount of local celebrity as well as indicating to the local landlords and authorities that events in their tiny backwater had the potential to receive the broadest reportage. Thus, Hodnett was now a much more important figure than he had been just a month earlier. This indicates the power of

³⁴⁸ *Irish Times*, 13 Sept. 1880; *Weekly Irish Times*, 18 Sept. 1880.

³⁴⁹ *The Times*, 13 Sept. 1880.

³⁵⁰ *The Times*, 13 Sept. 1880; *Irish Times*, 13 Sept. 1880.

³⁵¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Sept. 1880; *Irish Times*, 13 Sept. 1880.

aligning with a national movement and linking local issues with a national cause. The Skibbereen meeting received less press, but Dillon's speech was reported at length in *The Times* and *Irish Times*.³⁵² *The Manchester Guardian* reported the death of Lord Mountmorres in a brief news summary above a mention of Dillon's speech, which noted he was enthusiastically received and his references to the 'lessons' the landlords had 'evoked cries "Shoot them"'.³⁵³ The Skibbereen meeting may have been reported more widely, but papers such as the *Freeman's Journal* concentrated on the Charleville meeting held the same day.³⁵⁴ Therefore, even though the Ballydehob meeting had a lesser attendance and no MP on the platform, it afforded Hodnett and the Ballydehob branch greater publicity.

The I.R.B. and Parnell in Cork

In *The I.R.B. from the Land War to Sinn Féin*, Owen McGee states that it was only in late September 1880 that the Land League was established in Co. Cork. However, as we have seen, the Cork Land League was active much earlier and meetings outside Cork city were held as early as the 1 August meeting at Millstreet.³⁵⁵ It is noteworthy that, even at this early meeting, several of the same names who were involved in the meetings in West Cork were present, notably Patrick O'Hea, Edward O'Farrell, and John Heffernan. On 3 October 1880, a huge demonstration took place in Cork to welcome Parnell. However, the Parnell meeting highlighted a division in the Cork Land League that had been gaining momentum since August. In August, at a meeting of the Cork Land League attended by fourteen members and with its president, Edward Farrell, in the chair, Timothy Cronin, the secretary, proposed (with John O'Brien seconding) a motion condemning the robbery of arms from the ship *Juno* at

³⁵² *The Times*, 28 Sept. 1880; *Irish Times*, 27 Sept. 1880.

³⁵³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 Sept. 1880.

³⁵⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 27 Sept. 1880.

³⁵⁵ McGee, *The I.R.B.*, p. 77; Millstreet Co. Cork, 1 Aug. 1880, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell, box 5.

Passage West on 12 August.³⁵⁶ This resulted in heated exchanges, with T.P. Sullivan saying that he was a nationalist and that no organisation should condemn their countrymen as this was the doing the work of English spies. Sullivan also declared that he belonged to many organisations and would 'belong to any organisation that had for its object the good of the country'.³⁵⁷ From this, we may assume that he was broadly hinting that he belonged to the I.R.B., which was being criticised by Cronin's motion. Sullivan was supported in an amendment to the motion, to adjourn the meeting, by John Heffernan. After two votes were taken, Cronin's resolution was defeated first by 7 to 6 votes and, as there was some reported doubt, a second vote was taken resulting in 7 to 5 against Cronin. The chairman of the meeting, Edward Farrell, did not have to exercise his casting vote. Therefore, it may be assumed that 8 of the members of the committee were either I.R.B. members or supporters.

Six weeks later, when the Land League in Cork was preparing for Parnell's visit, Cronin took a leading role on the part of the Land League. However, a second committee—the 'old Parnell reception committee'—was at odds with the Cork Land League as the former would not come together under the Land League banner.³⁵⁸ A further development came when a circular was issued by what *The Nation* termed 'the local Nationalist party', stating:

It may not be imprudent that as individuals you would take part in the forthcoming demonstration to Mr Parnell. But as a body, to interfere even in the remotest degree would be a contravention of your clearly defined principles of nationality, and might be construed as a recognition of that constitutional agitation which those principles teach us always has been utterly impotent to forward the welfare of our country. You are, however, at liberty to join with your trade societies and benefit societies and other non-political associations with which you may be connected, on according Mr. Parnell hearty respect and applause for his noble exertions to

³⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 16 Aug. 1880, 13 Aug. 1880.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 Aug. 1880.

³⁵⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 2 Oct. 1880.

relieve the deep distress of our people, and his honest endeavours to ameliorate the pitiable condition of our peasant population.³⁵⁹

This statement appeared to allow for the I.R.B. to attend the meeting and also gave a public endorsement of Parnell. However, C.G. Doran, head of the I.R.B. in Cork, though not quoted in that capacity by *Irish Times*, wrote a letter to a meeting of the Cork trades held on 27 September. He stated that he did not believe the Nationalists were responsible for the ‘weak-kneed’ pronouncement nor would they ‘[...] commit political suicide by abandoning the national faith of Tone, Emmet and Mitchel for the national heresy of Parnell and Company.’³⁶⁰ However, at the same meeting, John O’Connor, who was secretary of the I.R.B. in Cork, said that he ‘was a Nationalist’ and gave a similar opinion to that expressed in the circular.³⁶¹ He went on to state that when the ‘nationalist party showed they should show in strength, and not expose their weakness to the enemy.’³⁶² Robert Walsh said: ‘The Nationalists did not intend to honour Mr. Parnell as a Parliamentary man, for they did not believe in Parliament, but they would take part individually to honour Mr. Parnell, who had declared himself a Nationalist.’³⁶³ Walsh felt he could ask ‘in this assembly of Irishmen’ whether they were not always together, and replied ‘No, they were not’.³⁶⁴ He also felt that, should they all be armed, they would not be together (with Parnell) either.³⁶⁵ Walsh’s reported pronouncement was phrased in such a way as to indicate that he spoke for the Nationalists. That, coupled with O’Connor’s stated assertion that he was a Nationalist and his apparent knowledge of what the Nationalists would do, adds further weight to the thesis that the I.R.B. was endorsing Parnell. The fact that both men supported the

³⁵⁹ *The Nation*, 2 Oct. 1880.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Irish Times*, 28 Sept. 1880.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

advice given in the circular indicates that the Cork I.R.B. were responsible for the circular despite Doran's letter, which was not an outright denial of their involvement.

In light of these public anomalies in the I.R.B. attitude leading to a publicly reported conflict of opinion both at the Cork trades meeting and at the earlier meeting of the Cork Land League, it might be assumed that both the Land League and the I.R.B. were split in Cork. However, it may be the case that the I.R.B. was merely split in terms of the information it offered publicly and which allowed for a dual platform: the new departure, on one hand, and the desire to free Ireland by armed insurrection, on the other. While the Land League split in Cork was merely between the I.R.B. (who were the majority) and constitutionalists (the minority), Doran in his letter was echoing the declared stance of the I.R.B. Supreme Council. However, John O'Connor and Robert Murphy were declaring the I.R.B.'s *de facto* stance or operational stance and effectively issuing orders to their membership through a public forum. The Cork I.R.B. was covering all their bases: Doran, who Parnell had previously courted, was maintaining the traditional I.R.B. line in public, while O'Connor and Murphy were outlining what the I.R.B. on the ground were going to do.³⁶⁶ While Doran and O'Connor's public utterances were at odds with what transpired at the Parnell demonstration, this indicates that it is necessary to probe I.R.B. statements for hidden meanings rather than accept them literally. While it is possible to argue that Doran was hostile to I.R.B. members' involvement in politics in the mid-1870s, leading directly to O'Connor Power, Biggar, Egan and Barry being expelled from both the supreme council and the I.R.B. in March 1877, events in Cork indicate that the I.R.B. was taking a very different stance on the ground in 1880.³⁶⁷ Likewise, the apparent split between O'Connor and Doran over Parnell could be used as evidence supporting O'Connor's later claims that he had left

³⁶⁶ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 48.

³⁶⁷ McGee, *I.R.B.*, pp 55-6.

the I.R.B. when he became involved with the Land League. However, the character of the Parnell demonstration and the treatment meted out to Cronin and O'Brien on 3 October renders either hypothesis void and indicates that Doran, O'Connor and the I.R.B. may well have been acting in concert.

The raid for arms on the Juno on 12 August was undoubtedly the work of the I.R.B.. While the public proposal by Cronin that the Cork Land League should condemn a raid for arms was defeated, it was something which the I.R.B. could not let occur again while maintaining their ascendant curve. The Parnell visit provided the organisation with an opportunity to display both its odium of Cronin and Murphy and also its special position locally. When Parnell arrived by special arrangement at Blarney Station, an immense crowd of town and country people had gathered. Surrounding fields were filled with men on horseback and what the *West Cork Eagle* described as a small body of horsemen provided a 'cavalry' escort.³⁶⁸ When Cronin and O'Brien attempted to get into the lead carriage with Parnell, a group approached them and a voice declared that there were 'better men than them to sit beside Parnell' and they were dragged from the carriage.³⁶⁹ The men from Cork who did sit with Parnell and T.P. O'Connor MP in the lead carriage were John Heffernan, Edward Farrell and Patrick O'Hea.³⁷⁰ Cronin and O'Brien attempted to mount four other carriages and, on at least one occasion, some occupants levelled revolvers at them and forced them off.³⁷¹ An account of the same altercation appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* and was possibly written by the author of the *West Cork Eagle* account, as it included in its preface the same phrases as the *Eagle* in describing the meeting, and was more detailed and less

³⁶⁸ *WCE*, 9 Oct. 1880.

³⁶⁹ *WCE*, 9 Oct. 1880; *The Nation*, 9 Oct. 1880.

³⁷⁰ *The Nation*, 9 Oct. 1880.

³⁷¹ *WCE*, 9 Oct. 1880.

equivocal regarding Nationalist involvement in the reception for Parnell.³⁷² According to the *Freeman's Journal*, Cronin and O'Brien, having first sat in Parnell's carriage, were compelled to get down when it was surrounded by a body of young men who 'expressed the utmost goodwill for Mr. Parnell'.³⁷³ They then ascended a carriage bearing T.D. Sullivan, Patrick Egan, and J.W. Walsh of Balla, Co. Mayo, which was soon stopped by another 'body of young men' who insisted the pair walk to Cork and four revolvers were produced and 'placed within a short distance of his (O'Brien's) head'.³⁷⁴ When Cronin refused to come down a 'Bulldog revolver was then put to his head' and he acceded and climbed down, saying, 'I know how to punish you'.³⁷⁵ The *Freeman's Journal* also noted that 'The Nationalists who had at first marched as a compact group broke up into detachments and scattered themselves along the road'.³⁷⁶ When Cronin and O'Brien were finally compelled to dismount the Middleton wagonette in what was a 'fierce and dangerous altercation', one man stated that he 'had the authority to take Mr. Cronin into custody'.³⁷⁷ Cronin was hustled and kept under 'close surveillance for some considerable distance'.³⁷⁸ According to the *West Cork Eagle*, the pair were deemed 'obnoxious Land Leaguers' by the 'pure revolutionaries of Cork'.³⁷⁹ While the latter were willing 'to accede some measure of toleration to Mr. Parnell' on account of his efforts in the recent distress, they 'were not prepared to extend a similar favour to those of his followers who repudiate a recourse to arms for the redress of Irish grievances'.³⁸⁰ The *Eagle* report had more the air of a press statement than of journalistic reporting. The Cork meeting was described as a great demonstration and

³⁷² *Freeman's Journal*, Oct. 4, 1880.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Brackets this author.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *WCE*, 9 Oct. 1880.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

afforded the West Cork Land Leaguers and their organisers a further boost to their political celebrity. Whereas O’Hea, Edward Farrell and John Heffernan accompanied Parnell in the lead carriage, Richard Hodnett was afforded a place on the platform at The Park after a procession from Blarney which was miles long and included large bodies of men on horseback and thousands lining the route. The *Eagle* declared that not since the O’Connell’s Centenary had Ireland seen such a demonstration. Patrick O’Hea proposed a resolution at the meeting pledging that none would take over a farm from anyone unfairly evicted, while members of the local Cork Land League committees were represented on the platform.

At the later banquet for two hundred, presided over by Edward Farrell, John O’Connor again exposed his public political support for the I.R.B. In a T.P. O’Connor MP noted that the ‘men of ’98’ were called ruffians and murderers until 1848, when they were called ‘heroes and martyrs’, while ‘the men of ‘48’ were called ‘ruffians and scoundrels’. He went on to note that they, too, were later discovered to be ‘heroes and martyrs’. He continued saying that now Parnell and his friends were being described as ‘inciters of assassination’ but that Parnell and his friends who were ‘[...] now denounced as ruffians and assassins, united the high courage of patriots with the sagisous(*sic*) moderation of statesmen’.³⁸¹ John O’Connor took exception with T.P. O’Connor omitting the Fenians from his retrospective of Irish history; without naming them, he referred to them as the men who had ‘brought the Church Act and the Land Act’. O’Connor said it was an accidental omission and that on platforms in England before an English populace he always stated ‘it was the spirit kept alive by that movement that made their present work in Ireland so easy’.³⁸² A toast to The Land League was followed by a toast proposed by Rev. Eugene Sheehy, the allegedly Fenian

³⁸¹ Ibid

³⁸² Ibid.

priest from Kilmallock, saying that ‘as an Irish priest who has read a little of Irish history, paid his tribute, humble as it was to the men of ’67, for he believed that if Ireland had not had the men of ’67, she would not have the Parnell of 1880 (cheers).’³⁸³ The toasts to the Land League and the men of 1867 at the close of Parnell’s public visit to Cork are notable. The *Irish Times* of 5 October reported that the Land League in Cork, which it reported had only been temporarily formed at the time of Parnell’s return as an MP for the city, was to be reorganised and would be ‘of a more representative character, embracing farmers, local traders, and others’.³⁸⁴ The same paper stated that neither Cronin nor O’Brien had sworn information to the police about their treatment, rendering police action impossible against the perpetrators of the armed threats against them.³⁸⁵ It is notable that, after the Parnell visit, Doran, who was also a Queenstown Town Commissioner, was reported attacking Parnell’s position as being between two stools, stating that Parnell’s position was both illegal and untenable, falling short of ‘Shaw’s position which was to beg for what was required and O’Donovan Rossa’s position which was to fight for whatever you require’.³⁸⁶ Doran stated that the Parnell position was ‘neither beg nor fight but bluster’.³⁸⁷ The latter statement might indicate that there was dissension in the I.R.B. but for the fact that the man who would soon assume the position vacated by Timothy Cronin as secretary of the Cork Land League was John O’Connor, a senior officer in that body. Whereas in normal constitutional bodies some consistency of statement and stance on issues might be deemed an imperative, it would be foolhardy to apply such rules to a secret body that was attempting to control a public organisation at a local level while under the attention of the national and international press and under the observation of the local authorities

³⁸³ *WCE*, 9 Oct. 1880.

³⁸⁴ *Irish Times*, 5 Oct. 1880.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 Oct. 1880.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

and the government. There was no imperative on a secret society to follow the norms of open political society or discourse. A secret society's actions are governed by its own internal needs and imperatives. In the case of Cork and the Land League in 1880, it was the desire and imperative of the I.R.B. to control the public manifestations of the Land League, its organisation and the organisation, in order to further its own agenda. The fact that a public display of armed force utilised in order to repel two organisers of the Land League from carriages bearing both sitting members of parliament and committee members of the Land League, with no reported opposition from Land Leaguers or MPs, gives a clear indication of the true form and composition intended for the future of the land war in Cork. This is an important point since the reason that O'Brien and Cronin were reviled was stated as being that they opposed people taking arms and thus the concept of armed insurrection. Whereas historians have argued that Parnell maintained an astute balancing act between physical force and constitutional imperatives, one historian has argued that he had in fact taken the I.R.B. oath.³⁸⁸ Whereas the latter argument may be not be entirely convincing, the actions and lack of reaction on 3 October in Cork to two members of the Land League being forced off carriages at gunpoint amid a strong display of Nationalist drilling and cavalry indicates at least the ambiguity that was extant in the autumn of 1880 as to what course the Land League agitation in Cork was to follow.

Following the Parnell meeting, C.G. Doran publicly announced that the Nationalists of Cork had gone over to the Land League.³⁸⁹ His letter denounced this as a 'capitulation', claiming that the Nationalists had acted 'treacherously to the cause' they had been upholding in the past 'by countenancing, either individually or collectively, a

³⁸⁸ Patrick Maume, 'Parnell and the I.R.B. Oath,' *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 115 (May, 1995), pp 363-70, *passim*.

³⁸⁹ *The Nation*, 9 Oct. 1880.

movement the nationalism of which all true Irishmen can judge by the vapid meanderings of the Parliamentary orators on Sunday'.³⁹⁰ According to the same report in the *Freeman's Journal*, the Land League in Cork was also to be organised and Parnell had issued circulars relating to this. Given the fact that it was already in existence and organised, it is clear that—at least on the propaganda front—there were issues that the new departure Nationalists felt needed to be addressed by publicly reorganising their body.³⁹¹ This reorganisation saw John O'Connor, the self-proclaimed Nationalist, take over as paid secretary.³⁹²

The Cork Farmers' Club voluntarily dissolved on 24 October. According to its chairman, D.J. Riordan, they had not held their regular meetings as they did not want to 'appear antagonistic to the Land League'.³⁹³ However, as the bishops and priests were united, he felt that anything could be accomplished.³⁹⁴ He said that, as the 'Government at present [...] was determined to redress the wrongs of Ireland', anyone committing a crime 'hampered the Government and gave strength to the enemy'.³⁹⁵ He further advised against intemperate language; however, given the cries of 'Shoot the landlords' at a land meeting at Inniscarra in November which was addressed by Heffernan, Riordan's exhortations did not carry a great deal of influence.³⁹⁶ On dissolution, those present at the Cork Farmers' Club, 'about 30 farmers' went on to attend a meeting of the Land League.³⁹⁷ Col. Colthurst sent a cheque for £25 to cover the outstanding debts of the Club.³⁹⁸ Hence not only had the hard-line anti-Parnell face of the I.R.B. publicly thrown in the towel and accepted Land League dominance as the *realpolitik*; so too had

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² *Freeman's Journal*, 28 Sept. 1880; *The Nation*, 9 Oct. 1880.

³⁹³ *Freeman's Journal*, 25 Oct. 1880.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ *Irish Times*, 29 Nov. 1880.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Ibid; and also 25 Oct. 1880.

both clergy and their moderate Whig torch-bearer, Col. Colthurst. Exhortations to moderation from one side and claims of capitulation from the other extreme make it clear that whatever had been preventing the organisation of West Carbery for the Land League was a political force of the past. Between the Ballydehob meeting and the Skibbereen meeting (a period of two weeks), the clergy and the grassroots of the I.R.B. had moved to support the political body in ascendance. The Parnell meeting one week after Skibbereen, gave a public and militarised face to this ascendancy.

Conclusion

In early 1879, the clergy supported Colthurst, a former army officer, to replace McCarthy Downing, a '48 man, even though a nephew of the latter was willing to stand. By the autumn of 1880, however, politics both at the grassroots and parliamentary levels in Cork city and county had taken a radical shift towards advanced Nationalism, but with the Supreme Council side-lined by lower-echelon I.R.B. men like John O'Connor. There were two important factors in this momentum towards adopting the Land League. Firstly, as a vehicle for political change, the existence of a national movement which ostensibly advocated tenant right provided a perfect vehicle for ambitious I.R.B. elements to emerge from the shadows; secondly, in adopting the new-departure politics, they had successfully abrogated the power previously held by key bodies such as the Cork Farmers' Club, whose influence was nullified from within. The distress caused by the poor harvest in the winter of 1878-9 might have been a catalyst for an abiding paternalistic relationship between the various social elements and classes. However, local agitators, such as Richard Hodnett P.L.G. of Ballydehob, were in a position to voice their discontent and maintain a steady stream of anti-landlord invective at public meetings that were reported locally. The key figures in the organisation of West Cork for Land League and nationalist agitation were clearly active earlier in 1880.

The pivotal moment of ascent for the advanced Nationalists was Parnell's return to Ireland in March 1880 from his US tour with Dillon. Despite both government and charitable efforts to relieve distress, the fear of hunger in an area that had been greatly affected by the Great Famine was a boon for those who accepted Mitchel's genocide doctrine. The potential to seize this rhetoric and utilise it in furtherance of the advanced Nationalist cause was as evident at the first Land League meetings in West Cork in the autumn of 1880 as it had been in the winter and spring of the year. Throughout 1880, two figures, John R. Heffernan and Edward Farrell, appeared repeatedly in various positions not only at moments of political importance but also at events reported by the newspapers. By appearing alongside Parnell and Tim Healy, they received national press mentions. On a local level, at meetings of the Cork Farmers' Club, and as committee members of the Cork Land League, they received both local and occasional national press mentions also. By the autumn of 1880, they had orchestrated the demise of the Cork Farmers' Club and replaced it with their own Land League organisation. However their *coup de grace* was delivered only after local branches of the Land League had been established. Likewise, on a micro level, in the village of Ballydehob and the Skull Union, Richard Hodnett became an important figure, receiving press mentions both nationally and locally. He journeyed to London to meet Parnell with Patrick O'Hea, his local partner in organising the Skibbereen and Skull Unions for the Land League, who was a colleague of Farrell's from the Cork Farmers' Club and a solicitor. Though it was only in later police reports that the terms Nationalist and Fenian would be associated with some of these men, the circumstantial evidence of their ascent to key organisational positions in the League in Cork and the fact that the rhetoric used in West Cork at the inauguration meetings was resolutely Nationalist is important. C.G. Doran's comments, following the Parnell visit to Cork in October 1880, that the

Nationalists of Cork had moved as a body towards the Land League may have been heartfelt or it was politically expedient for him to publicise that fact. Given the nature of the I.R.B. as an oath-bound secret society, it is difficult to gauge whether Doran was being totally genuine in his public declaration that the I.R.B. men in the League had in fact betrayed their previous convictions. For the Land League to be an effective vehicle of revolution for the I.R.B., it was advisable that it could not be declared such by the authorities. Therefore, if a senior Nationalist I.R.B. leader and Supreme Council member was denouncing the Nationalists who were now running the constitutional Home Rule political machine, the I.R.B. and Land League grassroots in the county, this could have served as a device to aid in their sublimation.

What is not clear is what this new-found power by an advanced Nationalist political class was aiming to achieve. In his dealings with Cork, Parnell was reverential to the Advancing Nationalist cause and, indeed, appeared to advocate their aims in such a way as to not be open to prosecution. He placed the aspiration for the acceptance of the I.R.B. ideal in the voice of the American diaspora, who he reminded the people, would also provide unlimited funds for their cause should the need arise. The balancing act was one of incredible verbal and political dexterity but the audience was clearly one that would hear what it wanted to hear, and seeing the strong men of the county rally to the Land League was obviously a catalyst for the I.R.B. at a grassroots level to emerge into the public realm, though not as themselves. They had the Land League. When Devoy, Davitt and Parnell welded their pact, it was obviously one that needed the grassroots to effect. It is evident that, in Co. Cork, the Land League was a product of advanced Nationalist ambition and timeliness. The potential for a genuine revolution in the autumn of 1880 was very real if forces that played against it were side-lined or co-opted. It is evident that these conditions existed in West Cork in the autumn of 1880.

Within two weeks of the Ballydehob meeting, the previously hesitant clergy were expressing full support for the Land League in language as intemperate as might have been expected from the I.R.B. themselves. The rhetorical devices of the mid-nineteenth century separatists were also evident at land meetings. What remained was to operate the open movement and press forward for the potential revolution whilst keeping the government and authorities back-footed by the appearance of propriety and agrarian idealism. In this regard even the most well-meaning and paternalistic members of the land-owning class were fair game. It was imperative that, having side-lined moderates in politics, the I.R.B. men who controlled the Land League should prove that they had the ability to usurp the civil authorities—whether they be policemen, magistrates, or other figures—by breaking the backs, or assuming the authority of the local ruling class who were deemed to represent England, the local resident landlords.

CHAPTER THREE—PERMANENT REVOLUTIONARIES: THE I.R.B. AND THE LAND WAR IN WEST CORK

The Irish National Land League, founded on 21 October 1879, was a compact between revolutionary nationalists, or Fenians, and Parnell's parliamentary followers which officially sought to create peasant proprietorship in Ireland.¹ In practice the Land League combined the 'land question with the question of national independence' and allowed for a resurgence of the revolutionary secret society, the Irish Republican Brotherhood.² The Land War tested the efficacy of the Fenian organisation and its grassroots. There was an inherent difficulty proving Fenian or Irish Republican Brotherhood activism when members remained true to the oath of secrecy that membership demanded or when they used another organisation as a repository for their own records.³ This is especially so as the secret revolutionary organisation had operatives who remained members for life and retained the organisation's oath of secrecy when they advanced a political message in public. Despite informers and infiltrators at national and local level, a great deal of the I.R.B.'s business remained secret. This chapter focuses on Ballydehob in West Cork and examines a suspected cell of I.R.B. members. As discussed in Chapter Two, between the beginning of 1879 and the autumn of 1880, the I.R.B.—or its members acting inside other organisations—had effectively side-lined moderate nationalists and their own fundamentalist wing, if the public pronouncements of C.G. Doran could be taken at face value.

¹ John Devoy, 'Parnell and the Fenians', *Chicago Tribune*, 24 Mar. 1899 cited in T.W. Moody 'The new departure in Irish politics, 1878-9' in H.A. Croome, T.W. Moody, and D.B. Quinn, (eds), *Essays in British and Irish History* (London, 1949), p. 303.

² T.W. Moody, *Davitt and the Irish Revolution 1848-82* (Oxford, 1981), p. 36.

³ Report of Supt. John Mallon, 'G' Division, Dublin Metropolitan Police, 2 Dec. 1880, N.A.I., Irish National League papers [I.N.L. papers], box 9.

In June 1880, Clan Na Gael's John Devoy noted that the Irish National Land League 'made it possible to keep alive a national movement in the future'.⁴ For Devoy and his contemporaries, the 'national movement' meant the Fenian movement of physical force or advanced Nationalism. Two months after Devoy opined on the benefits that Fenianism would derive from the Land League, the first branches of the Land League were established in West Cork. In 1888, at *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission, R.I.C. Sergeant Lang stated that Ballydehob, a tiny village in West Cork, was in 1880 and 1881 'the political centre of the West'.⁵ He did not elaborate on what kind of politics the village was the centre of, be it constitutional Home Rule or revolutionary Nationalist/I.R.B./Fenian. His statement does imply that Land League activities in West Cork were led by the Ballydehob branch. As has been noted above in Chapter Two, Richard Hodnett on approaching the Cork Land League at a public meeting in August 1880, stated that there were forces that were preventing the establishment of the I.N.L.L. in West Cork. Following the establishment of branches in West Cork in September 1880 and the expulsion, at gunpoint, of anti-physical force nationalists from the leadership of the county Land League branch, it is necessary to examine the local organisation to determine the extent of I.R.B. and the advanced Nationalist imperatives that prevailed in the West Cork. An examination of the operation and activities of the Ballydehob Branch of the I.N.L.L. reveals that it was organised and managed by a small cadre who wielded an influence on their community disproportionate to the small membership which the branch had during most of the year and one month it was operational. Events at Ballydehob served as the catalyst for what amounted to an open insurrection in West Cork in June 1881. However, proving that

⁴ Frank Rynne, "'This extra parliamentary propaganda': Land League Posters", *History Ireland*, Vol. 16, No.6, Nov./Dec., 2008, p. 39.

⁵ Evidence of Sergeant Lang, R.I.C., 6 Dec 1888, *Special Commission Act 1888, Report of the Proceedings before the Commissioners appointed by the Act*, (4 Vols, London, 1890), i, p. 526.

someone in the Land League was in fact an I.R.B. organiser or operative relies on the assessment of circumstantial evidence. In Chapter Two, this circumstantial evidence was proven on a county-wide basis, if one accepts that C.G. Doran's statement that the I.R.B. had 'capitulated' was either a false flag or that his leadership of the grassroots had been usurped by others such as John O'Connor, Edward Farrell and John Heffernan. In many cases, several small clues—such as the language used in speeches, personal connections and police intelligence—may be combined and make it possible to conclude that that someone was an I.R.B. man. However, in general, the character of the West Cork Land League flowed from Ballydehob. Having been founded at Ballydehob on 12 September 1880, it spread with Skibbereen soon being organised. Land League activity and meetings in even more outlying districts followed quickly.

The founding of the Land League branches in West Cork was soon followed, on Saturday, 16 October, by a gun attack in broad daylight on a landlord near Skibbereen. Samuel Newburgh Hutchins and his driver were ambushed, resulting in the driver, John Downey, being mortally wounded.⁶ It would appear that Hutchins was not the unfeeling landlord who might have expected local antagonism. He informed the inquest into Downey's death that he had been collecting rents that day in the parish of Drimoleague. However, he had restricted his demands to rents due on the previous 24 March or before and had not sought the rent which had fallen due on 29 September. Moreover, he had been asked by tenants for an abatement and had allowed a 10% reduction in the long overdue rents and he also granted 'the indulgence' to those who asked for more time to pay.⁷ Only two tenants refused to pay rent when Hutchins refused their offers of, in one

⁶ *WCE*, 23 Oct. 1880.

⁷ *Ibid.*

case £14 in lieu of £22. After the inquest adjourned, Hutchins was reluctant to talk to the press but was persuaded to make a statement by Warburton RM after the pair had walked up and down outside for some time. Warburton had persuaded him to speak to the press to clarify matters that were raised at the Bantry Land League inaugural meeting held the day following the shooting. Hutchins told the press that he had never received any intimation by way of threatening letter that he may have been in danger. He had two ejectment writs issued at the previous June sessions but had not enforced the evictions.⁸ Local children and one local farmer had seen a man—described by the children as dressed in a woman’s cloak—in the area where the murder took place at various times that afternoon. A man wearing similar garb was reported to have called that morning on an old woman who occupied the lodge at Hutchins’ house, 14 miles from the murder scene and had been told he was collecting rents at Drimoleague. Some locals claimed that the motive for the attack was robbery as two shots were fired which they assumed were to kill or disable the two men so the rent receipts could be stolen. However, others were reported to believe that the attack was intended to scare landlords into either flight or submission to the demands of the Land League.⁹ Hutchins’ nervousness regarding the press was due to statements made at the Land League meeting in Bantry the day after the attempt on his life (i.e. 17 October). Among those from West Cork who attended were Patrick O’Hea, Richard Hodnett and John Collins.¹⁰ According to the *West Cork Eagle*, close to ten thousand people attended and noted that Spillane’s band led the Skibbereen delegation playing national airs.¹¹ Addressing the meeting, Tim Healy MP stated that it was for want of an organised Land League in the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 30 Oct. 1880.

¹⁰ Ibid., 23 Oct. 1880.

¹¹ Ibid.

district that had led to the ‘regrettable occurrence of last night’.¹² He went on to ask upon who the main guilt of the ‘unfortunate outrage’ rested and a voices variously answered ‘Hutchins’ and ‘the landlords’.¹³ Healy then denounced Hutchins, stating there was evidence in the Hutchins estate of ‘cruelty and injustice and rack renting’ similar to that of ‘the estate of the greatest tyrant in Ireland.’¹⁴ Healy noted that he had seen the ‘poor, unhappy boy stretched out and weltering in his own blood’ the previous day.¹⁵ He claimed that, had the Land League been organised in the district, such an occurrence would not have taken place. He said Hutchins was ‘vindictive and vicious’ and despised ‘the prayer of tenants’ that he had got writs against. Healy said he was there on behalf of the Irish National Land League to provide all those unjustly treated with a better way of redressing wrongs: ‘[...] if five hundred thousand tenants straighten up their backs and stand in their determination before the ten thousand landlords in this country, I say they will sweep away these few men, and they will stand in the end, free, erect and disenthralled.’¹⁶ J. A. Walsh of Balla, Co Mayo said that he wished to express his regret on behalf of the Irish National Land League for the ‘lamentable occurrence that took place in the locality last evening’.¹⁷ However he claimed that not a single crime had been committed in the past eighteen months ‘wherever the Land League was in working order’.¹⁸ Walsh ended his speech by saying that Parnell was ‘the captain of that ship “the Emerald Isle”’ and was directing her ‘to the safe waters of happiness and prosperity, and the glorious sunlight of national independence’.¹⁹ At this Bantry meeting, John O’Connor, secretary of the Cork Land League and the I.R.B., made his

¹² Mr W. H. Noble, “Report of Land Meeting, Bantry Co. Cork”, N.A.I., Chief Crown Solicitor papers[CCS], Queen v. Parnell papers (1881-82), box 1.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

first prominent speech at a West Cork land meeting. He took exception to disparaging remarks made by the local parish priest, Fr Murphy, who chaired the meeting, against what O'Connor termed were 'a class of people not interfering with us'.²⁰ Murphy had condemned 'extremism'.²¹ O'Connor claimed that Murphy had called on the people to 'denounce all revolutionary measures,' stating, before he was interrupted, 'I would not fulfil my duty to that party for which I have respect, if I did not say that revolution (Interruption) I can't think but (Interruption) I know men in the country'.²² O'Connor did not get to finish his point as Fr Murphy protested his using a 'word of that sort' and threatened to leave the chair if he did so again.²³ O'Connor pressed his point saying he was sorry it was called for as 'it would be a great mistake to put ourselves in the way of hostility to that party'.²⁴ The party being referenced was the I.R.B. Following the inquest into Downey's murder, Hutchins and his family received a police escort as they departed from West Cork on their way to Dublin.²⁵

It is interesting to note that at the Bantry meeting, held less a day after a local man was killed while driving a landlord collecting his rent, the messages conveyed by a sitting MP, a founder of the Irish National Land League and a senior I.R.B. man, were that there would be no crime if the Land League were in force, a call for Irish independence and a nod to the revolutionary party, the I.R.B. While Downey was described as being a sad boy, the mention of the state of his corpse added nothing to any exhortation for moderation despite the weasel words that accompanied the statements. There is no evidence that the meeting in Bantry and the shooting of Downey and attempted murder of Hutchins were in any way connected. The convergence of the two

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *WCE*, 23 Oct. 1880.

²² 'Report of Land Meeting, Bantry Co. Cork', N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers (1881-82), box 1.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *WCE*, 30 Oct. 1880.

events on the same weekend, a weekend where there were sixteen major Land League meetings, may have been entirely coincidental. However, if, as the *West Cork Eagle* stated the, Bantry meeting had ten thousand in attendance, then a strong message was being sent by some force or individuals to the people of West Cork. Taken alongside the claims of both Healy and Walsh, namely that by organising the League people would at once have a voice and also no crime would be extant, it is possible to see a use of rhetoric that could be perceived as offering a utopian protection racket. The fact that the attempt to kill a landlord on the eve of the last large West Cork district being organised for the Land League and the fact that the meeting the following day used the example of the attempt on and taking of, a life may have been as coincidental as it was opportunistic. The reason to have the Land League firmly established was in order to achieve order and independence.

It is noteworthy that, in the face of clerical condemnation, O'Connor defended the adherents of advanced Nationalism or the 'revolutionary party' and made a clear statement stating his respect for, and duty to them, as well as pointing out that it would be an error to antagonise them. The fact that these statements were made in the aftermath of a killing that O'Connor did not condemn is also poignant. By declaring, at a public meeting of the Land League, that he had a duty to the I.R.B. sent a clear message to grassroots I.R.B. men, to wit, that the Land League was open to them. Furthermore, doing so in direct opposition to the views of the local parish priest served as a public admonishment of the priest before his flock. In the introduction to the 2009 book, *The Black Hand of Republicanism Fenianism and Modern Ireland*, Fearghal McGarry and James McConnell noted that rather than being directly linked to the Serbian secret society, the I.R.B. was influenced by various European revolutionary

physical force movements.²⁶ Despite their small membership, they maintained a strong influence on the emotive nationalism that was the product of decades of nationalist propaganda and development; as Matthew Kelly stated, they had an ‘emotional resonance with the Irish people.’²⁷ It was this emotiveness and his own position as an I.R.B. man that compelled O’Connor to assert his advocacy of the advanced Nationalist or revolutionary party in the face of clerical opposition. In doing so, he also indicated that clerical opinion was both reproachable and fallible.

The shooting of Downey and the attack on a landlord further polarised the local community in Skull. In this early phase of the Land War, it indicated that the climate of threats manifested by rowdy shouts at land meetings was not hollow bravado but could be supported by physical force. In the aftermath of the shooting of Hutchins and the Bantry meeting, the Earl of Bandon, who was Lieutenant of County Cork, called a meeting of the magistrates of Cork West Riding to ‘discuss the present condition of Cork West Riding and other important matters’. Among those present were James Francis Bernard, the Fourth Earl of Bandon, and Sir George Colthurst, who had been the conservative candidate in the 1879 by-election, The O’Donohue, B.L. Fleming, and J.W. Payne who owned land in the Ballydehob area, as did the Hungerford family, represented by Richard, William and Henry Hungerford and various others.²⁸ Though the proceedings were private, the resolutions were widely reported. These were that *Habeas Corpus* Act be suspended, that the Peace Preservation Act, which had given special powers of arrest and allowed the suppression of public meetings, be re-enacted and that an Arms Act, restricting or prohibiting the ownership of guns, be brought in by

²⁶ Fergal McGarry and James McConnel, ‘Introduction’, idem (eds), *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland*, (Dublin, 2009), p. xvi.

²⁷ M. J. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism 1882-1916* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. 123.

²⁸ *WCE*, 30 Oct. 1880.

the government.²⁹ It was reported that one of those attending felt though ‘the Chief Secretary had intimated that he was not inclined to reintroduce the Peace Preservation Act [but that] “with a little pressure put on them the Government were prepared to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act”’.³⁰ They also resolved to request that the Lord Lieutenant be informed that the provision of 20 extra police sent to the West Riding was insufficient and that troops be sent to Bantry, Bandon, Skibbereen, and Dunmanway.³¹ However the *West Cork Eagle* reported that it was evident that in West Cork there was an increased police presence and that the police had taken to carrying their weapons which was ‘a custom only lately introduced’ when carrying out ‘trifling duties’, while two officers of the Royal Engineers were making arrangements for the reception of extra military at Bantry.³² Mr Warburton RM gave a report while some of the magistrates present noted the ‘peaceable condition of some districts’.³³ The fact that the suspension of *habeas corpus* was being urged in the face of magistrates claiming some districts were peaceable indicates that they were seeking to restrain the landlords from over-reacting in response to provocation while at the same time increasing the police presence in the district. However local land-owners were genuinely shaken by the recent events. Their demand that legislation such as the Peace Preservation Act and an Arms Act be reintroduced indicates that their fear went beyond that of murder as these latter two parliamentary acts were most likely used in times of great political upheaval or times of revolution. In November, the local agitators received a further boost to their credibility when *The Times* reported that extra police were needed due to ‘the disturbed state of the district’.³⁴ As has been noted above, the Land League claimed that once

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² *WCE*, 30 Oct. 1880.

³³ Ibid; *Irish Times*, 28 Oct. 1880.

³⁴ *The Times*, 13 Nov. 1880.

people joined the League, a district would be peaceable. This argument afforded the Land League a devious, albeit unconvincing, argument against any claims that it was in fact their agitation that was disturbing the peace of a district. The Land League claimed that it was in fact the tyrannical and unjust landlords that created disturbance.

Ballydehob Land League Branch

Following its inaugural meeting, the Ballydehob Land League branch began holding what became regular weekly meetings. These meetings at first allowed the airing of general grievances such as landlords raising the rent on farms that people had taken over by between 50% and 100%. In other anecdotes, unnamed landlords were said to have raised rents and taken several acres of the best land from the farm. When a farmer asked what the Land League's position was regarding the payment of rent, Richard Hodnett advised that the Land League did not object to the payment of rent that was at the Griffith's Valuation. However, land agents began to be named in particular cases, such as one raised in October where William Good was in dispute with Samuel Jago (*sic*).³⁵ At that juncture, William Good hoped to bring the case to the Quarter Sessions and was offered the support of the Land League in doing so.³⁶ In this early period, the Land League at Ballydehob was merely cutting its teeth. It would soon take on the character of a court that attempted to arbitrate disputes and dictate remedies. This process was relatively slow and was emboldened by factors such as the numerical strength of the branch and local factors determined by the influence the Land League could exert. On 29 October the Land League meeting was attended by a Protestant tenant named Kingston, who sought their assistance in a dispute with his landlord, J.R. Swanton.³⁷ This case is noteworthy as it indicates that the populist appeal of the Land

³⁵ *WCE*, 16 Oct. 1880.

³⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁷ *WCE*, 30 Oct. 1880. See Chapter Four below.

League was not entrenched in the nominally Catholic nationalist community. Other cases were discussed relating to another landlord, George Swanton; that discussion soon became more general, referring to the government wishing to bring in coercive measure while judges being paid thousands of pounds a year claimed they were forced to pass unjust judgements. Latterly, a Mr Donovan suggested that the room the Land League was renting ought to be open on Sundays for the public and that the League should subscribe to newspapers. After some discussion, it was decided that the Ballydehob Land League should subscribe to the '*Irish World, Nation, Freeman's Journal and Eagle*'.³⁸ It is notable that the, American publication, *Irish World* was an extreme Nationalist newspaper edited by Patrick Ford which had advocated 'scientific warfare' against Britain including the use of hot air balloons circling London and dropping bombs.³⁹ Indeed, in 1875, it was at Ford's home that O'Donovan Rossa, John McCafferty and Patrick Crowe first proposed the idea of 'skirmishing', the concept of bringing a guerrilla war to the England that led ultimately to the Dynamite War which began at the time of the Land War.⁴⁰ Clifford Lloyd, R.M. for the Kilmallock and Kilfinane districts in Co. Limerick continually raised the concern that various branches of the Land League 'abrogated to themselves and exercise the functions of a Government and of our Courts.'⁴¹ The weekly public meetings of the Ballydehob Land League continued to provide a forum for local tenants to seek redress of disputes.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Niall Whelehan "'Cheap as Soap and Common as Sugar": The Fenians, Dynamite and Scientific Warfare', McGarry and McConnel (eds), *The Black Hand of Republicanism*, p. 105 citing *Irish World*, 9 June 1877.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

⁴¹ Clifford Lloyd to W .E. Forster, 6 June 1881 N.A.I., CSORP/1881/18837. For Lloyd's account of his work combating the Land League in his roles as R.M. and Special R.M., see Lloyd, Charles Dalton Clifford, *Ireland under the Land League, A narrative of personal experiences* (London, 1892).

⁴² N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 8, Envelopes 36 & 39.

Soon, however, the Ballydehob Land League was issuing summonses on its own headed stationary and failure to attend or agree to its arbitration resulted in boycotting.⁴³

When faced with public accusations, some landlords sought to refute them publicly. In the aforementioned case of Kingston, the landlord, James R. Swanton, replied to the accusations in a letter to the *West Cork Eagle*. He completely denied Kingston's claims and explained his side of the story in some detail. He said that the main farm had been rented by the late Samuel Kingston some twenty years earlier and that in 1869 Kingston had rented a further 12 acres from him. Swanton noted that the rent had not been raised since the land was first rented and that the widow Kingston and her two sons lived on the larger farm as representatives of their father. One son had formerly been a policeman but left to take over his interest in the farm following the death of Samuel Kingston. Swanton claimed that they had been doing well and that the father had always paid his rent but one of the sons had guaranteed the debt of an indigent and subsequently had to pay that debt. Swanton claimed it was this, rather than the unviability of the land, that led to their problems. He noted the two sons had come to his home offering a part payment of a year's rent that was due but Swanton refused. Swanton said that the value of the farm they rented was added to the value of his own farm and therefore it was he who was paying all the rates and taxes on it. According to Swanton, it was the Kingstons who offered to give up the farm in return for another farm and £60. After a few days Swanton, agreed to this and allowed the pair to take possession of a farm for free even though he himself had paid £125 on it and further that they could retain the cattle and crops on the farms they were to give up. He also agreed

⁴³ Ibid.

to compensate them £6 for improvements on the smaller 12-acre farm even though they only asked for £3-4.⁴⁴

Swanton was at a loss as to the motive for the version of events relayed to the Ballydehob Land League. However, it may be that, given their hardship caused by taking on another man's debts, they felt that the Land League would in some way also compensate them. The Land League was also taking on legal obligations on behalf of tenants and utilising the services of Patrick O'Hea.⁴⁵

At the next meeting of the Ballydehob branch, Michael Sullivan stated that he had been approached by Constable Galbraith, who wished him to divulge the names of the members of the Land League; this Sullivan refused to do, telling him to apply to the chairman, Hodnett. There ensued some humorous banter about the police and a suggestion that, if Galbraith joined and paid his subscription, he could have any information he wanted.⁴⁶ Other meetings served to discuss previous cases where people who were, in fact in America and had surrendered farms to landlords such as John Limerick, might have them back should they return if the Land League took up their cases.⁴⁷ One tenant gave an account of the father of a present landlord burning sixteen hovels after the famine on land for which the son was now demanding a year's rent due. On asking for the name of the landlord, one of the board, Michael Sullivan, said he had met him the day before and had exchanged words with the landlord, Connelly calling Sullivan 'a meddling presumptuous fellow' to which Sullivan retorted Connelly was a 'whipper-in', the latter term being a reference to the assistant to a huntsman and therefore implying that he was merely a servant of the oppressor. To this he replied in

⁴⁴ *WCE*, 6 Nov. 1880.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 Nov. 1880.

Irish, calling Sullivan a *poscenaugh*.⁴⁸ What is notable about this reported occurrence on the byways of Ballydehob is that the minutiae of interaction between agents, landlords and tenants due to the establishment of the Land League and its public meetings was now being reported in the local newspaper and therefore was no longer private business but material for public discussion, public derision and—more importantly—potentially marking people out for intimidation. Other cases presented were not so straightforward and involved enforced sales that had occurred in the past before the Land League had organised, where agents were held up to be vindictive in refusing offers for land at £300 from the soon-to-be son-in-law of the troubled tenant while later at auction at the Bantry Courthouse the same agents accepted a winning bid of a mere £50 and £5 for the crops on the land from another person.⁴⁹ Through November, tenants approached the Land League asking if they should accept reductions of £6 and were informed that if the reduction of £6 did not bring the rent down to the Griffith valuation they should not pay the rent.⁵⁰ Such cases and such advice was being published every week as well as the general banter which poked fun at landlords, even naming names. On hearing that a Mr Bird had raised a man's rents from £2 10s. to £8 a year, one committee member asked 'Is he a bird of passage' and hoped that he 'would migrate from us'.⁵¹ Over a very short period, the Land League became newsworthy on a local and national level, providing a weekly forum to air even historical discontent and grudges and for the humorous humiliation of both landlord and policeman.

Powder and ball

The pressure being applied on local landlords by the Land League in Ballydehob was soon evident when the local landlords and magistrates, Richard Henry Notter,

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 20 Nov. 1880.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 27 Nov. 1880.

George Swanton, Becher Lionel Fleming, and Robert Swanton, presided over a Presentment Session at Ballydehob Court House on 18 November. The cess payers were represented by John Ardunel, Denis McCarthy, J. McCarthy, John Mahony, E. Leahy, D. Reagan and Isaac Notter. A case for compensation for malicious damage to houses belonging to one of George H. Swanton's tenants, Timothy Holland, raised local tensions. Holland had bought out the tenant interest in a property at Ardinina in November 1879. However, it became necessary to get an ejectment order as Coghlan, the sitting tenant who sold out his interest, would not vacate the property.⁵² One evening in August, Holland stayed the night at an adjoining property but during the night local people knocked down the walls of the dwelling and outhouses on the land. Patrick O'Hea asserted that it was not a Land League matter. Holland felt there was bad feeling against him but Richard Hodnett stated that 'I have never heard that there was anything like an unfriendly feeling towards the applicant.'⁵³ Dr McCormack thought the buildings should have been pulled down long ago and described them as a 'wretched set of hovels' and that 'like the rest of the houses in the townland, a person would be afraid to go into them'.⁵⁴

Richard Notter objected to the local doctor describing the houses in question as 'hovels', stating that there were many good houses in the townland. Dr Sweetnam said that, rather than the £30 compensation being sought, the houses were worth less than £7-8. As the compensation would be levied on the townland and since tensions were high, when a voice urged the magistrates to consider the poor people, Notter intemperately declared that 'The poor people of the country must behave themselves; if

⁵² Ibid., 20 Nov. 1880.

⁵³ Ibid., 20 Nov. 1880.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

not I hope they will get powder and ball before long'.⁵⁵ A vote was taken with the two Notters, Isaac and Richard, B.L. Fleming, Carew O'Grady and Robert Swanton voting for the £30 while George Swanton, the landlord abstained. However, the cesspayers Regan, the two McCarthys, Harrington, Leahy and Mahony held to the £8.⁵⁶ In this case the £8 was levied against the townland and the landlords suffered not only a defeat in terms of their wishes being overruled but also notoriety because of Notter's outburst. On 3 December the Ballydehob Land League branch passed the following resolution:

That we, the Ballydehob branch of the National Land League, deem it our duty to protest against the language uttered by R.H. Notter J.P. in his capacity as chairman of the Presentment Sessions held at Ballydehob on the 18th inst., when he said that he hoped the people would get powder and ball. In our opinion this language is calculated to foment disturbance and dissatisfaction, and to induce a peaceably disposed people to violate the law. We beg to draw the attention of Mr. Parnell and his colleagues to Mr. Notter's conduct, with the view of having it brought before the proper authorities at the earliest opportunity.⁵⁷

Soon threatening notices citing Notter's outburst were posted throughout the district, including one on the chapel gate at Ballydehob, cautioning people not to pay more rent than their Griffith valuation:

Notice is hereby given that the West Cork Shooting Gallery are now supplied with Notter's powder and ball and Enfield rifles, which will be ready immediately for landlords and land-grabbers. Will give our additional peelers work in guarding landlords. Sam Jagoe will be collecting rents on Wednesday next. Farmers pay him only Griffith's valuation. I am practicing my aim. Rory⁵⁸

Other notices which the police found were variations of the above and included references to drunk policemen and boycotting: 'We must give our drunk additional peelers work in boycotting our land-grabbers' as well as making direct threats against

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 Nov. 1880.

⁵⁶ *WCE*, 20 Oct. 1880.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 Dec. 1880.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 11 Dec. 1880; 'County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...', p. 2, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

Samuel Jagoe: ‘Sam look out’.⁵⁹ Two notices the police found also contained direct threats against farmers of whom it was demanded that they not pay more than the Griffith Valuation or they would be sure to be ‘visited by Rory Junior who is supplied with Notter’s powder and ball’.⁶⁰ Thus the allusion to Notter’s outburst was melded with a demand of adherence to a tenet of the Land League: not to pay more than the Griffith valuation. Though the *nom de guerre*, Rory of the Hills, was originally associated with Ribbonism, in 1880 it was closely associated with attacks on landlords, as well as with Fenianism and Irish republican agitation in the Land War.⁶¹ The I.R.B. Supreme Council president, Charles Kickham, had, in 1857, penned the popular ballad ‘Rory of the Hills’ which referenced Wolfe Tone, pike-making and freedom and was a popular Nationalist/Fenian song.⁶² Whether it was from fear of reprisals, genuine adherence to the Land League or merely opportunistic an opportunistic use by tenants of the publicly posted threats to withhold rent is unclear, the notices had the desired effect of depriving the landlords and their agents of their rents.

On 8 December, at the fair in Ballydehob, tenants refused *en masse* to pay rent in excess of their valuation and withheld payment when this demand was rejected by the landlord’s agents, including Abraham Jagoe.⁶³ It is noteworthy that, while driving to the fair on that day, Robert H. Swanton JP observed a notice which stated:

Take notice, I came here to-day to give advice to Mr. Jago’s (*sic*) tenants not to pay more than Griffith’s valuation, for if any one of ye pay it death will be your doom. If you want to save your lives pay no more, for I have a rusty gun waiting

⁵⁹ ‘County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...’, p. 2, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *New York Times*, 18 Oct. 1879; Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance Since 1848* (Oxford, 1983), p. 23; Seumus MacManus, *The Story of the Irish Race* (New York, 2005), pp 612-3.

⁶² MacManus, *The Story of the Irish Race*, p. 613.

⁶³ ‘County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage ...’, p. 3, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

this many a day to get one charge to scour it. "ONE WHO KNOWS RORY OF THE HILLS"⁶⁴

Like his brother Abraham, Samuel Jagoe, who was attempting to collect rents owed to James H. Swanton at Ballydehob, encountered a refusal to pay above the Griffith valuation.⁶⁵ A similar pattern was evident in Skull, where John Limerick and Mr French were both refused rents above the valuation. However they adopted the course of accepting the offer but refusing to give receipts indicating rent had been paid in full.⁶⁶ By doing this they both, received a part payment, and by implication reserved the right to take legal action in the future to recover their lost rental income. The *West Cork Eagle* reported that landlords throughout the West were adopting this course of action. The same paper also reported that tenants from Calf Island had been refused lodging in Skibbereen after paying their rents in full. When they found a public house to have a meal, the windows were smashed and the landlady turned them out. They were subsequently set upon and badly beaten and cautioned 'never again to pay more than the valuation'.⁶⁷

On 9 December, three local men who worked for landlords, Richard Daly, Henry Allen and Thomas Allen, received notices signed 'Rory of the Hills' ordering them to 'join the League'.⁶⁸ Though there is no evidence that such intimidation was the work of the Land League, the police certainly felt that it was their work. When preparing evidence for *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission 1888-9, two policemen based in West Cork District, Inspector Hume and Sub-constable Lang, stated that when the Land League was founded in Ballydehob it 'began its tyranny in the neighbourhood'.⁶⁹ Two

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *WCE*, 11 Dec. 1880.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ 'County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...', p. 4, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

days after the Ballydehob fair, at the weekly meeting of the Ballydehob Land League branch, one committee member stated that he would like to see the membership of the League increased and that he would continue to support ‘the League undeterred by what anyone might say’.⁷⁰ In response Richard Hodnett said ‘You are not afraid of the “powder and ball man”’.⁷¹ In light of the fact that there were now two parties associated with the ‘powder and ball’ phrase, namely Rory of the Hills and Richard Notter, the reference may well have been a *double entendre*. It is possible that Hodnett meant that once in the Land League one need not be afraid of either magistrates like Notter or of the nocturnal visitations of Rory of the Hills. However despite threats to murder farmers who paid their rents in full, or above the Griffith valuation and indeed threats to harm agents of landlords, it is remarkable that Hodnett’s comment evoked laughter. It is also of interest and indeed potentially incriminating that at the Ballydehob Land League branch meeting following the gale day for rent there was no mention or discussion of the posting the notices threatening farmers with murder, no resolution was passed in condemnation of such notices or their author or authors even though the intimidation notices were posted widely throughout the district. Indeed, the fact that jocose references were made to the ‘powder and ball man’ would indicate a certain satisfaction with the week’s events. Notter was rebuked, for his comments, by the Lord Chancellor at the end of January 1881, however his outburst had already served to alienate the local people and provided propaganda material for those determined to usurp the functions of the authorities and local government.⁷²

⁷⁰ *WCE*, 11 Dec. 1880.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Glasgow Herald*, 1 Feb. 1881.

Standing up to the Land League: the Case of Michael Hegarty

With the government seeking to thwart the growing agitation in the trail of Parnell and the other Land League leaders, the police were generally adopting a reactive rather than a proactive approach by providing escorts and protection for landlords and other individuals while also monitoring the activities of the local Land League activists. In this hiatus, the Ballydehob branch extended its influence and its writ while at the same time adopting militancy in its demands to tenants and agents. In the twelve weeks after the formation of the Land League in West Cork, the tenantry was mobilised whether through fear of reprisals, genuine adherence to the tenets of the Land League or the mere use of publicly posted threats to effect a strike against rent.⁷³ Meanwhile, the emboldened Land League branch began to assert its influence by publishing disapproval of individuals such as O'Mahony of Ardin, a tenant who pledged 10s. for the Parnell Defence Fund if his name was advertised for doing so. Chairman Hodnett noted that O'Mahony had 'ridiculed the Land League' and it was decided that his subscription be returned. Michael Sullivan wryly commented that O'Mahony had done the right thing 'to get his name advertised because we will advertise it'.⁷⁴ Indeed the weekly meetings took on the character of a court issuing threats, judgements and suggestions for people to boycott individuals. In one case, a summons to the Ballydehob Land League court was answered with threats from the summoned defendant, a Michael Hegarty Jnr. of Lissacaha. He both wrote a letter the *West Cork Eagle* denouncing the 'puerile' comments made by O'Sullivan at a branch meeting urging people to have no discourse with Hegarty and suggesting he be treated according to 'the Mayo plan'.⁷⁵ On 3 December, the Ballydehob branch had discussed a boycott of Hegarty in relation to his attempt to raise the rent of a Mr Driscoll and then getting a decree for possession

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *WCE*, 11 Dec. 1880.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 4 Dec. 1880.

against him at the Skibbereen Petty Sessions.⁷⁶ Michael Sullivan also suggested that a solution would be to set up a forge near Hegarty's house to rival his smithing business. Hegarty countered this suggestion in his letter to the *West Cork Eagle* by suggesting that Sullivan needed a rival in the goose trade and positing that the women should have no discourse with a man of such character.⁷⁷ The odium in which the Land League branch held Hegarty would persist for several more months. In many respects, Hegarty was the weakest of targets, a local man who owned some land that he rented out and who plied his trade as a blacksmith. However, Hegarty's reaction to being denounced by the Land League was also telling as he appeared willing to face them down both publicly and in private. In an 8 December letter to John Collins, the branch secretary, responding to a letter Collins had sent on 30 November, Hegarty stated that the dispute with Driscoll was not a matter of land reform principles. Driscoll did not live on the land and Hegarty wanted it as it was in the centre of a parcel of land where he intended himself to reside. He felt it would be superfluous to seek a suspension of the ejectment and said he had offered John Driscoll arbitration and was prepared to give him a fair settlement. However, he said that if the League did not take an unprejudiced consideration of the matter, he would be prepared for it; he was unconcerned about being boycotted as he didn't 'care a whit if I never made a £1 on my trade again'.⁷⁸

Publicly, Hegarty declared that he supported their aims of fair rent, free sale and peasant proprietorship but felt that he was being treated unfairly. In response to Patrick Gallagher stating at a branch meeting that Hegarty had bought the land for '25-30 years of purchase' thus implying he had paid too much and was now rack-renting.⁷⁹ Hegarty

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *WCE*, 11 Dec. 1880.

⁷⁸ Michael Hegarty to John Collins, 8 Dec. 1880, Minute Book of Ballydehob Land League Branch, N.A.I., I.N.L., papers, box 9.

⁷⁹ *WCE*, 4 Dec. 1880.

did his best to assert his right to do as he wished with land he had bought the interest in for £458 and £12 transaction fees for land the Landed Estate's Court conveyance stated was £26 6s.⁸⁰ Hegarty pointed out that this was '17½ years rent' and having invested £15 in it he had increased its value and felt he had got 'it at less than 13 years rent'.⁸¹ Furthermore, he said he had reduced one man's rent by one-third and that this was the only rack-rent that had existed as most of the other rents were at less than the Griffith Valuation.⁸² A noteworthy comment he made in his letter to the *Eagle* was that he would not consider selling it for '30 years rent, or at least to Mr. Gallagher, who would harass the poor people'.⁸³ There is an implication in the latter statement that perhaps there was local jealousy or a contrivance by Gallagher and others associated with the Land League to take Hegarty's land from him. Hegarty was no push-over and in December 1880 appeared to not be in the slightest intimidated by the Land League, saying to Collins: 'If this matter is carried further, I shall be prepared for it by one of the most unprecedented examples in the history of the present agitation. My numerous friends including Land Leaguers, &c., &c., discard with impunity all the indignation that you can reflect on them'.⁸⁴ Again, at the end of December, Hegarty informed the Land League that he would give Driscoll a fair settlement.⁸⁵ However, it is clear that his resolve was severely tested by the developments in the locality in the first six months of 1881. As will be seen below, as the Land League branch become more pervasive and the government reacted by arresting its leaders, the atmosphere in the district became such that even a defiant likeke Hegarty felt his best course was to fall in with the Land League. By the middle of June 1881, he had not only joined the Land League but he had

⁸⁰ *WCE*, 11 Dec. 1880

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Michael Hegarty to John Collins, 8 Dec. 1880, Minute Book of Ballydehob Land League Branch, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 9.

⁸⁵ *WCE*, 24 Dec. 1880.

also reduced all his rents to the Griffith Valuation.⁸⁶ This news was shared by letter with Richard Hodnett, who was by then in Limerick Gaol *under the provisions of the habeas corpus suspension measures introduced by the Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act, as proof of how successful the Land League at Ballydehob.*⁸⁷

Cocking a Snook

The historian R.V. Comerford made the following observation that in the mid 1860s:

It was well known to the Irish police that Fenians had an 'independent look' about them. Because of their consciousness of America as an easily accessible refuge, because mentally so many of them were already on their way there, they could dare to run the risks inherent in 'cocking a snook' at priests, policemen and magistrates in [...] authoritarian post famine Ireland.⁸⁸

In a similar manner, the I.R.B.-led Irish National Land League sought to show disrespect and indeed superiority to magistrates or indeed any class that they perceived as being the oppressors of the people in public settings that were reported, such as the meetings of the Board of Guardians of the Skull Union. When such displays were effected at a public meeting that normally had a level of gravitas, simple irritants served the purposes of not only irritating, for example, the local justices of the peace (now notorious for intolerance) but also ensured that minor displays of disrespect to the whims of an authority figure received wide publicity locally. Whereas the anonymous posters of threats had utilised Richard Notter's 'powder and ball' phrase, in both a jocose and a serious threatening manner, an incident at a meeting of the Skull Board of Guardians in the middle of January 1881 served as agit-prop for the demands of the Ballydehob Land League branch. That demand was for rents to be paid at the Griffith

⁸⁶ John Collins, Ballydehob, to Richard Hodnett, Limerick Prison, 21 June 1881, 'County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage ...', p. 9.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Comerford, *The Fenians in Context*, p. 114.

valuation. In mid-January, the Vice Chairman, Patrick Gallagher, who was also on the committee of the Land League branch, presided. Henry Daly of Skull was present, copying the Griffith Valuation of certain tenants down from the rate-books.⁸⁹ On his arrival and observing Daly, Notter immediately objected to the latter's presence. There followed a discussion where Robert Swanton said that Daly had asked if he could stay, to which Swanton replied he could until someone objected to his presence.⁹⁰ Gallagher noted that Mr. Baldwin, a local landlord, had often been present at meetings, while Richard Hodnett told Daly to stay when Daly seemed ready to accede to Notter's demand.⁹¹ Hodnett stated that 'I saw strangers here thirty or forty times. The man who would object to Mr. Daly being here would not carry out the administration of justice'.⁹² Notter cautioned Hodnett that he may soon 'be compelled to stop such language'.⁹³ Hodnett countered by saying that 'The Board was kept up by the rate-payers, and they should not be excluded. The power of the oligarchy is fast passing away'.⁹⁴ The Notter demand for a vote led to an even split of five to five and Daly remained during the meeting. In the edition of the *West Cork Eagle* which reported this meeting, there was a small report of a question raised by Timothy Healy in the House of Commons calling the attention of the Chief Secretary of Ireland to 'the reported utterances of R.H. Notter at the Ballydehob presentment sessions, Co Cork, in November last when he expressed the opinion that the people of the locality would get powder and ball'.⁹⁵ The Chief Secretary replied: 'I should hope and believe that there is an inaccuracy in the report; but the Lord Chancellor will cause attention to be directed to the matter'.⁹⁶ The fact that the Chief Secretary of Ireland went on record hoping that Notter had not uttered his

⁸⁹ *WCE*, 15 Jan. 1881.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Hansard* 3, cclvii, col. 634 (13 Jan. 1881).

infamous statement was a great boost for not only Hodnett and the local Land League but also for the authors of the moonlighters' intimidation notices. The shift in the balance of power in the locality was palpable on the cusp of the government throwing their liberal ideology to one side in favour of legislation which would suspend *habeas corpus*, one of the cornerstones of British justice, common law and enlightened liberal democracy. In the absence of *habeas corpus*, the rhetoric of the Land League agitators such as John O'Connor, John Heffernan, and Richard Hodnett, their deprecation of the oligarchy, analogies of serfdom and slavery, and demands for Irish independence gained a credibility that transcended mere rhetoric.

Breaking the Land League

At a national level, the government sought to prosecute Parnell and others in order to arrest the impetus of the Land League. At the local level, prosecutions were brought to attempt to rein in local leaders. On 19 January 1881, the prosecution of Patrick Spillane, founder of the Skibbereen Land League branch, failed at Skibbereen.⁹⁷ The case was regarding a letter Spillane wrote asking a Mrs Maris Long to surrender a farm she had taken from Thomas Long but which had at the time of the prosecution been returned to Long. The proprietor of the *West Cork Eagle*, F.P.E. Long was a witness called in an attempt to prove Spillane's handwriting. However the case collapsed, with Spillane and the free press vindicated.⁹⁸ On 27 January 1881, after the regular weekly meeting of the Ballydehob Land League, the attendees 'formed themselves into a committee for the purposes of making arrangements to commemorate the great State trials event which had brought so much joy to the Irish people'.⁹⁹ This event was the marking of the collapse of the prosecution of Parnell, Davitt and other

⁹⁷ *WCE*, 22 Jan. 1881.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 Jan. 1881.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29 Jan. 1881.

Land League leaders earlier in the week.¹⁰⁰ At seven o'clock the entire village was illuminated as each house lit lights in their windows. Thousands were reported to have assembled and eight tar barrels were carried up and down the streets while youths carrying torches and 'cheering loudly for Mr Parnell and his companions, paraded the streets several times'.¹⁰¹ The proceedings were closed by speeches on 'the steps of The Land League Rooms' by Richard Hodnett, John Collins, Patrick Gallagher, Michael Sullivan and Patrick Leahy.¹⁰² The vitriolic display was in stark contrast to the depression and fear of starvation that had dominated public gatherings and meetings the previous January. In early February, notices were posted throughout the country purporting to be from the Irish National Directory and warning the people that those who 'now incite to attempts at insurrection are doing England's work' and to 'Move only by command of your officers'.¹⁰³ It is undoubted that whatever issues had held the Land League back from establishing in West Cork were now at an end as these notices were reported to be of a 'Fenian origin' and that though directed against the Land League there was a 'further beyond represented by the I.R.B.'. ¹⁰⁴ It may be assumed from the latter analysis that the notices were from a branch of the I.R.B. loyal to James Stephens but that the Land League had the support of the I.R.B. On 7 February, a meeting of four hundred men representing the Land League branches of Co. Cork apart from the Youghal branch met in Cork city and passed resolutions calling for both Shaw and Colthurst, the MPs for the county, to resign as they had seceded from the Irish Parliamentary Party.¹⁰⁵ This meeting took place four days after the arrest, on Thursday 3

¹⁰⁰ Moody, *Davitt*, pp 252-3.

¹⁰¹ *WCE*, 29 Jan. 1881.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5 Feb. 1881.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 February 1881.

February, of Michael Davitt, whose ticket of leave had been revoked.¹⁰⁶ At the meeting John O'Connor spoke of his personal acquaintance with Davitt and stated that the Land League was a movement that was directed towards 'infusing in the down-trodden people the spirit of self reliance and of independence'.¹⁰⁷ He went on to say that the arrest of Davitt was an attempt by the Government to 'force the people to arms' but that they would not be advised to do so 'until the people are perfectly prepared'.¹⁰⁸ O'Connor was honorary secretary of the meeting but his speech served to allow him the opportunity to emerge from the shadows of conspiracy and assume a leadership role in the agitation that was to come. In the same edition of the *West Cork Eagle* that reported this meeting, a report on a meeting of the Ballydehob branch of the League listed a new name among the notables: that of Henry O'Mahony.

Henry O'Mahony: portrait of a Land League leader

Henry O'Mahony was an American citizen, a successful grocer, publican and farmer.¹⁰⁹ O'Mahony was born at Derrygoole, near Skibbereen on 1 June 1843. His family survived the famine but O'Mahony remembered, as a boy, eating 'turnips and kale and the cries of the poorer people dying of hunger and disease'.¹¹⁰ Being reasonably well off, the family had 'milk, butter, chickens, eggs and pigs' enabling them to survive without potatoes.¹¹¹ From 1857-62 O'Mahony was an apprentice cooper in Skibbereen a few doors away from O'Donovan Rossa's shop.¹¹² During this period Fenians drilled on his father's land at Coomnageeha.¹¹³ Like many Fenians, he served in

¹⁰⁶ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 464.

¹⁰⁷ *WCE*, 12 February 1881.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Henry F. Quirke, 'Diary of a Land League Activist', *Skibbereen and District Historical Society*, Vol. 4, 2008 (Skibbereen, 2008), pp 26-7.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.24.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Interview with Henry Quirke, 15 June 2008; Quirke, 'Diary of a Land League Activist', p. 24.

the US Civil War.¹¹⁴ He enlisted on 19 November 1864 and having served on the U.S.S. Sibyl and was honourably discharged on 25 August 1865.¹¹⁵ The Sibyl was a wooden-hulled steamer based at Cairo, Illinois, operating as a dispatch boat on the Mississippi river between Cairo and New Orleans, for the commander of the Mississippi Squadron Rear Admiral David D. Porter. The steamer was tasked with delivering messages to the Union Army and gathering intelligence on the Confederate forces up and down the river.¹¹⁶

According to an account written by his grand nephew, Henry F. Quirke, O'Mahony moved back to Ballydehob in 1873, a contemporary account given by O'Mahony in 1881 states that he returned in 1874, but he also said that he could not be sure of the exact dates.¹¹⁷ That same year, 1874, John O'Connor had visited the USA as an I.R.B. envoy.¹¹⁸ It is clear that in the 1870s he returned to America twice for long periods, the last visit being 'some two years' before the formation of the local Land League branch.¹¹⁹ In 1877, American Fenians were sent to Ireland to recruit for and reorganise the I.R.B. prior to founding local Land League branches.¹²⁰ As an old man he

¹¹⁴ Interview with Henry O'Mahony's grandnephew, Col. Henry F. Quirke, 15 June 2008.

¹¹⁵ Certificate of Naturalisation of Henry O'Mahoney, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, transmitted to congress, with the annual message of the president, December 4, 1882* (Washington, 1883), Inclosure 21 in No. 331, p. 215, (<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS188283v01p1>).

¹¹⁶ Dictionary of American Fighting Ships, Naval Historical Centre, US Department of the Navy, (<http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/s12/sibyl.htm>) [retrieved 30 Oct. 2013]; Mary O'Mahoney Lupton, 'The recollections of Henry O'Mahoney' in Elizabeth Lupton Owen, Courtney D. Smith and Jenifer P. Smith (eds.), *Rolling Echoes, The Collected Writings of Mary O Mahoney-Luton Irish Immigrant and West Texas Pioneer*, 2nd Edition (NP, 2006), pp 252-3.

¹¹⁷ Mr. Brooks to Mr. Badeau, 22 June 1881, *ibid.*, p.216.

¹¹⁸ James McConnel, "'Fenians at Westminster': The Edwardian Irish Parliamentary Party and the Legacy of the New Departure, *IHS*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 133, (May 2004), p. 51.

¹¹⁹ Henry F. Quirke, 'Diary of a Land League Activist', p. 27; Lang, *Special Commission*, i, p. 527. Note a contemporary account given in 1881, when O'Mahony was in prison, states he returned to Ireland in 1874 but he could not be sure of the dates.

¹²⁰ Edward O'Toole, *Whist for your Life that's Treason, Recollections of a Long Life* (Dublin, 2003), p. 28. Note: see the Conclusion of this thesis for a detailed analysis of O'Toole's memoirs.

dictated a memoir of the period at the insistence of his daughter, but made no mention of being involved in either the Phoenix Society or the I.R.B.

In April 1882, the President of the United States sent to the Senate details of American citizens who were arrested under the PPP Act, including particulars relating to Henry O'Mahony. On 15 June U.S. Consul, Mr Edward P. Brooks having received a request in early June from Henry's wife, Bridget O'Mahony (O'Mahoney) for the US Consul to get involved in the case of her husband and ensure him 'a speedy trial'.¹²¹ Having made unofficial enquiries Brooks reported to London that:

He (O'Mahony) was one of the most popular of the Land League leaders in his country-side, and that during the "famine" of 1880 was very efficient in relieving the distress of his neighbours.

From this stand-point he was assuredly a reputable person, and one of whom every one in the locality of his "home," as he calls it, at Ballydehob, speaks in terms of highest praise.

On the other hand, or viewed by from the stand-point of the police authorities, he appears to have been a very violent, unscrupulous, and dangerous agitator.¹²²

The two views of O'Mahony presented to Brooks when he his enquiries are in stark contrast. The fact that O'Mahony was viewed in Ballydehob as having been effective in relieving the distress of his neighbours indicates that the Ballydehob Land League branch had been successful in helping their neighbours when they took over the Poor Law Board in 1881. The police view, that he was a violent, unscrupulous and a dangerous agitator may also be credible especially if he was a Fenian agent as this would have been their view of Fenians and especially American ones.

On 22 June 1881, Brooks sent a report from the United States Consulate at Queenstown, Co. Cork with detailed information he had received from 'O'Mahoney'

¹²¹ Mr. Brooks to Mr. Badeau, 15 June 1881 Inclosure 21 No 331, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, transmitted to congress, with the annual message of the president, December 4, 1882* p. 214

¹²² Ibid.

during an interview he held with him in Limerick prison on 21 June 1881.¹²³ It would appear that O'Mahony used the spelling 'O'Mahoney' when dealing with the US government. O'Mahony stated that, having been discharged from the United States Navy in the fall of 1865, he had lost his discharge papers.¹²⁴ He had lived in Kansas, Missouri and the Mississippi Valley from 1865 until 1874. In 1866, he made an application at the County Court, Craddo Parish, Shreveport, Louisiana for U.S. citizenship but the papers were not issued for some reason O'Mahony did not mention. In 1874, he returned to Ireland due to the hard times prevailing in the USA and because he had lost money in banks that had failed. He further stated that his financial woes were the result of bank failures and the fact that contractors for whom he worked constructing sawmills had not paid him.¹²⁵ In 1875, he married in Ireland and obtained a licence to run a public house.¹²⁶ In 1882 the *New York Times* wryly asserted that he had been selling 'potheen, save when engaged in the duties of his office, that of Poor Law Guardian.'¹²⁷ The paper also asserted that the 'bandetii of Downing-street.' had 'raised a quibble about the validity of the Lockport naturalization, arguing that 'if Mr O'Mahoney had been an American citizen he would never have accepted an office of trust and profit under the Crown'.¹²⁸ However a copy of his certificate of naturalisation shows that O'Mahony had renounced 'all allegiance and fidelity' to the 'Queen of Great Britain and Ireland' on 25 February 1880:

I, Henry O'Mahoney, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States of America, and I do absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereign whatsoever, particularly to the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, to whom I now owe allegiance.

¹²³ Brooks to Badeau, 22 June 1881, *ibid.*, p. 216.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *New York Times*, 6 Apr. 1882.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

According to the memoir O'Mahony dictated to his daughter in 1933, in 1875 he spent £4,000 building a house and two shops, in Ballydehob.¹²⁹ This figure seems incredible, however, in 1933 when he was 91 years old, he stated clearly that it was £4,000 or \$20,000.¹³⁰ In 1876, he returned to the USA for a short time and left the business in the hands of his wife to run. He returned to the USA again in 1879 and resided in Lockport and Buffalo New York. He applied for citizenship at Lockport and this time it was granted.¹³¹ O'Mahony had many relatives living in Lockport.¹³² There had been some doubt in this regard when the matter was raised in a letter between Frederick Theodore Frelinghuysen, the US Secretary of State and the Ambassador to Britain, James Russell Lowell, on 2 April 1882.¹³³ However, Brooks had forwarded a copy of O'Mahony's certificate of naturalisation on 15 June 1881 proving that O'Mahony was in fact a US citizen.¹³⁴ It is important to note that his successful application for naturalisation was made during a visit to the USA and after the Land War had begun. He had at the time when he had already established a successful business in Ballydehob. Therefore, it is quite possible that the sole purpose of O'Mahony's visit to the USA was to apply for citizenship as he felt the protection it would afford him might prove useful in the very near future. This hypothesis was shared by Edward Brooks, the consul at Cork stated in a letter to Adam Badeau, at the Consul General in London, that he suspected O'Mahony's 1879 trip to the USA had

¹²⁹ O'Mahoney Lupton, 'The recollections of Henry O'Mahoney' in Lupton Owen, Smith and Smith (eds), *Rolling Echoes*, p. 259.

¹³⁰ Henry F. Quirke, 'Diary of a Land League Activist', p. 25; O'Mahoney Lupton, 'The recollections of Henry O'Mahoney', *Rolling Echoes*, p. 270. O'Mahony was born in 1842 and died in 1937.

¹³¹ Brooks to Badeau, 22 June 1881, Inclosure 21 in No. 331, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States*, p. 216.

¹³² 'The recollections of Henry O'Mahoney', *Rolling Echoes*, p. 256.

¹³³ Joseph P. O'Grady, *Irish Americans and Anglo-American Relations 1880-1888* (PhD thesis University of Pennsylvania, 1965), p. 160.

¹³⁴ Certificate of Naturalisation of Henry O'Mahoney, Appendix to Inclosure 21, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States*, p. 215. Note: O'Mahony became a citizen on 25 Feb. 1880 exactly one month before the Poor Law elections in Skull.

been undertaken explicitly for the purpose of obtaining for US citizenship in order to have recourse to help form the US government.¹³⁵ According to the memoir he dictated, he had gone to the United States in order to collect dividends he was owed from two banks that had closed in 1873.¹³⁶ In light of the fact that a writer in the *New York Times* cited amongst others a ‘Rossa [...] and the rest of us Americans’ amongst the U.S. citizens who deemed Brooks a ‘craven sycophant’ who had refused ‘to tear down the jail in which Mr O’Mahoney lay rotting’; there may have been sound reasons for Brook’s suspicions.¹³⁷ As will be shown below, O’Mahony’s connections with O’Donovan Rossa went far beyond his just having the latter’s support.

When O’Mahony returned to Ballydehob in March 1881, the formation of the Land League movement there had been successful and the first arrests under a coercion act were imminent. It is impossible from available sources to ascertain O’Mahony’s political activities in Ballydehob prior to his 1879 return to the USA. However, on his arrival in Ireland, in March 1880, he immediately assumed a central role on the Ballydehob Land League committee and on 25 March 1881, exactly one month after he received his American citizenship, he was elected as a Poor Law Guardian for the Skull Union¹³⁸. O’Mahony stated that his name was put forward against his wishes and it was not a position he had sought.¹³⁹ In 1878, Davitt told American Nationalists that constitutionalists should be challenged from the ‘local board of guardians to a

¹³⁵ Brooks to Badeau, 15 June, 1881, Inclosure 21, No. 331, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States*, p. 214.

¹³⁶ O’Mahoney Lupton, ‘The recollections of Henry O’Mahony’ in Owen, Smith and Smith (eds), p. 259.

¹³⁷ *New York Times*, 6 Apr. 1882.

¹³⁸ Certificate of Naturalisation of Henry O’Mahoney, Appendix to Inclosure 21, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States*, p. 215. Note: The date of the elections for Poor Law Guardians was statutorily 25 March each year.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

representation in an alien Parliament.’¹⁴⁰ Two years later, he boasted to John Devoy that the Land League ‘carry on the government of the country from 39 Upper Sackville St.’¹⁴¹ The fact that O’Mahony, on his return to Ireland, assumed both a leadership role in Ballydehob Land League branch which was closely associated with leading Cork I.R.B. men and was elected a Poor Law Guardian at Skull, would indicate that his protestations that he was an unwillingly candidate were false. That he continued to protest his unwillingness to be a Poor Law Guardian even down to the 1930s, in the memoir dictated to his daughter, may well be attributed to his oath of secrecy and allegiance to the I.R.B.’s republican cause. It must be noted that when he dictated his memoirs in 1933, Ireland was divided into two political units, one the Free State comprised of 26 counties with no representation at Westminster, while the other 6 counties had a form of Home Rule while also being represented in the British parliament. Neither entity fulfilled the Fenian’s republican ideal. As the I.R.B.’s political mission had still to be achieved in the 1930s it can be speculated that neither had O’Mahony’s. In all likelihood he still held to the oaths of secrecy demanded of sworn Fenians.

The fact that the *New York Times* mentioned a ‘Rossa’, who could only have been O’Donovan Rossa, in connection with supporters of O’Mahony’s cause while imprisoned, indicates a knowledge of the connections O’Mahony maintained. This has been borne out by recent historical research. Following his release from prison in 1882, O’Mahony went back to the United States but made annual visits to Ireland to see his family.¹⁴² On 24 January, 1885, three bombs exploded in London in the Tower of

¹⁴⁰ Michael Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism in Ireland or The Story of the Land League Revolution* (Illinois, 2003), p. 129, Speech by Michael Davitt, Boston, 8 Dec. 1878, *Boston Pilot* 21 Dec. 1878, *ibid.*, pp 131-33.

¹⁴¹ Michael Davitt to John Devoy, 16 Dec. 1881, in William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan (eds), *Devoy’s Post Bag, 1871-1928* (2 Vols, Dublin 1848 and 1954), ii, p. 23.

¹⁴² O’Mahoney Lupton, ‘The recollections of Henry O’Mahoney’, *Rolling Echoes*, p. 270.

London, the Crypt of Westminster Hall and the chamber of the House of Commons.¹⁴³ One of the men convicted for the bombings was James Cunningham of Schull. Cunningham's daughter was married to a labourer from Ballydehob named O'Connell.¹⁴⁴ The dynamite campaign against Britain was organised by Fenians associated with O'Donovan Rossa and, also, by Clan-na-Gael associates of John Devoy such as William Mackey Lomansey, who died attempting to blow up London Bridge in 1884.¹⁴⁵ Historian, Niall Whelehan, recently discovered accounts in O'Donovan Rossa's papers that show that O'Donovan Rossa used Henry O'Mahony to courier money to the families of Corkmen jailed in the Dynamite war. In 1886, O'Mahony brought £12 from a fund raised by O'Donovan Rossa's through the *United Irishman* newspaper to 'Cunningham's widowed mother in Schull'.¹⁴⁶ Receipts dated 27 March, 8 November and 14 December 1886 and a one detailing a further payment to O'Mahony himself of £100 on 27 July 1887, which are in the O'Donovan Rossa papers at the Catholic University of America, show that O'Mahony acted as Rossa's intermediary in financial matters in Cork.¹⁴⁷ Whelehan makes the assumption that O'Mahony supported the dynamite campaign but also points out that merely being a financial courier does not prove there was a link between Rossa and O'Mahony during the Land War. He also notes that Rossa opposed the Land League.¹⁴⁸ However, the fact that O'Mahony was connected with O'Donovan Rossa, from the period that the latter was organising a revolutionary organisation that preceded the I.R.B. in the late 1850s, right down to the late 1880s when he assisted people associated with the dynamite campaign, would seem to indicate that O'Mahony moved in revolutionary circles in the New York area. This

¹⁴³ Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 109.

¹⁴⁴ *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 17 Feb. 1885.

¹⁴⁵ *DPB*, ii, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Whelehan, *The Dynamiters*, p. 271.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Note: also see footnote 187 on same page.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

fact is also omitted from his memoir.¹⁴⁹ Whelehan further states that O'Mahony was imprisoned in Kilmainham though, though he was there for two very short periods to answer questions about landlords he claimed were blackmailing, in fact he spent most of his jail time in Limerick and Armagh Gaols. It is also notable that prior to returning to Ballydehob in 1880, O'Mahony was based in upstate New York. Both, Devoy and O'Donovan Rossa, were based in New York city during this period.

Participation in the democratic process

In his studies of the Poor Law elections of 1881 in Tralee, William Feingold noted that Davitt felt that the Poor Law elections should be contested by Land Leaguers and that he had the support of the executive of the League in this.¹⁵⁰ In 1878, at the last meeting of the 'new departure' tour of America, 'organised under the auspices of the revolutionary bodies' of Boston, Davitt said that Nationalists needed to compete with the constitutionalists in all aspect of Irish life up to and including participation in parliament.¹⁵¹

The national party in Ireland has a right to participate in everything concerning the social and political condition of the country, to compete with the constitutionalist and other partiers who cater for public support and to stamp in this manner its nationalist convictions and principles on everything Irish, from the local board of guardians to a representation in an alien Parliament.¹⁵²

Feingold's study shows that, despite running a vigorous and successful campaign in the March poor-law elections, the Land Leaguers of Tralee failed to oust Major Rowan from his position as chairman of the board of the Tralee Union.¹⁵³ Poor Law Boards comprised both elected and appointed guardians. Therefore it is noteworthy

¹⁴⁹ Whelehan, *The Dynamiters*, p. 270; *Rolling Echoes*, p. 264.

¹⁵⁰ William L. Feingold, 'Tralee Poor Law Elections of 1881', in Samuel Clark, James S. Donnelly Jnr, (eds), *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest 1780-1914*, p. 291; Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, p. 129.

¹⁵¹ Feingold, 'Tralee Poor Law Elections of 1881', p. 291; Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, p. 129.

¹⁵² Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, p. 129; Speech by Michael Davitt, Boston, 8 Dec. 1878, quoted in Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, pp 131-33 and reported in the *Boston Pilot*, 21 Dec. 1878.

¹⁵³ Feingold, 'Tralee Poor Law Elections of 1881', p. 297.

that the Ballydehob branch was successful in its efforts to seize control of the local union from the landlord class. Richard Hodnett, who had been a guardian for eighteen years, was elected by the board members as chairman, defeating the *ex-officio* appointee George Swanton J.P.¹⁵⁴ From December 1880, when the tenants of Ballydehob had refused to pay their rents, the Swantons had become a focus of the Land League's vitriol. Between the absentee James H. Swanton, who had an address at 122 Pembroke Road, Dublin 6, and several members of the family including George and Robert, they held approximately 10,563 acres of land in West Carbery.¹⁵⁵ In 1620, when the town that became Ballydehob received a royal charter, it was called Swantontown.¹⁵⁶ In light of their long association with Ballydehob and the fact that both George and Robert Swanton lived in the area and were justices of the peace, they made good targets for a revolutionary body that was attempting to assert its dominance in local affairs by humiliating and threatening what they termed the 'oligarchy'.

The Visit of Anna Parnell

On 5 March, the Lord Lieutenant Lord Cowper proscribed eleven baronies in West Cork, including West Carbery, under the provisions of the Protection of Person and Property Act (1881), allowing for the suspension of *habeas corpus*.¹⁵⁷ In a show of defiance at their district being proscribed, a 'monster meeting' was held at Ballydehob on Wednesday 30 March.¹⁵⁸ Anna Parnell was conveyed to Ballydehob, led by Fr

¹⁵⁴ *Thom's Directory, 1881* (Dublin, 1881); Membership Book of Ballydehob Branch of the National Land League of Ireland, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 9; Liam O'Regan, 'Anna Parnell's 1881 visits and amazing sequels', *Mizen Journal, Mizen Archaeological and Historical Society*, No. 3, 1995, p. 51.

¹⁵⁵ *Land owners in Ireland: return of owners of land of one acre and upwards in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland, showing the names of such owners arranged alphabetically in each county, their addresses ... ; to which is added a summary for each province and for all Ireland / presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, reprint of 1876 edition* (Baltimore, 1988).

¹⁵⁶ Patrick Hickey, *The Famine in West Cork* (Cork, 2002), p. 14.

¹⁵⁷ Memorandum of Proceedings in the Case of Richard Hodnett, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 9; Protection of Person and Property Act (1881) 44 Vict., c. 4. (2 Mar. 1881_

¹⁵⁸ Membership Book of Ballydehob Branch of the National Land League of Ireland, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 9; Liam O'Regan, 'Anna Parnell's 1881 visits and amazing sequels', , p. 51; Moody, *Davitt*, p. 457.

McCarthy's band, banners and a 'noticeable feature being hundreds of men on horseback' led by Richard Hodnett.¹⁵⁹ However, just as Ballydehob had preceded Skibbereen in the formation of 'a masculine branch of the Land League, it preceded the "cradle of rebellion" in the formation of a feminine cognate institution'.¹⁶⁰ It is notable that less than a month after the district was proscribed and thus was subject to *habeas corpus* suspension that the meeting was held under the auspices of the Ballydehob branch of the Ladies Land League, which had invited Anna Parnell to attend one of their regular meetings.¹⁶¹ Yet it was the president of the masculine branch of the Land League at Ballydehob, Richard Hodnett, who introduced the guest of honour, Anna Parnell, sister of Charles Stewart Parnell and head of the Ladies Irish National Land League.¹⁶² Her speech sought to reassure the tenants that they would not suffer financially by supporting the Land League:

[...] all the money of the Land League is in the hands of trustees [...] men who would not allow an evicted tenant to suffer if he continues to live according to the teaching of the Land League [...] the people in America would subscribe as much money as would keep the tenants for five years.¹⁶³

Anna Parnell was unaware that Ballydehob was in a proscribed district but, on being assured of this by Richard Hodnett, who asserted loudly enough to be heard by the reporting policeman: 'We are ready' she replied 'I knew that Ballydehob was a grand place'.¹⁶⁴

John O'Connor spoke after Parnell. Referencing his Fenian/I.R.B. credentials, he linked that past with his present Land League activities, stating: 'I shouldered my rifle

¹⁵⁹ *WCE*, 2 Apr. 1881.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 26 Mar. 1881.

¹⁶² Sub Inspector Jacob Ruttle, 5 Apr. 1881 Constabulary report of Land Meeting held at Ballydehob, 30 Mar. 1881, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 8, Envelope 72.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Ruttle, 5 Apr. 1881, Constabulary report of Land Meeting held at Ballydehob, 30 Mar. 1881, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 8, Envelope 72.

in '67' and am prepared to associate and organise every association to benefit my country'.¹⁶⁵ According to O'Connor, Hodnett had appealed in vain to many men who were now active in organising the Land League for them to form branches but that he 'scarcely received any replies to his communications'.¹⁶⁶ This would seem to indicate that Hodnett was the architect of the new departure in West Cork but that his early efforts had borne no fruit. O'Connor praised Hodnett, claiming that he had been the catalyst as the local leader but in his capacity as secretary of the Co. Cork Land League committee, he was ambiguous as to how to deal with the landgrabber essentially leaving it up to the local people: 'I will not advise you to nail his ears to the village pump. I won't tell you to boycott him, but you know how to meet him yourself'.¹⁶⁷ By not endorsing a specific remedy O'Connor appeared to encourage violence.

The Arrest of Richard Hodnett

At a meeting of the Ballydehob branch of the Ladies Land League on Sunday 3 April 1881, two tenants were denounced: one James Camier had served processes for Robert Swanton as the regular process server, a man named Driscoll, was too afraid to do so.¹⁶⁸ The next meeting of the Ballydehob branch, on 7 April, was told that Robert Swanton had issued notices for rent at double the valuation.¹⁶⁹ Richard Hodnett was confident that 'the tenants knew the duty they had to perform' and hoped 'they had courage and manliness enough to perform' that duty.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ John O'Connor addressing Land League Meeting Ballydehob, 30 Mar. 1881, Ruttle, 5 Apr. 1881, Constabulary report of Land Meeting held at Ballydehob, 30 Mar. 1881, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 8, Envelope 72.

¹⁶⁶ *WCE*, 2 Apr. 1880.

¹⁶⁷ John O'Connor, Land League Meeting Ballydehob, 30 Mar. 1881, Ruttle, 5 Apr. 1881, Constabulary report of Land Meeting held at Ballydehob, 30 Mar. 1881, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 8, Envelope 72.

¹⁶⁸ A.L. MacDonald, District Inspector R.I.C., 'County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...', p. 5, N.A.I., I.N.L., papers, box 10; *WCE*, 9 Apr. 1881; *Irish Times*, 14 Apr. 1881.

¹⁶⁹ Cutting from *WCE*, 9 Apr. 1881 in Envelope 71, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 8.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

On 14 April, *Irish Times* reported a series of outrages that had occurred in Ballydehob in the preceding week.¹⁷¹ In one incident, a plantation of trees and a series of furze breaks belonging to Rev. T. N. Hicks were set alight and destroyed. On 10 April, a Mr Maloney, who was a civil bill officers in the district and had served ejectment processes on behalf of Henry Sweetnam, was ambushed in broad daylight by four men with blackened faces. One man produced a revolver and put it to Maloney's head and threatened that 'if he served more processes for Sweetnam or Swanton they would blow his brains out.'¹⁷² The men proceed to kick Maloney senseless, and took 'thirty processes and a sum of money from him'. The following night, 11 April, James Camier's house was stormed by seven men with blackened faces who entered his bedroom.¹⁷³ They proceeded to beat him, threaten him with a revolver and attempted to cut off one of his ears. Using the attack on Camier as a pretext, on 18 April, the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Cowper signed a warrant for the arrest of Richard Hodnett under the provisions of the Protection of Person and Property Act.¹⁷⁴ The grounds for his arrest were: 'For being reasonably suspected of having been guilty as accessory to a crime punishable by the law, that is to say maliciously assaulting and breaking into a dwelling house, and assaulting and beating a person therein'.¹⁷⁵

Early on the morning of April 25, Hodnett was arrested at his home in Ballydehob. At first he refused to dress, which delayed his removal until a crowd had gathered. Car drivers hired by the police refused to carry them, forcing them to return to Skibbereen on foot.¹⁷⁶ Telegrams were sent to Skibbereen and John O'Connor had the

¹⁷¹ *Irish Times*, 14 Apr. 1881.

¹⁷² Ibid; A.I. Mac Donald, 'Crime and Outrage...', p. 5; *WCE*, 9 Apr. 1881; James Camier, 5 Dec. 1888, *Special Commission*, i, p. 529.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Copy of arrest warrant for Richard Hodnett, 18 Apr. 1881, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers box 9; Protection of Person and Property Act, 44 & 45 Vict., c.4, 2 Mar.

¹⁷⁵ *WCE*, 30 Apr. 1881.

¹⁷⁶ Lang, *Special Commission*, i, p. 526.

time to come from Cork in order to address the crowds that were assembling before Hodnett and his escort arrived in the town.¹⁷⁷ When they did arrive, the police and their prisoner were met by large crowds. A band struck up ‘God Save Ireland’ and the policemen were compelled to march through the crowd with Hodnett while green banners ‘floated over them’.¹⁷⁸ At Skibbereen railway station, they were met by a large crowd headed up by John O’Connor. O’Connor again referenced the I.R.B. by likening Hodnett to the Skibbereen men Morty Moynihan and Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa. He blamed ‘tyranny on the part of the English Government’ for placing Hodnett in a prison cell in ‘the cause of good old Ireland.’¹⁷⁹ He declared that the arrest proved that Irishmen needed to ‘to have the preservation of their Liberties in their own hands’.¹⁸⁰ After eradicating the land system they would ‘continue [...] efforts for a national independence’.¹⁸¹ The I.R.B. aim of national independence had finally come to the fore. At various points, in Skibbereen the police were pelted with pebbles and clumps of seaweed. However, the assailants withdrew on the police fixing bayonets to their rifles.¹⁸² One man was later sentenced to one month in prison for assaulting a policeman.¹⁸³

On 8 March, Anna Parnell had written to the Chief Secretary informing him that the Ladies Land League has ‘undertaken the duty of providing for the comforts of persons imprisoned under the provisions of the Protection of Life and Property Act’.¹⁸⁴ Hodnett was conveyed to Limerick prison, where the local Land League made

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.; *WCE*, 30 Apr. 1881; Frank Rynne, ‘Redressing Historical Imbalance: The Role of Land League leaders, Richard Hodnett and Henry O’Mahony in the Land League Revolution in West Cork’, Brian Casey (ed) *Defying the Law of the Land*, (Dublin, 2013), pp 133-53, *passim*.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Anna Parnell to Forster, 8 Mar. 1881 N.A.I., CSORP/1881/ 7852.

arrangements for him to receive food from outside.¹⁸⁵ On 9 May, Hodnett and the other five PPP prisoners in Limerick Prison were visited by a deputation led by Fr Eugene Sheehy, Mrs Walsh and Mrs Wallace of the Killmallock Ladies Land League in order to ‘ascertain their wants.’¹⁸⁶ Hodnett complained that the governor of the prison, Mr Eager, ‘was most hostile and cool towards him’ and had denied that he be let out of his cell for breakfast that morning.¹⁸⁷ Among the items that were brought by the visitation committee was an armchair for each of the five prisoners under the PPP Act at Limerick Prison.¹⁸⁸ In many respects Hodnett’s imprisonment did his cause more good than harm. The pretext for arresting; attacking Camier in his house, was not even believed by Hodnett’s most strident local foe, Richard Notter. Notter believed the true reason for his arrest the speeches Hodnett made.¹⁸⁹ In light of the fact that the PPP was a relatively crude *habeas corpus* suspension measure, flimsy and unbelievable grounds for arrest such as those cited in the Hodnett case served to heighten the rhetoric of injustice and arbitrary rule. However, removing Hodnett from the scene left the leadership of the Land League in the hands of a less influential figure, his eldest son Richard. However the returned American, Henry O’Mahony, soon emerged as the preeminent figure in the Ballydehob branch.

The Agitation builds and the Arrest of Henry O’Mahony

The arrest of Hodnett raised him from the status of local agitator to that of a political celebrity. Rather, than delivering some kind of respite or indeed striking fear in the other committee members, it emboldened them further. In the Skull and Skibbereen districts, his arrest served as a rallying point, rather than diminishing either the Land League, or indeed crime, the former increased its membership exponentially and the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ *WCE*, 14 May 1881.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

former jumped also after Hodnett's incarceration. As will be seen below, the arrest of Hodnett was a boon for the Land League, as well as, those in the locality bent on agitation or, indeed, violence. Whereas the clergy had not hitherto joined the Land League, Fr Murphy, the parish priest at Skull who had earlier warned against extremism joined the League and assured the members that he would attend as often as he could.¹⁹⁰ On their return to Ballydehob on the evening of Hodnett's arrest, the Ballydehob contingent, in consultation with the Land League committee, decided that the town should be illuminated. A procession, with crowds signing the Fenian hymn 'God Save Ireland' made the rounds of the village carrying tar barrels. Henry O'Mahony gave a speech denouncing the arrest of Hodnett for 'standing up to landlord tyranny and oppression'.¹⁹¹ He promised that Hodnett's arrest would not weaken the Land League but would 'stimulate the inhabitants of the locality to greater energy.'¹⁹² Later that evening a mob stoned the house of Samuel Jagoe.¹⁹³ In the following days, the Ballydehob Ladies Land League branch passed a resolution urging Land Leaguers to stop having anything to do with 'non-Land Leaguers' with Hannah Sweeny declaring that those who had not joined the Land League were 'enemies'.¹⁹⁴ At the next meeting of the Skull Board of Guardians, held the day after Hodnett's arrest, Henry O'Mahony proposed a resolution, which was passed, condemning the arrest of Hodnett and declaring his arrest was the result of his being elected Chairman of the Skull Board of Guardians 'in preference to a local magistrate', over the objections of Richard Notter.¹⁹⁵ At the Ballydehob Land League meeting held on 28 April, a resolution was passed which stated much the same but named George Swanton, the former Chairman of the

¹⁹⁰ *WCE*, 30 Apr. 1881.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ 'County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...', p. 5, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers box 10.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Skull Union, as the magistrate in question. Furthermore, it was stated that the opinion of the branch was that ‘the arrest was caused by the misrepresentation of said, George Swanton and Richd. H Notter, to the Chief Secretary and Lord Lieutenant, whose conduct is so much at variance with the liberty and prosperity of the Irish people’.¹⁹⁶ The resolution called for the condemnation of these local magistrates by ‘not only the law-abiding people of this community but of all Ireland’.¹⁹⁷ By naming local magistrates as being instrumental in Hodnett’s arrest, Henry O’Mahony was attempting to undermine the rule of law in Ballydehob and Skull. The government was not blameless in such a turn of events. The use of However, in light of recent incidents of violence against men like Camier, who had been declared obnoxious by the Land League, such condemnation was likely to force events to take a certain course. The ‘public odium was now so much directed against these magistrates that they had to receive police protection by patrols’.¹⁹⁸ Events would later show that patrols ‘were not sufficient to ensure their safety’.¹⁹⁹

On Sunday 8 May, a monster indignation meeting was held at Ballydehob under the slogan ‘Freedom for the People! No Compromise!’²⁰⁰. The new-found status of political prisoner that Hodnett was now accorded was put to good effect in posters and advertisements for the meeting:

To protest against the action of the Govern-
ment and their Representatives for the unwarranted and uncalled for
ARREST of Mr. R Hodnett
President of the Ballydehob Land League,
Chairman of the Schull Board of
Guardians, and Chairman of the Ballydehob Dispensary
Committee.
Tillers of the Soil, assemble in your
Thousands, and prove to your

¹⁹⁶ ‘Crime and Outrage...’, p. 6, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Countrymen, who have been driven, by Landlord Tyranny and Magis-
 terial influence, from their
 Homes to British Dungeons,
 That they are deserving of
 our sympathy and
 support
 FEAR NOT, MEN OF CARBERY
 Stand to the cause to break oppression
 And unjust Laws-
 Dread not Coercion
 Tho' your bitterest foe,
 Freedom for all is our motto!²⁰¹

The meeting was chaired by Fr Murphy, who declared its two-fold sympathy with the man of the people, John Dillon who had also been arrested under the PPP Act, and Hodnett, who had been '[...] unjustly taken away from the people without any reason whatever [...]'.²⁰² A 2 May letter from Hodnett in 'Limerick gaol' to John Collins was read out. The letter gives some insight into Hodnett's views of his current predicament.

My Dear Mr. Collins,

With feelings of unmixed pleasure I have read the proceedings in Skibbereen and Schull, and other places in the West touching my arrest. I assure those miserable men who have deprived me of my liberty that I feel more consolation in my lonely cell than they do in their mansions, pondering over the persecution I have received during the last thirty years at the hands of my opponents. I have not the presumptuous vanity to think that I am even worthy to have survived many of them to see and feel the dawn of liberty. One great consolation I feel – that after twenty years of drudgery at the Schull Board of Guardians I have lived to see my efforts crowned with victory and success. The enemies of our distracted country are so dark to everything that concerns the interests of our tenant farmers and labourers that they fancy arresting a few warm-hearted men our movement will ultimately collapse. Selfish motives are always clouded with darkness. I tell those miserable flunkies that they are on a downward track. I assure you that everyday is bringing light and happiness to my mind. It is a glorious thought to suffer for a noble cause. [...] be in for my country.²⁰³

²⁰¹ *WCE*, 14 May 1881; 'Crime and Outrage...', p. 6, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

²⁰² *WCE*, 14 May 1881.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

Membership of the Ossianic Society

It is clear from Hodnett's letter that he viewed the current Land League agitation as a continuation of a thirty-year-long struggle that he was engaged in. Unlike John O'Connor, who stated that he had been involved in the 1867 Fenian Rising, Hodnett did not illuminate what struggle he was involved in for that long. Though there is no direct evidence that Richard Hodnett was ever a Fenian, in the 1860 he joined a society that included many members of the Fenian movement and three members of the Skibbereen Phoenix Society. The Ossianic Society was a society for the preservation 'of manuscripts in the Irish language, illustrative of the Fenian period of Irish history with literal translations and notes'.²⁰⁴ It was formed on St. Patrick's Day, 1853; five years to the day before the I.R.B.²⁰⁵ Its publications used the spelling Fenian rather than Fianna, which may account for Fenian movement adopting that spelling. On the day the 'brotherhood' was founded in 1858, James Stephens's Young Ireland commander, William Smith O'Brien, became the Ossianic Society's president.²⁰⁶ Among the early members were James Stephens's brother-in-law and I.R.B. man, George Hooper, as well as O'Donovan Rossa, Mortimer Moynihan and Daniel Mac Cartie of the Skibbereen Phoenix Society and later founders of the I.R.B., Skibbereen solicitor Patrick O'Hea and Richard Hodnett.²⁰⁷ Hodnett and O'Hea were admitted as members in August 1860 on the same day as Thomas Swanton of Ballydehob.²⁰⁸ At the same meeting of the society, presided over by William Smith O'Brien, a letter was read out from the American branch with a subscription of £3 5s. asking for a number of people

²⁰⁴ *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the year 1856* (6 vols, Dublin, 1853-1863, 1859), iv, p.vii; *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the year 1853* (Dublin, 1854), i, n.p.

²⁰⁵ *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the year 1856* (1859), iv, n.p; Denieffe, *Irish Republican Brotherhood*, p. 25.

²⁰⁶ *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the year 1856*, iv, p.ix.

²⁰⁷ *Transactions of the Ossianic Society ... 1853*, i, n.p.; *Transactions of the Ossianic Society ... 1856*, iv, p. 334, p. 330, p. 335.

²⁰⁸ *Irish Times*, 9 Aug. 1860

to be admitted among them were the leaders of the Fenian Brotherhood.²⁰⁹ The New York branch, founded to sustain the Irish branch financially, had as its secretary John Egan who was based at 191, Duane St. Nine of the US members used the address of the New York Phoenix. Egan would later participate in the Fenian invasion of Canada at Battle of Ridgeway on 2 June 1866.²¹⁰ According to Toby Joyce: '[...] the 'New York Ossianic Society' seems to have been a hotbed of Fenianism. In a membership of sixty-eight, at least ten were Fenians, of whom nine had the same address - the Phoenix office.'²¹¹ Among the American Fenian members who were admitted the same day as Hodnett and O'Hea were John O'Mahony, Head Centre of the Fenian Brotherhood, Col. Michael Corcoran of the N.Y. 69th regiment, Michael Doheny, J.J. Kelly and others.²¹² John O'Mahony gave the same address as the secretary, John Egan, while the Fenian Brotherhood had their offices at No. 22 on the same street. Michael Cavanagh, the Young Irelander and Fenian, was also a member of the American Ossianic Society and was part of the American delegation who accompanied the body of Terence Bellow McManus to Ireland in 1861 for the his I.R.B. stage managed funeral.²¹³ O'Donovan Rossa later recalled attending a banquet for the American delegation where Cavanagh was present amongst the guest of honour.²¹⁴ Though there is no evidence that an interest in the Irish language and the 'Fenian period of Irish history' proved Hodnett a Fenian, it is intriguing that he and O'Hea were admitted at the same time as the leading lights of

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Patrick Steward & Bryan P. McGovern, *The Fenians: Irish Rebellion in the North Atlantic World, 1858-1876* (Tennessee, 2013), p. 217.

²¹¹ Toby Joyce, 'The "Galway American" 1862-63: Part 1: James Roche and the American Civil War', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, Vol. 47, (1995), p. 111.

²¹² *Transactions of the Ossianic Society ... 1853*. i, n.p.; *Transactions of the Ossianic Society ... 1856*, iv, pp 338-40.

²¹³ Maureen Murphy, James Quinn, 'Cavanagh, Michael', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2010). (<http://dib.cambridge.org.elib.tcd.ie/quicksearch.do#>); O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's Recollections*, p. 238.

²¹⁴ O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's Recollections*, p. 238.

American Fenianism while O'Donovan Rossa and the Phoenix Society men had been a members since at least 1859.

In his study of *Romanticism, Nationalism and Irish Antiquarian Societies, 1840-80*, Damien Murray noted that the membership of the Ossianic Society was made up of 70% nationalists, 9% b unionists and 19.5% English academics, nobles and gentry.²¹⁵ Murray notes the Skibbereen Phoenix men's membership and that Thomas Swanton was a landlord who lost his farm in 1860.²¹⁶ Swanton had become more revolutionary after witnessing the distress caused by the Famine and even for a time considered joining the Irish Confederates.²¹⁷ Whereas these connections through the Ossianic Society are by no means a smoking gun, it is notable that O'Hea and Hodnett were in the same, Dublin based, society as Rossa, Moynihan when they all resided in West Carbery. On that basis alone it is quite possible that Hodnett may well have been one of the Ballydehob Phoenix Society members who escaped police identification in 1858. As has been noted this is the period same period that O'Donovan Rossa previously had a shop just a few doors from where Henry O'Mahony was apprenticed.

Reaction to Hodnett's Arrest

The guest of honour at the indignation meeting at Ballydehob on 8 May was James Gilhooley, the 1860s I.R.B. Head Centre from Bantry. Henry O'Mahony 'spoke violently against the local magistrates including Swanton'.²¹⁸ On 19 May, George Swanton was shot at while returning home from Skibbereen.²¹⁹ Police concluded that three people had lain in wait for him behind. Having fired one shot which 'whizzed past

²¹⁵ Damien Murray, *Romanticism, Nationalism and Irish Antiquarian Societies, 1840-80* (Naas, 2000), p. 108.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 109.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ George Swanton, 5 Dec. 1888, *Special Commission*, i, p. 529; Membership Book of Ballydehob Branch of the National Land League of Ireland, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 9; Lang, *Special Commission*, i, p. 526.

²¹⁹ D.I. MacDonald, "Crime and Outrage ...", pp 6-7, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 10.

his head' the assailants throw stones at the carriage.²²⁰ On 1 June, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Henry O'Mahony for 'incitement to murder' Swanton.²²¹

When ten policemen attempted to arrest O'Mahony in Ballydehob on June 4, the people of the district forcibly resisted.²²² Having prior knowledge that he would be arrested he had asked that it should be effected by a single constable in order to avoid the possibility that people might get injured.²²³ However, this foreknowledge also gave him an opportunity to organise resistance. Fifteen hundred people assembled on hearing the chapel bell and blowing of horns. They rescued him twice from armed police, who withdrew to avoid loss of life.²²⁴ O'Mahony refused to contemplate the opportunity to escape on an American ship and declared that the 'boys of Ballydehob will make it hot for the Swantons' as he set off for Skibbereen at the head of the crowd.²²⁵ The police report illuminates the difficulties the police faced:

Arrest and Rescue of Henry O'Mahony

June 4 1881 Skull

I beg to report that this morning at 6.45 am I proceeded with nine men to the house of Henry O Mahony in Ballydehob for the purpose of executing the warrant for his arrest. He was very quiet and I had no difficulty getting in to his house and making the arrest. Before, however, O'Mahony could have time to dress a crowd had gathered at the door of the house. The chapel bell was set ringing to alarm the town and horns were sounded on the hills around to bring in the people from the country. When we got the prisoner into the street, he refused to get on the car, which was ready waiting so we walked him quietly down the street through the crowd to get him on the car without difficulty when we got outside the town.

²²⁰ *WCE*, 21 May 1881.

²²¹ List of Warrants by county and district, Skull, Cork West Riding, N.A.I., P.P.P. Act 1881, box 1; *The Times*, 6 June 1881, p. 11.

²²² D.I. A.L. MacDonald, Report on the Arrest of Henry O'Mahony N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205; N.A.I., P.P.P. Act (1881) papers, box 1.

²²³ N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

²²⁴ D.I. MacDonald, "Crime and Outrage ...", p. 6, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 10; *The Times*, 6 June 1881, p. 11; N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

²²⁵ *The Times* 6 June 1881, p. 11; N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

But before we reached the outskirts of the town the crowd which by this time numbered several hundred, forced their way through the escort and dragged the prisoner back to his house. Stone throwing then commenced and one constable received a cut on the head from a large stone. The men having fixed swords the stone throwing ceased and O'Mahony who appeared anxious to go away quickly, addressed the mob requesting them not to break the law or make any disturbance. The police then surrounded the prisoner with swords and marched him about half a mile out of town accompanied by the crowd without any disturbance. At about half a mile from the town the mob was reinforced by a large contingent from the country. The mob now numbered about fifteen hundred and they declared that they would not let the prisoner be taken away. They broke through the escort and again brought O'Mahony back to his house. I then withdrew to the barracks and telegraphed the facts of the case. I do not doubt that if an attempt had been made to take him into Skibbereen loss of life would have resulted. Since I left Ballydehob, the mob took him away towards Skibbereen and it is rumoured that he is on his way to Limerick to give himself up to the governor of the gaol there. I wired Inspector Hume but received a reply that he had not yet arrived in Skibbereen. Having endorsed the execution of the warrant, I sent it by post to SI Hume that in case the prisoner does arrive in Skibbereen he could send him on with an escort in the morning.

I could not withdraw any police from Ballydehob on account of the excitement there. Mr Robert Swanton, father to Mr George Swanton who was fired at (see my reports of 19th May) applied this evening for protection for the night and three men were sent to his house from Ballydehob, threatening language having been used towards both Mr Geo Swanton and his father by the mob today.

AI MacDonald 3 S I²²⁶

It is clear from the police report that the efforts to resist the arrest of O'Mahony were mob-based and even O'Mahony had difficulty in his attempts to restrain the people from releasing him. O'Mahony took the train to Cork, where he stayed at the house of a friend.²²⁷ However, O'Mahony quickly turned his situation into an embarrassing affront to rule of law and order. Despite his claims that he was willing to be arrested, D.I. MacDonald stated that, once in Skibbereen, O'Mahony displayed the warrant for his arrest rendering it impossible for the police to intervene, such was the

²²⁶ MacDonald, Report on the Arrest of Henry O'Mahony, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

²²⁷ O'Mahony Luton, *Rolling Echoes*, p. 262.

excitement of the people. Injuries would have resulted and the police allowed him to proceed by train to Cork where he at first went to the Victoria Hotel but had left by the time police arrived there.²²⁸ The following day, John O'Connor hired a car and accompanied O'Mahony to Limerick Gaol where he was at first refused admittance.²²⁹ However the police investigation indicated that he took the car rather than the train to Limerick on the night of 4 June.²³⁰ Even the act of conveying himself to prison resulted in a political manifestation as he later claimed his travel expenses from the government.²³¹ The *Kildare Observer* reported that Mr Forster had ordered that O'Mahony's travelling expenses be paid stating: 'Mr Forster said "he had considered the application of Mr O'Mahony, of Ballydehob, to be reimbursed travelling expenses which he incurred by going to lodge himself in Limerick Gaol after being rescued by a Cork mob, a reasonable one, and he had ordered the expenses to be paid."'”²³²

According to O'Mahony:

I was rescued by an infuriated and outraged people, rearrested and rescued a second time. Then the police quietly went to their barracks and a boat got ready to take me out to meet an American liner for America. This I objected to but came into Skibbereen escorted by several thousand people showed the copy of my warrant publically as I went through the streets of Skibbereen here there is a very large force of police and yet not one of them had the kindness of escorting me to Limerick prison. I was compelled to pay my own fare to Cork and when I arrived there I told publically what my mission was and although surrounded in Cork by a number of people yet none of the authorities had the kindness to escort me to Limerick and it being Saturday evening and too late for the last train I would have to lay over "until" Monday morning consequently was compelled to hire cars to convey me to prison with a Land League escort and was after demanding admittance at the prison gate here when arrested by Constable Kelly under these

²²⁸ Report of DI A.L. MacDonald, 20 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

²²⁹ O'Mahony Luton, *Rolling Echoes*, p. 262; *The Times* 6 June 1881.

²³⁰ Report of DI A.L. MacDonald, 20 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

²³¹ *Hansard* 3, cclxii col. 98; *Quirke*, 'Diary of a Land League Activist', p. 27

²³² *Kildare Observer*, 25 June 1881.

circumstance would you kindly ask if I am entitled to £4. 1. 6. which I was compelled to borrow to bring me here.²³³

Even the police agreed that O'Mahony could have escaped as 'Cape Clear fishermen were in Ballydehob on the morning' but O'Mahony refused to go with them after they offered to bring him out to an American ship.²³⁴ Having had ample opportunity to escape the country, O'Mahony willingly became a political prisoner. On 30 July Robert Swanton was shot near Ballydehob.²³⁵ His arrest having precipitated a popular uprising in Ballydehob, Skull and Skibbereen, O'Mahony was released from Limerick Goal on health grounds on 20 September.²³⁶ However, he was rearrested on 10 December on suspicion of 'Intimidation against rent' and imprisoned until 14 August 1882.²³⁷

Richard Daly, the postmaster at Ballydehob and also steward for George Swanton, continued to be a target of threatening letters. One found on 30 July, the day after Robert Swanton was shot at, stated:

One more thing I have to say
Is to shun the peelers without delay
And not to give the country say
That you should be a Traitor
Robert, George and Daly too!
Woe be to them, for I am true,
A Croppy-still for ever.²³⁸

Charles Townshend in his *Political Violence in Ireland: Government and Resistance Since 1848*, noted that the message contained in the above notice was

²³³ Henry O'Mahony, prisoner under P.P.P. Act Limerick Goal, to Mr Healy MP, 9 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

²³⁴ DI A.L. MacDonald, 20 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

²³⁵ DI A.L. MacDonald, 'County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...', p. 9, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

²³⁶ Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act, List of all persons arrested under the Act, N.A.I., P.P.P. papers, box 1; *WCE*, 24 Sept. 1881.

²³⁷ List of all persons Arrested under Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act, 44 & 45, Vict. c.4, N.A.I., P.P.P. Act paper, box 2. See also Chapter Four below.

²³⁸ Envelope 10, N.A.I., I.N.L., box 8. Note: Croppy was a nickname given to the rebels of 1798.

‘definitely a political’ one.²³⁹ Such references to the rebellion of 1798 were pervasive in West Cork during the Land War. As such a threatening notice the one cited above indicates that republican Nationalism and allusions to rebellion went hand in hand with agitation for tenant rights during the Land War in West Cork.

Daly remained in Swanton’s employment despite being boycotted.²⁴⁰ On 24 October 1881, his outhouse was burned down. A notice found near the property by Constable Kells said:

Dear Richardeen, I am going to pay you a small complement – that is only too well due to you, you pimping soup-copping bastard. Take my word that as soon as God is in Heaven I will stain my hands in your blood and yellow George and father one eyed Robert
Yours truly
Captain Moonlight and Co.²⁴¹

Daly told the investigating officer, Constable George Kells, that ‘the people associated with the Land League were much embittered towards him for remaining in Swanton’s service’.²⁴² Thereafter, Daly received continuous police protection and ‘had to go some considerable way to get my [his] horses shod’.²⁴³ Richard Daly’s treatment clearly shows that going against the wishes of the League could result in a person being subjected to threats and violence of a decidedly Ribbon character.

The West Cork Uprising

On 6 June, a rumour was circulated that the parish priest at Skull was to be arrested. Horns were blown and chapel bells rung which according to the *West Cork*

²³⁹ Charles Townshend, *Political Violence in Ireland* (Oxford, 1983), p. 112. Note: Townshend mistakenly states that Robert Swanton was shot in May 1881 and that George was shot at in June rather than July.

²⁴⁰ Outrage report, Constable George Kells to Sub Inspector M. Hurley, Envelope 37, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 8.

²⁴¹ Envelope 34, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 8; ‘County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage ...’, p. 11, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10; Richard Daly, 5 Dec. 1888, *Special Commission*, i, p. 531.

²⁴² Outrage report: Constable George Kells to Sub Inspector M. Hurley, Envelope 37, N.A.I., I.N.L. paper, box 8.

²⁴³ Richard Daly, 5 Dec. 1888, *Special Commission*, i, p. 531.

Eagle were 'the summons that the hour for action was drawing nigh'.²⁴⁴ A bridge between Durrus and Skull was broken down and the telegraph from Ballydehob and Skibbereen was also sabotaged in order to cut the local officials off from communication outside the district.²⁴⁵ Three thousand people 'armed with sticks, stones, some few firearms and enormous pikes [...] took complete charge of the village' of Skull.²⁴⁶ They stoned the police barracks and the inspector's home but were under the control of leaders one of whom was overheard ordering the cessation of an attack on the coast guard station as 'the coast guard have not meddled with us yet, when they do will be the time to meddle with them'.²⁴⁷ Communication outside the district was impossible as the telegraph wires and poles were pulled down and thrown into bogs, leaving Dublin Castle to rely on newspaper reports for intelligence.²⁴⁸ Navy gunboats, the H.M.S. Britomart and H.M.S. Valorous, were sent to Skull and the H.M.S. Orwell to Bantry.²⁴⁹ An attempt to restore order at Ballydehob by E.B. Warburton RM and a company of marines was repulsed by one thousand people who, injuring two officers and several men, compelling them to retreat to Skull.²⁵⁰ On the night of 7 June, men commanded in military fashion marched to the house of Richard Notter and formed a line opposite. Notter commenced shooting on hearing a voice issuing orders: 'Halt! Front! Uncase revolvers' and the group withdrew.²⁵¹ On June 8, John O'Connor arrived in Ballydehob with an American named Captain Bell, staying one night with the Land League treasurer before moving on to Skull. Though local police were to report that Bell was

²⁴⁴ *WCE*, 11 June 1881.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ E.R. Cobb to Rear Admiral R.T. Hamilton, 6 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/19291.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *The Times*, June 9 1881; Rear Admiral R.T. Hamilton to W.E. Forster, Chief Secretary, 8 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/19372

²⁴⁹ Rear Admiral R.T. Hamilton to W.E. Forster, Chief Secretary, 8 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/19372; *The Times*, 9 June 1881.

²⁵⁰ *The Times*, 9 June 1881; E.B. Warburton, R.M., 'Crime and Outrage', p. 8, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box10.

²⁵¹ Richard H. Notter, 'Crime and Outrage...', N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10, p. 8.

‘not recruiting for a secret society’, Limerick R.I.C. were informed that he was in Ireland with other Americans to increase the number of young men joined in the confederation known as ‘The Irish Republican Brotherhood’ and the ‘Skirmishing Fund’.²⁵²

When order was restored, the district was under the control of the military. On 10 June, A.L. MacDonald reported that ‘a number of persons concerned in the rescue of Henry O’Mahony can be identified’. He asserted that ‘informations have been sworn before Mr Warburton RM as to the circumstances of the rescue and the persons concerned in it.’²⁵³ Such was the state of excitement about the district that in order to effect the arrest of Richard Hodnett Jnr., seventy men from the 36th Regiment were dispatched to Ballydehob while a naval gunboat was at the ready in case of trouble:

HMS Gunboat Britomart

Reporting an arrest and proposed proceeding of gunboat

20 June 1881

J B H Atkinson Lt. commanding to Rear Admiral commanding

Sir I have the honour to report that yesterday an arrest was made at Ballydehob under the Magistrates warrant of a man named Richard Hodnett: Seventy men belonging to the detachment of the 36th Regt at present stationed at Skull marched for Ballydehob at 8 a.m. The arrest was made without any disturbance and the prisoner escorted by this detachment two miles on the Skibbereen road beyond Ballydehob where he was handed over to a detachment of the Rifle Brigade and lodged in Skibbereen Gaol .

²⁵² T.H. Burke to C.I. Hillier, 17 June 1881, and D.I. Horne report as to ‘Strangers in Ballydehob’, 20 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21038; J. Moore Coffey to Head Constable Clark, 11 July 1881, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 9.

²⁵³ A.L. Mac Donald, 10 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21205.

I placed the gunboat at the service of the Hon Capt. Plunkett Resident Magistrate should he consider it advisable that she should proceed up Roaring Water Bay and cooperate with the troops but he wished me to remain at Skull. [...]²⁵⁴

What is remarkable about this report is the extent to which the activities of the Ballydehob Land League Branch had forced government to commit military resources, including advanced weaponry and naval artillery, to compel the district to acquiescence and subservience to the normal rule of law. The London weekly, *Penny Illustrated News*, published an engraving featuring the riots on 18 June with the caption: 'Ireland within a measureable distance of Civil War'.²⁵⁵ The poster writers and speechmakers who had previously assailed the oligarchy and the tyrants had proven their point.

The naval officer continued:

Captain Plunkett informs me that the offence of this man (common assault on a policeman) would at other times be met with a fine of a few shillings, but that the people here about have the mistaken notion that they cannot be apprehended hence this example. Rd Hodnett's father is at present in prison on a warrant of the Lord Lieutenant.²⁵⁶

This latter statement further proves the loss of dignity for state power and indeed the arbitrary nature of justice in the crisis that befell the administrators of justice in the face of a concerted public defiance and the willingness of a population to resist what they deemed the judicial picking-off of their appointed leaders. Whereas the revolutionaries were not militarily equipped to face down the forces that were quickly arrayed against them, by forcing the government to react and indeed over-react, they proved a central point of their continued rhetoric: that the people were subjugated by landlords supported by a military force. Even the examples that justice sought to make of individuals such as the young Hodnett merely provided further evidence of the

²⁵⁴ J.B.H Atkinson, Lt. Commanding HMS Britomart to Rear Admiral commanding, 20 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/21472.

²⁵⁵ *Penny Illustrated News*, 18 June 1881. See Illustration 3 in appendix of images.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

inequity and cruelty that were propagandists' favourite tools of mobilisation and proselytization.

The table shows that the police were at a loss when investigating what they termed 'agrarian outrages' in West Cork. They did have some success in convicting some rioters and the rescuers of O'Mahony. However it must be noted activities such as the rescue of O'Mahony took place openly and in front of the policemen. Of 38 reported outrages, only four resulted in arrests or convictions.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, on 30 July, after Richard Hodnett Jnr was jailed and calm had apparently been restored, George Swanton's 76 year old father, Robert, was shot in the head and severely injured near Ballydehob.²⁵⁸ He subsequently lost the one eye and thereafter received constant police protection. He was later awarded compensation for the injury at the Spring Assizes in Cork.²⁵⁹

No of case	Injured persons	Nature of Outrage	No. of Persons summonsed or arrested and how disposed of
1	Jer. McCarthy	Threatening Notice	Nil
1	Cath O'Shea	Do do	Do
2	Jas Wiseman	Injury to property Threatening Notice	Do
1	Thos. Downes	Incendiary Fire	Nil
1	Mr. Lyons Mrs. Lyons	Threat letters	Nil
2	At Skull Jas Sullivan Anne Wilkinson Elln Cowen Denis Regan + Skull Barracks	I. Riot II. Injuries to Property	Fifteen persons summonsed: one whom received two months' imprisonment; nine received one month each; two were fined £1 each and three discharged
1	Sam Jagoe	Injury to property	Nil
1	Post Master General	Injury to Telegraph wire	Nil
2	Jon. Cappithorne, J. Downes, R. Carey, C. McCarthy	Riot at Skibbereen Injury to Property	Nil
2	R. Notter, Esq.J.P.	I. Intimidation II. Robbery	Nil
1	Cork +Bandon Railway	Attempt to obstruct Railway train	Nil
1	J.C. Beamish	Threaten Notice	Nil
1	Andw Sullivan	Threat letter	Nil
1	Dr Hallahan	Threat Notice	Nil
1	Cork and Bandon Railway	Attempt to injure a railway	Nil

²⁵⁷ Return of agrarian outrages in June Cork West Riding, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/24576.

²⁵⁸ D.I. A.L. MacDonald, "Crime and Outrage ...", p. 9.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

		train	
1	Jas. Mahony	Threat letter	Nil
1	H.J. Wright	Injury to Property	Nil
1	Jerh. Mahony	Intimidation	Nil
1	Peter Good	Threat Notice	Nil
1	At Ballydehob	Riot	Thirteen persons summoned one of whom was sentenced to six months' imprisonment; nine to one month each, one fined £1, two cases adjourned
1	Geo Swanton, Esq. J.P., Robt. Swanton, A. Jagoe, and Rchd Notter	Threat Notice	Nil
2	Lawce. FitzGerald	Administration Unlawful Oath Intimidation	Nil
1	Joseph White	Threatening Notice	Nil
1	At Goleen	Riot	Nil
1	John Morrin	Threat Notices	Nil
2	Bernard Mahoney	Injury to Property Threatening Notice	Nil
1	P. Donovan	Assault on Bailiff	Five persons arrested, three of whom were fined £5 each, and two discharged
1	Jas Sheenan	Threat Letter	Nil
1	Jermiah McCarthy	Threat Notice	Nil
1	Robert White J.P.	Riot	Nine persons arrested and bailed for Cork Summer Assizes
1	Robert Travers	Threatening Notices	Nil
1	Robert Travers, Esq. J.P.	Threat Notices	Nil
2	JerH. Buckley	House Attack Cutting the person	Nil
1	Mary Kingston servant of Jas. White	Intimidation	Nil
1	Thos. Clarke	Maiming of Cattle	Nil
1	Jerh. Hurley	Threatening Notices	Nil
1	Chas. McCarthy	Threat Notice	Nil
1	Robt. Travers	Threat Notice	Nil
1	Cork and Bandon Railway	Attempt to injure a railway train	Nil

260

Arrest of Richard Hodnett Junior

Richard Hodnett Jnr was arrested by a large force of military and police led by Mr Cronin R.M. while a demonstration of groaning and hooting by the residents of Ballydehob took place. According to *The Nation*, he was charged with assaulting police but the paper asserted that the assault was of the most trivial nature.²⁶¹ On 1 July, he was found guilty of assaulting 6 police constables on 4 June and 9 June and sentenced to six one-month sentences to run consecutively.

On 28 July, Hodnett's case was raised in a parliamentary question by Parnell. Parnell asked the Chief Secretary whether Hodnett junior had been found guilty of six

²⁶⁰ Return of agrarian outrages in June Cork West Riding, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/24576.

²⁶¹ *The Nation*, 25 June 1881.

separate offences by Mr. Plunkett at the petty sessions, whether he had been sentenced to a month's imprisonment for each offence, whether the cumulative effect was that Hodnett would have to sleep 'on a plank bed' for six months and whether Forster approved of Petty Sessions in Ireland passing such cumulative sentences.²⁶² Forster replied that Hodnett had led a riotous mob 'at Clonakilty' rescuing Mr O'Mahony on June 4 and that he had been convicted at the Petty Sessions on 1 July of assaulting two constables on that occasion. He was further convicted of assaulting four constables on 7 June when he led a mob attacking police. He was sentenced to one month imprisonment for each assault. However, Forster stated that the effect of the sentences was that Hodnett would only have to sleep on a plank for one of the six months he was sentenced to.²⁶³ Parnell did not correct Forster's error as to the fact it was in Ballydehob and not Clonakilty that O'Mahony was rescued. However, the fact that the activities of the Ballydehob agitators was again being mentioned in the House of Commons may be seen as a further success for the local Land League branch.

On his release from prison Hodnett Jnr again received local and national newspaper coverage. On January 25 1882, *The Nation* carried a report from the previous Monday's *Cork Herald* reporting on Hodnett being 'liberated' from Cork county jail and being met by his mother, who had travelled from Ballydehob to meet him. The report went on to detail Hodnett's imprisonment and the deprivations he was said to have suffered. According to the report 'the poor young man' spent the first month of his imprisonment on a plank bed, which Hodnett Jnr likened to 'a slow torture'.²⁶⁴ During his first month, he was also put to work on a treadmill. He then had a cot to sleep on for three months but spent his last two months once more 'subjected to the cruelty on the

²⁶² *Hansard* 3, cclxiv, col. 25 (28 July 1881). cc 24-25.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, cc24-25.

²⁶⁴ *The Nation*, 7 Jan. 1882.

hard bed'. It was said that Hodnett suffered very badly during cold weather. His diet was described as 'affording no greater variety than bread and milk, or bread and cocoa', which was said to be 'undrinkable stuff'.²⁶⁵ Twice a week, on Sundays and Thursdays, he received about three ounces of meat; while on Tuesdays he received suet pudding which also constituted his 'repast on Christmas Day'.²⁶⁶ Hodnett's incarceration was reported to have had an effect on his "fine manly features' as he had "lost strength' and his 'body was much reduced'.²⁶⁷ Hodnett left Cork the same day by train to Skibbereen.²⁶⁸ Such reportage indicates the propaganda value that could be wrought from an ordinary conviction and imprisonment. In this case, Hodnett was convicted of assault on the police. However, as can be seen above, the first reports played down the nature of the assaults as being minor whereas later reports from the nationalist *Nation* treated Hodnett junior as though he was a political rather than an ordinary prisoner.

Recruitment to the Ballydehob Land League

From the arrest of Hodnett in April until the suppression of the Land League in October 1881, membership of the Ballydehob Land League branch increased substantially week on week. A review of the Membership Book of the Ballydehob Branch of the Irish National Land League shows that first 114 names are listed without a date, thus indicating that the book, which was a printed official National Land League of Ireland membership book with a space for the branch name to be hand-written, was a new book sent out from Dublin to the local branches. There are some anomalies in this handwritten book. Entries for 31 June jump from 820 to 900. As the writing is in the same hand, this may indicate that there were two registrars on that date and that a separate list was made for the other 80. On the same date, one number 792 is repeated;

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

therefore the actual membership was potentially either 1,037 or 957. The latter figure allows for human error in recording the numbers. In the last entries, the 0 looks like a 6, which is why, at the Parnell Special Commission, the membership was given as 1,638.²⁶⁹

Between its formation in September 1880 and 16 May 1881, the Ballydehob Land League branch recruited only 114 people. Only after Hodnett's arrest did recruiting begin in earnest. On 26 May, 141 people joined the branch in a single day. Following O'Mahony's arrest in June, membership grew steadily. The last entries in the membership book on September 13 brought the total number to 1,037.²⁷⁰ The large land meetings of 1880 and 1881 should have proved fertile recruiting grounds for the branch. It is clear that no effort was made to get people to join the Land League and threatening notices urging specific individuals to join were mere intimidation of landlord and government employees. It might be concluded that the Ballydehob Land League branch wished to remain a small cadre of trusted men until the government directly challenged them by arresting their leader. By June 20 1881, even landlord Michael Hegarty, who had threatened the League the preceding December, had joined and lowered his rents to the Griffith valuation.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ D.I. Royce, 6 Dec. 1888, *Special Commission*, i, p. 536.

²⁷⁰ Membership Book of the Ballydehob Branch, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 9.

²⁷¹ John Collins to Richard Hodnett, 20 June 1881, Minute Book of the Ballydehob Land League Branch, N.A.I. I.N.L. papers, box 9.

Ballydehob Land League Members enrolled Sept 1880 to Oct 1881 (exact dates) ²⁷²	
12-May	47
19-May	39
26-May	60
02-Jun	39
09-Jun	91
16-Jun	107
23-Jun	35
30-Jun	40
07-Jul	15
14-Jul	35
21-Jul	11
04-Aug	9
11-Aug	4
20-Aug	2
25-Aug	4
08-Sep	1
09-Sep	1
15-Sep	1
22-Sep	1
29-Sep	1
30-Sep	3
06-Oct	8
13-Oct	3
20-Oct	5
Subtotal	562
Pre-reg 12 Sep 80 to 9 May 81	131
Unknown dates	81
Total	774

In the same period, their subscriptions also rose and it is notable that the best month for subscriptions and enrolment was June 1881, with £24 6s. subscribed and 312 new members joining. The discrepancy between the 774 names listed in the membership book and the 1,037 listed members may be accounted for by enrolment being done by several people using separate lists which were not subsequently entered into the book.

Ballydehob Land League Subscriptions May – Oct 1881²⁷³			
	£	s	d
May	11	3	5
June	24	6	0
July	3	6	0
August	1	8	2
September	0	17	0
October	1	11	2
Undated	13	16	9

²⁷² Membership Book of the Ballydehob Branch, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 9.

²⁷³ Ibid..

By looking at the recorded subscriptions by month in pence, it is clear that June was the greatest month for subscriptions and that they continued strong into July despite the military presence in the area and remained.²⁷⁴

One of the main rallying points of the Ballydehob Land League branch, and one which the tenants stuck to, was their refusal to pay rent at over the Griffith Valuation. The total rental of members who joined between May and Oct 1881 was £7,892 6s. 6d. while the Griffith Valuation of this land was £4,997. The average rental was therefore nearly 58% more than the valuation.²⁷⁵ When a comparison of the value of agricultural output for Ireland for 1853, the year when the Griffith's Valuation was completed for Co. Cork, and the first two years of the Land War, 1879 and 1880, it is possible to see that the Land League demands may not have been unreasonable.

The value of the potato crop in Ireland for 1853 when the Griffith's Valuation of the county was completed was £27.5 million, however the value of the total production in 1879 was £6.77 million and in 1880 was £9.30 million respectably.²⁷⁶ In 1853 the value of tillage output not including potatoes was £19 million compared to £4.9 in 1879 and £5.6 in 1880. Livestock and livestock products were worth £19 million in 1853 and £30.6 million and £31.3 million in the respectively in 1879 and 1880.²⁷⁷ Therefore the value of agricultural output had fallen from the year of Griffith's Valuation by 27% in 1879 and 19.3% or a mean drop of 23.15%. The population of Ireland fell by 20.6% between the census of 1851 and that of 1881.²⁷⁸ Taking into account the fact that

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Moody, *Davitt*, Appendix G2, Tonnage and value of Potato Crop, 1847-83, p. 570.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, Appendix G1, Value of Total Agricultural Output, p. 569. Note this does not include potatoes and all figures for potatoes cited above and livestock and tillage are based on W.E. Vaughan, 'A study of Landlord and Tenant relations between the Famine and the Land War, 1850-78 (Ph.D thesis, University of Dublin, 1973) pp33-5, 333-58.

²⁷⁸ W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics, Population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), p.3.

population and the value of the agricultural output fell by a similar amount in the period, the fact that the Ballydehob members rents were 58% above the valuation lends some credibility to the Land League's demand for rents to be reduced.

Ballydehob Comparison of Total Rent, Valuation, & Land League Subscriptions			
	£	s	d
Rent	7,892	6	6
Griffith's Valuation	4,997	2	4
Land League Subscriptions	59	5	0

Source: Membership Book of Ballydehob Land League Branch, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 9.

Ballydehob Land League Subscriptions 1881			
	£	s	d
May	11	2	2
June	24	6	0
July	3	6	0
Aug	1	8	2
Sep	0	17	0
Oct	1	11	2
Total dated subscriptions	42	10	6
Undated subscriptions	13	19	9
Grand Total subscriptions	66	10	3

Source: Membership Book of Ballydehob Land League Branch, N.A.I., INL papers Box 9.

The Unrepentant

Hodnett was released from prison on 29 April 1882.²⁷⁹ Three nights later, he assaulted a constable as Ballydehob celebrated the release of Parnell.²⁸⁰ On May 5, after three cheers were called for Davitt 'the leader of the Fenians' following his release from Portland Prison, Hodnett declared 'Aristocracy is rolling and democracy rising up in this place'.²⁸¹ On February 22 1883, Richard Hodnett Jr was observed at the post receiver at Ballydehob. The next day Richard Daly found a package containing dynamite addressed to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Earl Spencer. However as reported by *The Manchester Guardian* he 'indiscreetly destroyed the address label'; thus making handwriting analysis impossible.²⁸² The *Irish Times* reported that as the package had no stamp which aroused Daly's suspicions; so took it outside to examine it

²⁷⁹ N.A.I., P.P.P. Act (1881) papers, box 1.

²⁸⁰ N.A.I., CSORP/1882/25572.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Royce, 'Crime and Outrage...', p. 12, N.A.I., I.N.L. box 10; *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 Feb. 1883.

and discovered that it contained dynamite and a fuse and immediately contacted the police.²⁸³ However, prior to his ‘being aware of what the package contained’ he burned the outer packaging in the fire.²⁸⁴ A week later Hodnett Jnr, allegedly commenting on newspaper reports that the dynamite came from Durrus, was overheard by a policeman eavesdropping from outside his house, saying that the newspapers were wrong and that the dynamite ‘came from across the water’.²⁸⁵ By March 1883, both Hodnetts were in jail, Richard Jnr. awaiting trial for trial attempting to murder Earl Spencer, (he was later acquitted twice), and Richard Snr. under the provisions of the Crimes Act.²⁸⁶ Richard Daly subsequently received a letter from America threatening his life and the life of ‘The Invincibles’ approver James Carey.²⁸⁷

The Ballydehob Case

When District Inspector Royce was examined at *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission on 6 December 1888, he stated that he had seized a number of books and documents at the house of Henry O’Mahony on 11 January 1883. The purpose of introducing the Ballydehob Case as it was called in the printed briefs and reproductions of original documents prepared by the police and the Chief Crown Solicitor’s office to aid *The Times*, was to show a link between the operation of the Land League at Ballydehob—and indeed in West Cork—and sedition.²⁸⁸ Royce proved the documents that he seized from O’Mahony’s house including; a membership book of the Ballydehob Land League branch, several letters and partial accounts which were read into the record.²⁸⁹ Royce had only begun to serve at Skull in December 1882 and so his evidence was confined to the items he had taken from O’Mahony’s home and events

²⁸³ *Irish Times*, 26 Feb. 1883.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Constable Roche, ‘Crime and Outrage...’, p. 12.

²⁸⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 10 1883; N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 8, Envelope 40.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Mar. 10 1883; Envelope 40, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 8.

²⁸⁸ N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 9 and 10; *The Times*, 7 Dec. 1888.

²⁸⁹ *The Times*, 7 Dec. 1888.

after that date. One matter that Royce was able to discuss was an incident that happened the month after the Land League papers were seized, which was the posting at Ballydehob of a package said to have been addressed to the Chief Secretary of Ireland, Earl Spencer. Though no one has ever doubted that it was indeed addressed to Spencer, the wrapping was burned by the postmaster as he had intended to burn the entire unwrapped parcel, believing its posting was a hoax.²⁹⁰ A Press Association report printed with the *Irish Times* article referring to the incident noted that, during the recent agrarian agitation, Ballydehob had been ‘the scene of organised resistance to the authorities but had become more peaceable of late’.²⁹¹ It was also noted that a search of the house of a former suspect who was currently in Cork jail under the provisions of the Crimes Act had not yielded anything for the police.²⁹² On the 8 January, Richard Hodnett Snr. along with James Gilhooly and John O’Brien had been sentenced to prison terms under the Prevention of Crime Act for making speeches of an ‘inflammatory and illegal’ nature at a meeting in Bantry on 10 December 1882.²⁹³ However, having lodged appeals which had failed the previous Friday, 16 February, they not arrested until the morning of on the morning of 22 February to serve their sentences, of two months in the case of Hodnett and three months in the other two cases.²⁹⁴ The three were charged with intimidation for the speech made at a National League meeting at which Gilhooly decried tyranny and said the Land League had only been suppressed for its opposition to tyranny and injustice and that no one should pay rents that were unfair.²⁹⁵ He was also reported to have said: ‘The landlords were the bulwark of the British garrison and, and by abolishing them they would be helping to win the independence of their native

²⁹⁰ *Irish Times*, 26 Feb. 1883; *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Feb. 1883.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Royce, ‘County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...’ p. 4, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10; Prevention of Crime (Ireland) Act, 45 & 46 Vict., c.25, 12 July.

²⁹⁴ *Irish Times*, 23 Feb. 1883.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9 Jan. 1880.

country'.²⁹⁶ O'Brien said that the Irish people should pass their own laws and that 'England had given the people of Ireland for the last 700 years nothing but bayonets, buckshot, and British rule, and they had starved the tenantry'.²⁹⁷ Royce made no reference in his evidence in 1888 to these separatist sentiments, while he noted the dynamite incident.²⁹⁸ However, the fact that the Land League which had ceased to operate in Ballydehob in October 1881, was linked at the Special Commission with the 1883 dynamite incident, was designed to give the impression that the two were linked. In that respect, *The Times* case was likely correct. The personnel involved in agitation in 1880 and 1882 were similar, however, with so much evidence to present in support of the untenable position of *The Times*, given that its claims were based on forged documents, evidence that might have proved significant was dealt with quickly. The core of *The Times* case was to prove matters relating to Parnell's and the Land League national organisers' involvement with crime rather than dwell on the micro-climate of revolution that continued in West Cork. Parnell's counsel, Sir Charles Russell QC, stated that the contents of the papers seized from Henry O'Mahony were not even worth his commenting on, indicating that the material was not relevant to core claims from *The Times* in regard to his client.²⁹⁹ Indeed, in this Russell was correct, for the documents seized from O'Mahony, while indicating that the Ballydehob Land League branch was well organised and strong, did little to implicate the Irish National Land League headquarters in much other than giving advice in specific cases.³⁰⁰ However, they also prove that As has been noted in Chapter Two, Gilhooly was said to have been an I.R.B. head centre in the 1860s. It is noteworthy that both Gilhooly and Hodnett continued with their radical stance even after their imprisonment. Indeed, imprisonment

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ *The Times*, 7 Dec. 1888.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 5 Apr. 1889.

³⁰⁰ 'Crime and Outrage...', N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

increased the political notability of both men. A further piece of revolutionary theatre was evident when John O'Brien was present along with John O'Conner and Parnell for the formal formation of the Irish National League in Cork city on 18 December 1882. On that occasion, John O'Connor read a statement from an informal 'Vigilance Court' that had been established as 'a court to watch over national and political affairs for the City and County of Cork' which he said now abrogated their functions and merged with the Irish National League.³⁰¹ In January 1883, at the trial of the Invisibles for the murder of Earl Spencer and under, evidence of a Fenian 'Vigilance Committee' was offered by a witness.³⁰² These were also matters that Royce did not address. However, in light of O'Connor's own claims at the Special Commission, the fact that his companions in founding the Irish National League in Cork were from the ranks of advanced Nationalists further diminishes his claims to have left the I.R.B. in 1880. Furthermore it is impossible to ignore similarity in the names of the Invisible's 'committee' and O'Connor's 'court' and it must be assumed that the latter was an I.R.B. affair.

The dynamite incident at Ballydehob was notable in many respects. It involved the attempted mailing of a package containing detonation caps, wiring and dynamite to the Lord Lieutenant, unstamped, but with the handwritten notation that it was a parcel on 'Her Majesty's Service' from the mail receiver at Ballydehob.³⁰³ It was perpetrated on the day of the delayed arrest of Richard Hodnett, former leader of the Land League branch, in order for him to serve a two-month sentence and it created a national and international news story as it came at a time when dynamiting and dynamitards were international news stories.³⁰⁴ There was little chance that a package emanating from Ballydehob and addressed to the Lord Lieutenant would not be suspect; however, the

³⁰¹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 23 Dec. 1882.

³⁰² *Irish Times*, 29 Jan. 1883.

³⁰³ *Irish Times*, 23 Feb. 1883.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid*; *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 Feb. 1880.

fact that the outer wrapping was destroyed by the postmaster, despite police reports that he had immediately sent for the police, makes the reported event hard to reconcile. According to the police reports, the package was discovered on the morning of 23 February in the post receiver at Ballydehob. The package was later analysed by Mr Burrell at Cork, who found it contained:

[...]four and a half ounces of dynamite, which contained about seventy-one per cent of nitro-glycerine, an ordinary gutta-percha fuse, thirty three inches long. Inside the string a layer was impregnated with nitrate of potassium, and inside the string a layer of gunpowder, which ran through the middle of the fuse. There was also a detonator which was highly explosive – more so than the dynamite. If the quantity of dynamite had been exploded it would have sufficient force to raise five tons one foot high.³⁰⁵

A witness, Daniel Mahony, claimed to have seen Richard Hodnett Jnr about 9 pm on 22 February. According to the report prepared for the Special Commission

He had hand was in the receiver for seven to eight minutes. (It was afterwards proved by Mr Royse(sic), D-I., that the package was of such a size that considerable force should be used to put it in) In any case, it was a package requiring great care in posting.³⁰⁶

Constable John F. Jonston ‘when in ambush’ outside Hodnett’s house on 27 February stated that he heard a conversation between Richard Hodnett Jnr and an unidentified woman who was reported to have said: ‘If Dannie O’Mahony swore against you, you would have been arrested before this.’³⁰⁷ Another Constable, Maurice Roche, reported that he overheard a conversation being held inside the Hodnett house between Richard Hodnett Jnr and his brother Thomas:

³⁰⁵ Ibid

³⁰⁶ Daniel Maloney and Sergt. Royce, ‘County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...’, p. 12, N.A.I., I.N.L., papers, box 10.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

The newspaper are saying a good deal about the dynamite and about it coming from Durrus” Richard replied “The newspapers are mistaken when they say it came from Durrus, for it came across the water³⁰⁸

While the police used the dynamite incident to show the seriousness of the ‘Crime and Outrage resulting from the Establishment of the Land League at Ballydehob’ a more sober and scientific report stated that the incident ‘scarcely ranked higher than a hoax but of an alarming character’.³⁰⁹ This report also stated that the package would have more likely exploded in transit rather than when opened by the Lord Lieutenant.³¹⁰

It is impossible to know what the true circumstances surrounding the Ballydehob dynamite incident and Richard Daly’s actions were. As Daly was under constant intimidation, it seems remarkable that he did not preserve the entire package since it was addressed to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. It is possible he, indeed, thought it was a hoax and initially threw it in the fire as was reported by the *Irish Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*. In his book on the I.R.B. Owen McGee states that in early 1883, E.G. Jenkinson, the head of the newly formed Special Branch in London, began using *agent provocateurs* to join bogus dynamite plots.³¹¹ Though not beyond the realms of possibility it is unlikely that the Ballydehob dynamite case was a Jenkinson operation. However, only proof that the package was addressed to Earl Spenser came from Daly; who had destroyed the evidence. As a victim of extreme forms of intimidation, Daly would possibly have been an easy tool in a dubious police operation against the I.R.B. Another possibility might be that he destroyed the packaging in order to forestall the

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ ‘County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...’, p. 12, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10; Explosives Act, 1875 (38 Vict. c.17). Eighth annual report of Her Majesty’s inspectors of explosives; being their annual report for the year 1883, [C.4013], H.C. 1884, XVII.212.

³¹⁰ Explosives Act, 1875 (38 Vict. c.17). Eighth annual report of Her Majesty’s inspectors of explosives... for the year 1883, [C.4013], H.C. 1884, XVII.212.

³¹¹ McGee, *I.R.B. from the Land league to Sinn* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2005), p. 120.

successful apprehension of the perpetrator of the crime. If the latter were the case, then it would prove the efficacy of the intimidation campaign that appears to have shadowed Land League activities in Ballydehob. If the former were the case then the packaging could have proven innocence as much as guilt as the handwriting could have exonerated the prime suspect and would have had to be destroyed in order for a police set-up to succeed. However, the fact that Henry O'Mahony would, just a few years later, assume a role as courier for O'Donovan Rossa in assisting the families of dynamitards tends to point to the bomb plot being one that was hatched in Ballydehob, through O'Mahony's connections and with American assistance. O'Mahony's house had been raided and documents seized just a few weeks earlier. Richard Hodnett Snr was under imminent threat of arrest if his appeal failed and on the evening of his arrest the bomb was posted. It is also likely that Richard Hodnett Jnr would have fallen in with such a plot for, as evidenced by his role in the rescue of O'Mahony, he was not as controlled and cerebral as his father. He had also endured six months in prison as a result and playing a role in a wider conspiracy and was something of an enforcer with a history of attacking the police.

Richard Hodnett Jnr was tried twice for the offence but the juries failed to reach a verdict and he was never convicted.³¹²

John O'Connor at *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission 1889

When John O'Connor was questioned by his own barrister, Mr F. Lockwood QC, at the *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission on 9 July 1889, he stated that he became a member of the Fenian movement in 1866 when he was fifteen. In 1878 and 1879 he had been impressed by Devoy and Davitt's speeches and letters, especially

³¹² Sgt Lang, *The Special Commission*, p. 526; Royce, 'County of Cork, W.R., Crime and Outrage...', p. 13, N.A.I., I.N.L., papers, box 10.

³¹² *The Times*, 10 July 1889.

Devoy's calling for the young revolutionaries to come 'out of the rat-hole of conspiracy'.³¹³ It is notable that for several decades after 1879, Devoy continued to be involved in separatist Nationalist conspiracy. O'Connor's inference was Davitt and Devoy public stance persuaded him to leave the movement. He claimed: 'My conversion to constitutionalism was completed by Mr. Parnell's election for Cork, and since that time I have had no connection with the Fenian body'.³¹⁴ If O'Connor was being truthful then, as historians have noted, he left the I.R.B. in April 1880. However he was not being truthful: he was merely presenting a version of the truth which ably concealed his actual revolutionary adherence and allegiance to a secret oath-bound fraternal society.

Under cross-examination by Mr Atkinson representing *The Times*, he noted 'I took part in the starting of the Land League at Ballydehob, county Cork. I made several speeches there. Speaking there in April, 1881, I said "I shouldered my rifle in '67 and am prepared to associate and organise every organisation for the benefit of the country."' "³¹⁵ O'Connor continued: 'I referred only to constitutional organizations. I had taken part in the rising of 1867 and I was now willing to help any constitutional movement.'³¹⁶ As has been stated in Chapter Two above, O'Connor was still being discussed in senior I.R.B./Clan-na-Gael circles in 1881 as though he were still a member. Indeed for over a year after April 1880, right up until his arrest in on 4 July 1881, O'Connor repeatedly claimed to be a Nationalist in public or made statements that referred to his I.R.B. status. Under further cross examination, O'Connor was also asked 'Were members of the Fenian body an important factor in the agitation?' To this O'Connor replied 'No; indeed they were not. I was trying to make them more so, but I

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ *The Times*, 10 July 1889.

did not succeed to my entire satisfaction'. Asked if they 'Held aloof from it?', O'Connor replied 'Yes unfortunately'.³¹⁷ Asked: 'The Nationalists?' O'Connor appeared to contradict his previous statement 'As a rule. The rank and file of the Fenian organization did attend our demonstrations and seemed to be well affected towards us; but their leaders had always held rather jealously aloof from us'.³¹⁸ However, O'Connor also stated that the word 'nationalist' in the early 1880s meant 'men of Fenian opinions and proclivities'.³¹⁹ under further questioning O'Connor stated that 'a great many men in the Fenian party' had given assistance. He claimed that they 'had refrained from the hostility' but 'many of their best men had given us assistance'.³²⁰ When further pressed on whether the Fenians had been the main supporters of the Land League O'Connor said they were not but that 'the rank and file used to attend our meetings, and that many patriotic Fenians had given us assistance'.³²¹ Therefore, despite O'Connor claiming not to have been in the I.R.B., it was clear that he had associated a great deal with what he termed the 'rank and file' of the organisation. At a speech he made at Lisgoold on 26 June 1881, he was reported to have stated that any man 'who violated a principle of the brotherhood deserved to be boycotted'.³²² Only someone in the Irish Republican Brotherhood would have made such a statement referring to the fraternal bond extant amongst the members of the oath-bound secret society. I.R.B. men from the rank and file up would have had little time for someone who repeatedly asserted that they were part of the body or indeed implied they spoke for the body publicly if they were not in fact in the 'brotherhood'.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ John O'Connor, 9 July 1889, *Special Commission Act*, iii, p. 666.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

In 1889, O'Connor was a sitting MP; however, he still refused to answer in any detail questions regarding I.R.B. matters or any information regarding an I.R.B. meeting with General Millen held in '1878 or 1879', which he attended on the grounds that it was a 'Fenian meeting'.³²³ This meeting was in fact in 1879 and was part of Millen's tour of Ireland to inspect the 'military organisation' of the I.R.B. in Millen's capacity as 'leader of the Clan's "Military Board"'.³²⁴ It is likely that John Devoy attended this meeting as he accompanied Millen on the tour of Ireland.³²⁵ Ironically, from 1866, Millen was intermittently—if not continuously—a British spy and *agent provocateur*.³²⁶ While O'Connor praised the Fenian rank and file, he also stated that they needed to be placated at the time of the Land League agitation. Whereas that was undoubtedly true, O'Connor's claim that his rhetoric in 1880 and 1881 was merely an attempt at placating the I.R.B., coupled with his evasive answers, is hardly credible.

O'Connor's claim that his speeches were the mere placation of I.R.B. men do not explain his advanced Nationalist rhetoric and activities, and his continued presence close to the centre of extreme activities, such as the West Cork insurrection of June 1881. He stated at Land League and other meetings between 1880 and 1882, that he was a Nationalist and he defended the I.R.B. publicly. As has been noted above, he was also the mouthpiece for a so-called 'Vigilance Court' that had disbanded and merged with the Irish National League in December 1882. In his own testimony to the Special Commission, he stated that both Nationalist and Fenian meant the same thing in 1881 and his referring to himself as a Nationalist at public meetings can only have been an intentional reference to the fact that he was a sworn member of the I.R.B. at the time of

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ McGee, *I.R.B.*, p. 62.

³²⁵ *DPB*, i, p. 501.

³²⁶ Owen McGee, 'Millen, Francis Frederick', in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *DIB*, (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a5820>).

his utterances. The fact that, even in 1889, he refused to offer information beyond vague references to the number of people who attended also indicates that, whether he was still associated with any branch of the movement in 1889, he was not willing to break his oath to the organisation.³²⁷

Conclusion

From the autumn of 1880 right through to 1883, a small group of men with connections to John O'Connor, Richard Hodnett and Henry O'Mahony dominated the Land League struggle in West Cork. Though in no case, save for O'Connor and James Gilhooly of Bantry, was there police reports or verbal admissions that these men were part of the I.R.B. in 1880-81 there is ample circumstantial evidence. From the time the Ballydehob branch began, it was a force of discord that targeted local landlords, magistrates and their employees. The level of threat used increased over time, leading to shootings, burnings, beatings, boycotts and an effective strike against rent. Before the introduction of coercion, the leaders of the Ballydehob branch were increasingly bold in their defiance of authority. Following the suspension of *habeas corpus* and the arrest of Richard Hodnett, the district became even less controllable. It is notable that, by May 1881, a recruitment drive was under way and was highly successful. As has been shown above, the recorded membership of the Land League branch at Ballydehob increased from a mere 141 to over 1,000, the bulk of this recruitment occurring in May, June and July 1881. Local events, such as the shooting of landlord, the mini-insurrection of June, and the arrest of leaders, all served to increase membership in these months. However, when several of the local notables were arrested and incarcerated at the same time, some level of order was restored though threat notices continued. As has been shown, Richard Hodnett Snr and Jnr did not cease to attract police attention after their initial release

³²⁷ *The Times*, 10 July 1889.

from prison. There is ample evidence of the existence of a secret society in Ballydehob. For a start, the police received no information revealing the identities of individuals involved in attacks on Mahony or Cramier. In the case of Richard Daly, who was threatened throughout 1881, when he found a package addressed to the Lord Lieutenant which contained dynamite, he actually burned the outer wrapping, making it impossible to identify the sender. Despite Richard Hodnett being identified as having his hand in the mail box, juries on two occasions failed to convict him. The only successful convictions were in front of magistrates and in the absence of juries or under the provisions of special powers acts such as the Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act or the Prevention of Crime (Ireland) Act.

The character and personality of Richard Hodnett, a sage and capable man who was widely connected, would seem to indicate that he was the leader of whatever secret society existed in Ballydehob. His long-standing connection, through his membership of the Ossianic Society, with both the founders of Fenianism from his own locality, such as O'Donovan Rossa, and also with American Fenians, though not conclusive in proving Hodnett was I.R.B., is certainly a key piece of circumstantial evidence. In the case of Henry O'Mahony, despite supposedly losing his money in the USA, he made a successful business for himself in Ballydehob. His visits to America at a time when the Land League movement was being promoted by Clan-na-Gael, and Clan men were being sent to Ireland to reorganise the I.R.B is significant. Like Hodnett, O'Mahony also had a tangential connection with the early Fenians as they drilled on his father's land and as a youth he had worked a few doors from where O'Donovan Rossa kept a shop. The fact that, in 1886, O'Mahony was a financial courier for Rossa, bringing funds collected through a revolutionary newspaper, the *United Irishman*, to aid the families of Cork men arrested for dynamite offences, proves his direct connection with

advanced Nationalism and revolutionary projects. The fact that he personally received a payment from O'Donovan Rossa of £100 in 1887 reinforces the assumption that he was in fact a member of the I.R.B. That these connections continued, until at least the late 1880s, reinforce the theory that Land League activities in Ballydehob were driven by a revolutionary cadre. In that light the fact that O'Mahony failed to mention his connections with O'Donovan Rossa in the memoir dictated to his daughter may well have been an error of omission but might also be construed as being, as stated above, adherence to the strict code of secrecy obligated by membership of a oath-bound revolutionary secret society.

When the circumstantial evidence is considered in conjunction with the statements, actions, and evidence to the *The Times*/Parnell Special Commission of I.R.B. man John O'Connor is set alongside Henry O'Mahony's direct links to the dynamite campaign it may be concluded that the Ballydehob Land League branch was organised by an I.R.B. cell with connections to New York. The fact that recruiting was only widely commenced after the arrest of Hodnett in April 1880 is of note. In his evidence, O'Connor sought to distance the leadership of the Land League, even at a local level, from the I.R.B. However, he repeatedly admitted that the I.R.B. were important to the Land League. As the Land League in West Cork flowed out of Ballydehob, it is clear that the Ballydehob branch was at the political agitation in West Cork. While it is likely that it was organised by an I.R.B. circle which was never infiltrated by the police, it is impossible to state that conclusively. It was sophisticated both in its organisational capacities, not only the running of an effective Land League court and organising mass meetings, but also utilising not only their own public meetings but also presentment Session and meetings of Boards of Guardians to forward republican ideology in both subtle and unsubtle ways. Even these mere acts of defiance,

the confronting of men that had been branded oligarchs, tyrants and oppressors, was tactical and masterfully executed political theatre. Actually taking over a local taxing body, the Skull Poor Law Board of Guardians, at the elections in 1881, which displaced the landlords and magistrates from their long held positions, showed a rare level of political organising existed in Skull.

Given Ballydehob and Skull's geographical connection with the Phoenix Society of the 1850s and the foundation of the Fenian movement, it must be considered likely—if not certain—that Richard Hodnett's political career was in fact a revolutionary one. In Chapter Four below it is noted that he was a member of the Ossianic Society as were three members of the Skibbereen Phoenix Society including Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and Morty Moynihan. He had been a Poor Law Guardian for 18 years prior to his arrest in 1881. His arrest also prompted the first organised recruitment into the Land League at Ballydehob and demonstrations against the government which were insurrectionary displays. The fact, in December 1882, Richard Hodnett was still connected with I.R.B men, James Gilhooly and John O'Connor, who had recently been in charge of the 'Vigilance Court', in the organising the Irish National League Committee tends to indicate the I.R.B's continued grasp on Cork politics and Hodnett's involvement with the brotherhood. The dynamite incident at Ballydehob, for which his son, Richard Hodnett Jnr was charged, and the subsequent letter from America intimidating a witness on his behalf proves either an international revolutionary connection with Ballydehob, or a targeting by police *agent provocateurs* of an I.R.B. cell that, the police were unable to penetrate and neutralise by ordinary investigative methods. The central role that the returned American, Henry O'Mahony, assumed in the organising of the Land League in Ballydehob seems to indicate that the latter is possible. Though Henry O'Mahony never admitted his Fenianism, the fact remains he

assisted the families of those convicted of being involved in its most violent phase in the 1880s, the urban terrorism pursued by Skibbereen man, O'Donovan Rossa.

CHAPTER FOUR—PROTECTION OF PERSON AND PROPERTY

The Appeal of the Land League and the ‘Liberal Dilemma’

In the autumn of 1880 local branches of the Irish National Land League were formed throughout rural Ireland. In December Michael Davitt, in his last important letter to John Devoy, said that ‘There are branches in *every* county in Ireland and the total number of members throughout the country will top 200,000.’¹ Davitt noted that Tipperary had 50 branches, Limerick a similar number and Cork 37.² The government was also aware of the fact that as the League spread throughout the country the number of evictions was falling. Of the 1,893 evictions in Ireland in 1880, only 152 were evicted in the last three months of the year.³

In October 1880 the Lord-Lieutenant, Earl Cowper, and the Chief Secretary of Ireland, W.E. Forster, recommended that *habeas corpus* be suspended in Ireland.⁴ However the prime minister did not concur. Gladstone was on the horns of what Margaret O’Callaghan has called a ‘Liberal dilemma’.⁵ Despite several urgent representations to the government in Ireland and heated cabinet debates, Gladstone was opposed to the introduction of coercive legislation for Ireland. The Orange press in Ireland had warned in December 1879 that Davitt was following the advice of ‘the Fenian Devoy’ that ‘The tenants of Ireland should band together in clubs and associations in order that landholders be ‘thoroughly reformed and totally abolished’’.⁶ *The Warder* was a year ahead of the Orange movement in its editorial suggestion that a landlord’s defence association be formed rather than perceived ‘silent resistance to the

¹ Michael Davitt to John Devoy, 16 Dec. 1880, in William O’Brien and Desmond Ryan (eds), *Devoy’s Post Bag, 1871–1928* (2 vols, Dublin, 1948 & 1954), ii, p. 24.

² Ibid.

³ T. W. Moody, *Davitt and the Irish Revolution 1848–82* (Oxford, 1981), Appendix F, p. 567.

⁴ Ibid., p. 427.

⁵ Margaret O’Callaghan, *British high politics and a nationalist Ireland: criminality, land, and the law under Forster and Balfour* (Cork, 1994), p. 61.

⁶ *The Warder*, 20 Dec. 1879.

Socialism proclaimed all around them.’⁷ Gladstone’s reluctance in the face of numerous pleas, demands and suggestions is evidenced by a letter to Earl Cowper at the end of November 1880 stating that the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus* Act was a ‘very doubtful remedy’ to combat ‘a wide-spreading conspiracy embracing in certain districts large factions of the population’.⁸ Gladstone was aware that he would encounter opposition from the Liberal press and from within his own party if such a course was adopted.⁹

It is evident from Cowper’s correspondence that as winter approached he was coming under increasing pressure to adopt a hard line approach to the Land League. The murder in County Galway of Lord Mountmorres on 25 September is likely to have been the catalyst for the Irish administration to consider urgent action. This is borne out by letters Cowper wrote to his brother Henry dated 27 September and 4 October which both refer to Montmorres’ murder.¹⁰ On 27 September Cowper wrote: ‘We had a sort of Cabinet on Friday. Forster, Burke, the Solicitor General and I: and are probably going to have another tomorrow, if the Law officers have prepared their answers to certain questions.’¹¹ According to Moody on 30 September the government agreed that rather than introducing coercion, the ordinary law should be used against Parnell and the leaders of the Land League if the Law officers agreed.¹² The law officers felt that it would be impossible under current legislation to stop a land meeting or prosecute a speaker or issuer of a placard which named an individual, however if it was decided that

⁷ Ibid., 8 Nov. 1879.

⁸ Gladstone to Cowper, 24 Nov. 1880, *Earl Cowper, KG, A Memoir by His Wife* (London, 1913), p. 435 cited in O’Callaghan, *British high politics and a nationalist Ireland*, p. 61. Note *Earl Cowper, KG, A Memoir by His Wife* (London, 1913) was limited to 250 copies numbered copies but is available online at (http://www.archive.org/stream/earlcowperkgmemo00cowpiala/earlcowperkgmemo00cowpiala_djvu.txt) [retrieved 22 Aug. 2009].

⁹ Moody, *Davitt*, pp 428-9.

¹⁰ Cowper to Hon. H. Cowper, 27 Sept. 1880, *Cowper, A Memoir by His Wife*, pp 394-5; Cowper to Hon. H. Cowper, 4 Oct. 1880, *ibid.*, p. 395.

¹¹ Cowper to Hon. H. Cowper, 27 Sept. 1880, *Cowper, A Memoir by His Wife*, pp 394-5.

¹² Moody, *Davitt*, p. 427.

the Land League was a combination which prevented persons from purchasing stock or taking over evicted farms they would have fallen foul of the ordinary law.¹³ In his letter of 3 October Forster outlined this approach to Cowper and it is clear he was determined that the government show its determination to not stand idly by. In light of Gladstone's complete opposition to *habeas corpus* suspension or martial law Forster promoted a course, which would "strike at the head" of the Land League.¹⁴ However he was also hopeful that should such a prosecution fail it would force the government's hand and enable him to demand stronger powers:

If we think agitation ought to be stopped it appears that there is only one possible way. A combination to prevent persons from taking evicted farms or purchasing stock &c. is illegal. We have not yet obtained a decided opinion whether the Land League is such a combination but it would appear to be so. If so, it would also appear that its President or its leading members could be prosecuted. Such a course would have the advantage of striking at the head. It would fix the attention of the whole country from its announcement till its conclusion and divert the minds of the leaders of the League from their ordinary work such as intimidating landlords and the takers of farms from which men have been evicted. It would show the determination of the Government to stop the present state of things. If the prosecution failed through the perversity of the jury it would give a reason for asking for stronger powers.

The prosecution of the Land League, if possible, seems desirable in itself, but its chief recommendation is that it appears to be the only alternative to doing nothing.¹⁵

Remarkably in light of the fact that hundreds of speeches were later presented as evidence in the trial of the Land League leaders, in early October Forster stated that 'No speech has yet been made in the presence of a Government reporter for which the speaker could be prosecuted.'¹⁶

¹³ Forster to Cowper, Oct. 3, 1880, Cowper, *A Memoir by His Wife*, p. 395.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 393.

¹⁶ Ibid.

It is clear that Forster was determined to do something in the face of Gladstone's hesitancy. However it is also clear that Forster was politically astute and by going through the motions of a trial it would satisfy the reluctant Liberal leadership and party that coercion was the only solution following the failure to convict the leaders of the League. Such a result would force Gladstone's hand and force the government to adopt what both he and Cowper deemed to be the only remedy to the increasing power of the League which was the suspension *habeas corpus*. In any case, Forster was not convinced that a jury in Ireland in the early 1880s would agree to convict Parnell, Davitt and the other leaders of the Land League, a point on which he would later be proven correct.

Meanwhile the government was coming under intense pressure both due to public events and through private deputations of potentates. An example of this is a letter to Forster from, John Luke George Hely-Hutchinson, the fifth Earl of Donoughmore, representing in writing the views of a deputation who had awaited the Lord-Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary on 8 October and who, at Forster's request put their concerns in writing. Despite the correspondence being marked 'Private' and the fact that Cowper had been confronted by the deputation on his arrival at Dublin Castle for a Council meeting, Forster informed the Lord Lieutenant when forwarding their communication that the deputation was of 'over 100 gentlemen from the Landlords Association'.¹⁷ It is clear that the Lord Lieutenant was affected by such a strongly numbered and unannounced demonstration from his peers at the seat of Irish government. A week later he wrote to his brother stating 'Imagine my feelings when a week ago I drove to the Castle to attend a Council and found myself confronted without

¹⁷ Forster to the Viceroy, 9 Oct. 1880, *ibid.*, p. 398.

one moment for preparation, with 105 infuriated Landowners.’¹⁸ Donoughmore wrote: ‘That a system of lawless terrorism prevails over many parts of Ireland, more especially in the Western portion, a system which is daily increasing and spreading wherever the meetings of the Land League take place.’¹⁹ The earl urged on behalf of the deputation that the *Habeas Corpus* Act be suspended forthwith.²⁰ In his biography of Parnell, Lyons stated that the decision to prosecute the leaders of the Land League was likely made in September. Cowper was aware that the two courses open to the government were to introduce either coercive or remedial legislation.²¹

On 4 October he wrote again to Henry and quoted a minute sent to Government in early October. Cowper was as concerned as Gladstone to uphold Liberal values and was aware that any curtailment of freedoms would be a boon to secret societies:

In spite of the fact that some of the speakers have dissuaded their hearers from committing murders, and of the suggestion that if freedom of speech were stopped secret associations would derive increased strength, it is my opinion that the meetings cause far more crime than they prevent. I would preserve freedom of speech to the very utmost as long as it is confined to general subjects such as abuse of England, abuse of the Government or advocacy of political measures however impracticable; but when it has the immediate effect of endangering the lives or the property of individuals it should be checked.²²

The pursuit of the Land League leaders in a criminal trial was merely an effort to buy time. Liberal hopes hinged on Gladstone’s proposed land act, which could not be prepared before the next year. However the prosecution would ultimately lead to what Lyons noted was the government’s ‘first serious blunder’.²³ Forster’s hope that a

¹⁸ Viceroy to the Hon. H. Cowper, 14 Oct. 1880, *ibid.*, p. 401.

¹⁹ Marc Brodie, ‘Hutchinson, Richard Walter John Hely-, sixth earl of Donoughmore (1875–1948)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004); online edn, Jan. 2008. (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33804>), [accessed 23 Aug. 2009]; Private letter from The Earl of Donoughmore to Mr. Forster, 8 Oct. 8, 1880, Earl Cowper, KG, *A Memoir by His Wife*, p. 399.

²⁰ The Earl of Donoughmore to Mr. Forster, 8 Oct. 1880, Earl Cowper, *A Memoir by His Wife*, p. 399.

²¹ Cowper to Hon. H. Cowper, 4 Oct. 1880, *ibid.*, p. 395.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 139

criminal trial of a few leaders would halt the work at a grassroots level can in retrospect be seen as naïve. The cadres in the countryside were only beginning to formant the real agitation. Local branches were only weeks old when this dilemma was being faced by government. On 23 October it was announced that prosecutions would be initiated.²⁴ However the clamour for the suspension of the of the *Habeas Corpus* Act continued unabated. Lord Bandon chaired a meeting of Cork magistrates which passed such a resolution and further advised that the Lord Lieutenant should be prepared to send troops to Bantry, Dunmanway, Skibbereen, and Bandon.²⁵ In the period from 1 October 1880 until 31 December 1880 the number of crimes categorised as agrarian increased strikingly with 1,696 or 64.48% of the 1880 total of 2,590 occurring in those last three months of the year.²⁶ On the 5 November Cowper received a letter from the Queen's private secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, stating that Queen Victoria was concerned about the state of Ireland asking for either he or Forster to address, preferably directly to Her Majesty, the various questions, which concerned her. It is also clear that the Queen was convinced that having decided to prosecute the promoters it was also advisable to seek increased powers. Her Majesty was inclined towards either martial law, *habeas corpus* suspension or both and she was intent on informing her Viceroy of that opinion:

I may mention that the points on which the Queen wishes for information are: Is the bad feeling in Ireland as widespread as it is stated to be? Is it all over the country or only in certain provinces and Counties? Is the agitation solely an Anti-rent movement, or is there a political principle behind it? Why is no one ever discovered and punished for the Crimes committed? As it has been considered right to prosecute the promoters of discord, why has it not been thought proper

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *WCE*, 30 Oct. 1880.

²⁶ *Return by provinces and counties ...of case of evictions in each of the years 1849-1886 inclusive and of agrarian and general crime*, reprinted in *Spec. Comm. Proc.*, vii, 17. cited in Lyons, *Parnell*, pp 138-39.

also to ask for increased powers to put a stop to the crimes that are being perpetrated?²⁷

Cowper had already written to the Queen and the letters crossed each other in the post.²⁸ He stated that the outrages were generally confined to threatening letters and incendiary fires and that as compensation for the latter was demandable from the ratepayers they should decrease. However he noted that:

The graver outrages, involving loss of life and serious bodily injury, are not many in number. What makes them so appalling is the apparent want of any sufficient motive, and the impossibility of detecting the perpetrators, though this last feature which is so astounding and appears so serious to an Englishman seems always to have existed here in a greater or less degree.²⁹

Ponsonby wrote on the 7 November saying: 'Still these prove that a serious state of things exists and Her Majesty presumes that it is with the hope of putting an end to these disorders that the 'State Prosecutions' have been commenced.'

In reply Cowper added that 'among the members of the different branches of the Land League are Fenians and Ribbonmen'.³⁰ Remarkably Ponsonby had previously stated that the Queen 'had received so little information that she was compelled to rely chiefly on newspaper reports.'³¹ This may indicate the Queen's 'anti-Liberal vehemence' and increasing displeasure towards her first minister.³²

²⁷ Sir Henry Ponsonby to Lord Cowper, No date is given from the quoted letter but it was received 5 Nov. 1880, Cowper, *A Memoir by His Wife*, pp 417-8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

²⁹ Viceroy to the Queen, 4 Nov. 1880, *ibid.*, p. 418

³⁰ Viceroy to Ponsonby, 8 Nov. 1880, *ibid.*, pp 419-20.

³¹ Sir Henry Ponsonby to Lord Cowper, 7 Nov. 1880, *ibid.*, p. 419.

³² H. C. G. Matthew, 'Ponsonby, Sir Henry Frederick (1825-1895)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22497>) [accessed 24 Aug 2009].

The appeal of the Land League to protestant tenants in Orange strongholds and the Orange Order's backlash

On 3 November 1880 an emergency meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge convened in Dublin. Deputy Grand master Edward Wingfield Verneer indicated that the order was acutely aware that the issue of tenant rights and tenant interests needed to be addressed. He stated that the Orange Institution sought the welfare of the tenant and of all other classes. However, the Order sought the 'amelioration of Society and the redress of legitimate grievances connected with the land question, by justice and equality, not by outrage and wrong.'³³ His statements serve to highlight a fear in the Orange hierarchy of the appeal of both tenant rights organisations and the Land League in traditionally Orange parts of the country. This fear was well justified. On 17 December 1880 a clash occurred in Bangor Co. Down when 'tenant-righters' sought to hold a meeting in the Good Templar Hall which had been occupied in advance by local Orangemen.³⁴ On Christmas Eve, the tenant righters having proposed an open air meeting were forced by torrential rain to hold their meeting in the Good Templar's Hall. However, the Orange Hall next door was soon overflowing with fife and drum players who made it impossible for the assembled tenant rights group to hear their speakers.³⁵ Presumably during interludes in the cacophony from next door the tenant righters passed resolutions distancing themselves from any connection 'direct or indirect with the Land League.'³⁶ However they noted that the 'Ulster Custom had failed to protect the tenant from arbitrary rent increase on their own improvements.'³⁷ Whereas this meeting sought to distance the Bangor tenant right movement from the Land League

The Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail warned only one week earlier:

³³ *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland at the Special Meeting held Weds, 3rd Nov. 1880 and the General half-yearly Meeting held Weds. 1st and Thurs. 2nd Dec. 1880 at the Orange Hall, Dublin* (Dublin, 1881), p. 9.

³⁴ *The Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail*, 25 Dec. 1880.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

The spread of the League meetings in Ulster is a very serious omen of advanced demoralization. The farmers of the North attached to tenant-right and sturdy though in their claims have always been law-abiding and self-respecting. They as a rule have not joined the League, but when we remember how the Orangemen of the North have long resisted, even to bloodshed, anything like, Home Rule or Catholic demonstrations, the impunity with which the League holds its (sic) meetings in some of the most Orange districts is pretty plain proof that the agricultural revolution is spreading fast.³⁸

R.W. Kirkpatrick has shown that the Land League had support in mid-Ulster and that 'several areas and several branches [...] boasted protestant leaders.'³⁹ This was having a direct impact on committee members of the Loyal Orange Lodge.⁴⁰ Kirkpatrick also noted that William Verneer and the Imperial Grand Master were having difficulty collecting rent from their own tenants.⁴¹ Another member of the Grand Orange Lodge, Major Blacker, was singled out for criticism by Thomas Shillingham, chairman of the Antrim Tenant Farmers' Association, for charging high rents and restricting the practice of the Ulster custom.⁴² The special meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge was informed of a 'monster conspiracy' aimed at the confiscation of property and the stopping of trade with the ulterior motive of extinguishing Protestantism and smashing the union between Britain and Ireland.⁴³ With reference to the Fenian agitation of the mid 1860s the Lodge meeting was informed that a 'paralysed government' was permitting murder and outrage while arms intended for revolution were being imported.⁴⁴ This echoed the concerns of the Grand Orange Lodge expressed

³⁸ Ibid., 18 Dec. 1880.

³⁹ Richard W. Kirkpatrick, 'Origins and development of the land war in mid-Ulster 1879-85' in R.A.J. Hawkins & F.S.L. Lyons (eds), *Ireland under the Union, Varieties of Tension* (Oxford, 1980), p. 202.

⁴⁰ *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland at the Special Meeting held Weds, 3rd Nov. 1880 and the General half-yearly Meeting held Weds. 1st and Thurs. 2nd Dec. 1880 at the Orange Hall, Dublin* (Dublin, 1881), p. 24.

⁴¹ Kirkpatrick, 'Origins and development of the land war in mid-Ulster 1879-85' in Hawkins & Lyons (eds), *Ireland under the Union, Varieties of Tension* (Oxford, 1980), p. 216 & p. 221.

⁴² Ibid. p. 204, p. 212, & p. 219. NB Kirkpatrick did not find evidence to support this claim.

⁴³ *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland at the Special Meeting held Weds, 3rd Nov. 1880 and the General half-yearly Meeting held Weds. 1st and Thurs. 2nd Dec. 1880 at the Orange Hall, Dublin* (Dublin, 1881), p. 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

at their half-yearly meeting in 1865 when it was noted that the government had been complacent and had ignored the Fenian conspiracy despite having had twelve months' foreknowledge of intended revolution.⁴⁵ However at the special meeting in November 1880 the Orange Institution was determined to mount a fight back. It was felt that in the face of the threat of the Land League they could broaden their own appeal and reach people who had previously been indifferent to the Orange Institution who would co-operate and unite with them in the face of foreign anarchists and domestic traitors.⁴⁶ All classes and creeds loyal to the Queen would now be grateful for the Orange Order.⁴⁷

Ironically by November 1880 the Orange Institution had had at least a year's forewarning of the threat of the Land League which they had seemingly ignored. In November 1879 *The Warder* had advocated the setting up of a landlord's defense association to combat the threat of the Land League stating it was an error to resort to 'silent resistance to Socialism proclaimed all around them.'⁴⁸ On 20 December 1879 the paper had noted that as Davitt was following the advice of the 'Fenian Devoy. The tenants of Ireland should band together in clubs and associations in order that landholders be "thoroughly reformed and totally abolished."⁴⁹ Indeed their half yearly meeting in December 1879, sought to deflect the influence of the Land League by appealing to denominational prejudice:

The state of things in Ireland where Protestants in Connaught and elsewhere, are subject to great persecution without having obtained any effectual relief, and since unprincipled Traitors and released Rebels, have been and are at present "stumping" the United Kingdom, and delivering inflammatory speeches which

⁴⁵ *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland general half-yearly Meeting held in Dublin Wednesday 6th, Thursday 7th and Friday 8th Dec. 1865* (Dublin, 1866), p. 26.

⁴⁶ *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland at the Special Meeting held Weds, 3rd Nov. 1880 and the General half-yearly Meeting held Weds. 1st and Thurs. 2nd Dec. 1880 at the Orange Hall, Dublin* (Dublin, 1881), p. 10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 9-10.

⁴⁸ *The Warder*, 8 Nov. 1879.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 20 Dec. 1879.

produce the worst results upon an excitable population it is hereby resolved : “that it is the duty of all Orangemen of Ireland to support Her Majesty’s Government in whatever action that they may deem necessary to uphold the Constitution and Administer the Laws of the realm, which are being violated to the detriment of all classes, but more especially to the Agricultural interest.”⁵⁰

It is perhaps no coincidence that the landlord’s delegation upset the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary in Dublin Castle demanding the suspension of *habeas corpus* a mere five days after the special meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge. It indicates that Tory and unionist landed interests were determined to force the Liberal government to take action and indeed were about to take action themselves which necessitated government assistance. Following a speech by Parnell’s on 7 September 1880 in Ennis in which he called for the moral ostracism of obnoxious landlords and their agents, Captain Charles Cunningham Boycott of Lough Mask House, Co. Mayo where he was Lord Erne’s land agent, became the first notorious victim of what was by 13 December termed ‘boycotting’ by *The Daily Mail*.⁵¹ Boycott was thoroughly isolated by the withdrawal of goods, labour and services. To his aid came the ‘Boycott Relief Expedition’ consisting of Orangemen from counties Monaghan and Cavan and led by Captain Somerset H. Maxwell with the protection of 1,000 troops.⁵² Between the 12 and 26 November they harvested Boycott’s crops.⁵³ This use of troops to support Ulster Orangemen relieving a land agent in Co. Mayo cost the government £10,000.⁵⁴

The land question also dominated the regular half-yearly meeting of the Grand Orange Lodge held on 1 and 2 December in the Orange Hall in York Street, Dublin. It

⁵⁰ *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland general half-yearly Meeting held in Dublin Wednesday 3rd, Thurs 4th, Friday 5th Dec. 1879* (Dublin, 1880), p. 21.

⁵¹ D.J. Hickey, & J.E. Doherty, *A Dictionary of Irish History, 1880-1900* (Dublin, 1980), p. 42.

⁵² Moody, *Davitt*, p. 424; Hickey, & Doherty, *A Dictionary of Irish History*, p. 42; *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland at the Special Meeting held Weds, 3rd Nov. 1880 and the General half-yearly Meeting held Weds. 1st and Thurs. 2nd Dec. 1880 at the Orange Hall, Dublin* (Dublin, 1881), p. 26.

⁵³ Hickey & Doherty, *A Dictionary of Irish History*, p. 42

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

was noted that the brethren of Co. Down were organizing to resist the Land League.⁵⁵ It was resolved that an 'Emergency Committee' be set up with fourteen members for the purpose of 'Collecting funds and organizing a Defence for Brethren'.⁵⁶ The Masters of all private lodges were to be instructed to open subscription lists and forward all funds to the Emergency Committee's chairman William E. Caldbeck, Trinity College, Dublin, Orange Lodge. The December meeting was also compelled to address again the appeal the Land League held for ordinary members of the Orange Order. It was noted that newspapers had reported that 'Orangemen had gone in for the Land League' and that Davitt had referenced these reports only the day before.⁵⁷ Furthermore the Grand Lodge members were told that a meeting that had taken place in Belfast's Ulster Hall on 10 November, had been attended by a capacity crowd and had passed a resolution of support for the 'tillers of the soil'.⁵⁸ However the Grand Orange Lodge also noted in Resolution 17 that the Parnell and his movement were actually intent on 'the separation of this country from England'.⁵⁹ They asserted that Parnell and other protestant leaders of the 'Tenant-righters' were 'popularity-hunting' and in league with the Catholic clergy.⁶⁰ Such statements regarding the Land League and tenant rights movement seeking the achievement of national independence in a compact with the Catholic clergy was a deliberate ploy that aimed to alienate Orangemen who may have had a material interest in supporting either movement. The resolution passed by the Bangor tenant righters on the following Christmas Eve may indicate that this approach along with a numerically strong and solid Orange resistance in the town may prove that the Grand

⁵⁵ Resolution No. 7 & 8, *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland at the Special Meeting held Weds, 3rd Nov. 1880 and the General half-yearly Meeting held Weds. 1st and Thurs. 2nd Dec. 1880 at the Orange Hall, Dublin* (Dublin, 1881), pp 23-4.

⁵⁶ Resolution 10 & 11, *Proceedings of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland at the Special Meeting held Weds, 3rd Nov. 1880 and the General half-yearly Meeting held Weds. 1st and Thurs. 2nd Dec. 1880 at the Orange Hall, Dublin* (Dublin, 1881), pp 24-5.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp 48-9.

Lodge's crude approach was successful. Indeed the Bangor tenant righters sought to distance themselves from the Land League. However, on 21 January Davitt addressed a meeting at Loughall 'the cradle of the orange movement' which was chaired by James Wier, Master of Kinnegoe Loyal Orange Lodge.⁶¹

Protestants and the Land League in Ballydehob

In Ballydehob, the local Land League branch also held appeal for the protestant tenants of the district. On 29 October 1880 the Land League meeting was attended by a Protestant tenant named Kingston wanting assistance in a dispute with his landlord, J.R. Swanton.⁶² This was not a case of seeking a rent reduction but rather one of maintaining his farm in a case of indebtedness. Kingston stated that he had owed money to Swanton and that he had been told by the landlord he could surrender the farm or be brought to court and compelled to pay the £14 costs. He further stated that he held another farm from the same landlord and had been offered £60 to surrender it, as Swanton wanted it for his son.⁶³ Chairman, Richard Hodnett, asked Kingston why he had not joined the Land League earlier, suggesting that, if he had been in the Land League, he would not have been so foolish as to surrender his farm. Kingston replied that he had not joined because the Rev. Mr Noble had advised him not to. He said he would in future advise all 'Protestant brethren to join'.⁶⁴ The fact that protestant tenants were willing to join the Land League and indeed help promote it over the advice of their minister is significant and indicates that, in disputes, they felt that the League would take their side. Paul Bew notes that in October 1881 following the issuing of the 'No Rent Manifesto' by imprisoned Land League leaders who were in Kilmainham Jail, Patrick Egan sent out a circular to all the Land League branches asking them to send requests for

⁶¹ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 447.

⁶² *WCE*, 30 Oct. 1880.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

‘guaranteed law costs to the Land League solicitor.’⁶⁵ Paul Bew then cites a case in Ballydehob where protestant tenants had ‘acted in solidarity with their poorer neighbours and ‘whose costs had been personally guaranteed by Parnell’.⁶⁶ Bew noted there was great difficulty over the payment and speculated that ‘by implication in other less significant cases a complete failure’, by the Land League, to pay the promised payments at all.

The No Rent manifesto was signed by Parnell, Davitt, A.J. Kettle, Thomas Brennan, John Dillon, now ‘Head Organiser’ of the Land League, Thomas Sexton, all residing in ‘Kilmainham gaol, and Patrick Egan in Paris.’⁶⁷ Anna Parnell, who took a more prominent role in Land League affairs following her brothers arrest ‘claimed that this (the promise to pay legal costs) applied only to costs actually incurred’ and that ‘all promises to pay other costs were deemed by the League executive to be cancelled’.⁶⁸ Bew notes that there was considerable difficulty getting paid. Egan’s circular had been very explicit, it said ‘If there are any Sherriff or other law costs *guaranteed by members of Central Executive to members of your Branch* which still remain to be paid, please send particulars of them, with the letter from Dublin offices guaranteeing the same [...] when they will be paid as soon as accounts are examined and vouched.’⁶⁹ On 12 October, William Dorris, writing from the Land League executive offices, to a J. Coleman at Ballydehob, regarding Jagoe tenants, Dan Coughlan, Jeremiah Meehan and John Donovan, guaranteed that the tenants’ expenses would be paid if they held out in the face of a Sherriff’s sale of their farms.⁷⁰ On the same day he wrote to John Collins, secretary of the Ballydehob League branch, saying that if: ‘James Gogin, Denis Sweny,

⁶⁵ Paul Bew, *Land and the national Question in Ireland, 1858-82* (Dublin, 1978), p. 198.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Documents relating to the Ballydehob Case, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 10.

⁶⁸ Ibid. Note in brackets in quote this author

⁶⁹ Printed circular, Patrick Egan to Branch Secretary, 25 Oct. 1881, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers, box 9.

⁷⁰ William Dorris to John Collins, 12 Oct. 1881, *ibid.*

John Gogin and Andrew Sweny' held out against rack rents and against ejectments 'the League will give them every assistance'.⁷¹ On 15 October, Dorris, in a letter to Henry O'Mahony, who had been released from prison and was now treasurer of the Ballydehob Land League branch, said that there was no point defending (the) cases in the courts but that if the tenants held out and refused to pay they would be given every assistance.⁷² However, on 25 October, Dorris was arrested under the provisions of the P.P.P. Act.⁷³ In November the rent strike was continuing in Ballydehob and Henry O'Mahony was receiving letters of advice on individual cases from R. McGough, the Land League solicitor, from the law offices of McGough and Fowler, at Ormond Quay, Dublin.⁷⁴ On 18 November, Henry O'Mahony, 'Ex-Suspect', wrote to Anna Parnell, saying that he had £39 in hand but that the committee members were worried about forwarding it as a circular had been issued stating that if any tenant paid rent or applied to the Land Commission, no expenses would be paid to any of the strikers.⁷⁵ On the 19 November Clare Stritch of the Ladies Land League replied that they had not seen the circular but that all who held out would be supported even if it was 'only one in a thousand'.⁷⁶ However, she stated that no one would be supported in cases where they could not pay merely through inability to pay.⁷⁷ In an undated note, John Collins reported that 9 farms of members who had complied with the rules and not paid their rents, despite being able to, had been bought out, including five by 'Emergency men' and four by the previous owner of the farm through a Mr. O'Neill at a sale in Cork the

⁷¹ William Dorris to John Collins, Documents relating to the Ballydehob case, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers box 10.

⁷² William Dorris to Henry O'Mahony, 15 Oct. 1881, handwritten on Land League stationary in *ibid*.

⁷³ List of all persons Arrested under Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act, 44 & 45, Vict c.4, N.A.I., P.P.P papers box 2.

⁷⁴ R. McGough to Henry O'Mahony, 17 Nov. 1881, Documents relating to the Ballydehob case, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers box 10.

⁷⁵ Henry O'Mahony to Anna Parnell, 18 Nov. 1881, *ibid*.

⁷⁶ Clare Stritch to Edward (sic) O'Mahony, 19 Nov. 1881, *ibid*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

previous Saturday.⁷⁸ It is this case that Paul Bew referred to. The letter transcribed and printed in preparation for the *Times*/Parnell Special Commission, from the Ballydehob Land League to the Executive F. (sic) League, Dublin, goes on to state:

Now these men who bought were, we are glad to add were Protestants and the five farms were....were Catholics, and these men refused a fair reduction and made their sacrifice on behalf of our League, and it is certainly unjust to think that these men should not get their legal expenses, as they were heretofore promised, and such promise induced these men to make this hold out.⁷⁹

Though, in the transcription it is difficult to fully follow the thread of this letter, it would appear, and Paul Bew assumed so, that in this, protestants came to the assistance of their catholic neighbours or possibly their own tenants. Either that, or, the other four farms were owned by protestant tenants who had stood with the five catholics even though the Orange Order's Emergency committee men were involved in buying out Ballydehob farms. Given the earlier evidence that the Ballydehob branch was willing to help the protestant tenant Kingston, there is no reason to believe that when they state that the men who 'bought' 'were thankfully Protestants' that the branch are referring to the Emergency men. It is also noteworthy that the republican ideals of the Fenianism did not allow for denominational prejudice and indeed their main foe in Ireland was often, as much, the Catholic Church's hierarchy, as it was the 'English' government. That interdenominational co-operation in the Land War, existed in Ballydehob, as evidenced by the above case and the Kingston case. It may indicate that there was a strict adherence to Fenian orthodoxy in the branch as much as that there was inter-denominational co-operation between certain tenants and/or their landlords. The fact that one of the Swanton family used Richard Hodnett as an agent may evidence of the latter.

⁷⁸ Undated letter from the Ballydehob Land League to 'Dublin F. (sic) League', in *ibid*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*.

Habeas Corpus Suspension: protection of Persons and Property

On 25 January 1881, the trial of Parnell and others collapsed. The evening before the chief secretary of Ireland, W.E. Forster, had introduced a bill, which would suspend *habeas corpus* in proscribed districts in Ireland. The Bill for the Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) 1881 was aimed at the perpetrators of agrarian outrage. These Forster divided into three classes:

There are first those who remain of the old Ribbon and other secret societies of former days; in the second place, there are a large number of Fenians who have taken advantage of the present condition of the country, not so much as caring about the Land Question, but as hoping that trouble will come of it, and in order to promote their own particular views in regard to the government of Ireland; and in the third place, there are a large number of men who are the *Mauvais sujets* of their neighbourhood.⁸⁰

Forster noted that Fenians had taken advantage of the current land agitation but he did not say they were the architects of it. He made no mention of Davitt or the other Fenians on the Land League's executive in his Commons speech.⁸¹ *The Times* called it the Chief Secretary's most forceful speech but declared that though he implied that a state of terrorism existed in Ireland, the writer for *The Times* felt that a *habeas corpus* suspension act should have been introduced much earlier.⁸² The debates surrounding the bill continued for several weeks, but on March 2, the Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act became law.⁸³ The desire of government was to give it a legal tool to remove both bad characters that may have been causing or perpetuating crime in their district but also to allow the government to remove Land League leaders that they deemed to be overly effective from their localities.

⁸⁰ *Hansard's parliamentary debates*, third series, 1830-91 (vols i-ccclvi, London, 1831-91), cclvii, col. 1226.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, cols. 1209-35.

⁸² *The Times*, 25 Jan. 1881.

⁸³ Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act, 44 & 45, Vict c.4, 2 Mar. 1881.

Protection of Person and Property Act: West Cork

In West Cork, the first prominent person arrested was Richard Hodnett. As has been seen in Chapter Three Hodnett was arrested for being reasonably suspected of nocturnal attacks on a person denounced by the Land League. One of the great problems facing any government introducing a *habeas corpus* suspension measure is the political gift that they may hand to the very forces that they are seeking to defeat. In the case of the PPP Act over the duration it was implemented there were a total 955 persons arrested of whom 32 were arrested a second time. In the long term, it was an effective measure as it bought the government time and gave them the ability to arrest people they felt were a threat but who would not or could not be convicted in ordinary court. However, in the case of Ballydehob and West Cork, the operation of the act initially drove people into the embrace of the Land League revolutionaries. Of the four Richard Hodnett was the 54th arrest nationwide, John Heffernan the 79th, Henry O'Mahony was the 136th, Patrick Spillane was the 191st and John O'Connor the 192th. The fact that Hodnett was arrested before more prominent leaders of the Land League like O'Connor and Heffernan indicates his importance as a West Cork organiser. O'Mahony was arrested in the aftermath of the shooting of George Swanton and Patrick Spillane and O'Connor in the period after the general outbreak in Skull, Ballydehob and Skibbereen. Whereas O'Mahony was initially released after only a few months, Hodnett and O'Connor were imprisoned until May 1882. When O' Mahony was rearrested in December 1881 he was to be held almost until nearly the expiration of the Act. The data that can be gleaned from the list of all persons detained under the PPP Act shows that the most arrests occurred in Munster, despite the fact that the Land League had originated in Connaught. Though Connaught had fewer arrests the median time spent in jail was higher at 160 days.

Arrests for Land League activity under the P.P.P. Act 1880 – 1881		
Source List of all persons Arrested under Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act, 44 & 45, Vict. c.4, N.A.I., P.P.P. Act, box 2.		
	No. of Arrests	Median Days spent in Prison
Ulster	25	77
Munster	372	117
Leinster	337	110
Connaught	297	160
Cork	74	136
National		128

84

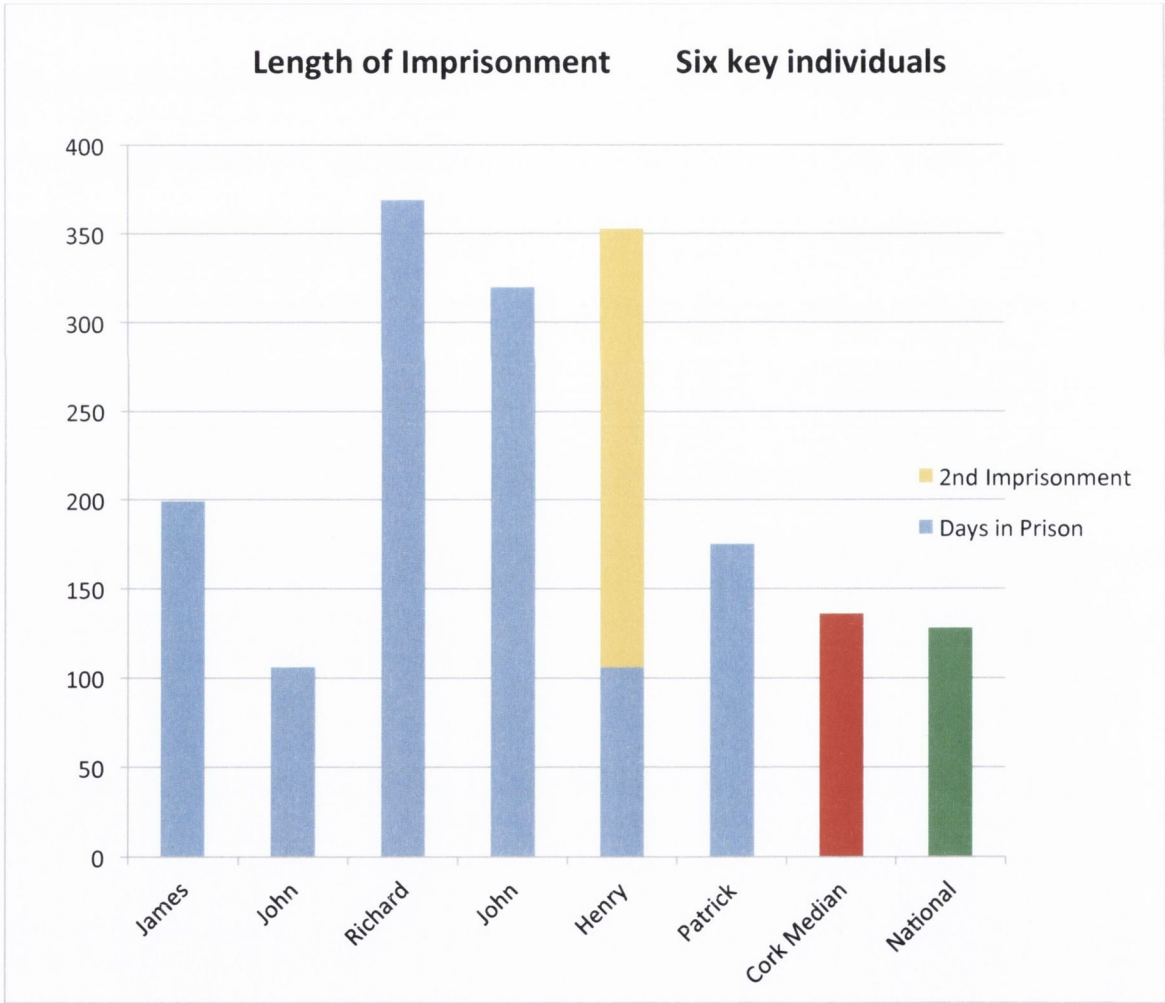
Taking a sample of four of the Cork activists, they spent considerably longer in prison than the national median. Ironically, John Heffernan who as a strong arm in the Cork political scene in 1880 and was instrumental in the spread of the Land League in West Cork, served slightly less time than the national median of 128 days or indeed the Cork median of 136 days.⁸⁵ Hodnett served a year and four days, and O'Mahony just three days short of a year in prison despite his being freed for a period in the autumn of 1881.

Name	Days in Prison
John Heffernan	106
Richard Hodnett	369
Henry O'Mahony (1 st arrest)	106
Henry O'Mahony	247
Patrick Spillane	175
Cork Median	136
National Median	128

⁸⁴ List of all persons Arrested under Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act, 44 & 45, Vict c.4, N.A.I., P.P.P papers box 2.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

A bar graph comparing four of the Cork activists with the national median and indeed some of their fellow agitators indicates the reluctance of the authorities to free Hodnett, O'Connor and O'Mahony. In the first instance, this may be linked to their prominence locally. Another factor may be the fact that in Ballydehob two of the people fired on by persons unknown were magistrates.



87

⁸⁶ Ibid.
⁸⁷ Ibid.

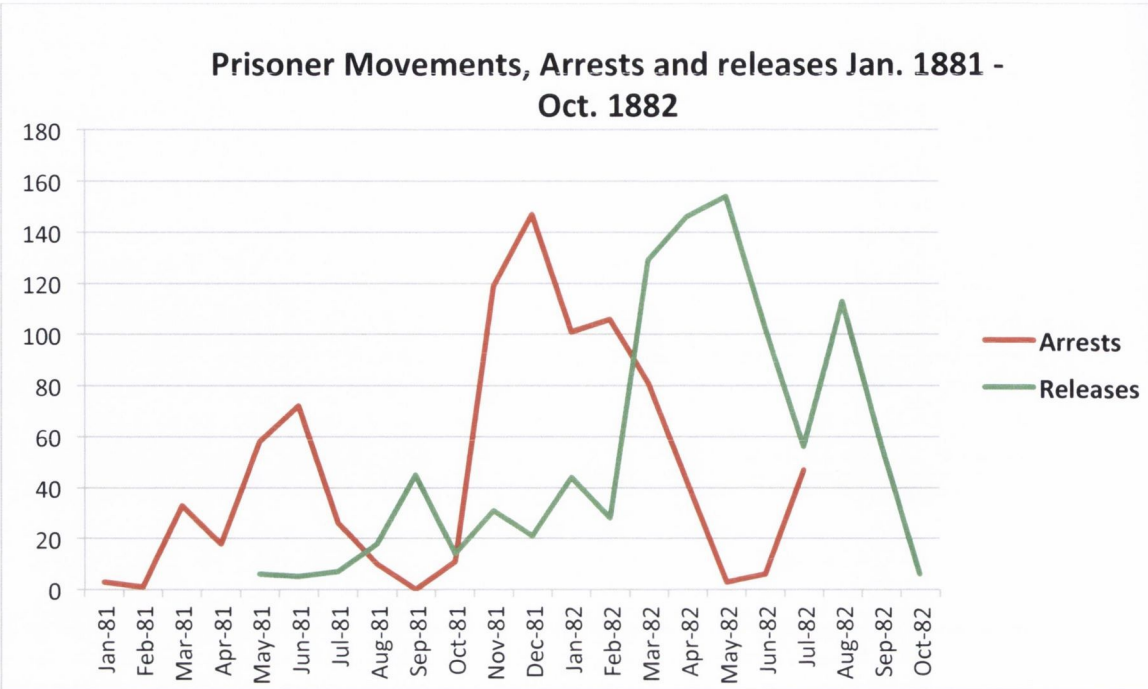
Arrests by month under the PPP Act Jan 1881 - Jul 1882	
Month	Arrests
Mar-81	33
Apr-81	18
May-81	58
Jun-81	72
Jul-81	26
Aug-81	10
Sep-81	0
Oct-81	11
Nov-81	119
Dec-81	147
Jan-82	101
Feb-82	106
Mar-82	81
Apr-82	42
May-82	3
Jun-82	6
Jul-82	47

88

When arrests by month are examined it is clear that despite the coercion act being introduced in March the period of most arrests was actually in the winter of 1881-82 from when the Land League was suppressed on 20 October until the end of April 1882. However another pattern emerges when the numbers released are compared with the numbers arrested. The chart below graphically illustrates the use of *habeas corpus* suspension as a negotiating tool by the government. The peak in arrests occurs in December 1881 after most of the national leaders of the Land League had been arrested while the peak of releases occurred in April 1882 just before Davitt and Parnell’s release following negotiations between Parnell and the government. The spike in arrests in November 1881 may be attributed to the No Rent Manifesto issued in public on 18 October 1881.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Moody, *Davitt*, p. 495.



90

Recruitment to Ballydehob Land League Branch

On the micro level, the effect of the arrest of two local leaders was reflected by increased recruitment to the Ballydehob Land League branch following Hodnett's arrest at the end of April and O'Mahony's at the beginning of June 1881. The two peak periods of enrolment were the first week of May just after Hodnett's arrest and the first week of June when O'Mahony was arrested. The second and third highest weeks for recruitment were the second and third weeks of June after the district was swamped by military and police in response to the complete breakdown in the rule of law following Hodnett's arrest and the rumour that Fr Murphy of Skull was to be arrested. The conclusion that may be drawn is that the arrests created both a sense of indignation and or a necessity to conform in a climate of fear.

⁹⁰ List of all persons Arrested under Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act, 44 & 45, Vict c.4, N.A.I., P.P.P papers box 2. Note: arrests prior to 2 Mar. 1881 may refer to people detained under the act who had already been arrested on other matters.

If the length and the date of incarceration is used to gauge the rank of the agitator or perceived danger they may have posed to the state, then an examination of the number of people, the dates of arrest and length of time spent in prison of all persons under the provisions of the Protection Persons and Property Act places the two activists from Ballydehob at the top of the rank. However, unlike the assertions of the magistrate Clifford Lloyd, stationed at Kilmallock in the early stage of the Land War who believed that every member of the Kilmallock and Kilfinane Land league branches were Fenians, there was no such official inference regarding either O'Mahony or Hodnett.⁹¹ However while he was out of prison between his two arrests, Henry O'Mahony mentioned a planned visit to Kilfinane in a letter to the Executive of the Cork Land League November 1881.⁹² An examination of the incomplete records available, the 127 'Memorandum of Proceedings' for PPP Act (1881) prisoners which give details of the reasons for their arrest shows that 22.7% were described as 'Fenians', 'advanced nationalists, or 'members of a secret society'.⁹³ As neither O'Mahony nor Hodnett were described as being political before their arrest, they are not included in that 22.7%.

Postscript

By 1889, Richard Hodnett was no longer a Poor Law Guardian, but was still an agent for a Robert Swanton.⁹⁴ This fact emerged in a case brought by four tenants who were seeking an abatement of their rents before the Land Court.⁹⁵ He was also plaintiff in a libel case where he sought £500 damages from John Newman who it was alleged wrote to *West Cork Eagle* claiming Hodnett had received landlord's proxy votes

⁹¹ Clifford Lloyd RM to Lord Lieutenant, 9 June 1881, N.A.I., CSORP/1881/19293.

⁹² Henry O'Mahony to Mr Collin, Irish National Land League, Cork branch, 4 Nov. 1881, Documents relating to the Ballydehob case, N.A.I., I.N.L. papers box 10.

⁹³ Based on an examination of 127 Memorandum of Proceedings of prisoners arrested under the P.P.P Act, N.A.I., P.P.P Act papers, boxes 1 & 2.

⁹⁴ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 June 1889 & *Irish Times*, 22 Mar. 1889.

⁹⁵ *Irish Times*, 22 Mar. 1889.

organised by Samuel Jagoe in the recent Poor Law elections where Hodnett lost his seat. Hodnett in a letter to the *Eagle* denied this and stated that ‘an ex-policeman is more in demand for honors at present in the Schull Union than an ex-suspect. I have never asked a landlord’s proxy.’⁹⁶ In the reported discussion between the two judges, which appears to have been humorous banter eliciting laughter from the courtroom, O’Brien joked: ‘I was under the impression that Mr. Hodnett filled both characters, that he was in the Constabulary one time, I saw him examined as a witness on a criminal trial.’⁹⁷ The latter comment would likely have been seen as great a libel to Hodnett as the letter to the *Eagle* claiming he had the support of the landlords of the district and that the support was marshalled by Samuel Jagoe.

When the defendants solicitor quipped that Hodnett ‘posed as a great Nationalist now’ Judge O’Brien, who ‘knew him well’ replied ‘He was always that’.⁹⁸ The defendant’s solicitor stated that Hodnett had no visible means, a farm valued at £10 ‘on which he only kept two cows’ and a mortgage from the Munster and Leinster Bank of £180 ‘on which proceedings were now being taken.’⁹⁹ The defence claim regarding Hodnett’s means was doubted by Hodnett’s barrister, Seymour Bushe. Patrick Fleming appearing for the defendant stated that Hodnett’s solicitor, Mr Marshall, had informed him that Hodnett ‘had been for some time in London and was not at present at home.’¹⁰⁰ The case was sent forward to the County Court at Bantry with the defendant denying that he had not written the offence letter but refusing to make an affidavit to that effect. There is no record of the final verdict or if, indeed, the action continued. There is

⁹⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 June 1889

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

nothing ironic in Hodnett seeking relief to Her Majesty's civil courts given the status of some of his former activists in 1889.

Hodnett's presence in London may have been due to Patrick O'Hea's presense there, the pair had attended parliament in 1880 for the debate on John Dillon's speech in Kildare during that summer. Following the upheavals of the first Land War, O'Hea ran unopposed as a Parnellite candidate in the newly created constituency of Donegal West in the general election of 1885.¹⁰¹ In 1888, in the act establishing the Parnell/*Times* Special Commission he was named by *The Times* as one of the MPs against whom they intended to give evidence and charges.¹⁰² He resigned his seat, on 19 May 1890, in the wake of the Parnell/O'Shea divorce case and just a few months before the Irish Party split over the affair.¹⁰³ In keeping with the parliamentary tradition, that no sitting MP may resign, he received a crown appointment as Steward of Northstead to effect his withdrawal from parliament. In consideration of O'Hea's political beliefs this may not be viewed as any capitulation but merely the device by which he resigned his seat. Previously ex-Fenians such as J.F.X. O'Brien were appointed to the same stewardship on resignation of parliamentary seats and Michael Davitt was appointed to the other stewardship used for such purposes, the Chiltern Hundreds, in 1893.¹⁰⁴ O'Hea,

¹⁰¹ Brian M. Walker, (ed), *Parliamentary election results in Ireland 1801–1922* (Dublin, 1978), p. 340; Entry for Patrick O'Hea (1852–1925), *A Biographical Dictionary of Cork* (Dublin, 2006), p. 249; Patrick Maume, review of Feaghal McGarry and James McConnel (eds), *The Black Hand of Republicanism Fenianism in Modern Ireland*, (Dublin, 2009), *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 144, November 2009, p. 658;

¹⁰² Robert M. McWade, *The Uncrowned King. The Life and Public Services of Hon. Charles Stewart Parnell, comprising A Graphic Story of his Ancestry; also family reminiscences, related by his aged mother, Delia Tudor Stewart Parnell, and a Brilliant History of his public services in the gigantic movement extending throughout Ireland, America and England for the relief of the suffering in Ireland; also A biographical sketch of his co-laborer, Rt. Hon. W.M. E. Gladstone* (NP, 1893), p. 213.

¹⁰³ Appointments to the Chiltern Hundreds and Manor of Northstead Stewardships since 1850, House of Commons Library, Parliamentary Information List, SN/PC/04731, (<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-04731.pdf>) [retrieved 30 Aug. 2013]; Frank Callanan, *The Parnell Split, 1890–91*, *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ Appointments to the Chiltern Hundreds and Manor of Northstead Stewardships since 1850, HOC Library, SN/PC/04731. Note: In recent times the IRA and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams was also appointed Steward of Northstead on his resignation from the House of Commons in 2011, *ibid*.

apparently disillusioned with Irish politics moved to South Africa and is reported to have become a 'pro British, anti-Boer propagandist in the run-up to the Boer war'.¹⁰⁵

At the general election in 1885 John O'Connor and James Gilhooly were also elected to parliament. O'Connor first held a Tipperary seat (1885-92) and latterly North Kildare (1905-18), while Gilhooly held West Cork for an impressive 26 years, until his death in 1916.¹⁰⁶ According to the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* O'Connor was, 'A witty speaker and an excellent mimic, and 'a popular figure in parliament.'¹⁰⁷

After the Land War, 1879-82, O'Connor maintained an influence over fellow '67 men including William Lunden, who, had sought selection in 1885 as a candidate for Limerick but, was persuaded to stand aside by "his fellow labourer in 1867".¹⁰⁸ James McConnel noted that, in 1910, John Devoy's newspaper, *Gaelic American*, was scathing in its criticism of O'Connor, saying he was a 'politically effete' nationalist who was "enervated by association with English Liberals and weak-kneed Irishmen".¹⁰⁹ Of his career as a lawyer between 1892 and 1905 the article stated that O'Connor's:

[...] ambitions and patriotism were revolutionised. No longer the militant Parnellite, still less the bold Fenian, he subordinated his country to the exigencies of the English connection, and became one of the most docile self-seekers that ever invaded the precincts of an English court of justice.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Maume, review *The Black Hand of Republicanism Fenianism*, *IHS*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 144, November 2009, p. 658;

¹⁰⁶ James McConnel, "Fenians at Westminster": The Edwardian Irish Parliamentary Party and the Legacy of the New Departure', *IHS*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 133, (May 2004), p. 46; Bridget Hourican. "Gilhooly, James Peter", James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Clinton and McGee. 'O'Connor, John', McGuire and Quinn, (eds), *D.I.B.*, (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6598>).

¹⁰⁸ McConnel, "Fenians at Westminster", *IHS*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 133, (May 2004), p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ *Gaelic American*, 1 Jan. 1910, cited in *ibid.*, p. 56.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Yet in 1914, O'Connor and Tom Kettle contrived to import arms for the Redmondite volunteers in a plot that was thwarted by the Belgian authorities.¹¹¹ He was defeated in the 1918 general election by a Sinn Féin candidate; and having largely quit public life, died in Hampstead in 1928.¹¹² James Gilhooly was active in the Irish National League and was imprisoned several times in the late 1880s.¹¹³ He died in October 1916.¹¹⁴

After his release from prison Henry O'Mahony, with his business in ruins, returned to the USA and set up as a farmer in Texas. He amassed considerable land holdings on which oil was discovered in the late 1920s.¹¹⁵ In the late 1920s, he visited Ireland where, though almost blind, he found 'a dying country' with 'little or no business' under the 'leadership of Cosgrave' who to his 'mind was a British agent'.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

In 1880 the government resisted the introduction of a *habeas corpus* suspension act despite being put under tremendous pressure by various parties from aristocratic landed gentry to the brethren of the Orange Order. Incidences such as the murder of Lord Montmorres and the ostracising of Captain Boycott increased the pressure on the government. Gladstone resisted the pleas of his Irish minister in order to bring in a Land Act that he felt would ameliorate Irish discontent. With the collapse of the State Trial

¹¹¹ Clinton and McGee. 'O'Connor, John', McGuire and Quinn, (eds), *D.I.B.*, (<http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6598>).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Bridget Hourican. "Gilhooly, James Peter", McGuire and Quinn (eds), *D.I.B.*

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Henry F. Quirke, 'Diary of a Land League Activist', *Skibbereen and District Historical Society*, Vol. 4, 2008 (Skibbereen, 2008), pp 28-31.

¹¹⁶ Mary O'Mahoney Lupton, "The recollections of Henry O'Mahony" in (eds.) Elizabeth Lupton Owen, Courtney D. Smith and Jenifer P. Smith, *Rolling Echoes, The Collected Writings of Mary O Mahoney-Luton Irish Immigrant and West Texas Pioneer*, (2nd., NP, 2006), p. 271.

against Parnell and the other Land League leaders inevitable legislation was introduced to parliament. However, even after the Protection of Persons and Property Act received royal ascent in March 1881, its provisions were used sparingly. It was only after the Land League was proscribed and the No Rent Manifesto was issued in October 1881 that the government took real advantage of the provisions of the act. It is notable that the PPP Act provided the government with a crude tool of negotiation with the Land League leaders most notable Parnell. While negotiating an unwritten agreement with Parnell the government were able to release prisoners as acts of good faith.

However in relation to the Ballydehob prisoners the PPP Act initially failed to achieve the desired results as membership of the Land League branch increased dramatically on the arrest of the branch leaders O'Mahony and Hodnett. On a national level the act may be seen as a successful tool which government was able to use to press for negotiation with leaders. However, it must be concluded that on a local level the use of coercion backfired and merely served to make national figures out of men who had previously been barely known. The government's failure is evidenced by the fact three of the leaders of the Land League in Cork went on to become members of parliament. Richard Hodnett and Henry O'Mahony, were eventually sidelined from Cork politics. However, as has been seen in chapter three, O'Mahony continued in the service of the most extreme wing of advanced Nationalism. In the aftermath of the land war in West Cork, the losers locally were the grassroots leaders of the remotest district, Henry O'Mahony and Richard Hodnett. The former lost his business in Ireland but died a rich man. Richard Hodnett disappeared from public life following his defeat at the poor law elections in 1889.

CONCLUSION

In undertaking a micro study of the I.R.B. and the Land War it was necessary to understand the terminology and adherence that may have influenced the grassroots leaders and membership. The development of a particular ideology or notion of nationalism was not a foregone conclusion in the mid-nineteenth century. The fact Thomas Davis felt that Ireland and its people were not sufficiently informed or knowledgeable of a distinct history and culture to the rest of the United Kingdom may seem remarkable. However, the construction of nationalist origin myths or programs of action proved critical to the development of what became the Fenian orthodoxy. Where Davis tended towards a cultural nationalism, James Fintan Lalor provided the ideas that would emerge as a far more potent tool than armed insurrection in furthering the cause of Irish separatism. Though Lalor's ideas were kept alive and spread by his followers especially Thomas Clarke Luby and other advanced Nationalists in the 1860s, as the I.R.B. was a mainly urban organisation in that decade and agrarian agitation did not come to the fore save through newspaper articles. In order to organise farmers it was necessary to support their interest.

In the late 1870s the convergence of an economic downturn with poor harvests created an opportunity for the I.R.B. to begin to woo farmers in the remotest parts of Ireland to their cause. Regardless of the demands of the Land League it provided a propaganda vehicle for the ideas of the advanced Nationalists. Land League posters contained honed down slogans that were based on the political writings of Mitchel, Davis and Lalor. The construction of a coherent national identity by Land League activists which formed out of various elements of their Fenian orthodoxy was essential for the political indoctrination that continued through a variety of organisations in the subsequent decades. This is most evident in the writing of and, indeed, in the actions of

Pearse. Despite a separatist armed insurrection not emerging from the Land League agitation, the advanced Nationalists were enabled in a more important way. They were placed in the centre of their communities, politically and intellectually in a propaganda war. Furthermore, I.R.B. men came to the fore in political life as the grassroots organisers entered political life becoming MPs. The propaganda war could not be overcome by greater military force, even while extreme I.R.B. men were taken off the streets through the use of *agent provocateurs* the fact is that the early phase of the Land War changed the political landscape in Ireland, with moderate constitutionalists replaced by I.R.B. men such as O’Hea, O’Connor and Gilhooly and the separatist rhetoric that was espoused at land meetings entering the mainstream. This change was perhaps the most abiding legacy of the Land War and a development that led directly to characters like Pearse emerging in the early twentieth century.

The new departure of Parnell, Devoy and Davitt precipitated and indeed, for any success, necessitated a radicalisation of local political organisations. In Co. Cork in 1879 the most influential political body, The Cork Farmers’ Club was under the influence of the Catholic clergy. The conservatism of the clergy was reflected in the choice of Col. Colthurst as a candidate for the Cork by-election. By the time of the 1880 general election the I.R.B. had positioned itself to both defy clerical authority and also to shun clerical dictates on their political choices and actions. This is one of the most important legacies of the Land League agitation. By using their influence and, indeed, physically intimidating those who would challenge their will, the I.R.B. men managed to assume important local positions of influence. The evidence of John O’Connor at the Special Commission indicates that the I.R.B. was split in 1880. However, it would be foolhardy to assume that anything involving the I.R.B. was clear-cut or straight forward. No matter how far they emerged from the shadows the I.R.B. were still an oath bound

secret society and despite police infiltration, *agent provocateurs* and informers the study of the Ballydehob branch of the Land League shows that much remained secret.

In the introduction to this thesis it was noted that a cadre of returned Americans began to slip back into Ireland in the mid to late 1870s. A memoir written in the 1940s, but only published in 2003, *Whist for Your Life, That's Treason, Recollections of a Long Life* by Edward O'Toole, a founder of the Rathvilly, Co. Carlow, branch of the Land League and later schoolmaster to Kevin Barry, illuminates the American influence and possible usurpation of the I.R.B. at a local level in Ireland in the late 1870s. According to O'Toole, T.P. O'Connor, an I.R.B. man travelling under the guise of a commercial traveller, came back from America in 1878 and contacted a local man that he had met there. According to O'Toole, while in America both of these men, T.P. O'Connor from Laffana, Co. Tipperary and James L. White from Tullow, Co. Carlow, had been 'intimately associated with O'Donovan Rossa, John Devoy and other Fenian leaders'.⁹⁸¹

Both [O'Connor and White] were ardent supporters of the 'New Departure' but looking back now [...] I believe the real reason for their visit was the organisation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.⁹⁸²

O'Toole's narrative bears up to scrutiny. T.P. O'Connor had been a Fenian in the 1860s but, according to William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan, he left the organisation in the late 1860s while remaining 'sympathetic to its ideals and aims'.⁹⁸³ Both he and his wife were staunch Republicans. He was a friend of Charles Kickham's, while his wife had aided Terence Bellew MacManus following the 1848 fiasco at

⁹⁸¹ Edward O'Toole *Whist for Your Life, That's Treason : Recollections of a Long Life* (Dublin, 2003), p. 28. Note: I am indebted to Prof. R.V. Comerford, N.U.I., Maynooth for pointing out this source to me.

⁹⁸² Ibid.

⁹⁸³ O'Brien & Ryan, *D.P.B.*, i, p. 342.

Ballingarry.⁹⁸⁴ However, he was also obviously an active I.R.B. man in the period and was a confidant of the most senior people in both Clan-na-Gael and the I.R.B. In the winter of 1877-78, and at the time that O'Toole refers to, Dr William Carroll, chairman of Clan-na-Gael, Kickham and John O'Connor, respectively the president and secretary of the I.R.B., stayed in T.P. O'Connor's Tipperary home.⁹⁸⁵ In 1880, John Devoy was asked by O'Carroll to enquire from O'Connor about disaffection in Ireland because of the reluctance of Supreme Council secretary, John O'Connor, and others to ensure a supply of arms for I.R.B. men.⁹⁸⁶ O'Carroll noted that O'Connor's stepson had previously left the I.R.B. due to dissatisfaction over the failure to arm sworn members whose subscriptions to the brotherhood were intended to be spent on gun importation.⁹⁸⁷ This was likely in the mid-1870s, as Eoin McGee noted that the I.R.B. was in decline in the then, having lost half of its subscribers, because of the Supreme Council's failure to arm men who had paid their subscriptions for the purposes of buying arms.⁹⁸⁸ R.V. Comerford has stated that: 'Clearly, for such people the IRB was an unregistered gun club dedicated to a popular rural pastime.'⁹⁸⁹ It is clear that though T.P. O'Connor was said to have left the movement in the late 1860s, in the late 1870s he was either back in the fold or had never actually left the I.R.B. It is also clear that he maintained contacts directly with leaders on both sides of the Atlantic.

Edward O'Toole was soon sworn into the I.R.B. at White's home by John Daly of Limerick.⁹⁹⁰ Daly was the chief travelling organiser of the I.R.B. in the mid 1870s.⁹⁹¹

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid; *D.P.B.*, ii, pp 423-4.

⁹⁸⁵ *D.P.B.*, i, p. 342. Note: not to be confused with 'Long John' O'Connor, secretary of the Cork IRB, Cork Land League and later MP.

⁹⁸⁶ Dr William O'Carroll to John Devoy, 6 Feb. 1880, *D.P.B.*, ii, p. 485

⁹⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁸ Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Féin* (2nd ed., Dublin, 2007), p. 52.

⁹⁸⁹ R.V. Comerford, 'Fenianism: the Scope and Limitations of a Concept', James McConnel & Fearghal McGarry, (eds), *The Black Hand of Republicanism* (London, 2009), p. 183.

⁹⁹⁰ Edward O'Toole *Whist for Your Life*, p. 28

The John L. White from Co. Carlow, arrested on 1 December 1881 under the provisions of the Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act 1881, for intimidation against rent, was the same James L. White referred to in O'Toole's memoir.⁹⁹² Furthermore, like Henry O'Mahony from Ballydehob, White had become a naturalised American and, like O'Mahony, sought the protection of his the government of his new country, on 23 January 1882, when he incarcerated under the P.P.P. Act.⁹⁹³ What is noteworthy about O'Toole's account is that, when the Land League was formed in the area, O'Toole was active in the affairs of both the I.R.B. and the Land League. By the time that monster meetings were being organised in the area, there were active I.R.B. circles in all the neighbouring towns.⁹⁹⁴ John Daly had previously been opposed to the new departure and continued to be a physical-force Fenian.⁹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, he recruited men who would found Land League branches. In 1884, with the assistance of *agent provocateurs*, he was arrested in possession of dynamite at Birkenhead.⁹⁹⁶ It was alleged that he intended to throw bombs from the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons.⁹⁹⁷ The fact that Daly and returned Americans were involved in reviving the I.R.B. in an area where the I.R.B. men later established the local Land League branches indicates that Mallon's 1880 report as to Devoy ordering I.R.B. centres to engage in Land League activities was not fanciful. It is also highly improbable that, having embarked on a scheme involving the relocation of grassroots activists from America to Ireland requiring several years of planning, recruiting and organising, the I.R.B. would not have

⁹⁹¹ McGee, *I.R.B.*, p. 49.

⁹⁹² *Protection of Persons and Property (Ireland) Act, List of all persons arrested under the Act*, N.A.I., Protection of Persons and Property papers, box 1.

⁹⁹³ Mr. Barrows, Consulate of the U.S.A., Dublin to Mr Lowell, Consulate of the U.S.A., London, 30 Jan. 1882, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, transmitted to congress, with the annual message of the president, December 4, 1882* (Washington, 1883), p. 220

(<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS188283v01p1>) [retrieved 15 Oct. 2013]

⁹⁹⁴ Edward O'Toole *Whist for Your Life, That's Treason: Recollections of a Long Life*, pp 29-31.

⁹⁹⁵ Moody, *Davitt*, pp 133-4.

⁹⁹⁶ McGee, *The IRB*, pp 119-20.

⁹⁹⁷ *D.P.B.*, (Dublin, 1853), ii, p. 242. Note Daly's sister married 1916 leader Tom Clarke.

used the Land League to promote advanced Nationalist politics of separation and as a cover for their own activities. In light of developments in West Cork, this conclusion goes some way to explaining the rapid expansion of the Land League from September 1880 and also its recruiting policies, to be discussed below. Owen McGee noted that from 1879 the increase in I.R.B. membership in Ireland was partly related to arms importation and partly due to having an operational Land League in an area. He noted that in Munster following the importation of 1,173 rifles and 289 revolvers subscribing membership increased by 1,500.⁹⁹⁸ However in Connaught, though in receipt of half as many rifles as Munster, I.R.B. membership increased by 2000 which, McGee speculates was due to the fact that the Land League was operational there earlier than in Munster.⁹⁹⁹

What is clear from the O'Toole account regarding O'Connor and White is that in small villages, other than Ballydehob, returned Americans arrived in order to revive the I.R.B. in their home place. In the case of O'Mahony, he obviously arrived with a fair deal of money as he established a successful business and built a large house in the village. This provides a new area of enquiry for future researchers. One conclusion might be that the American Fenians were not just seeking to effect the resurgence of the I.R.B. and Irish nationalism from the top down by associating with parliamentarians like Parnell in the new departure, but it were, also, simultaneously seeking to wrest control of the grassroots of the I.R.B. from the Supreme Council that had allowed the organisation to fall into disarray by not satisfying the urge of the local 'unlicensed gun clubs' that Comerford refers to. It is clear that the incidence of these trans-Atlantic organising cadre was not geographically confined. As noted in the introduction, Fergus Campbell identified Lynam from Galway as one such operative. O'Mahony from

⁹⁹⁸ McGee, *I.R.B.*, p. 86.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Ballydehob and White and O'Connor mentioned in O'Toole's memoirs, cited here, were all sent to different parts of the country. This indicates a planning and design rather than accident or coincidence.

Other interpretations of the origins and course of the Land War are equally challenged by the findings in this thesis. The election of Parnell for Cork city at the general election of April 1880 indicated a changing of the guard and proved that the I.R.B. men associated with the Co. Cork Land League could challenge both the bishop and the conservative Home Rulers. The fact that three men associated with the victory of Parnell would be anointed by him and elected at the subsequent general election in 1885, for constituencies in counties as widely separated by distance as Donegal, Tipperary and West Cork, indicates that they received their reward. The publicity achieved through their close association with Parnell had served them well locally but in the case of O'Hea, Donegal was a long way from Skibbereen and he was handed a safe seat, unopposed, at the election in 1885. The fact that Richard Hodnett and Patrick O'Hea, prior to emerging as Land League leaders in West Cork, had met with Parnell gave them considerable influence. In the fevered atmosphere of the Land League agitation, Parnell and new men like Dillon were political stars who received vast amounts of publicity. It is clear from the Cork election, in 1881, that Parnell hitched his own star not just to the men at the top of Clan-na-Gael and was provided with the personnel on the ground to make sure things turned out the right way. It is possible that Cork was more organised than other parts of the country and that is why the particular pattern of grassroots I.R.B. allowing nothing, including their hesitant or more moderate fraternal brothers, to get in their way, might have eluded historians using the top down approach. One reason why Ballydehob was described as the political centre of the West at the *Times*/Parnell Special Commission might be that in such a small place the

inclination to inform would have been tempered by the difficulties associated with being found doing so. Whereas more urban areas presented people and their families with a certain amount of mobility, in such a remote and poor area it would have been impossible for relatives not to be ostracised were one of their own to betray the local cadre.

Throughout the summer of 1880 Edward Farrell and John Heffernan stepped into the limelight as political operators in Cork. It was only after the Land League was formed in West Cork that John O'Connor, the future MP, gained prominence. However in the same period there was an internal wrangle in the I.R.B. that was brought to a head with the Parnell visit in October 1880. It appears from public pronouncements at the time that the leader of the I.R.B. in Cork, Charles Guilfoyle Doran, was sidelined at the same time as Bew's 'moderate' Land Leaguers in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the Land League in West Cork. It has been speculated above that Doran may have been in on the play, when announcing that the Nationalists had gone over to the League. Given, the disingenuous nature of senior Fenian figures such as Devoy, it is entirely possible that he was in concert with O'Connor at the time. If Doran was not part of the plan then it can be assumed that that after a period of months when the Land League in Cork was hollowing out the Cork Farmers' Club and intimidating both moderate Home Rulers and moderate I.R.B. men O'Connor, Heffernan and O'Farrell led the core of I.R.B. into the Land League without abandoning, either, their advanced political ideals nor their guns. The facts established show are that in the last weeks of August O'Hea and Hodnett met with Parnell in London, arrived back in Cork and proposed the setting up of the Land League in Ballydehob. Two weeks later thousands gathered in Skibbereen for a Land League meeting there attended by up to 10,000 people. In the first week of October, coinciding with Parnell's triumphal

monster meeting in Cork, the moderates who had denounced the seizing of arms from the Juno were threatened with guns in public as they tried to board the carriages with the national and local Nationalist leaders going to the meeting. It is impossible to view Hodnett's involvement in these events as accidental given that he was in the company of Patrick O'Hea at every important moment from visiting the House of Commons on 23 August, to attending the Cork Land League on 28 August, the inaugural meetings of the Land League in West Cork on 12 September in Ballydehob and the monster meeting at Skibbereen on 26 September. They were also together at the Parnell monster meeting on 3 October.

The inaugural Land League meetings in West Cork evidenced nationalist pageantry and, indeed, entertainment with the presence of both famous public figures and also bands playing national tunes. However, they also provided settings for preaching separatist propaganda to the farmers and labourers. Meetings such as the one in Skibbereen, indicated to the people that they did have strength of numbers and the support of both fire-brand MPs like Dillon and allowed the local leaders to emerge and get publicity. That this was all capped off by the events surrounding the Parnell meeting in Cork city on 3 October indicating that there was a method and planning to all the previous developments. If historical focus on the events is top down they centre on Parnell and Doran, a split in the I.R.B. and a political triumph for Parnell that was slightly tarnished by the Nationalist displays and gun totting on the way to a meeting where the moderate Land Leaguers were humiliated. However, viewed from the bottom up, as was the focus of this study, it can be seen that the Parnell meeting, on 3 October, was a triumph, a celebration of and by a reorganised I.R.B. that had become confident enough to emerge from the shadows with both Ballydehob and then Skibbereen

organised. Indeed, it can be viewed as a triumphal re-emergence and celebration of the changing of the guard.

The operation of a local Land League branch such as the Ballydehob branch was a directly challenged the authority of the state as it attempt held courts which passed judgements enforced by both unaccountable men with blackened faces and public boycotting. To be taken seriously when they advanced separatist rhetoric it was important for the Land Leaguers to show they could best the local landlords, humiliate the police and usurp or imitate government functions. In the first few months , after it was launched, the Ballydehob branch focused its attention on locals who remained aloof from their ranks. However following the success of achieving a rent boycott in December they were further emboldened. A measure of their influence can be gauged by the fact that Richard Hodnett was elected as Chairman of the Skull Board of Guardians over the magistrate and local landlord George Swanton. Following this a series of violent incidents were perpetuated locally in order to intimidate process servers from delivering court documents to the tenants on rent strike. Hodnett's arrest further emboldened the tenants to join the Land League and, also, brought the clergy into the branch as members. Following Henry O'Mahony's arrest the public displays of violence that were orchestrated by local leaders is significant. Coercion was turned to the advantage of the revolutionaries. When it became necessary to restore order in the district, using the military and naval gunboats, the I.R.B. rhetoric espoused at land meetings, where it was stated that the landlords were the British garrison, seemed convincing.

There is no doubt that the organising body of the Irish National Land League in Cork was controlled by active I.R.B. men. Furthermore it is clear that Patrick O'Hea and John O'Connor were I.R.B. men in the 1860s. Both, O'Hea and O'Connor, claimed

they were not in the I.R.B. in the 1880s. As O'Connor was not being truthful in this claim there is no reason to presume O'Hea was either. Richard Hodnett and O'Donovan Rossa were both members of the Ossianic Society which attracted Phoenix men and Fenians as members as well as the nobility and scholars. As they were both men from the same area of the country they are likely to have known each personally at that time. The speeches made by O'Connor, Heffernan, O'Mahony, O'Farrell, O'Hea and Hodnett, both, overtly and by allusion promoted nationalism and republicanism in opposition to a tyrannical oligarchy. Following Hodnett and O'Mahony's arrests West Carbery became insurrectionary. Their arrests also prompted the first organised recruitment into the Land League at Ballydehob and demonstrations against the government which were viewed by sections of the press as being precursors to a civil war in Ireland. After O'Mahony's release he continued the work of the Land League even after the Land League had been proscribed. The dynamite incident at Ballydehob, followed by the letter from America intimidating a witness on Richard Hodnett Jnr's behalf, proves either an international revolutionary connection with the Ballydehob. Though Henry O'Mahony never admitted his Fenianism the fact that the early Fenians drilled on his father's land while he lived in 'revolutionary' Skibbereen proves his association with the early movement. The fact that he later was a courier linked to the long urban bombing campaign against England and the fact he received the funds from O'Donovan Rossa would indicate a proof 'beyond a reasonable doubt that he advocated extreme advanced Nationalism. Walter White and Donnacha Seán Lucey, noted in their studies of counties, that the resistance of the catholic clergy to the Land League, was an obstacle in certain parts of the country, in West Cork in the clerics aligned themselves early with the League. However, it has been shown that protestant tenants were also attracted to the Land League in Skull. These two factors indicate that at least in the area

under survey bridging the sectarian divide that prevailed in certain parts of Ireland, as evidenced by Walsh's quotes from the Bishop of Ossary, decrying the Land League as atheist and protestant was also a factor in the success of the Land League agitation. A no denominational approach was also in keeping with the truly republican ideal the espoused by the early Fenians.

The developments outlined in this thesis show that though the I.R.B. split in Cork in just prior to the roll out of the Land League in West Cork there is nothing to indicate that the split made the organisation weaker as had happened in the past. Quite the opposite, using the Land League as a propaganda driven organisational front

In light of the new information that emerged during the course of this research an almost random approach to the choice of the geographical area to be studied could have been taken. However, there was nothing random in the choice of the exploring the activities of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the formation and operation of the Irish National Land League in the Skull (Schull) Poor Law Union in Co. Cork and more particularly the branch formed in the village of Ballydehob, in September 1880, as the subject of this thesis.

Further micro studies might look for identifiers of a resurgent I.R.B. such as the presence of returned Americans in the local Land League, radical changes in the selection bodies for Home Rule candidates at elections, the targeting of landlords who also held government appointments, as well as, what has traditionally been done by historians, a close reading of the rhetoric used at land meetings to identify not just nationalist sentiments but, also, revolutionary rhetoric that references the French revolution, the destruction of the oligarchy and the various evangelists of Irish republicanism.

APPENDIX
OF
ILLUSTRATIONS

GLE & COUNTY CORI

**MONSTER
LAND LEAGUE MEETING**

**AT
BALLYDEHOB,
On Sunday Next, Sept. 12th, 1880,
At 2 o'clock.**

MEN of West Carbery assemble in your
thousands, and show our Rulers that
the present Land Laws are the cause of

Famine and Emigration,

**And declare your determination to live and
die in the homes you were born in.**

The following as Deputation from Dub-
lin and Cork Land Leagues, will address
you :—Messrs. KETTLE, FARRELL, HEPPER-
NAN, O'HEA, BRENNAN, BYRNE, O'BRIEN,
and FULLER.

DOWN WITH LANDLORDISM

GOD SAVE IRELAND !

(765)

Image 1: Announcement for the inaugural meeting Ballydehob Land League 12 Sept. 1880: 'Men of West Carbery assemble in you thousands, and show out Rulers that the present Land Laws are the causes of Famine and Emigration, And declare your determination to live and die in the homes you were born in. [...] DOWN WITH LANDLORDISM. GOD SAVE IRELAND.

Source: *West Cork Eagle*, 11 Sept. 1881.

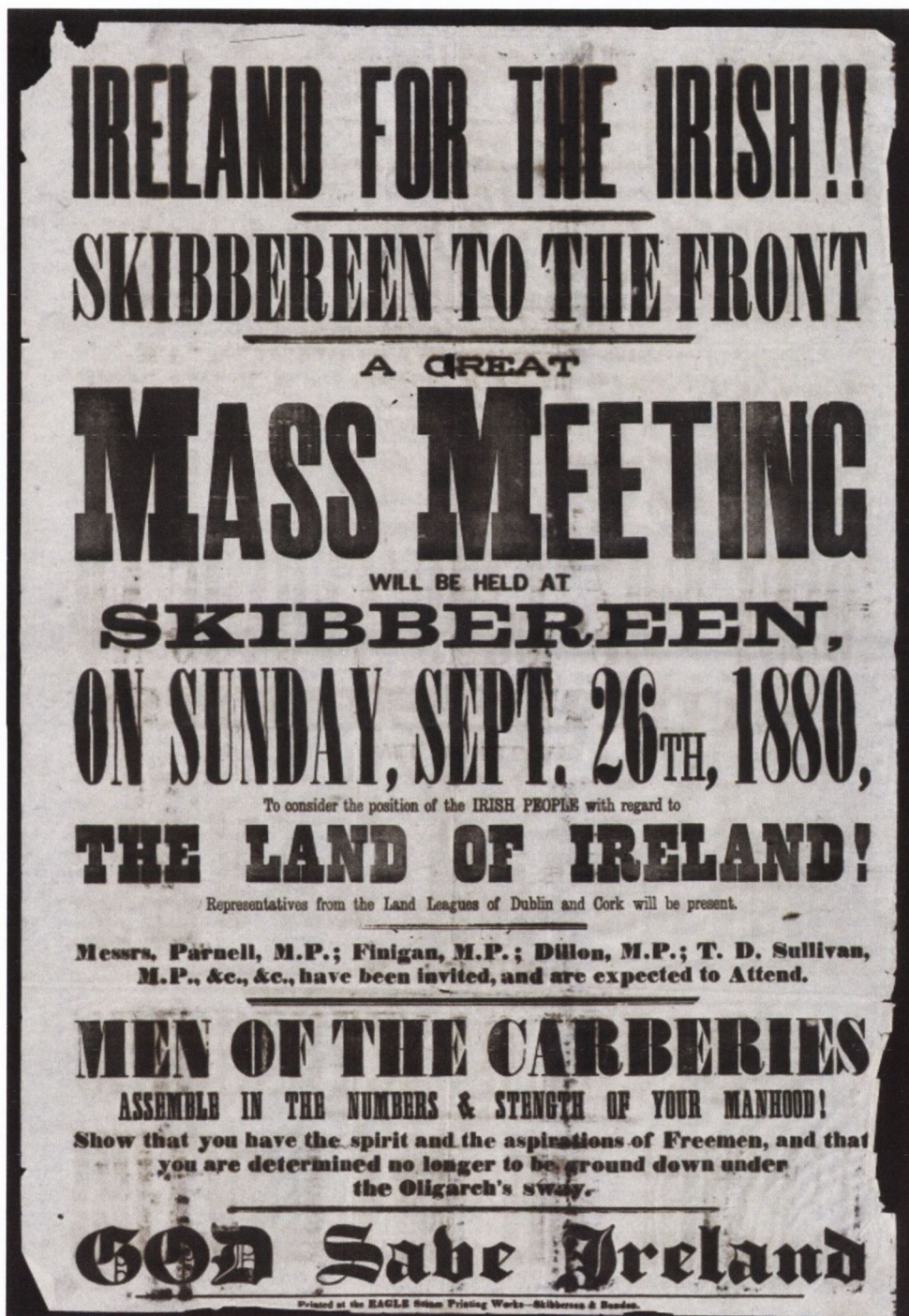


Image 2: Poster for inaugural meeting of the Skibbereen Land League, 26 Sept. 1880. "Ireland for the Irish!! Skibbereen to the Front [...] Men of the Carberies to assemble in numbers and show their strength. Show that you have the spirit and aspirations of Freeman, and that you are determined no longer to be ground down under the Oligarchs sway. God Save Ireland". Source: N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers, box 1.

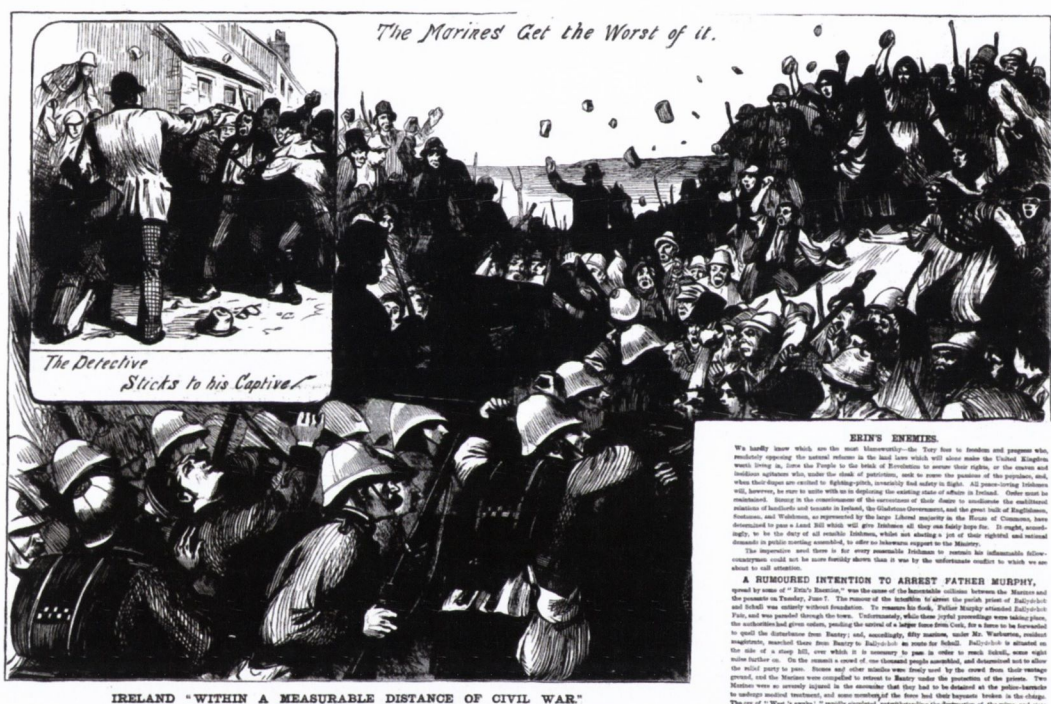


Image 3: Report on the riots in Skull and Ballydehob following the rumours of Fr Murphy's imminent arrest in June 1881.

'Ireland within a measureable distance of Civil War'

Penny Illustrated News, (London), 18 June 1881.



Image 4: Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in the early to mid-1860s.
This image is reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland [Samuel Lee
Anderson Collection, MS5957].



Image 5: Poster for Land League and Dublin Trades Meeting, 26 July 1881. The design and colouring is a remarkable example of the sophistication of Land League propaganda.

‘To ENABLE THE INHABITANTS OF THE METROPOLIS And surrounding districts to express their sympathies with the cause of the Down trodden Tenant-farmers of Ireland.’

Reproduced courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland, CSORP/1881/25228

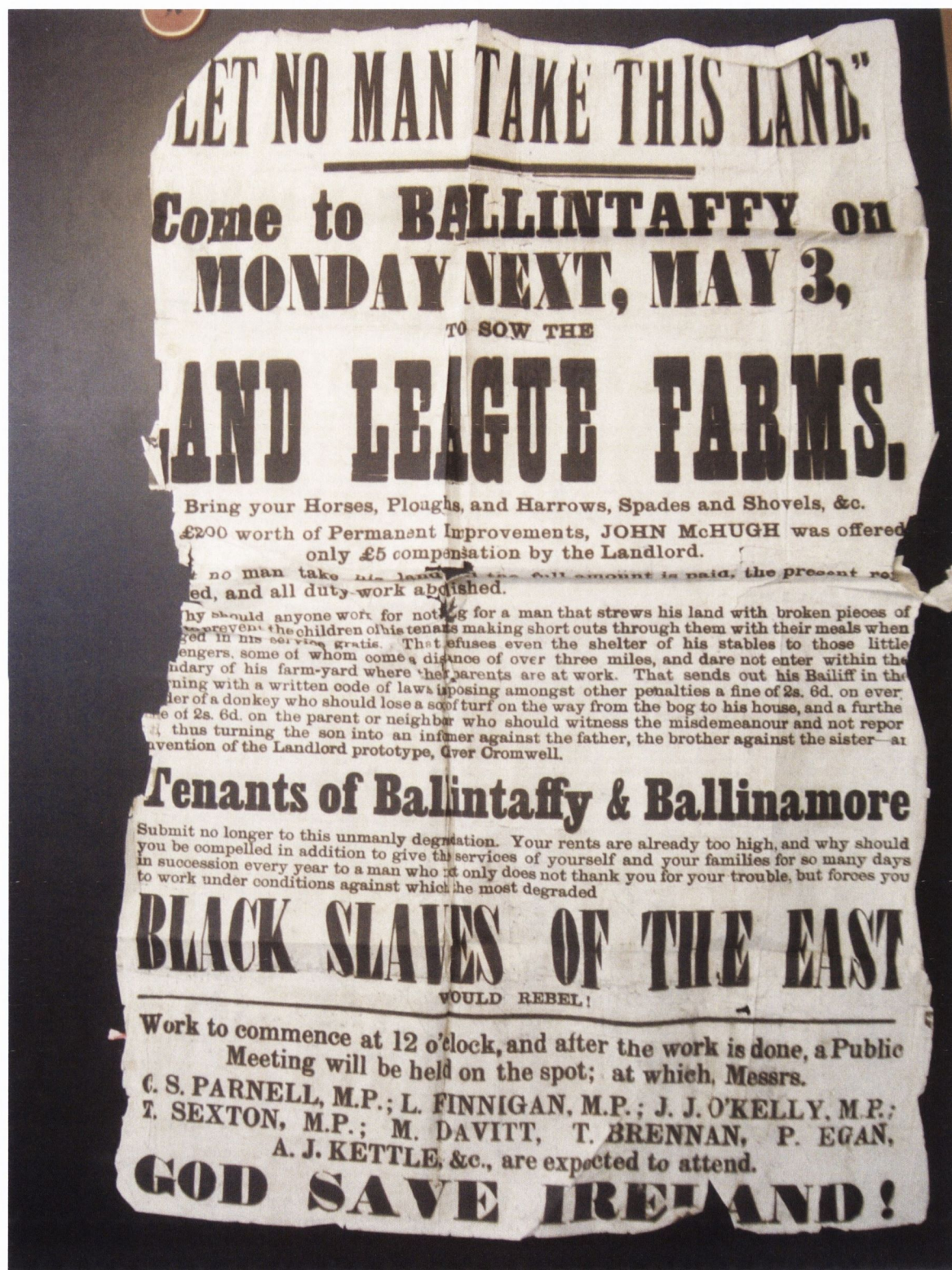


Image 6: Poster for Land League Meeting, Ballintaffy, 3 May 1880, 'Submit no Longer to unmanly degradation BLACK SLAVES OF THE EAST WOULD REBEL!'

Reproduced courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland Source: N.A.I.,CCS, Queen v. Parnell box 1.

a



Image 7: Land League No Rent placard 1880. 'If you are evicted the Land League will support you. Let no tenant offer more than the Government valuation.' Reproduced courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland Source: N.A.I., Queen v. Parnell box 1.

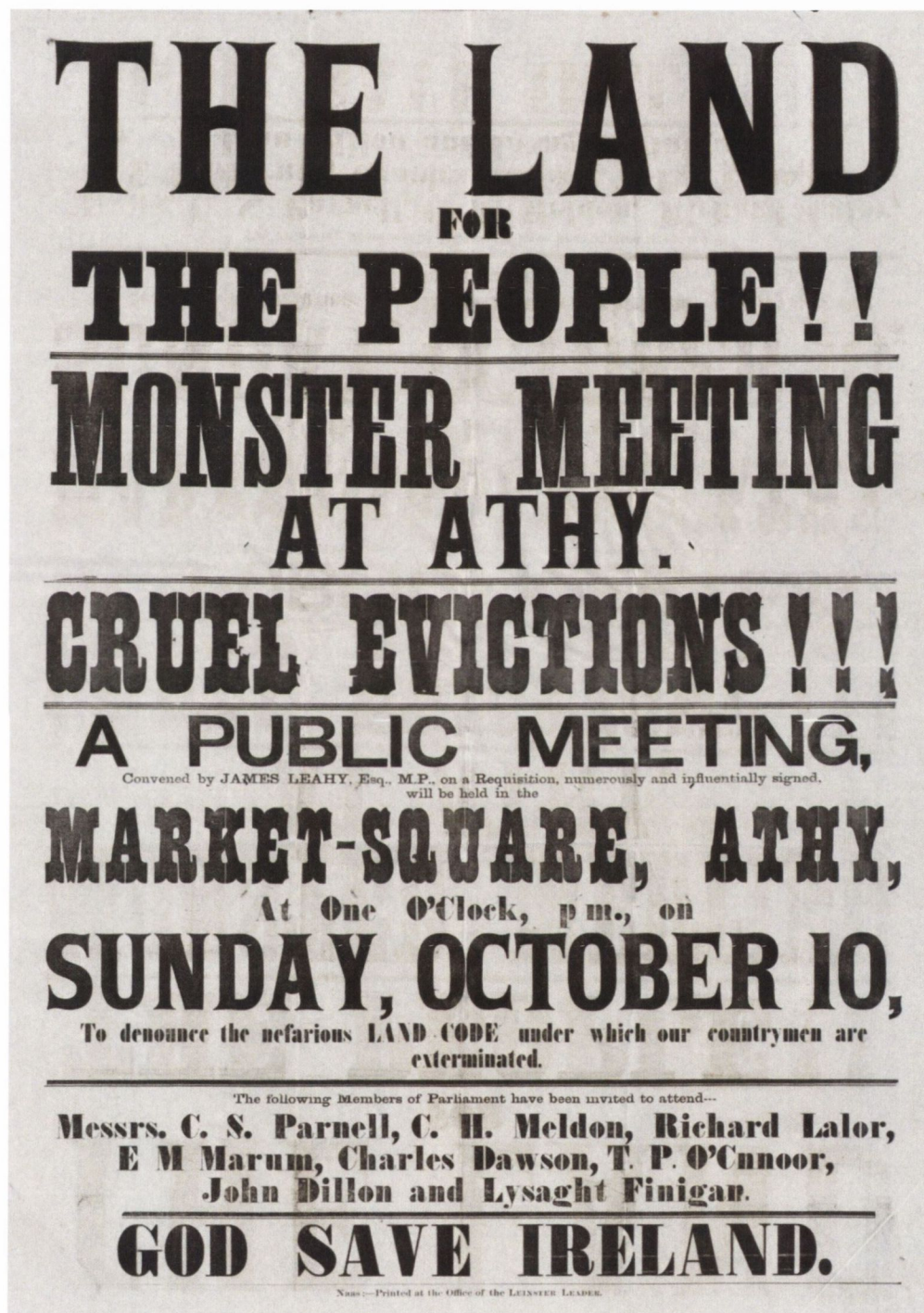


Image 8: 'Land for the People. [...] God Save Ireland'
Poster for Land League Meeting, Athy, 10 Oct. 1880,
Reproduced courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland,
N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers box 2.



Image 9: Henry O'Mahony in 1936-7 aged 93. Courtesy of the O'Mahony, OMahoney Lupton, Smith families and Sandra Owen Livingston.

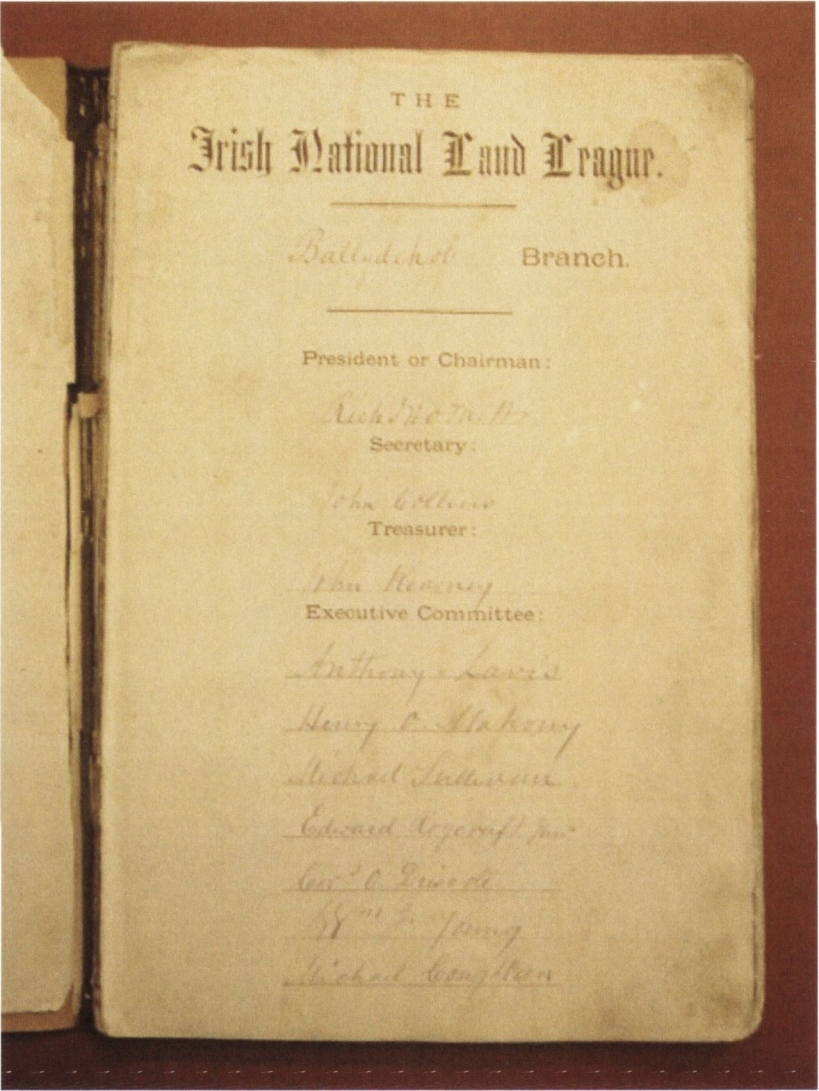


Image 10: Membership book of the Ballydehob Land League branch. Reproduced courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland. N.A.I, I.N.L., papers contained in box 9.



Image 11: Poster for Land League Meeting Dunkaneely, Co Donegal, 29 July 1881. In this area with a large protestant population the standard nationalist slogans are absent.

N.A.I., CSORP/1881/25411.

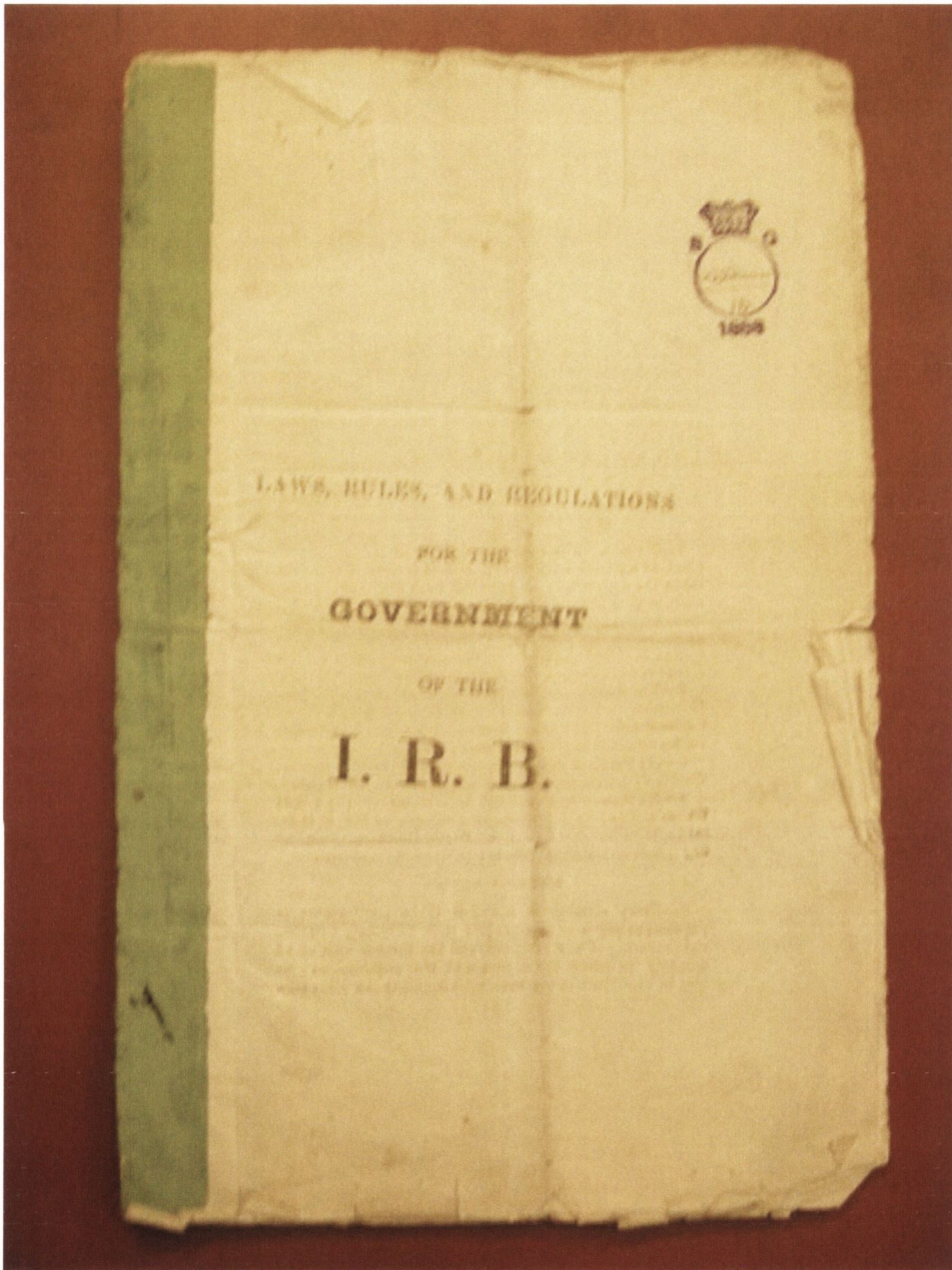


Image 12: *Laws, Rules and Regulations for the Government of the I.R.B.* Reproduced courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland. N.A.I, I.N.L. papers contained in box 9.



Image 13: The house Henry O'Mahony built in Ballydehob.

Courtesy of the O'Mahony, OMahoney Lupton, Smith, families and Sandra Owen Livingston.

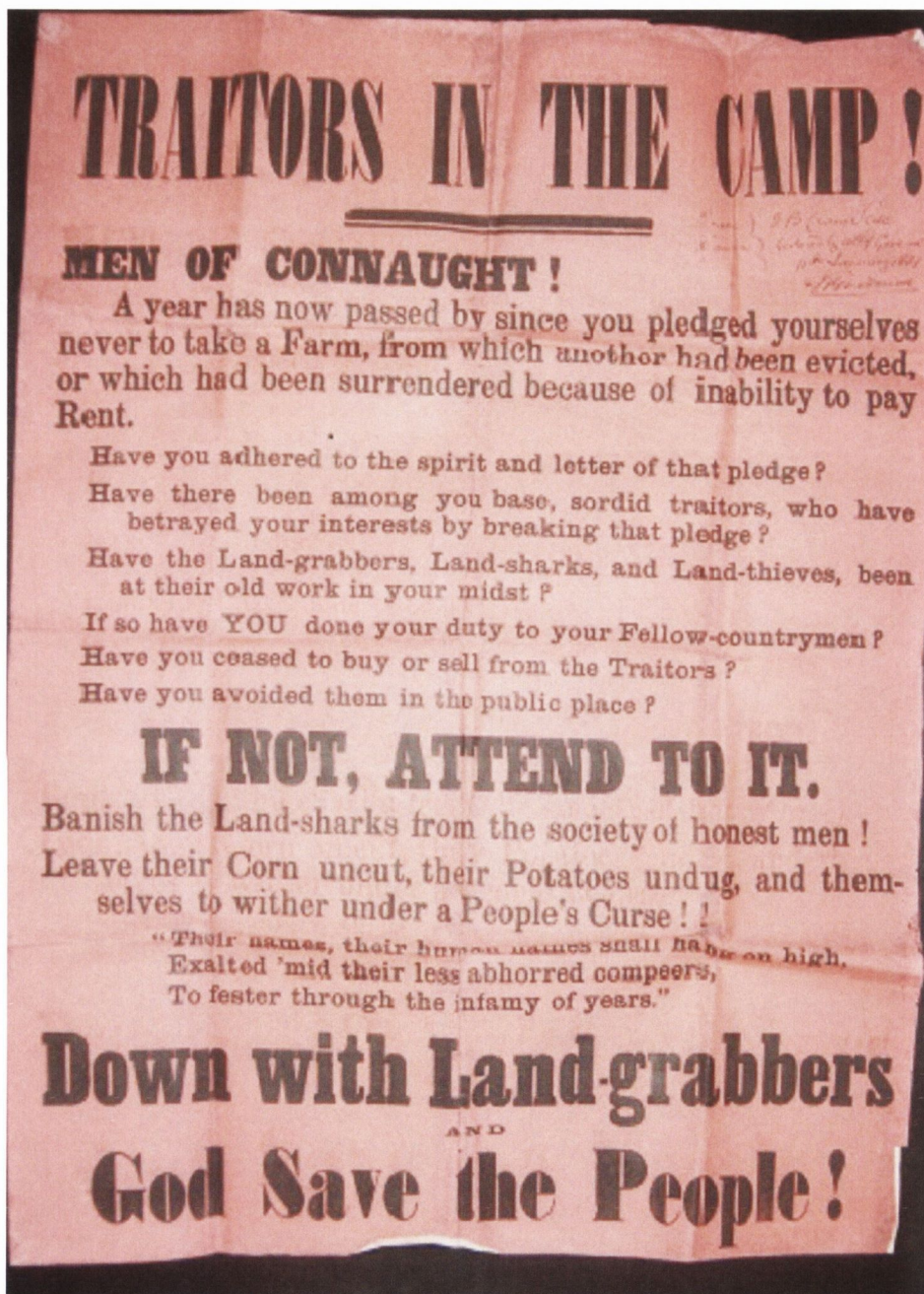


Image 14: 'Traitors in the Camp. [...] Have you ceased to buy and sell from the Traitors? [...] Banish the Land-sharks from the society of honest men' A Boycotting poster from 1880.

Reproduced courtesy of the National Archives of Ireland, N.A.I., CCS, Queen v. Parnell papers.

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Irish National League papers 1879-1889 (10 boxes)

CHIEF CROWN SOLICITORS PAPERS

Queen v Parnell papers, 1880-81, (11 boxes),

DATABASES CREATED AND SUBMITTED WITH THIS THESIS

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