

**University of Strathclyde**

**Department of History**

**Irish Political Identity in Glasgow, 1863-91**

**by**

**Terence McBride**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**2002**

**The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyright Acts as qualified by University of Strathclyde Regulation 3.49. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.**

## Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i-ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii-iv</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Note to the Reader</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1-32</b>
<b>1. Irish Politics in Early Nineteenth Century Glasgow</b>	<b>33-70</b>
<b>2. Irish Popular Politics, the Clergy and ‘Fenian fever’</b>	<b>71-105</b>
<b>3. John Ferguson and the Mobilisation of the Irish Vote</b>	<b>106-41</b>
<b>4. The Catholic Church and the Drink Trade: Their Competing Claims to the Irish Vote</b>	<b>142-89</b>
<b>5. The Glasgow Irish and the Politics of Land Reform</b>	<b>190-244</b>
<b>6. The Politics of ‘The Democracy’ and Irish Identity</b>	<b>245-90</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>291-310</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>311-29</b>

## Abstract

The Irish in nineteenth-century Glasgow constituted a significant but essentially short-term element in politics. The purpose of this thesis was, first of all, to identify and characterise competing claims to their allegiances. Then, secondly, to decide whether one 'fusion' of loyalties, elaborated in the course of a dynamic, evolutionary engagement with Glasgow popular politics in the period 1863-91, made the integration of the Glasgow Irish into the mainstream of local and Westminster politics more possible than it otherwise might have been.

A secular, at times radical, tradition of organising and representing Irish nationality in Glasgow had been moulded in O'Connell's various campaigns for catholic emancipation and Repeal, in Reform Bill and Chartist agitation. It however, was strongly opposed by the local catholic hierarchy. Irish people *qua* lay catholics, nevertheless, asserted a right to come together in social and political organisations. When such bodies were portrayed as insurrectionary nationalism in disguise in the 1860s, leading Irish catholics took measures to re-assert secular Irishness through more formal and enduring political association. This secular Irishness gave Irish protestants such as John Ferguson an entry into nationalist debate.



Ferguson, from 1870 to 1879, through his agitation among the Irish and confrontation with local Liberal 'commonsense', united nationalists in the West of Scotland behind his militant constitutionalism. That said, in the 1870s, the Catholic Church and the drink trade made competing claims on the loyalty of the Glasgow Irish. During and immediately after the Irish Land War of 1879-82, however, Ferguson and Michael Davitt adapted the traditional rhetoric of anti-landlordism and a vision of land redistribution to the aspirations of Britain's urban-based Irishmen. These 'social' nationalists continued to represent their cause as one essentially allied to a vision of social reform. Ferguson and like-minded activists formalised this by entering into municipal electoral alliances with the cause of independent labour and crucially fused loyalty to organised labour with his representation of Irish political identity.

## Acknowledgements

Many people have played a part in the production of this thesis. Profound thanks have to go, first of all, to my supervisor, Professor Hamish Fraser, for his early encouragement of my research plans and for his continued enthusiasm, advice and deep knowledge of nineteenth-century popular politics in Scotland. Many thanks are also due to all staff and postgraduate students in the Department of History, University of Strathclyde who listened to my ideas and offered their thoughts and assistance in workshops over the years. In addition, I would like to give thanks to the same Department for the initial invaluable financial support provided by the award of an MRes Studentship in September 1996.

In carrying out my research, I benefited from the specialist knowledge and guidance of many library and archive staff, with particular mention due to the enthusiastic staff of the Glasgow Room and the Glasgow City Archives in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow. Individuals worthy of acknowledgement in this regard are: Dr. Mary McHugh, Glasgow Archdiocesan Archives; Dr. Christine Johnstone, Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh; and Mr. Stuart O'Seanoir, Trinity College Library, Dublin. All three pointed me in the direction of valuable sources which I

might have easily missed. Helping me with personal information on various key Irish politicians and labour activists, I would also like to give warm thanks to Dr. Eric Taplin, Dr. Patrick Connolly and Ms. W. MacAuley.

Lastly, deserved thanks go to Dr. Julian Ward for his careful proof reading of early drafts of this thesis and to the typing, encouragement and listening skills of my ever patient wife, Antoinette.

**Abbreviations**

<b>ILP</b>	<b>Independent Labour Party</b>
<b>HRCGB</b>	<b>Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain</b>
<b>SVDP</b>	<b>St. Vincent De Paul Society</b>
<b>IRB</b>	<b>Irish Republican Brotherhood</b>
<b>NBSP</b>	<b>National Brotherhood of St. Patrick</b>
<b>INA</b>	<b>Irish National Association</b>
<b>HGA</b>	<b>Home Government Association</b>
<b>GWSBTA</b>	<b>Glasgow Wine Spirits and Beer Trade Association</b>
<b>INLGB</b>	<b>Irish National League of Great Britain</b>
<b>SLP</b>	<b>Scottish Labour Party</b>

**Note to the reader:**

In following the convention adopted by T. Gallagher in *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace* (Manchester, 1987), the terms 'catholic' and 'protestant', except where they form part of the title of an institution or organisation, are rendered in lower case. This I considered a useful device: it underscores the generally poor indication of individual allegiance rendered by the use of the upper case.



## Introduction

The Irish in Great Britain have in recent years been the object of increasing interest from historians. An early groundbreaking survey by J. A. Jackson has been followed up by a whole series of local studies. Some of these have attempted a comprehensive examination of the experience of Irish communities within a given area and others, more modestly, have undertaken case studies of important themes or aspects of migrant life emerging from research and debate. Urban studies were initially to the fore, with Lynn Hollen Lees' *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* notable among them, and recent work by John Belchem, Alan O'Day and Steven Fielding has added to our understanding of Irish life in this context. More recently, and showing historians how complex the migrant-host relationship could be, we also have regional studies, and indeed micro-studies of small rural communities, ranging from Donald Macraird's *Culture, Conflict and Migration: the Irish in Victorian Cumbria* to Louise Miskell's recent study of Irish immigrants in one small town in Cornwall.<sup>1</sup>

Much of this interest arises undoubtedly out of the desire of present generations of Irish descent to throw light on their forbears' distinct role in the making of British history and in itself could be viewed



as part of an ongoing reaffirmation of Irishness. However, for the disinterested, the history of the Irish in this island also has an intrinsic value. It highlights the process of integration, into the social and political life of this other part of the British Isles, of an ethnic group seen, at times, as alien and hostile to the British way of life. The examination of that process likewise promotes a more general understanding of the relationship of a national or ethnic identity to the context in which is expressed.

With that thought in mind, the purpose of this particular thesis was to attempt an appraisal of the factors involved in the making of an Irish political identity in the particular context of Glasgow during the latter half of the nineteenth century. More specifically it aimed to explore those factors forming an identity that could have culminated in the beginnings of Glasgow's peculiar working partnership of labour and Irish interests. In doing this, the very different social, political and religious context of Scotland was to be always borne in mind and the focus kept on local political structures. The hope was that there would thus emerge a picture of the complexity, and indeed ambiguity, of the 'host' and migrant relationship and the vital factor of its dynamic, evolutionary character which continues to the present day.

In so tackling the notion of political identity in the context of

nineteenth-century Glasgow, there is a need, first of all, to outline something of the numerical significance of the Irish coming to settle in this part of the British mainland and indeed their origins. Scotland for the major part of the nineteenth century was attractive to emigrating Irishmen. Coming mostly from the nine counties of pre-partition Ulster, they were drawn as much by its shipping links with North America as for the opportunities of employment in agriculture or in the burgeoning industrial towns of the West of Scotland. To make use of a phrase taken by Ruth–Ann Harris for the title of her book on early Irish migration, Scotland *was* for many migrants the ‘nearest place that wasn’t Ireland’.<sup>2</sup> Census figures are certainly difficult to evaluate, given a tendency for Irish people to move on overseas once money was saved or to return to Ireland once seasonal work had ceased for the year, but two significant points can be made regarding settlement in Scotland.

First of all, if we make comparisons with figures for like dates in England and Wales, it can be seen that, for the later half of the century, Scotland exercised a significant ‘pull’ on migrating Irishmen. In the year 1877 alone, 11,573 Irish persons left for England and Wales, whereas 8,698 made the journey to Scotland. According to Brenda Collins, between 1876 and 1921 40% of all Irish emigrants went to Scotland. Thus in 1881, when they formed the highest ever recorded



proportion of the British population, the Irish-born accounted for 9.5% of the population in Scotland, as against 2.2% in the whole of England and Wales. This statistical imbalance in favour of migration to Scotland ensured that the number of Irish-born would remain steady at just over 200,000 throughout the post-famine period from 1851 to 1901. However, from emigration and census statistics relating to the years immediately following the Great Famine of 1846-51 until the 1920s, we can also see that from around 1901 Irishmen were not coming to nor staying so readily in Scotland, as had been the case in the previous fifty years. This dropping-off in the number of Irish-born settling in Scotland is reflected in the fact that in 1920 only 113 persons were recorded as officially leaving Ireland for Scotland, compared to an influx numbered at 2,187 in 1901.<sup>3</sup> These two points indicate that Irish settlement in Scotland occurred largely, and dramatically, in the latter half of the nineteenth century and that - even if new arrivals did bring, in Collins' words, "undiluted peasant elements"- from 1901 onwards the resident 'Irish' community was to be overwhelmingly urban and Scots-born.

As for Glasgow's population, using figures extracted by one historian from Flinn's study of Scottish population trends, it can be seen that the Irish-born portion of its inhabitants reached a peak of 18.17% in 1851 then steadily fell to 8.87% by 1901.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding Glasgow's

dramatic increase in population and the annexation of contiguous burghs in 1891, 1905 and 1912, it would not be unreasonable to see this Irish-born element as being a significant, but essentially short-term, component of the city's population in line with settlement figures for the whole of Scotland. By 1885, what is more, John McCaffrey makes the claim that, at around 70,000, Glasgow catholics, whatever their ethnic origin, could be reckoned at over 6,000 more than the estimated Irish-born population.<sup>5</sup> The point clearly made here is that the catholic/protestant nature of the settled Irish community was increasingly more obvious than its ethnic or national origin, particularly when one takes into account the considerable numbers of protestant Ulstermen settling on Clydeside. In the early 1880s, in fact, over 80% of Irish emigrants to Scotland originated in one of the 9 counties of Ulster and 30% of all such Ulster emigrants in the period 1880-1910 came from the overwhelmingly protestant county of Antrim.<sup>6</sup>

Alongside these demographic facts about the Irish in Glasgow, the political nature of the Irish needs to be placed in the context of contemporary and current debate. Contemporary politicians and professional pundits in Glasgow made extravagant claims for the size of the Irish vote (synonymous later with the 'Catholic vote'). Those claiming to speak for the Irish did so in order to inflate their role to one



of 'generals' with an army of voters at their command and those antagonistic to an Irish/catholic presence did so in order to indulge in thinly veiled appeals to sectarian passions. John McCaffrey, however, in demonstrating the effects of Scotland's peculiarly tough electoral registration regulations after 1884, comes to the tentative conclusion that only 1 in every 2 Irish male householders, otherwise entitled as *personally* paying rates, would in fact have been able to vote in parliamentary elections. This reflected both the poverty and the greater mobility of the city's Irish immigrants. On this basis, for the late 1880s, a figure of around 7,000 Irish voters spread over Glasgow's seven parliamentary divisions would seem closer to the mark than leading nationalist John Ferguson's claim of 13,000.<sup>7</sup>

Without in any way discounting the more realistic assessment of the actual Irish vote within the city, the fact remains that, both at the level of Westminster and municipal politics, the Irish vote was much commented upon in the local press. Certainly after the franchise reforms of 1884-5, it was seen as a significant factor by contemporary politicians and commentators. This, and the fact that - with ongoing close cooperation between the Liberals and Irish Parliamentary party - pre-1918 pressure groups such as the Irish National League (later United Irish League) could legitimately claim to have a great influence over

both voters and non-voters alike, meant no serious politician of whatever disposition could afford to ignore Irish activists or issues.

In analysing the activity of the politically organised Irish within Glasgow, historians in the past have placed great emphasis on the forging of Irish-labour political ties at the turn of the century and on the pivotal role of John Ferguson. Ian Wood, for example, concluded that at national level, with Irish Home Rule a paramount concern, Irish nationalists, though generally actively supporting Liberal candidates, were increasingly drawn to support individual candidates with a more explicitly labourist appeal in the period 1880-1906. Wood revealed, however, that canvassing for distinctly working-class candidates operating outwith the Liberal Party (such as occurred in the famous Mid-Lanark election of 1888) was not accepted lightly by nationalist organisations.<sup>8</sup> This was not so much loyalty to the Liberal Party as a determination to support the party which by that time had converted to Home Rule. Home Rule (and even at times issues of a strictly catholic nature) was of such overriding concern to some Irish nationalists that they were prepared, for instance, to support Unionist candidates. This was the case when Bonar Law got their very visible support in the Blackfriars and Hutchesontown division of Glasgow in 1900. Liberals who were 'backsliding' on the nationalist cause, even if they might



advocate progressive social policies, were usually, as in this case, a primary target.<sup>9</sup> Labour in the end, both nationally and locally, seemed to offer nationalist activists in Glasgow a more comfortable option, and indeed opportunities, given the success at municipal level of labour candidates in the late nineteenth century.

James J. Smyth and Joan Smith have examined what they plainly consider as the positive aspect of the Irish in this relationship with Glasgow's labour politics. They have tried to characterise Irish involvement as arising out of the fundamental shift of an entire community towards labour politics. Taking Glasgow's skilled workers as the prime constituency for both the 'Stalwarts' (as councillors put up by Ferguson's Workers Election Committee were known) and the Independent Labour Party (hereafter ILP), Smyth, on the one hand, explains the apparent incongruity of Irish unskilled support for these early labour politicians. This, in areas such as the Hutchesontown ward in Glasgow, he sees as arising out of a municipal programme, inspired by Ferguson, stressing anti-landlordism and protection of the rights of labour by the municipality.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, in borrowing terminology from the Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci, Joan Smith's stress on the importance of self-help private associations in forming a 'Liberal commonsense' or Liberal 'world view' leads her to

allot to such 'social organisms' an integrating role. As the skilled workers' 'commonsense' view eventually moved many towards a political agenda of independent labour representation, similar social organisms geared towards the needs of migrants brought an unskilled Irish voting constituency in the same direction.<sup>11</sup> Determined as both historians are to be positive about Irish activism in labour politics and the stress on genuine shared interests, both also stress the diversity of Irish political life. That diversity is often highlighted by studies which have not focused on labour issues.

Irene Sweeney, for instance, has given valuable insights into the municipal affairs of Glasgow in the period 1833-1912, supplying us with an account of why, when and in what way catholics had so little apparent success in achieving their goals.<sup>12</sup> Her findings seem to suggest that implicit anti-catholicism exercised by the ruling Glasgow elites prevented several candidates being elected before the turn of the century. Publicly voiced fears and disapproval of ties with 'disreputable' trades such as pawnbroking and the supply of liquor, or, perhaps more significantly, with radical politics, Chartist or labourist, were apparently just tactics deployed in this exclusion. The one catholic elected, James MacKenzie (in 1893), was endorsed by Town Councillors as a reputable pro-temperance man with strong Liberal ties.<sup>13</sup> The latter, it is suggested



by Sweeney, gave a “whiff of fairness”, quite deliberately, to the Chisholmites - an alliance of Evangelicals and Progressives - against accusations of being anti-catholic.

Granted, however, that sectarianism and prejudice was a ‘tactic’ employed in local politics, it has to be said that according to Gallagher and Hutchison, explicit appeals to ‘No Popery’ in late nineteenth-century Glasgow were far more likely to come from a populist Conservatism than from Liberals or Evangelicals.<sup>14</sup> The ties of ‘Irish’ candidates such as James Lynch, Michael Connell and Patrick O’Hare (later to be the first Irish catholic councillor) with the liquor trade are well-documented<sup>15</sup> and, given the strongly voiced feelings of certain city ‘worthies’ on such matters as drink there would seem, at first sight, grounds for considering their lack of success as indeed due to such political matters as much as creed. Was, for instance, the Irishness of the candidates, in terms of its political connotations in the city, as liable to create fears and hostility among the city fathers and electorate as much as anything else? Likewise, were there features of Irish political life which inclined local Liberals to reject too close an association?

Literature at the time and since has, as in for example Iain McLean’s *The Legend of Red Clydeside*, attempted to understand the Glasgow Irish politician as somehow, through astute organisation and

management, creating a solid constituency which was then used as a bargaining counter in achieving individual and community progress. Thus, in McLean's view, Irish 'machine' politics, in a way which historians of the Irish in New York or Boston would recognise, contributed significantly towards Labour's success in the 1922 General Elections, bringing votes in exchange for the 'accommodation' of Irish community politicians within formal Labour party structures.<sup>16</sup> Explaining integration of the Irish into the political mainstream of Glasgow life in this way seems to depend on a view of Irish politics as separate and determinedly distinctive before 1922, which jars somewhat with Smyth and Smith's view of dynamic, participatory engagement. These two contrasting models of migrant engagement with host politics in mind, it is surely requisite to arrive at a true characterisation of Irish 'ward politicians' in terms of their aims and strategies. This, in turn, requires an account of the political culture they claimed to represent, that is how they practised politics, and, ultimately, what they saw as the substance of their group political identity.

Taking political identity, following on from an idea used by Patrick Joyce,<sup>17</sup> to mean in practice a 'fusion of loyalties', an examination of *Irish* political identity needs to deal with loyalty to particular representations of Irishness and how they were expressed in



both word and deed over time. Some American historians have tried to analyse Irish migrant behaviour in terms of prevailing discourses of race, or 'whiteness', showing how host and migrant perceptions of inherent Irish character traits was part of a process of racial differentiation.<sup>18</sup> The Irish it is claimed eventually became accepted as 'white', and as a result were integrated into nineteenth-century American society and politics in a way that African-Americans never were, many of them on the way becoming the upwardly-mobile 'lace-curtain Irish' so prominent in Irish-American nationalism.<sup>19</sup>

The problem with this approach is that cultural practices and political understanding are subsumed within the analytical category of 'race'; and, though in Britain the Irish were also sometimes depicted in terms of certain inherent physical attributes, it is clearly these practices and understanding which were the substance of any perceived differences between them and others. More importantly, in elaborating a sense of Irishness, the Irish-born were asserting a right to difference and therefore an analysis of this gets to the heart of the distinctive impact of the Irish-born on British politics. Notions of 'whiteness' may certainly help in our understanding of the host community, but Irishness puts the migrants themselves to the fore.

In doing this, 'Irishness', if it is to stand up at all as a defining

term for political identity among the Irish, must not only take account of efforts to assert it as of cultural and political primacy. Socio-economic origins and the migrants' handling of the material and psychological challenges that awaited them also played their part in the shaping of an Irish identity. Alan O'Day, for instance, in writing on the historiography of the Irish Diaspora, has commented on research which shows that Irish emigrants varied from region to region in terms of their socio-economic standing and their chosen destinations. Thus many of the migrants leaving the eastern and southern counties of Ireland chose England as their first destination, and may indeed have been drawn to areas which could make use of any particular skills they had. Likewise the choice of Scotland by those from the more economically developed north-east of Ireland may have been determined by known job opportunities. The evidence, in O'Day's view, certainly does not confirm the established view that only those without the means and ambition settled for Britain. Indeed, direct emigration to the USA in the fifty years or so before 1914 tended to be from the poorer west of Ireland.<sup>20</sup> So, for the Glasgow Irish, the Ulster connection previously referred to had implications perhaps for identity beyond the obviously sectarian and indeed, if some historians' views are correct, would influence how they acted on politics in Ireland.

Likewise, the experience of migration and settlement, in terms



of migrants' motivations, aspirations and disposition to settlement has to have relevance to any organised political activity. As David Fitzpatrick has revealed by his examination of correspondence between migrants in Australia and the motherland, a consciously-maintained nostalgia did not disguise the genuine desire of most to remain (and largely prosper) in exile, even if it is granted that for these distant exiles the costs of return would have been particularly high.<sup>21</sup> Closer to home, as John Belchem has shown for Liverpool, the towns of mainland Britain also offered opportunities for the acquisition of wealth and status, some individuals making quite striking inroads into local elite society. For instance, the Dublin-born merchant Richard Sheil became the principal catholic layman in Liverpool and served as the only catholic councillor up until 1857.<sup>22</sup> Many others, some arriving without any business backgrounds or capital, found a social mobility that they would be hard pressed to find in Ireland.

Clearly any Irish association might find itself heavily dependent on the energy and capabilities of such individuals making their fortune in urban Britain. Indeed, Donald MacRaild has made the observation that the British wing of the early Irish Home Rule movement, the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain (hereafter HRCGB), seemed to thrive in large towns and cities - such as Glasgow,

Newcastle and Liverpool - where there was a recognisable Irish middle class.<sup>23</sup> Belchem, in another article focusing on the Liverpool Irish, actually credits these successful migrants with the role of ‘culture-brokers of Irish ethnicity’, creating and maintaining social networks which allowed Irishness to flourish.<sup>24</sup> Organised Irishness in Britain, in any case, as in other parts of the world was in some way the reflection of a community with aspirations. There may be an ongoing debate among American scholars, for instance, as to whether or not these networks and organisations “strove to perpetuate old outlooks” or make the most of “unprecedented opportunity”, but they are in no doubt that they were part of a process of ‘getting on’.<sup>25</sup> With this insight in mind, recent local studies similar to Belchem’s have focused much more on those Irish migrants who made a way for themselves in business and community politics.<sup>26</sup>

Of course, the process of democratisation in nineteenth-century Britain meant a growing public space available for the expression of the opinions and practices of individuals and groups. Those with aspirations to wealth and social standing could thus find a variety of associations and institutions with which to engage. Of particular significance, however, in nineteenth-century Britain was the tendency to divide and antagonise on the basis of long-standing religious



loyalties. One cannot ignore it as a component of Irishness, especially in Victorian Glasgow. For the Irish in Britain, certainly in Scotland, one of the earliest and most successful in bringing them together was the movement for the civil rights of catholics. O'Connell's campaign from 1824-29 was about this and built on a folk loyalty to a specifically Irish catholicism. It also found great resonance with those British Whigs long tied to the rallying cry of 'civil and religious liberty'. This, certainly for both the Scottish and English hierarchies, was a problem, as in both countries catholic social élites and bishops tended if anything to see in Toryism the best protection of their values and interests.

If lay-inspired catholic political associations were worrying for the Church, then it did not stop lay members eventually becoming engaged more formally in its internal affairs. There can be no doubt, for instance, that in the administration of financial aid and education to the poor on behalf of the Church, space was made available for the personal development of leading first and second generation Irish in Britain. The provision of relief also to poor catholics gave real concrete meaning to the notion of a catholic community. Growing expertise and confidence reinforced a sense of community leadership for those who visited and doled out relief. Similarly, those in receipt of aid had material proof of the fellow feeling of wealthier catholics and, more importantly for the

construction of a common catholic identity, even that a specifically catholic social élite actually existed at all in their new home. More than one study has pointed out how important organisations such as the St. Vincent De Paul Society (hereafter SVDP) were in binding together some Irishmen on the basis of a common catholicism in “networks of mutuality”.<sup>27</sup>

Besides the work that they did directly relating to Church affairs and priorities, leading Irishmen came together in self-styled catholic bodies centred on a variety of special interests and in a spirit of mutual aid. The Church, quite in contrast to its earlier reluctance, readily involved these leading individual laymen in the 1860s and 70s when education became an object of government reform. In this way, it aimed to survive the secularising tendencies of the state in Britain, just as it found itself increasingly at odds with liberal democracy in Europe. The problem, however, was that the assertion of a catholic identity among Irish people did not always coincide with the interests of the Church. In particular, the new democratic politics of the 1860s, when an extension of the franchise was sought and won in the form of a household franchise, engendered a new public confidence among the catholic Irish. Would-be politicians now took their catholicism into the public sphere and a greater sense of a secular identity formed among the Irish. This



turn towards a more secular Irishness is observed in Ireland and elsewhere at this time, with interestingly an '*Irish Catholic Club*' formed in Liverpool to rival an older '*Catholic Club*'.<sup>28</sup> In the Liverpool case there was little to distinguish the social and political nature of a more secular Irishness from that which took shape around a sense of religious difference. Nevertheless, an associational culture centred on this rather than catholicism made for tentative steps in the direction of a constituency receptive to political nationalists.

Up until now, too little research has noticed how quickly and with what enthusiasm urban exiles were drawn to the kinds of associations which promoted secular Irishness, i.e. Fenianism, the National Brotherhood of St. Patrick and the various Home Rule bodies in Britain. Likewise, too little attention has been paid to the propagandist and genuinely educative impact these bodies had. What work has been done on Irish political associations in Britain indicates that they increased a sense of distinct cultural/political community in the short term. In the long term, however, the degree to which these associations facilitated political integration seems to be a problematic area.

Gerard Moran, for instance, in a study of the National Brotherhood in Lancashire noted that strong organisation (based on the vanguard role of a central branch in each major town) and attention to

cultural and social activities united the Irish after serious divisions in the 1850. It also laid the foundations for the later Home Rule set-up which adopted the same structure and emphasis on a sound cultural bedrock for the politicisation of exiles.<sup>29</sup> In Liverpool, John Belchem has shown how successful nationalist politics was in gaining councillors and having T.P. O'Connor elected as MP for the Scotland division, and yet, in his view, this very success seems to have emphasised Irish-catholic apartness within a "self-enclosed, self-sufficient network".<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, in asserting the continued cultural and political distinctiveness of Irish ward politician in Manchester, Steve Fielding nevertheless showed how two Irishmen, Dan McCabe and Dan Boyle, operated successfully within local Liberal Party structures from the early 1890s, standing as official Liberal candidates in municipal elections. Their effective co-operation with advanced Liberals in a programme of municipalisation and their leading role on council committees, according to Fielding, showed how "local Nationalist politics paved the way for significant Irish support for radical Liberalism and then Labour before 1914".<sup>31</sup> Clearly, the nature of locally expressed nationalism and the context for its expression are vital in determining the timing and extent of the political integration of the Irish.

In confirming this point, and yet pointing out the similarities



with the wider British picture, this thesis is intended to add to a more sophisticated understanding of the particular way in which the Irish and Irishness acted on Glasgow politics. As will be shown in Chapters One and Two, the Catholic Church at the beginning of the century found any sympathy with popular politics very unsettling and Glasgow Bishops used their authority to deprive enthusiasts of both funds and respectable middle-class support. Lay activity, even that which did not relate directly to Church affairs and of which the local hierarchy nevertheless disapproved, was asserted, however. When the hierarchy wanted to mobilise Catholic voters behind its demands for denominational education, and in the 1870s it did, it found many willing canvassers and agents for its campaigns in Glasgow School Board and other elections. The local Catholic Association, which apparently organised such electoral efforts, was also remarkable for the efficiency of such personnel and the effectiveness of its message. The Church had an infrastructure, both physical and social, in place at parish level. Parish halls, schools and local branches of bodies such as the Catholic Young Men's Society all helped to reinforce a sense of common purpose. Thus, as William Sloan has pointed out, a Catholic identity for men such as Parochial Board member James Lynch, must have had very real temporal and spiritual meaning.<sup>32</sup>

In stressing the wealth of certain Glasgow Catholics and their relationship with a convert-led Church, Bernard Aspinwall believes that this identity was essentially a socially conservative one.<sup>33</sup> However, this thesis contends that this only tells half the story. In the 1860s, the local hierarchy reaction to the perceived threat of conspiratorial nationalism in Glasgow seems, if anything, to have led to an unprecedented degree of consciously organised and expressed secular Irishness in the public arena. What is remarkable about this phenomenon is that it features the emergence of a cohort of artisans and small businessmen as the backbone of political Irishness. Their ambitions and their energies focused as much on the public recognition of their identity as much as on their support for self-government in Ireland.

These individuals, and the more respectable class of Irish joining in their efforts in the 1870s, did definitely see participation in local public life as the assertion of their community. This thesis, particularly in Chapters Three, Five and Six, will attempt, therefore, to examine organised Irishness in the particular context of late nineteenth-century Glasgow and show how one fusion of loyalties emerged which reflected the aspirations and needs of a self-styled community of 'exiles'. It will add hopefully to an understanding of the processes in Glasgow which made integration both more possible and more soundly based on



shared loyalties than in either Liverpool or Manchester. Liberalism in Glasgow, in terms of the loyalty to it based on strong traditions of religious dissent, seemed further away from the catholic Irish than anywhere else in Britain. It also seemed furthest away from Radical Liberalism, certainly furthest away from that secular radicalism which considered socio-political issues of greater import than questions of church-state relations. If he was seeking any kind of recognition of Irishness, John Ferguson had an enormous task on his hands, therefore, when he initiated Home Rule locally. Protestant Ulstermen, also, have not been noted for their enthusiasm for organising and representing Irishness abroad in a way which was favourable to a largely catholic body of Irish exiles.<sup>34</sup> Yet he more than anyone steered this body in the direction of a 'social' nationalism and found a response among those in the host community who were also challenging Liberal commonsense.

His efforts, both to organise and motivate an Irish 'constituency' in national and local affairs, will be examined also, however, as a further stage in a continuous secular thread of Irish nationalism which had its roots in the Irish experience in the West of Scotland as much as in Ireland. That thread manifested itself in a context of changing government-society relations in Britain. As I hope to show, the Irish-born cannot, in the way that they responded to democratisation,

be seen as automatically recognising nationality as the basis for political action. The definition of associations, committees and clubs as 'Irish' was part of a process of mobilisation dependent on individuals such as Ferguson and the causes such as land reform which they espoused.

Throughout the period looked at and particularly in the 1870s, of course, both the catholic clergy and laity could also draw on the very real loyalty of the Irish. Indeed, as will be shown in Chapter Four, ward organisers and politicians representing the interests of the drink trade and the Catholic Church could make formidable competing claims to any Irish vote. However, Ferguson and those of a similar secular caste of mind retained a following in the Irish community. With this they were able to develop further a representation of Irishness that did not, however, find a recognised place in local Liberal party structures. Nevertheless, zeal for a redistributive state shared with non-Irish activists gave him entry to politics and other similarly represented Irishmen soon followed him into municipal office. Loyalty to self-government for Ireland was never compromised. In the end, though, through the example offered by his own political career and through the fusion of loyalties which he publicly articulated, he linked the social mobility and recognition of the Irish to social radicalism. This, far more than his short-lived success in forming a distinct group of pro-labour

councillors, the Stalwarts, created the foundations of a catholic/Irish vote loyal to the later Labour Party.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup>General surveys include J. A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1963) and the more recent Donald M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750–1926* (Basingstoke, 1999). Notable studies of the Irish in major British cities include Lynn H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979) and Steven Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1780–1939* (Buckingham, 1993) - essentially focused on Manchester. In addition, important urban-based studies are brought together in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985) and more recently by the same authors in *The Irish in Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999). Significant contributions to the latter include John Belchem, 'Class, creed and country: the Irish middle class in Victorian Liverpool', pp. 190-211 and John Hutchinson and Alan O'Day, 'The Gaelic Revival in London, 1900-1922: Limits of Ethnic Identity', pp. 254-76. The great number of regional studies include Donald M. MacRaild, *Culture, Conflict and Migration: The Irish in Victorian Cumbria* (Liverpool, 1998); W. J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire: The Shaping of a Working Class Community*

(New York, 1989); Paul O'Leary, 'A Regional Perspective; The Famine Irish in South Wales', in Swift and Gilley, *Irish In Victorian Britain*, pp.14-30. For Scotland , an important stimulus to debate and research was the collection of articles in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991). Lastly, for a look at Irish migrants in a small town in a remote part of Britain, see Louise Miskell, 'Irish immigrants in Cornwall: the Camborne experience, 1861-82' in Swift and Gilley, *Irish in Victorian Britain*, pp. 31-51.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth-Ann Harris, *The Nearest Place That Wasn't Ireland: Early Nineteenth-Century Labor Migration* (Ames, IA, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Statistics drawn from J. A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1963), pp. 10-11 and 191; see also B. Collins, 'The Origins of Irish Immigration to Scotland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' in Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Withers, 'The Demographic History of the City, 1831-1911' in W. H. Fraser and I. Maver (eds), *Glasgow: Volume II* (Manchester and New York, 1996), p.149.

<sup>5</sup> J. F. McCaffrey, 'The Irish Vote in the Later Nineteenth Century. A Preliminary Survey', *Innes Review*, vol. 21(1970), pp. 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> Collins, 'Origins of Irish Immigration', p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> McCaffrey, 'Irish Vote', pp. 30-36.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Wood, 'Irish Immigrants and Scottish Radicalism, 1880-1906', in I. S. McDougall (ed.), *Essays in Scottish Labour History* (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> James J. Smyth, 'Labour and Socialism in Glasgow, 1880- 1914: The Electoral Challenge Prior to Democracy', University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1987, pp. 109-18. For a more recent study of similar ground, see, by the same author, *Labour in Glasgow, 1896-1936: Socialism, Suffrage, Sectarianism* (East Linton, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Joan Smith, 'Commonsense Thought and Working Class Consciousness; Some Aspects of the Glasgow and Liverpool Labour Movements in the Early Years of the Twentieth Century', University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1980, p. 171.

<sup>12</sup> Irene Sweeney, 'The Municipal Administration of Glasgow, 1833-1912: Public Service and the Scottish Civic Identity', University of Strathclyde Ph.D. thesis, 1990, pp. 787-802.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 787-788.

<sup>14</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace* (Manchester, 1987), pp.



25-28; I. G. C. Hutchison, 'Politics and Society in Mid-Victorian Glasgow, 1846-1886', University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1974, p. 502.

<sup>15</sup> Sweeney, 'Municipal Administration of Glasgow', pp. 796-800.

<sup>16</sup> Iain McLean, *The Legend of Red Clydeside* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 176-201 and 219-38. For revealing accounts of machine politics in the arguably very different social and political context of the USA, where promises of preferment to municipal jobs and services could secure Irish votes, see, among many other accounts, Hasla R. Diner, "'The Most Irish City in the Union": the Era of the Great Migration, 1844-77' in Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (eds), *The New York Irish* (London, 1996), pp. 87-106 and Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Boston Irish* (Boston, 1995), pp. 95-165.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 12. Joyce actually states that "class, people and nation were fusions of different loyalties".

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became white* (New York, 1995), *passim*; David R. Roediger, *The wages of whiteness: race and the making of the American working class* (London, 1999), pp. 133-63 and Mathew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a different colour:*

*European immigrants and the alchemy of race* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1998), pp. 48-52. A key text in this particular debate, and one which certainly pre-figured Ignatiev and Roediger's work, was Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race, Vol.1: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (London, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> Early works on Irish social mobility in USA's east coast cities stressed the importance of political activity as a means of gaining respectability. See Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, MA, 1964); also *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (London, 1973); and Thomas N. Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism, 1870-90* (Philadelphia and New York, 1966).

<sup>20</sup> A. O'Day, 'Revising the Diaspora', in D. George Boyce and A. O'Day (eds), *The Making of Modern Irish History* (London, 1996), pp. 191-197. See also Harris, *The Nearest Place*, pp. 9-10, 24, 99 and 129 for evidence of skills that Irish supplied to local labour markets in Britain.

<sup>21</sup> D. Fitzpatrick, 'The Irish in Britain: Settlers or Transients', *Labour History Review*, vol. 57, part 3 (1992), pp. 3-5; also *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Emigration to Australia* (London, 1994), *passim*.

<sup>22</sup> John Belchem, 'Class, Creed and Country', pp.190-211.

<sup>23</sup> Donald M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (Basingstoke, 1999), p.144.

<sup>24</sup> John Belchem, 'The Liverpool-Irish Enclave', in Donald M. MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 131.

<sup>25</sup> See Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford, 1985) for the view that nationalism was essentially driven by backward-looking world view. For a more balanced view of migrants' motivation, see Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920* (Lexington, KY, 1989), pp. 94-5 and Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation*, pp. 25, 517 and 610.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, B. Aspinwall, 'The Catholic Irish and Wealth in Glasgow', in Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants in Scottish Society*, pp. 91-115 and Hutchinson and O'Day, 'The Gaelic revival in London, 1900-22', pp. 254-76. Both in their different ways stress the link between upward mobility and the formation of catholic or Irish identity.

<sup>27</sup> See Bernard Aspinwall, 'The Formation of the Catholic Community in the West of Scotland: Some Preliminary Outlines', *Innes Review*, vol.



33, 1982, pp. 45-51; also Martha Kanya-Forstner, 'Defining Womanhood: Irish Women and the Catholic Church in Victorian Liverpool' in MacRaild, *The Great Famine and Beyond*, pp.168-188.

<sup>28</sup> Belchem, 'Irish Middle Class', p. 203.

<sup>29</sup> Gerard Moran, 'Nationalist in Exile: the National Brotherhood of St. Patrick in Lancashire, 1861-5', in Swift and Gilley, *Irish in Victorian Britain*, , pp. 232-5.

<sup>30</sup> Belchem, 'Liverpool-Irish Enclave', pp. 142-3.

<sup>31</sup> S Fielding, 'Irish politics in Manchester 1890-1914', *International Review of Social History*, vol. xxxiii (1988), p. 263.

<sup>32</sup> William Sloan, 'Religious Affiliation and the Immigrant Experience: Catholic Irish and Protestant Highlanders in Glasgow, 1830-1870' in Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society*, p.86.

<sup>33</sup> Aspinwall, 'The Catholic Irish', *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> Irish Protestants in Canada have received particular attention from historians. However, an indication of the nature of the continuing political interest of a significant number of these migrants in Irish affairs can be gleaned from the following citations: Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth, *The Sash Canada Wore: A Historical Geography of the Orange Order in Canada* (Toronto, 1980) and Hereward Senior,

'Orangemen on the Frontier: The Prairies and British Columbia' in Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (eds), *The Untold Story, the Irish in Canada* (Toronto, 1988).

## Chapter 1 Irish Politics in Early Nineteenth Century Glasgow

Politics in Ireland showed early signs of being able to motivate and inspire both efforts towards constitutional reform *and* political violence. The ‘national question’ which surfaced and resurfaced throughout the nineteenth century was elaborated, in bids to capture the mood of the moment, by individuals willing to draw on both traditions which these efforts gave rise to. That said, for the Irish in Britain that elaboration involved not only an engagement with the language of radicalism but also actual formal association in campaigns for the advancement of both Irish and radical causes. McCaffrey in stressing the dynamic, evolutionary aspect of Irish politics within the specific context of the nineteenth century quite rightly argues, also, for a diversity of activity - much depended on “who at the time and since defines terms like radicalism, organisation and activity”.<sup>1</sup> Politics in Scotland, therefore, cannot be explained by seeking to ‘add on’ Irish aspects, but rather Irish issues and organisations before the Home Rule movement have to be seen as an expression of a ‘fusion’ of loyalties with the national question as one of several ‘contentions’.

Current research into early Irish political leadership in mainland



Britain seems to demonstrate exactly this point about the Irish activist not fitting easily into pre-determined categories. Dorothy Thompson - in challenging J.H. Treble's view that working-class Irish immigrants were largely hostile to Chartism - for instance, shows how a Chartist such as Robert Crowe could quite easily articulate loyalties to apparently conflicting ideas. Using ideas from Daniel O'Connell, Robert Owen and Feargus O'Connor, Crowe constructed, by selection, a "cosmology" to suit his radical activism.<sup>2</sup> In this sense these activists were "children of their time and class"<sup>3</sup> and any investigation of so-called 'Irish' organisation has to take this into account. In the successive movements of the early nineteenth century (Catholic Association, O'Connell's Loyal National Repeal Association, Young Ireland, Irish Confederates and Fenianism), it must always be borne in mind that the commitments of prominent individuals, at least, were multifarious and could overcome the attempts of nationalist leaders to hold them fast to tactical alliances or assertions of organisational independence. Likewise, if activists could ignore such direction, it is at least possible to see ordinary individuals of Irish origin as being influenced just as readily by a variety of ideologies with no clear, rational inconsistency appreciated.

Another point to make is that Ireland or the condition of Ireland was not only a *cause célèbre* for early Radical politicians, but could be described as one of the foundation stones for the entire edifice of British Radicalism. Time after time in the early nineteenth century, radical voices cited concrete evidence in Ireland of 'class' action against the 'masses'. These attacks on 'civil and religious liberty' in the years 1822-1833 ranged from the House of Lords' rejection of numerous Catholic Relief Bills, aiming at equal rights for Catholics, to the suspension of Habeas Corpus, suppression of public meetings and introduction of military-style courts. Likewise, the poverty and destitution of many migrant Irish was seen by some as a vivid foretaste of the future for ordinary Scots and English people under the amended Poor Law, in operation from 1834 in England and 1845 in Scotland. In sum, the condition of the Irish was seen as an indictment of restricted political rights. Not concern for the Irish alone, but a general perception of the need to extend the suffrage, reform parliament and ensure lower class participation within it involved many beyond those of purely Irish birth in Irish affairs.

If Irish issues were then not the exclusive province of the Irish-born, and radicalism could give expression to a sense of Irish nationality, so also

could organisations such as catholic self-help and temperance societies give expression to that nationality. That expression, however, could not necessarily be dominant or ignore the very significant role of native religious communities, converts and other non-Irish believers. Irish and catholic issues in Britain were never simply the preserve of Irish catholics. As will be shown later, acrimonious feuding in the first half of the century between Irish and Scots catholic clergymen in the West of Scotland is proof enough of this assertion.

Turning now to specific examples of organisation, until recently one was struck by the apparently sporadic nature of Irish participation in Reform and Chartism before 1848. However, as McCaffrey, Thompson and Mitchell now demonstrate, there is ample evidence of both the commitment of certain individuals and a degree of sophistication in their responses to issues and campaigns before this date.<sup>4</sup> This suggests a continuity of activity, though, until recent times, there was a paucity of evidence as regards distinctly Irish political entities, particularly in Scotland. In describing Irish issues and organisations one, of course, has to take cognisance of the considerable input of non-catholic Irishmen into the Repeal movement and, indeed, radical politics in general. Graham Walker



has pointed out the “deep cultural interaction” of the Presbyterian élite in Scotland and Ulster, and hence both were deeply affected by arguments between liberal ‘New Lights’ and more traditional ‘Old Lights’. In addition, he details the degree of ‘permanent migration’ of textile workers into the West of Scotland which occurred from 1790 onwards. Many of these weavers brought with them folk memories of protestant radicalism in areas such as Saintfield, Co. Down, so significant in the formation of the Society of United Irishmen in 1791. Many actual participants in the armed rebellion of 1798 may indeed have found their way into Scotland, bringing their radicalism into a new context. Seeing the rebellion in many ways, in Walker’s words, as much about an “assertion of the Ulster-Scots identity” as about the French-inspired republicanism espoused by the national leadership, they represented a specifically Irish radical tradition nevertheless.<sup>5</sup> In Scotland, the engagement of Ulster-born radicals was with secular organisations in the main and yet they brought notable commitment to campaigns, even if they might not be said to represent the majority of Irish protestant opinion.

As for organisation in Ireland, Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic Association of 1823, first of all, offered Irishmen an assertion of nationality

in the language of a catholic identity and, more generally, the prospect of constitutional liberty. It was very much an attempt to mobilise the disenfranchised in favour of a catholic upper-class keen to take its place in the highest levels of the administration and government of Ireland. The movement succeeded, under the terms of the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act, in obtaining nearly full civil rights for catholics and allowed them to enter parliament and the judiciary. Following on from this, many activists remained engaged in disputes over tithes and local government in Ireland, eventually becoming members of O'Connell's Precursor Society, founded in 1838 to achieve these same ends. Soon after, the Loyal National Repeal Association, building on the membership of town-based Liberal Clubs and picking up on O'Connell's earlier enthusiasm for repeal, was set up in April 1841. This was to agitate ostensibly for the restoration of the short-lived Irish Parliament of 1782 to 1800 and represented O'Connell's second 'great cause', attracting into its ranks both radicals and romantic nationalists. O'Connell no doubt would have ensured catholic representation in any new parliament on Dublin's College Green. However, his campaign can be seen as more of an attempt to extract immediate, practical reforms benefiting catholics, reforms which might in the end have led to some degree of self-

government for Ireland.<sup>6</sup> Out of Repeal, young romantics and intellectuals inspired by the likes of the Italian liberal and nationalist, Giuseppe Mazzini, went on to further the tradition of conspiratorial, insurrectionary organisation under the guise of Young Ireland and the Irish Confederates. The concern of the catholic hierarchy thereafter, in both Ireland and mainland Britain, that lay bodies might act as a 'front' for underground 'cells' of such conspirators was to be a recurrent theme in private and public pronouncements.

So much for political organisation in Ireland; the question is what impact did it have on Irishmen in Britain and, more pertinently, in Glasgow. There would seem to be two distinct 'threads' to locally expressed Irish nationalism. One was bound up with an attempt to establish a culture of self-help and respectability within a modern, professionally-led catholic church; the other provided a secular outlet for grievances and wrongs, either historical or current, felt to be experienced by Irishmen, both in Ireland and beyond. The catholic participants in either thread, often it has to be said the same individuals, were giving voice to their own particular notions of nationalism. However, protestants such as Robert Malcolm junior, "adviser and champion" of the Glasgow Repealers in 1844,<sup>7</sup> were able to transcend a



purely catholic agenda in the pursuit of far-reaching extension of the franchise, parliamentary reform *and* self-government for Ireland. In the early days of O'Connell and Chartism, Irish protestants such as John Cleave (founder member of the London Working Men's Association) and George Condy (editor and part-owner of a radical journal, the *Manchester and Salford Advertiser*) did, in truth, seem to be more interested in the extension of the franchise to working men than Repeal *per se*. That said, there were many professed catholics, such as John Doherty in Lancashire and Patrick McGowan in Glasgow, who were prepared to campaign along similar lines. Both of these men were famous for their trade union work among cotton-spinners, for their part in Reform Bill agitation around 1832 and for their leading opposition to the Irish Coercion Bill in 1833. Doherty indeed, in February 1834, showed he was also prepared to involve himself in agitation for Repeal.<sup>8</sup> Thus, they exemplified an identity "in which religion, nationality and political outlook" were mutually reinforcing.<sup>9</sup> As the existence of two threads demonstrated, the nationalism of the Irish in Britain was never just about self-government or republican separatism; it could involve a struggle between different visions of how the condition of the Irish in British society might be improved.

As a first illustration of this point, it is worth looking at O'Connell's movement for Catholic Emancipation, taken up by the 'Glasgow Catholic Association' in October 1823. This certainly offered, in the form of the 'Catholic Rent' (small regular donations used to fund the Dublin-based campaign) and 'monster meetings', the opportunity for many Irishmen of moderate means to provide "irresistible proof that men of Glasgow sympathised with the wrongs of Ireland". However, if the reports of enormous enthusiasm to his visits are to be believed, it was as much of an event to middle-class Scots protestant reformers, such as Abram Duncan and Rev. Patrick Brewster, to hear O'Connell speak on the Glasgow Green in September 1835. Likewise, in the evening after his Glasgow speech, the 'Glasgow Trades' held a *soirée* for him at which several notable reformers, including journalist Peter McKenzie and former MP Sir John Maxwell, joined in the praise for "the liberator of a long misgoverned Ireland".<sup>10</sup> Perhaps such secular political enthusiasms go some way to explain why the two Scots-born Bishops of the Catholic Church's Western Vicariate, Andrew Scott and John Murdoch, did not look too kindly upon catholic Irish petitions, donations, and lay activism at this time.

Both Scott and his coadjutor Murdoch (succeeding Scott as 'Vicar-

Apostolic' of the Vicariate in October 1845) came from 'the Enzie', a small rural district in Banffshire, on the shores of the Moray Firth and had their roots in a catholic Highland community which in 1755 made up the bulk of Scotland's 16,490 catholics.<sup>11</sup> According to William McGowan, a leading committee member of the Glasgow Catholic Association, Scott had obstructed the Glasgow branch in its collection of O'Connell's Rent,<sup>12</sup> and had shown himself to be conservative with regard to constitutional reform, even voting for the Tory James Ewing in 1832.<sup>13</sup> McGowan, in fact, was dismissed from his teaching post in a catholic school in Bridgeton for his outspoken defence of the Association and lay activism in general. It was against this backdrop of, on the one hand, clerical suspicion regarding Irish motives and, on the other, the political conservatism and alleged financial incompetence of the hierarchy that a new Irish catholic middle-class in Glasgow was to seek respectability and give Irishness a new edge.

Aspinwall, in a recent article, tries to go beyond the view of Handley that parishioners such as McGowan were simply seeking to assert Irish demands for pastoral care to be administered by an Irish priesthood and to have lay supervision of church finances.<sup>14</sup> The 'feud' which came to a head in the 1860s was, according to Aspinwall, primarily a matter of



greater financial efficiency in attending to the spiritual needs of growing numbers of Irish catholics *and* the more material needs of Irish priests plagued by poverty. Glasgow's catholics had depended upon the goodwill of local protestants in Bishop Scott's time for, among other things, church-building and school upkeep. Indeed, there were several influential protestants on the 'Glasgow Catholic Schools Committee' in 1825 and Scott claimed that he was anxious to stop McGowan's O'Connellite influence at the time in order to avoid loss of funding.<sup>15</sup> However, certainly by the mid-nineteenth century, there were a number of relatively wealthy Irish catholics willing to loan money to the church on the basis of a professional co-operation of priest and laity.<sup>16</sup>

Among this group were Patrick Rogan, Hugh Margey and James Walsh. Rogan was an Anderston shopkeeper, notable for his contribution to the local St. Patrick's parish, and both Margey and Walsh were booksellers and stationers in the city centre. All three men, as successful small businessmen, were very much part of a new, more pro-active catholic laity. In addition, professionals such as Dr. James Scanlan were adding to the pool of expertise available to any would-be 'catholic' organisation.<sup>17</sup> For men like Rogan, there was an outlet for their energies in bodies with a

special concern for education and the poor. An early example of this was the Glasgow Catholic Schools Society, its first annual meeting being held in 1817.<sup>18</sup> Later on, the first Glasgow 'conference' of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul (hereafter SVDP) was set up in St. Andrew's parish in 1848 and, by 1854, it had seven conferences with 144 members providing relief and moral guidance in equal measure to the city's poorest.<sup>19</sup> Also, in Edinburgh in 1849, a lay initiative in Bishop Gillis' Eastern Vicariate saw the formation of the Association of St. Margaret. Ostensibly to protect the interests of the catholic working class, it later merged with the national Catholic Defence Association and was possibly more animated by the perceived threat of protestant proselytisation than anything else.<sup>20</sup> Such lay bodies, however, only received grudging support in the Western Vicariate from the hierarchy and were only to flourish in the second half of the century with a new, more tolerant and professional, church under Archbishop Charles Eyre.

Of far greater significance for the long-term political organisation of catholics and representing, paradoxically, a rapprochement of the Irish and Scots middle classes, both catholic and protestant, was the establishment in 1839 of the 'Catholic Total Abstinence Society'. From its earliest days, it

drew its inspiration from the ‘crusades’ of Father Theobald Mathew (1790-1856) and his peculiarly Irish appeal to catholic sentiment. In Ireland, his efforts had not only won the respect of the middle classes and, sometimes the veneration of the poor, but had gained a striking degree of support from Daniel O’Connell and the Repeal movement. As one historian of the Irish Temperance movement has stated,

the temperance movement was not merely an inspiration: with its bands, reading-rooms and societies, it could also be of great practical use to Repealers.<sup>21</sup>

Thus it should not be seen as surprising that a lecture by Robert Malcolm junior, Chartist and advocate of Repeal mentioned earlier, should be held in a “Glasgow Repeal Reading Room on Teetotal Principles”.<sup>22</sup> O’Connell’s attitude towards Father Mathew and temperance was perhaps ambiguous, even unscrupulous, however Young Irelanders and later Fenian leaders far more openly espoused an alliance of teetotalism and nationalism in complete agreement with the following sentiments:

A nation of sober men, with clear heads, with firm and erect forms, with the



proud strength of moral independence about them, shall and must have the full completion of their liberty.<sup>23</sup>

The Glasgow press of the time suspected that the ‘Glasgow Catholic Abstainers’ were a cover for sedition. Nevertheless, respectable middle-class catholics in the city such as James Walsh and Charles Bryson, merchant and secretary of the Abstainers, seemed to be now quite determined, as Bryson in fact stated in a letter to Bishop Scott in January 1840, to maintain denominational bodies in order to raise “their people” in society. These bodies would not necessarily come about as the result of clerical initiatives and possibly, therefore, not have the clergy in a controlling position.<sup>24</sup> Bryson’s role is significant here because, in April 1825, he had acted as secretary at a public meeting specifically organised by Scott and Murdoch to condemn the Catholic Association.<sup>25</sup>

On Tuesday, 16 August 1842, thirty thousand watched as members of both catholic and protestant temperance societies marched in a “quasi-military parade” before listening to Father Mathew speak and, significantly, a ‘moral force’ Chartist, the Rev. Patrick Brewster, attended a banquet in Mathew’s honour later that day. There would seem to be little doubt that

Irishmen both attended and, in conjunction with Scots protestants, played a major role in organising this event.<sup>26</sup> Although the initial enthusiasm no doubt waned, it was an indication that lay catholics did not experience the movements of the times in isolation. They were now prepared to act in a way which even the self-help enthusiast Bishop Gillis in Edinburgh found disturbing when catholic teetotalers chose to confront him.<sup>27</sup>

Even as catholics seemed to join together with protestants in such temperance activities, it must not be forgotten that temperance became integral to a whole series of 'catholic' self-improvement initiatives rooted in the local parish. This paralleled a 'devotional' revolution within the Church at the time - greatly assisted by parish 'missions' and revivals undertaken by religious orders such as the Jesuits - which sought to bring about a closer, more personal contact between clergy and congregation.<sup>28</sup> Parishes thus set up libraries, organised soirées and established branches of the Catholic Young Men's Society - St. Mary's parish in Glasgow having one in operation before 1846. These initiatives all sought to keep parishioners away from the temptations of drink, strengthened the sense of a distinctly catholic community and were probably intended to counteract the attractions of more secular, political involvements.

In any case, a new more confident middle class of first- and second-generation Irish-Scots became participants in 'catholic' special interest and political groups, claiming to represent the views of a catholic community on particular issues. Thus a 'Catholic Commercial Association' appeared in Glasgow in 1847; similarly a more directly political pressure group, a 'Catholic Electors Association',<sup>29</sup> is known to have existed in 1852 around the time of the controversy over the increase in the state grant to the principal Irish seminary, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.<sup>30</sup> For many, the "habits of thrift" inculcated by temperance and other denominational self-improvement societies may indeed have "led in the end to home ownership, the vote and greater catholic influence".<sup>31</sup> Whatever the truth of this statement, it is certainly the case that by the 1850s there was an emerging leadership class among the catholic Irish and such societies were for them the practical foundation of essentially political activity, activity which could revolve around denominational, clerically-influenced issues.

So much can be said then of one particular thread. However, there remains the question of alternatives open to those Irishmen prepared to take a more secular path towards an improvement of their lot in Britain - and willing perhaps to combine violence, or the threat of it, with demands for



self-government for Ireland. Wright claimed in an early study of Chartism in Scotland that it took a sharp turn towards 'physical force' in 1848 largely as a result of Irish Repealers' frustration with the British handling of the famine. He also claimed that suddenly the Irish became eager to work "like a leaven amongst the rank-and-file Chartists". McCaffrey's rebuttal of both the suddenness of interest and the decisive physical force influence of the Irish is effective precisely because it demonstrates moral force 'organisation' among the Irish *prior* to 1848 in O'Connellite, temperance and labour activities. He also, more importantly, recognises the dynamic of radicalism in Scotland itself.<sup>32</sup>

Irish issues, besides, had had the effect of galvanising support for reform before 1848 in avowedly working-class bodies, previously conspiratorial, such as the Spenceans in the post-Napoleonic period and Henry Hunt's 'National Union of the Working Classes and Others' around the time of the 1832 Reform Bill.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in Scotland, Wright himself cites a meeting in February 1843, called to demand 'Justice for Ireland', as actually producing a 'numerously' signed petition appealing for Government clemency towards imprisoned Chartist leaders.<sup>34</sup> Figures such as Henry Rankine (referred to as 'Ranken' in Wright's study), editor of the

*North British Express*, and James Hamilton, both arrested in August 1848 and later tried for treason, are described as ‘hot-heads’ and Repealers by Wright. According to him, these same hot-heads - incidentally, not specifically identified as Irish-born - used for their own ends a “National Guard” and political clubs heavily infiltrated by “Irish Nationalists”. They also, at one point, apparently urged that the “young and spirited men of Scotland should go to Ireland and help the Irish people”.<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that some Irish-born individuals were involved in disturbances in 1848, as the names of those arrested in Glasgow ‘bread riots’ in March shows.<sup>36</sup> It must be borne in mind, though, that insurrection appealed not only to Irishmen in that year of revolutions and they, thus, cannot be treated, as Wright seems to do, in isolation from Scottish radical trends.

In 1848, Irish names such as those of James Daly, James McGonagal, James and David McMullan appear alongside those of James Moir, James Adams and Dr. Hunter in the Glasgow Chartists ranks. This Irish connection may have motivated some Scots to espouse insurrectionary republican sentiments. However, James Moir for one, as a member in 1843 of the Patrick O’Higgins’ Dublin-based Irish Universal Suffrage Association, could show Irish sympathies *and* a desire for moral force in the

pursuit of an extended franchise.<sup>37</sup> Certainly Irish radicals, did have different intellectual traditions, or rather a collection of “myths of native antiquity” as one historian has described them,<sup>38</sup> which might find outlets in ‘Ribbonism’ - oath-bound, secret societies characterised by strong catholic sectarianism - in response to perceived protestant sectarianism. Bishop John Murdoch, indeed, mentioned the presence of a Ribbon lodge in Dumbarton in 1847.<sup>39</sup> Equally, however, they could find Chartist responses congenial to concrete demands such as reform of Scottish Poor Law regulations which, after restructuring of 1845, discriminated heavily against a highly mobile labouring population like the Irish.

In the early 1840s there were difficulties between Repealers and Chartists and yet Irishmen could be found on both sides as followers of two of the most influential Irishmen of their time, Feargus O’Connor and O’Connell. In the dispute between these two men, which rapidly expressed itself in bouts of highly personal vituperation, there were intimations of much later divisions over aims and strategy between Irish nationalists in Britain. O’Connor (1794-1855), son of a United Irishman and one-time repeal MP for Co. Cork, was for universal male suffrage and a democratic Ireland, whereas O’Connell preferred a more cautious engagement with



Whig politicians, politicians who had shown themselves sympathetic to the demands of catholic Ireland for civil and religious parity. In addition, O'Connell's hostility towards both trade unions and his ambivalence on the Poor Law did not particularly endear him to those artisans backing O'Connor.<sup>40</sup> Lastly, O'Connor's often unrestrained language associated him with the very real violence of the 'Newport Rising' of 1839, in which 14 died, and made worse his relations with both the more cautious O'Connell and the more moderate Chartists of Scotland.

Therefore, O'Connor not only found strong opposition within the ranks of Glasgow Repealers loyal to O'Connell, he also found himself in difficulties with moderate Scots Chartists such as Patrick Brewster. O'Connor despised these moderates so much that on his visit to Glasgow in January 1842 he labelled them 'Whigs'.<sup>41</sup> The moral force Chartists of Scotland were not at all happy about the inclusion of proposals to repeal the Union and the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act in the Chartist National Petition of 1841, rejecting it at the Scottish Chartist Convention of January 1842. Yet, in this instance, they may have been concerned just as much by O'Connor's leadership, and the apparent disregard of Scottish misgivings on the shift of focus away from the very radical 'Six Points', as by anti-Irish

sentiment. O'Connor's aim evidently in 1841-2 was to win Repealers over to Chartism by the inclusion of these two demands in the Petition and Glasgow Irish activists, such as Con Murray, were among the key proponents ensuring the eventual acceptance of the Petition by Glasgow Chartists on 7 February 1842.<sup>42</sup>

However, difficulties still remained among the more 'respectable' Irish reformers, such as Charles Bryson, leading the local Repealers. They were certainly more prepared, under O'Connell's influence, to join with Chartists after the installation of a new Tory administration under Sir Robert Peel in 1841, calling now for British working men to aid their efforts on Repeal. More self-government for Ireland, according to Repealers, would mean less competition to British workers in Britain from Irish labour and thus prevent "British labourers, trades people, and artizans having their wages reduced and places occupied through Irish enterprise and industry".<sup>43</sup> However, although O'Connor's meetings in Paisley and elsewhere in the West of Scotland were well and enthusiastically attended in late 1841,<sup>44</sup> the sudden enthusiasm of leading worthies among the Catholic Irish to actively support Joseph Sturge's Complete Suffrage Association was an indication of how ill-at-ease they still were with O'Connor's brand of politics, just at a

time when a rapprochement seemed possible.<sup>45</sup>

Joseph Sturge (1793-1859) was a Birmingham corn factor with deeply felt Quaker beliefs. He took up a number of philanthropic and political causes in his life, becoming an anti-slavery campaigner, temperance advocate, proponent of land reform and active member of the Anti-Corn Law League. He also came very much from a radical tradition which tactically and morally saw the best hope for progress in a coalition of classes. In attempting a middle path between Chartists and moderate middle-class reformers, he drew up what became known as the 'Sturge Declaration' in November 1841, seeking "fair, full and free exercise of the legislative franchise to which they are entitled by the great principles of Christian equity".<sup>46</sup> He did not seek to promote any precise formula for franchise extension – this helped his movement to raise support from a cross-section of middle-class reformers and radicals.

Thus, when he visited Glasgow in January 1842, he managed to interest most of the cities leading Chartists sufficiently that they set up a 'Glasgow Complete Suffrage Association'. The committee at the head of this body was formed in May 1842 and one of its members was Robert Malcolm junior, Chartist and advocate of Irish Repeal. What was more



striking, however, was the fact that prominent catholic Irish Repealers, who had vigorously opposed O'Connor's Chartists in the previous year, now fell in behind the English philanthropist's leadership. Indeed, four leading lights of the Glasgow Repeal Association - Charles Bryson, Dr. John Scanlan, Dr. Henry Gribben and Peter McCabe – were elected on to the committee in June 1842. Bryson became such a key figure on the committee that he was chosen as 'Vice-President' later that year.<sup>47</sup>

Complete Suffragism was extremely popular in the west of Scotland, so much so that very soon in early 1842 branches were established throughout the area; in the Glasgow branch alone there were 1000 members.<sup>48</sup> It drew in the respectable from amongst the catholic Irish and was particularly attractive to Scots protestant evangelicals and temperance reformers, and to both sides it was cause for much optimism on the matter of closer catholic-protestant political co-operation. One leading Chartist and Complete Suffragist, Walter Currie, spoke excitedly in June 1842 of this new union of hearts and minds:

Irishmen and Scotsmen had hitherto  
been taught by the ruling few, and by their  
clerical teachers, that it was good to hate,

oppose, and injure each other, and that they had no interests in common. The march of intelligence, however, had dispelled these nostrums, and the people now felt and acted upon the principle that union was strength, and a bad government the enemy of both.<sup>49</sup>

However, the city's O'Connorites - counting among their number James Moir, George Ross, John Colquhoun and the Irishman, Con Murray – acted quickly, after an initial truce, to counter the impact of Sturge's initiative. They resolved, in accordance with O'Connor's tactics in England, to "pack" future Complete Suffrage meetings with their own loyal followers and successfully took hold of the Glasgow organisation in November 1842. Likewise, a month later, the Sturgeites of Birmingham were forced to withdraw from their own organisation when William Lovett, founder of the London Working Men's Association and moral force rival of O'Connor within Chartism, lined up with the O'Connorites in favour of adopting the "plain and definite language" of the Six Points.<sup>50</sup>

The tension between radical democrats and respectable reformers within the nationalist community, as indicated earlier, was eased

considerably by a common antipathy felt towards Peel's administration of 1841-6. Peel's administration was notable for its resort once again to coercion in Ireland, giving both Repealers and Chartists ample cause to unite behind the banner of civil and religious liberty. When 'The Liberator' and fellow Repealers were tried in February 1844 before juries from which Catholics were specifically excluded, Chartists Patrick Brewster and Robert Malcolm junior were found yet again speaking before Repealers, condemning government policy on Ireland on exactly these lines. Brewster, in July 1843, had already announced his opposition to Peel's repressive action against 'monster meetings': "It was not possible that he could remain indifferent to the magnanimous and constitutional and peaceful struggle of his Irish brethren – the most oppressed people in the world".<sup>51</sup> Conditions then were favourable for considerable numbers of the Irish in Glasgow to show their attachment to the idea of self-government in non-violent ways.

The Repeal movement seems to have remained healthy throughout the period 1843-6, holding regular meetings and well-attended meetings until May 1846. However, it no doubt suffered, when Bishops Murdoch and Scott decide to speak out in public against clerical involvement and made life very difficult for priests displaying nationalist sentiment in public. Rev.



Hugh Quigley of St. Mary's in Glasgow's East End was, for instance, transferred to Campbeltown in the winter of 1844 because he had earnestly advocated Repeal and was one of a number of cases where anti-Irish action had allegedly taken place.<sup>52</sup> There is no doubt that, taken together with their earlier antagonism to the Glasgow Catholic Association, both Bishops were very animated by the perceived indiscipline and democratic tendencies of Irish congregations. As Scott put it as early as 1826, the relationship of eager, young Irish priests and Irish congregations could mean at some future point "all Episcopal authority would be set aside".<sup>53</sup> These fears were shared by Bryson during the time of the Glasgow Catholic Association and, thus, given the role of Irish Catholics of a similar social standing in Repeal, no doubt played their part in the relative lull in Repeal activity after May 1846. Mitchell has found little evidence of conflict in this short period between Bryson and the more advanced elements among local nationalism. However, one meeting in March 1848 indicates that local Repealers did experience divisions paralleling the situation in Ireland.

Young Irelanders, led by figures such as Charles Gavan Duffy and William Smith O'Brien, had already fallen out with O'Connell over new attempts to negotiate with the Whigs and went off to form a separate body,

the Irish Confederation, in January 1847. Irish Confederation 'clubs' attracted skilled tradesmen in Ireland's major towns and were in existence in Britain's towns and cities. Although there is no extant evidence of a Glasgow club, it would come as no surprise if one were shown to have been in existence in the area. Be that as it may, it is remarkable that the meeting of 27 March 1848, even though it was organised apparently by Irish Confederates, was essentially an effort to restore unity among the city's Repealers. 'Old Irelanders' (that is, O'Connellites) were urged to join in a common cause with the more recent breakaway group and work together for "all Ireland". This effort at unity seems to have met with success and it is against this spirit of conciliation and moderation among the Irish that the events of 1848 must be seen.

There were certainly loud voices in favour of an armed uprising or at least more militant action: one speaker, James Daly, a keen advocate of the formation of a local National Guard, declared that "Prayers and petitions were the weapons of slaves and cowards, arms were the weapons used by the free and the brave".<sup>54</sup> However, strong words from such hotheads did not lead to anything more than an outbreak of pike and dagger manufacture in the Anderston district of Glasgow in June 1848. Anderston,



along with Gorbals, was noted by one visitor to Glasgow in the summer of 1843 as a centre of Chartism and, thus, even if militancy existed there, it was not necessarily inspired by Repealers or indeed Irishmen.<sup>55</sup> There is also no evidence of any National Guard in Glasgow in 1848, whereas we know of their existence in Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen.<sup>56</sup> Reasonably attended meetings were held throughout the summer and hopes were certainly high after the uprisings in Europe of that spring of joint Repeal-Chartist success. Nevertheless, as the facts stand, Glasgow stood in sharp contrast to Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh and London of that year, when the authorities found plenty of evidence of sedition and conspiracy.<sup>57</sup> Local and national authorities were certainly effective in repressing physical force. Notwithstanding this, the strength of moral force opinion among the local Irish leadership may have made their task easier.

After 1848, with the demise of Chartism and suppression of Young Ireland, there is in the extant literature a sense of Irish politics, both in Ireland and Britain, losing a sense of focus and returning to the 'parish pump'. In Scotland what this meant in practice was that the concerns of an aspiring middle-class catholicism, as mentioned above, seem to have been predominant. One individual who typified Irish catholic ward politicians in



the 1850s was Henry Murphy, described as a ‘portioner’ (or part-owner of property) in Barony Parochial Board records.<sup>58</sup> Murphy was cited in the *Glasgow Free Press* in 1863 as leader of an Irish/catholic electoral organisation “some years” before and it is likely that this was the body, described as a ‘Catholic Electoral Committee’, which the Liberal candidate, Lord Melgund had invited for talks in 1858. He was clearly a role model for the type of “respectable, intelligent” representatives that the *Free Press* wished to see entering politics, principally in Parochial Boards.<sup>59</sup> These Parochial Boards for the Management of the Poor operated in accordance with the harsh terms of the 1845 Poor Law Amendment Act and worked to the disadvantage of highly mobile Irish migrants. Murphy was not only a sufficiently substantial ratepayer in Barony Parish to be given a vote, he also showed that he met the minimum property qualification laid down by the Board of Supervisors in Edinburgh for managers by including himself as a nominee in 1863.<sup>60</sup> Respectably wealthy, he was also properly respectful of the hierarchy, the local clergy and their community’s ‘benefactor’ O’Connell. By the 1860s, he was a confident example of success to a small select body of Irish catholic professionals and property owners.<sup>61</sup>

Involvement with co-religionists by lobbying Liberal MPs such as Melgund or the sympathetic Robert Dalglish, paying a close attention to the activities of Parochial Boards and working with lay committees continued to give valuable experience in the 1850s to middle-class Irishmen. It was however the 1860s, and the Reform agitation and Irish troubles of the time, that were to offer more permanent secular, even radical, nationalist organisation. This would bring together the experience of organisational leadership, the 'critical mind' of temperance and the insurrectionary tradition of the first half of the nineteenth century.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> J. McCaffrey, 'Irish Immigrants and Radical Movements in the West of Scotland in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Innes Review*, vol. 39 (1998), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> D. Thompson, 'Ireland and the Irish in English Radicalism before 1850' in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience* (London and Basingstoke, 1982), p. 139. Thompson draws on the writings of Crowe found in Robert Crowe, *Reminiscences of an Octagenarian* (New York, n.d.) and the journal *The Outlook*, 9 Aug. 1902. For an indication of Treble's views see J.H. Treble, 'O'Connor, O'Connell and the Attitudes of Irish Immigrants towards Chartism in the North of England 1838-1848' in J. Butt and I. F. Clarke (eds), *The Victorians and Social Protest: a Symposium* (Newton Abbott, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> McCaffrey, 'Irish Immigrants', p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, 'Ireland and the Irish', *passim*; McCaffrey, 'Irish Immigrants', *passim* and M. Mitchell, *The Irish in the West of Scotland 1797-1848: trade unions, strikes and political movements* (Edinburgh, 1998), *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Graham Walker, 'The Protestant Irish in Scotland', in T. M. Devine



(ed.), *Irish Immigrants in Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland* (London, 1988), pp. 307-10.

<sup>7</sup> A. Wilson, *The Chartist Movement in Scotland* (New York, 1970), p. 202.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, 'Ireland and the Irish', pp. 127-29; also John F. McCaffrey, 'Irish Issues in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century: Radicalism in a Scottish Context?' in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 123 on McGowan.

<sup>9</sup> McCaffrey, 'Irish Immigrants', p.49.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50-1.

<sup>11</sup> Scott (1772-1846), born in Chapelford, Enzie, became Vicar-Apostolic in September, 1832. Murdoch (1796-1865), born in Wellsheads, Enzie, served as coadjutor to Bishop Andrew Scott from 1833 before becoming the leading churchman himself. The *quod sacra* parish of Enzie only had a population of 2,251 in 1871. See James Darragh, *The Catholic Hierarchy of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1986), pp. 19-20 for biographical details on both Scott and Murdoch; also Francis C. Groome (ed.), *Ordnance Gazetteer of*

*Scotland: Vol.1* (Edinburgh, 1882), p. 574 and Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 31 for details of Enzie.

<sup>12</sup> J. E. Handley, *The Irish in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1973), p. 149; also, for a fuller account of McGowan's dispute with Scott and Murdoch see Mitchell, *Irish in the West*, pp. 114-29.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152. Ewing, it has to be said, did get support from a wide section of Glasgow's political élite due to his "strong local reputation and a promise to work for the good of all", for which see John F. McCaffrey, 'Political Issues and Developments' in W. Hamish Fraser and Irene Maver (eds.), *Glasgow: Vol. II, 1830-1912* (Manchester, 1996), p. 189.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Aspinwall, 'Scots and Irish Clergy Ministering to Immigrants, 1830-1878', *Innes Review*, Vol. xlvii, no.1 (1996), p. 48.

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell, *Irish in the West*, p. 128. Mitchell does say however that McGowan did receive in a local petition the support of 70 of the "most respectable Scots" of Bridgeton after his dismissal.

<sup>16</sup> Aspinwall, 'Scots and Irish Clergy', pp. 45-68; also J. E. Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland* (Cork, 1947), pp. 261-8.

<sup>17</sup> See Bernard Aspinwall, 'The Formation of the Catholic Community in

the West of Scotland: Some Preliminary Outlines, *Innes Review*, vol. 33 (1982), pp. 47-8 on Scanlan, Margey and Walsh. Patrick Rogan was one of the leading laymen in St. Patrick's parish, Anderston, Glasgow. By 1876, it is reckoned that he had loaned over £1,800 to the Western Vicariate, a substantial sum of money at the time. See W. Sloan, 'Aspects of the Assimilation of Highland and Irish Migrants in Glasgow, 1830-1870', University of Strathclyde M.Phil. thesis, 1987, p. 123.

<sup>18</sup> John S. North, *The Waterloo directory of Scottish newspaper and periodicals, 1800-1900* (Waterloo Ontario, 1989), p. 620; also Peter F. Anson, *Underground Catholicism in Scotland* (Montrose, 1970), p. 248.

<sup>19</sup> Aspinwall, 'Formation of the Catholic Community', p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> J. McCaffrey and B. Aspinwall, 'A Comparative View of the Irish in Glasgow and Edinburgh in the Nineteenth Century' in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985), p. 136; also Aspinwall, 'Formation of the Catholic Community', p. 52.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Malcolm, *Ireland Sober: Ireland Free* (Syracuse NY, 1986), p. 129.

<sup>22</sup> See note 7 above.



<sup>23</sup> Malcolm, *Ireland Sober*, p. 132. Quoted from *Cork Examiner*, 25 Oct. 1841.

<sup>24</sup> McCaffrey, 'Irish Immigrants', p. 52; also McCaffrey, 'Irish Issues', p. 124

<sup>25</sup> Mitchell, *Irish in the West*, p. 136

<sup>26</sup> McCaffrey, 'Irish Issues', p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> Aspinwall, 'Scots and Irish Clergy', p. 50; also McCaffrey, 'Irish Immigrants', p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> Aspinwall, 'Formation of the Catholic Community', p. 50

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> See I. G. C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland, 1832-1924: Parties, Elections and Issues* (Edinburgh, 1986), pp. 61-67. The raising of the state grant from £8,928 to £26,360 was an attempt by Peel to woo moderate catholics in Ireland away from Repeal. It however split the Conservatives, brought down Peel's administration and caused religious questions to dominate politics for around ten years in Scotland.

<sup>31</sup> McCaffrey and Aspinwall, 'A Comparative View of the Irish', p. 137.

<sup>32</sup> McCaffrey, 'Irish Immigrants', pp. 46-58; Wright, *Scottish*

*Chartism*, pp. 190-201.

<sup>33</sup> John Belchem, 'English Working Class Radicalism and the Irish, 1815-1850', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985), p. 88.

<sup>34</sup> Wright, *Scottish Chartism*, p.173.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-9. Quote from J. Shaw et al., *Justiciary Cases, 1832-1852* (Edinburgh, n.d.), p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> McCaffrey, 'Irish Immigrants', pp. 47 and 56-7; also see Belchem, 'Radicalism and the Irish', p. 92 for numbers of Irish arrested in Manchester on 15 Aug. 1848.

<sup>37</sup> Wilson, *Chartist Movement*, p. 208; also Thompson, 'Ireland and the Irish', p. 136. This organisation backed the Six Points and Repeal and had members in both Dublin and Belfast. It was also strongly opposed by O'Connell and the catholic clergy in Ireland.

<sup>38</sup> S. J. Connolly, 'Introduction', in S. J. Connolly et al. (eds.), *Conflict, Identity and Economic Development: Ireland and Scotland, 1600-1939* (Preston, 1995), p. 10. Quoted from comments by T. C. Smout.

<sup>39</sup> Aspinwall, 'Scots and Irish Clergy', p. 57. Murdoch is actually cited in this article as having said that a Rev. Charles McKenzie was

responsible for “destroying Dumbarton Ribbonmen in 1847”.

<sup>40</sup> Thompson, ‘Ireland and the Irish’, p. 133.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson, *Chartist Movement*, p. 172.

<sup>42</sup> Mitchell, *Irish in the West*, pp. 216-7.

<sup>43</sup> *Glasgow Saturday Post*, 26 Feb. 1842.

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, *Chartist Movement*, p. 170.

<sup>45</sup> See A. Tyrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* (London, 1987), pp. 119-30 and 164 for details of Sturge’s short-lived Complete Suffrage movement and his views on Ireland.

<sup>46</sup> A. Wilson, ‘The Suffrage Movement’ in P. Hollis (ed.), *Pressure from Without in early Victorian England* (London, 1974), p. 84.

<sup>47</sup> Mitchell, *Irish in the West*, p. 222.

<sup>48</sup> Wilson, *Chartist Movement*, p. 179

<sup>49</sup> *Glasgow Chronicle*, 10 June 1842.

<sup>50</sup> Mitchell, *Irish in the West*, pp. 224-26.

<sup>51</sup> *Glasgow Saturday Post*, 29 July 1843.

<sup>52</sup> Mitchell, *Irish in the West*, p. 238.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 266-7.



<sup>55</sup> Wilson, *Chartism Movement*, p. 200.

<sup>56</sup> Wright, *Scottish Chartism*, p. 194.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-201; also Mitchell, *Irish in the West*, p. 246.

<sup>58</sup> Glasgow City Archives (hereafter GCA), Minutes of Barony Parochial Board, D/HEW 2/1/4, Vol. 8, 15 Jan. 1859.

<sup>59</sup> *Glasgow Free Press* (hereafter *FP*), 14 Nov. 1863; John F. McCaffrey, 'Political Issues and Developments', in W. Hamish Fraser and Irene Maver (eds.), *Glasgow: Volume II, 1830 -1912* (Manchester, 1996), p.201 for Melgund talks.

<sup>60</sup> GCA, Minutes of Barony Parochial Board, D/HEW 2/1/4, Vol. 8, 15 Jan. 1859.

<sup>61</sup> *FP*, 31 Mar. 1866. At this select St. Patrick's soirée in Clyde Place, Glasgow fulsome toasts and praise were offered to the clergy, O'Connell, etc.

**Chapter 2**  
**Irish Popular Politics, the Clergy and**  
**'Fenian fever'.**

In the 1860s, the radical-secular thread of Irish politics in Glasgow was to benefit from rudimentary attempts at creating enduring and effective associations for Irishmen interested in all aspects of public life, local or otherwise. Although never completely at odds with the self-improvement ethos, the individuals involved, however, in making public displays of their loyalties within these associations, aroused displeasure and even disquiet among fellow Glaswegians. Yet they challenged the local and national governments to acknowledge the political and social aspirations of a hitherto hidden body of would-be public figures. In many ways not very different from similar host social groups, these able, often financially independent, men were not prepared to have traditional community leaders as their spokesmen. What this meant in the case of the catholic Irish, at a time when new civic arrangements themselves demanded participation from a wider public community, was that priests found their position as the undisputed public representatives of the Irish *and* catholics challenged. A vision of constitutional nationalism was to be the bonding agent possible for Irish politicians, but, prior to this, conspiratorial organisation, and clerical

confusion of lay activism with this, was to promote a sense of confidence and independence amongst them. This effectively ended the Church's predominant role in relations with the host community.

When examining conspiratorial organisation in Glasgow of the 1860s, we are essentially looking at the Fenian Brotherhood, as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (hereafter IRB) came to be known outside Ireland. Established on St. Patrick's Day, 1858 by James Stephens and John O'Mahony,<sup>1</sup> this was an attempt to make available a theoretically secular and republican ideology (which was particularly subject to interpretation, however) to young nationalists, at home and 'in exile'. Displaying the 'critical mind' of the temperance movement and harking back romantically to previous attempts at insurrection, this body was to have considerable appeal amongst Britain's fast-growing industrial workforce. In Ireland, the personal disposition of its leadership to teetotalism, and its noted appeal to skilled workers, schoolteachers and young men from shopkeeping background, appears to have nurtured what one historian has called a "lively recreational culture" as much as a political identity. In Britain, however, it has been proposed that membership may have been a symbolic activity: it represented an escape for young Irish migrants – an escape, that



is, from the 'daily round' of working life in the 'cities of the stranger'.<sup>2</sup> A reassertion of Irishness may not have been the only result of such association, however: it could have led possibly to the formation of distinct political attitudes towards the circumstances of everyday life.

The IRB was organised on a cell basis – with one 'Centre' or 'Head Centre' theoretically in command of a 'circle' of 820 men organised in such a way that they would know few others beyond their own cell of nine.<sup>3</sup> Given this structure and the fact that its members, in Britain at any rate, were bound by oath to secrecy, actual participation is largely a matter of speculation. In Scotland alone, one contemporary claim was that there were 25,000 'active' Fenians, largely concentrated in the Glasgow area, whereas a more sensible recent estimate puts the number in Glasgow at 2,500.<sup>4</sup> However, its reputed front organisation, the 'open' National Brotherhood of St. Patrick (hereafter NBSP), with the primary practical object of co-ordinating celebrations in the name of the patron saint of Ireland, in 1865, perhaps more reliably, claimed a membership of 80,000 (with 15 branches in Britain alone).<sup>5</sup> Formally established in March 1861 in Dublin, and aiming originally at uniting all moral-force nationalists within its ranks, it proved too loose a collection of individuals and ideas to come

up with anything practical in the way of politics. It did, however, contain noted anti-clericals such as the Ulster presbyterian, Thomas Neilson Underwood, and Dublin journalist, Clinton Hoey, amongst its leadership and quickly attracted men with advanced views, on land reform for example. Thus it proved a valuable recruiting ground for the IRB.<sup>6</sup>

Glasgow and its environs certainly had a number of NBSP branches – for instance, in Springburn, Kirkintilloch, Eastmuir and, in central Glasgow, the ‘McManus No.1’ branch. If one is to judge purely by the names accorded to branches (for example, the ‘O’Mahony’ branch in Kirkintilloch) and the public reading of Stephen’s newspaper, the *Irish People*, Fenian sympathisers played a leading role.<sup>7</sup> The NBSP itself appears to have had a short-lived existence – at any rate, no notices or reports of meetings appeared in the Irish catholic *Free Press* after late 1864. In Ireland, indeed, by the summer of 1864, the police view was that the NBSP was “all at once dead” as a result of an order, calling on all IRB members to withdraw, issued by Stephens.<sup>8</sup> Stephens had never trusted ‘fireside nationalists’ within the Brotherhood and apparently believed that his newspaper, the *Irish People*, by that time offered the best means of organisation. Also, in Glasgow, a vigorous campaign of denunciation by the

local hierarchy, culminating in a strongly worded pastoral letter in December 1863, played no small part in its demise locally.<sup>9</sup> It is, however, its association with the (*Glasgow*) *Free Press* newspaper, a Father Patrick Lavelle and the political ambitions of the ‘new democracy’ that its real significance lies.

The *Free Press* (alternately appearing as the *Glasgow Free Press* for legal reasons) enjoyed a somewhat precarious existence from February 1851 till February 1868 and had from the outset promoted itself as Irish (containing an “extensive synopsis of Irish Intelligence”) and catholic.<sup>10</sup> In the 1860s it was in the columns of the *Free Press* that the feud between the catholic Irish and a perceived ‘Highland clique’ came to a head. This feud arose out of considerable misunderstanding on both sides. A rapidly growing catholic Irish population was straining available resources and mismanagement seemed to be making the position worse. Indeed, by 1867 the Western District was reputedly bankrupt.<sup>11</sup> To wealthy, educated Irishmen diocesan and parish finances were a legitimate cause for concern; the *Free Press* importantly provided them with both grounds for complaint and a focus for discussion of solutions. Given earlier expressions, from the days of the O’Connellite organisations onwards, of clerical hostility to the



“vulgar democratic activism” of the Irish,<sup>12</sup> the reaction of the hierarchy and clergy to this kind of scrutiny was to be expected. However, in the climate created by the recent loss of real temporal authority by the Papacy at the hands of Italian nationalists, Garibaldi and Cavour, and the appearance of conspiratorial nationalists, in the guise of the NBSP, in Scotland, reactions were more extreme. Certain members of the clergy, not all of purely Scots origins, used unrestrained language, even anti-Irish prejudice, in both private correspondence and sermons to attack what they saw as Irish malcontents.

Rev. Alexander Munro, a parish priest in Paisley later to enjoy considerable trust in handling diocesan finances, was notably forthright against what he saw as the Irish tendency to intrigue and dissent. Indeed, he blamed these ‘born’ intriguers for the near bankruptcy of 1867. Behind these denunciations, there may have lain a genuine anxiety to protect ordinary catholics from the resentment and fear of local employers and authorities.<sup>13</sup> However, Munro was not alone in seeing an active Irish laity as a threat to the spiritual and temporal authority of the priesthood. His colleague in Paisley, Rev. Thomas Donnelly, and Paul McLaughlin in Eastmuir both also took action against what they described as Lavellists or

Fenians in their respective parishes. A committee of Irish worthies, including Henry Murphy, in fact had assisted McLaughlin in December 1862, raising funds for his defence against legal charges brought against him for refusing to divulge confidences uttered in confession. The latter however, on release from jail challenged the committee's right to disburse remaining funds and talked of Fenian influences.<sup>14</sup>

Lay Irishmen did not abandon criticism in the light of these attacks – Munro, Donnelly and McLaughlin were all denounced at some point in the columns of the *Free Press* and McLaughlin, for one, sued the newspaper for libel in June 1864. Stoking the flames further, however, colleagues of Munro took to branding Irish-born priests: graduates of All Hallows College in Dublin, “a hothouse of Irish nationalism”, were picked out for particular attention as Fenians, Carbonari or followers of the “revolutionary vagabond”, the Rev. Patrick Lavelle.<sup>15</sup> This view of Irish clerics seemed all the more justified by the fact that, towards the end of 1864, twenty-two Irish-born priests signed and sent to the Vicariate's Bishops a list of ‘resolutions’. These priests, with Rev. Michael Condon of St. Lawrence parish in Greenock as their ‘secretary’, were aggrieved about the lack of financial assistance and apparent exclusion from Glasgow

missions. To make matters worse the *Free Press*, by then owned by A.H. Keane, published the resolutions on 29 October 1864, much against the wishes of the clergy concerned.<sup>16</sup> This kind of action had the affect of not only making divisions within the body of the Catholic Church and laity very visible, it also provided opportunities for Irishmen interested in politics to cut their teeth in public debate.

A. H. Keane (employed as sub-editor of the *Press* from October 1861 and eventually owner in June 1864) as a former seminarian, was probably primarily animated in his quarrel with the ‘Highland clique’ by a concern for efficient and open church administration. However, although no records exist of his formal attachment to the NBSP or to Fenianism, and despite *Free Press* attacks on the Fenian primary tactic of armed insurrection as an “outrage to the nation’s intelligence”, he persisted in publishing articles and editorials couched in the language and traditions of romantic nationalism.<sup>17</sup> Keane was supported in *Press* defence campaigns – defence against, that is, the attacks of Glasgow’s prelates, Bishop John Murdoch and his coadjutor John Gray, and others<sup>18</sup> - by several from the ranks of the NBSP. He relied on them to, for example, collect funds and appear publicly on his behalf. However, a more certain indication of



Keane's sympathies lies in the adoption of the NBSP's vice-president, Lavelle, as one of his more notorious defenders and correspondents.

Father Patrick Lavelle (1825-86), born in Mullagh, Co. Mayo and later serving in the parish of Partry of the same county from 1858 to 1869, made his name initially in defence of catholic tenants on the estate of the evangelical Anglican Bishop of Tuam, Thomas Plunkett. Lavelle had in his youth been accused of having a violent temper: indeed his accuser, an embattled Rector of the Irish College in Paris, had gone further in saying that he had been known to assault those who happened to disagree with him. Not surprisingly then, Plunkett's use of eviction against opponents brought out the belligerent rebel in a man already well experienced in going against the grain.<sup>19</sup> His reputation as defender of the Irish peasant against English landlordism brought him to the attention of Fenians and other secular nationalists, such as Thomas Underwood mentioned above. Underwood, according to a recent study of Lavelle, invited the latter to say prayers in 1861 at the graveside of former Young Irelander, Terence Bellew McManus, and, in delivering an outspokenly anti-English oration, Lavelle won admiration as a living symbol of 'Irish resistance'.<sup>20</sup> A close, mutually beneficial, relationship grew up between Lavelle, the NBSP, and the IRB.

He was appointed vice-president of the Brotherhood in 1861 and, as a vigorous defender of the right to rebel, was an unrivalled propagandist for physical force nationalism and in turn benefited from networks of such nationalists gathering donations on behalf of his parish. The fund established, known initially as 'Patrick's Pence', cushioned his parishioners throughout the 1860s at a time of "recurring devastation of local communities by the potato failures".<sup>21</sup> Significantly, this appeal for funds found a greater response in Great Britain than in Ireland, particularly in areas such as Lancashire, already showing notable support for the NBSP and Fenianism.<sup>22</sup>

As early as 1862, Lavelle may have been in Scotland seeking aid for his parishioners. Certainly by the late summer of 1864, he was prepared to defy the attempts of Bishop Murdoch in Glasgow, Archbishop Paul Cullen (effectively the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland) and the Office of Propaganda in Rome even to curtail his political lecturing and writing.<sup>23</sup> Besides his nationalism, Lavelle's blunt opinion of the Church leaders on either side of the Irish Sea was not complimentary and his general hostility towards fashionable Ultramontanism led his admirers to see him as "the true priest of the people". Thus his public lecture of 8

August 1864 in support of a *Free Press* defence fund, against numerous legal actions initiated by lay friends of the Scots hierarchy, represented a serious escalation in the conflict with the political and ecclesiastical authority of Glasgow's bishops.<sup>24</sup>

Present at the lecture were several individuals already associated with the *Press* and NBSP. However, the animosity directed towards Bishops Murdoch and Gray also attracted men of the calibre of Dr. James McCarron, elected in late 1864 as president of the 'Glasgow Faculty of Medicine', and James McAulay, Parochial Board member and respected apologist of constitutionalism among Airdrie's Irish nationalists.<sup>25</sup> Keane's concern for the greater involvement of the laity in church affairs, for a Church more professional and responsive to the pastoral needs of Irish Catholics, had already resulted in an acrimonious clash with a conservative hierarchy which identified all such demands with subversion. Bringing Lavelle into the frame was to associate further, for better or for worse, the concerns of public-spirited Irishmen in Glasgow and the various strategies for self-government in Ireland. What is more, it was essentially those individuals, energised into making a public stance in the sometimes farcical struggle with Glasgow's clerical faction, who made the first attempt to



create a social and political association which addressed the needs of Irish people *in Scotland*. It also, significantly, explicitly denied the need for clerical approval.

Keane, in the heat of confrontation with the Glasgow hierarchy over the pulpit denunciation of Lavelle, proposed in August 1864 the formation of what was to become the 'Irish National Association of Scotland' (hereafter INA). This is not to be confused with the 'National Association' in Ireland set up in 1864 to act essentially as a vehicle for Cullen's ambition of a Catholic University and disestablishment - and acting also quite deliberately as an 'open' nationalist movement in order to counteract the appeal of secret societies to young Catholics.<sup>26</sup> By January 1865, a *Press* editorial was urging Irishmen to take advantage of tee-total recreational facilities provided by the INA in a large city-centre hall which would lead them away from the "many debasing temptations which a place like Glasgow so plentifully affords". An even more ambitious project was for the future purchase of premises to be given over to a 'Catholic Institute for Glasgow'.<sup>27</sup> The *Free Press* was clearly interested in social cohesion for political ends: Irishmen before September 1864 had, it contended, "strength in numbers but no bond save a Common Faith in Religion". Catholic

Irishmen were thereby disunited in its view and as a result “no greater disgrace” was attached to their “body then the fact that no Irishmen (save one) ever yet possessed a seat at the Council Board” of Glasgow.<sup>28</sup>

The INA was not to prosper: it had clearly failed to gain enough financial contributions by early 1867, to the cost and general demoralisation of its more active members. That this was almost entirely due to the hierarchy’s determined opposition is more than likely - for example, in March 1865, a pastoral letter warned that all taking part in INA-sponsored St. Patrick’s Day celebrations would be “guilty of mortal sin”.<sup>29</sup> This prevailing attitude did not alter much under Bishop Gray. However, although the INA was an apparently benign scheme to bring politically-minded Irishmen together, it must also be said that its stated objects were probably not enough to overcome the perception of ‘respectable’ worthies that it was the NBSP, hence IRB, in another guise.

Peter McCorry, already a leading figure in Glasgow’s Irish politics and *bête noir* of the local clergy, had taken over ownership of the *Press* in April 1865 and had furthered, in the absence of a now bankrupted Keane, the paper’s promotion of the INA<sup>30</sup> McCorry, one time schoolmaster and licensed auctioneer in Belfast, not only promoted a romantic view of

Irish insurrection under the colourful nom de guerre of 'Shandy McSherry' in the columns of the *Free Press*, but also probably had had a major say in the *Press*'s political tone under Keane. The 'noticeable thaw'<sup>31</sup> which one historian perceives in *Free Press* attitudes towards Fenianism in the late summer of 1865 may, in addition to the opportunities for increased readership after the suppression of the *Irish People* in September, owe a great deal to McCorry's more militant ownership. That very same summer, in August 1865, in the midst of the bad-tempered struggle with the Highland clique, he even had the temerity to bring Bishop Gray before the local 'Small Debt Court' in order to defend the 'forced ejection' of McCorry and another prominent INA member, a Dr McLeavy, from St. Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow.<sup>32</sup> Later on, in the summer of 1866, the *Press* under McCorry finally seemed to warm to the idea of a successful Fenian insurrection after the so-called 'invasion' of Canada in June, all the time assuring Glaswegians of the essential moderation of the Glasgow Irish with regard to *local* politics.<sup>33</sup>

What was probably a matter of notoriety then is borne out to some extent now, by existing evidence, of close association between McCorry and a number of individuals active in the NBSP, INA and the



cause of physical force nationalism. McCorry appeared as a key defence witness at the trial of Michael Barrett, later convicted and hanged for his part in the Clerkenwell explosion of 13 December 1867, and gave a detailed description of Barrett's activities in Glasgow on the day before the outrage. This alibi essentially placed Barrett at a meeting in the 'Bell's [Temperance] Hotel' in the company of McCorry, one Arthur Burgoyne, a blacksmith, and a foreman tailor by the name of Gallagher.<sup>34</sup> It is clear from the testimonies and post-trial statements made by McCorry and others that he was a central figure among a group of artisans and workingmen who both knew and defended Barrett. Citing their occupations variously as that of shoemakers, 'bottlemaker', railway workers and tailors, among others, they comply very much with the occupational profile of suspected Fenians apprehended by police forces in the west of Scotland at the time.<sup>35</sup> Besides this, McCorry's role in seeking out witnesses and financing travel arrangements played a great part in the delaying of the final execution of Barrett until 26 May 1868.

Apart from McCorry, several of the names associated with Barrett in Glasgow, or raised at the trial in connection with the case, were also either involved in earlier days with the INA or the NBSP. For example,

Charles McManus, a bottlemaker living in the Port Dundas area of the city who was in receipt of an carefully worded elaborate 'alibi letter' sent by Barrett from Newgate gaol, had been a member of an INA provisional committee in February 1865.<sup>36</sup> He, in seeking out witnesses in support of Barrett's alibi, made contact in turn with a James Mullin, a shoemaker, formerly treasurer of the 'McManus No.1' branch of the NBSP.<sup>37</sup> As for Barrett, it is highly probable that he was involved to some extent in the conspiracy to free the Fenian, O'Sullivan Burke, from Clerkenwell Gaol - even if he was not the one who actually lit the fuse and caused the deaths of six bystanders. Intelligence available to the Government and police, which was never revealed at the time nor since, made acquittal unlikely, in spite of the willingness of so many apparently to come forward on his behalf.<sup>38</sup> However, Barrett's probable involvement, and the precise and 'circumstantial' nature of some of the evidence used to defend Barrett (given by a number of men previously and currently having personal ties with him and with each other), tends to support so much other evidence, mentioned earlier, of concerted Fenian input into the NBSP and INA. One can only conclude that these bodies provided more than willing cover for the activities of ex-military Irish-Americans adventurers such as Captain

James Murphy, described by important 'retired' Fenians as the Centre of the Scottish IRB in 1867 and leading perpetrator of the Clerkenwell outrage.<sup>39</sup>

Leaving to one side for the moment the question of participation in or connivance at acts of violence, there was, as has already been shown, considerable evidence of support for the *Free Press* from a layer of what it called 'middlemen'. These, largely respectable businessmen, were pillars of the various parish communities and yet championed the paper both during its clashes with the hierarchy and even near the end when its pages overflowed with hardline nationalist rhetoric. Although the *Press*, in an editorial of August 1864, bemoaned the lack of political initiative, even the "mental capability" of these "shopkeepers, petty tradesmen, merchants in a small way, brokers, spirit dealers", it stated that the nucleus of any association for public advancement would need to come from 'unselfish' individuals within this very social group.<sup>40</sup> Whatever unselfish interest there might have been, there were certainly individuals such as Patrick Rogan (of St. Patrick's Parish, Anderston), J. D. Montague (Gorbals Parochial Board member) and James Lynch ('City' Parochial Board member) who benefited from *Free Press* readiness to publicise and promote their efforts to gain public office. Rogan indeed was warmly praised by the *Free Press* for his



“foresight and energy” in 1863 and 1864 in co-ordinating attempts by various Irish ‘middlemen’ in the city to be selected for Parochial Board membership.<sup>41</sup> These men did not always go the lengths of some *Press* supporters in making attacks, *in public* at least, on the clerical establishment and continued to appear alongside even Highland clergy in connection with denominational social organisations such as the SVDP (of which Rogan was local vice-president in 1867).<sup>42</sup> Nor is it likely that they refrained from donating funds towards the establishment of churches and schools.

If Rogan and others were clearly *pro-Press*, at least on the principle of legitimate lay interest in Church affairs and the right to take part as catholics in public life even with clerical disapproval, other prominent Irish worthies were decidedly against. Notable among them were James Walsh, polemicist and apologist for the primacy of a *catholic* identity, and Hugh Margey, bookseller and publisher of catholic texts.<sup>43</sup> Walsh and Margey showed in their different ways that they greatly resented the hostility shown towards local clergy in their dealings with what Bishop Gray called “a knot of factious lay and clerical agitators”.<sup>44</sup> Walsh in particular attempted to rebuke the *Free Press* before an angry audience of its defenders in November 1863 and four years later stated plainly in

writing that, as far as ecclesiastical government was concerned, “I have from the commencement held that laymen have nothing whatever to do with such matters”. His belief was that “His Holiness the Pope, together with his Council and our bishops and priests “ were “quite competent to settle and arrange” any such disputes without any lay interference. His belief was that the *Free Press* was refusing to put this case before its catholic Irish readership.<sup>45</sup> He demonstrated further, in later correspondence on the issue of education, his belief in the intrinsic, if not crucial role, of the clergy in Irish catholic public affairs and in doing so was prepared to ignore any suggestion that he was a friend of any Highland clique.<sup>46</sup>

As for the *Free Press*, it was to finally close in 1868 under the weight of condemnation from the pulpit and amidst fears, even recriminations, amongst the Irish community for its very public display of sympathy towards Fenian ‘martyrs’, executed in November 1867 for their part in the Manchester rescue-attempt.<sup>47</sup> McCorry did set up another newspaper immediately afterwards, *The Irish Catholic Banner*; however, in the fallout from the Barrett case, McCorry seems to have finally opted for the relatively safe haven of the USA, succeeding John O’Mahoney as editor of the New York-based *Irish People*.<sup>48</sup> He did leave behind, nevertheless, a



cohort of activists who increasingly saw opportunities in constitutional politics (although it must never be forgotten that hardliners remained and resisted any policy for nationalists other than that of insurrection under the ‘silent system’). McCorry’s view on participation in local and national elections for the British-domiciled Irish was generally a positive one – quite in contrast to the opinion expressed in a *Free Press* editorial, bearing all the hallmarks of McCorry’s rhetoric, “that the proper and only consistent policy of Irish Nationalists *at home* [my italics] is to keep aloof from Parliamentary agitation”.<sup>49</sup> He was particularly supportive, as other Irishmen were, of Robert DalGLISH, one of Glasgow’s MPs since 1857 – both Rogan and James Lynch, indeed, being listed as electors on a committee for his re-election in July 1865.<sup>50</sup> It was not unknown for candidates in the past to make overtures to Catholics – the Liberal candidate, Lord Melgund, had, as indicated previously, held talks with Catholic electors in 1858<sup>51</sup> – and, though his politics on Ireland’s Catholics have been described as ‘cautious’, DalGLISH seemed to represent a more tolerant face than some within the broad church of Scots Liberalism.<sup>52</sup>

McCorry’s personal inclination, however, seems to have been markedly towards the democratic – the *Press* was probably expressing *his*



thoughts when it said that “Irishmen from the peculiar circumstances of their history and traditions, are deeply imbued with democratic tendencies” and that “it was for the unreserved extension of the franchise to every adult member of the community”.<sup>53</sup> He, also, increasingly described his followers as from the lower ranks: when writing about the INA in 1867 he said it had been formed for the benefit of working men and, a few months later, praised Barrett’s active friends as “poor hard working artisans and labourers”.<sup>54</sup> Under his ownership, likewise, Reform Bill agitation was greatly encouraged, industrial disputes in mining areas were given sympathetic coverage and on one occasion he was invited along as speaking guest of the pro-labour newspaper, *The Glasgow Sentinel* (almost three years later, though, it was to describe him as a ‘wife-beater’!).<sup>55</sup>

No doubt McCorry would have preferred Liberals with distinctly advanced views on the political and social status of the working man. Radicals of the nature of a Charles Bradlaugh or a Joseph Cowen with just such views were thin on the ground in Scotland, however, and a tolerant patrician such as Dalglish probably seemed the best option available at the time. The Reform League in England under Edward Beales and Bradlaugh was itself highly supportive of fundamental change in the government of

Ireland. Bradlaugh, indeed, had spoken on behalf of the ‘Manchester Martyrs’ at Clerkenwell only a few weeks before the explosion. That said, its sister organisation, George Jackson’s ‘Scottish National Reform League’ (formed on 17 Sept. 1866), was much more cautious and reflected the more enlightened views on Ireland and Catholics displayed by some Liberals, such as Dalglish, and James Moir, east-end radical and former Chartist. These men and Jackson’s League, where it has been determined that they did get Irish support (evidence of any sort being very thin on the ground), got it from the respectable Irish such as James Lynch, Patrick Rogan and even from the pro-clerical Hugh Margey mentioned earlier.<sup>56</sup>

For those less respectable followers and fellow-travellers of McCorry’s brand of nationalism, skilled craftsmen and small-businessmen in the main, the road to electoral politics was not to be so straightforward. Encouraged by the national distress over the execution of the Manchester Martyrs and the hopes raised by Gladstone’s new policy of conciliation,<sup>57</sup> some former Fenians in Ireland engaged in open political agitation in 1868-69, under the auspices of John Nolan’s ‘Amnesty Association’, on behalf of remaining prisoners.<sup>58</sup> There does not, though, seem to have been any concerted attempt towards similar action in Glasgow. Amnesty

Association's demonstrations in Ireland were dramatically successful in late 1869 - even in London attracting an estimated 100,000 to a demonstration - and were significant for the extraordinary willingness of some clerics and respectable old-style Irish Liberal MPs to appear on platforms.<sup>59</sup> Glasgow Irish nationalists, in contrast, could only present a picture of bitter division in full view of local commentators.

A November 1869 meeting of largely working men in the city-centre, described variously as an Amnesty or Fenian meeting by local reporters, heard Peter Henrietta (tailor, member of the local Trades Council and veteran of Reform Bill agitation) urge the physical force party that it was never too late to act "under the Constitution". In the end, the meeting had to be closed early when a boisterous group calling for the primacy of the silent system disrupted the proceedings, in scenes that the *Glasgow Herald* described, with some smug satisfaction, as of a "disgraceful character". As for the *North British Daily Mail*, it was able to put its own gloss on the gathering: it took certain comfort from the sarcastic observation that the "leading speeches were remarkably mild" and that at least half were for constitutional politics.<sup>60</sup> Whatever comfort the meeting might have afforded the local press and those Irishmen in favour of the



constitutional path (albeit of the more militant variety displayed by the Amnesty movement), the meeting had still failed signally to present the impression of 'brotherly feeling' and unity that its organisers had appealed for in publicity placards. That division was reflected perhaps in the almost complete lack of any significant gatherings, politically motivated or otherwise, to celebrate St. Patrick's Day of that same year.<sup>61</sup>

All of the above only serves to make it all the more remarkable that within a year former close associates of McCorry's group were appearing on the same platform with pro-clerical James Walsh (as chairman!) to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in March 1870.<sup>62</sup> Notable among these was James Lindsay, printer, who had been a keen organiser and supporter of Lavelle meetings. He had also been cited as defence witness in the Barrett Trial.<sup>63</sup> Also, by the end of 1871 many of the same individuals at this meeting (including Hugh Margey, as vice-president) had become active members of possibly the very first branch, outside Ireland, of the recently formed Home Government Association. The evidence is strong that those respectable middlemen once referred to by a now defunct *Free Press* had at last managed to put their differences to one side: they were confidently declaring their political nationalism, free from any apparent fear of clerical

disapproval, and yet apparently 'organised out' of Fenian-led bodies. The physical force party persisted, of course - witness then-Fenian Michael Davitt's organising tours in 1869, ongoing references to *separate* St. Patrick's Day gatherings, and the persistence of an Amnesty Association in Glasgow well into the 1870s.<sup>64</sup> Overall, however, what may be described as 'advanced constitutionalism' seems to have benefited radically from the combination of Gladstone's attention to Irish affairs and electoral success of 'advanceds' such as John Martin in Ireland.<sup>65</sup>

The man behind the Glasgow HGA set-up, John Ferguson, made his first public appearance in March 1870 and it is now important to look in some detail at his political beginnings. For it is a remarkable fact that it is this respectable Irishman, with his radical-secular outlook, preoccupation with social reform and probable Fenian connections, who was to create organisational unity for Glasgow Irish popular politics, under conditions of relative ethnic harmony, were none had so patently existed before.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Patrick Quinlivan and Paul Rose, *The Fenians in England, 1865-1872: A Sense of Insecurity* (London and New York, 1982), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 394.

<sup>3</sup> Quinlivan and Rose, *The Fenians*, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> See *North British Daily Mail* (hereafter *NBDM*), 16 Oct. 1867 and 23 Sep. 1865 for first estimate and A. O'Day, 'The Political Organisation of the Irish in Britain, 1867-1890', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Britain*, p. 111 for the second.

<sup>5</sup> Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 396.

<sup>6</sup> Gerard Moran, *A Radical Priest in Mayo, Fr. Patrick Lavelle: The Rise and Fall of an Irish Nationalist, 1825-1886* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 52-53; also R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1842-82* (Dublin, 1985), pp. 71-74.

<sup>7</sup> See *FP*, 25 June 1864 for list of branches in Glasgow area; also 14 May, 6 Aug. and 3 Sept. 1864 for reports of branch activities.

<sup>8</sup> Elaine W. McFarland, 'A Reality and Yet Impalpable: the Fenian Panic in Mid-Victorian Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review*, vol.lxxvii, no. 2 (1998), p. 208.



<sup>9</sup> See Glasgow Archdiocesan Archives (hereafter GAA), WD 5, Diaries and Notebooks of Father Michael Condon, pastoral letter, 8 Dec. 1863. This circular, to be read out at Sunday mass, expressly condemns the NBSPP and forbids Catholics to join. See also McFarland, 'Fenian Panic', p. 208 for footnote reference to similar clerical antagonism towards NBSPP in Dundee and Edinburgh.

<sup>10</sup> Handley, *Irish in Scotland*, pp. 200-1; North, *Waterloo Directory*, p. 586; see also *FP*, 28 Aug. 1865 for indications of paper's shoestring budget.

<sup>11</sup> Aspinwall, 'Scots and Irish Clergy', pp. 46-7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> Munro (1820-93), born on the Black Isle, Aberdeenshire, served in Paisley mission 1861-7. He then went on to St. Andrews, Glasgow and served as Vicar-General, a deputy to the bishops and responsible for much of the executive functioning of the Western District. See *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50 and 53 for his attacks on nationalists.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8; also *FP*, 14 May and 16 July.

<sup>15</sup> See Aspinwall, 'Scots and Irish Clergy', pp. 53-54 for comments made by Rev. Alexander Munro and Rev. Angelo M. Celletti.

<sup>16</sup> GAA, WD 5, notebook dated 23 May 1873, p. 561-3. The resolutions

were republished again on 28 Aug. 1865 during Peter McCorry's period of ownership of *Free Press*. See Aspinwall, 'Scots and Irish Clergy', pp.45-68 for fuller discussion of discontent of Irish-born priests.

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that Keane was named as 'Chief Secretary' of Glasgow NBSPP by one of his enemies, Rev. Paul McLaughlin of Eastmuir, for which see *FP*, 14 May 1864. See *Ibid.*, 11 Feb. 1865 for attack on Fenian tactics. Also, however, see *Ibid.*, 4 June 1864 for praise offered to the editor by the Dublin branch of the NBSPP for being possibly the only one daring to publish an 'address' against the determined opponent of Fenianism, the Archbishop of Dublin, Paul Cullen and *Ibid.*, 13 Aug. 1864 for Keane's view that "misgovernment and oppression" had driven many into exile.

<sup>18</sup> John Gray (1817-72) was born in Buckie, Banffshire and served as coadjutor to Murdoch from around 1862 and followed him as head of the Western District.

<sup>19</sup> Moran, *Lavelle*, pp. 4-13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 56 for reference to 1862 lecture tour. The Office of Propaganda, an important organ of papal administration, directed and supervised worldwide missionary activity. Scotland at this time did not enjoy the status or rights that came with having its own national hierarchy.

<sup>24</sup> Moran, *Lavelle*, pp. 72-74.

<sup>25</sup> *FP*, 13 Aug. 1864. The *Free Press*, 5 Dec. 1866 was quite fulsome in its praise of McAulay, eulogising him as someone “who, by his own unaided efforts, high persevering character and strict adherence to principle, has done more for the Catholic poor of his place than any Catholic that we know of in this kingdom”. McAulay became an early enthusiastic supporter of Home Rule.

<sup>26</sup> Patrick J. Corish, ‘Cardinal Cullen and the National Association of Ireland’, *Reportorium Novum*, vol.3, part 1(1961-2), pp. 13-61.

<sup>27</sup> *FP*, 21 Jan. 1865.

<sup>28</sup> *FP*, 11 Feb. 1865.

<sup>29</sup> *FP*, 18 Mar. 1865; see also 16 Mar. 1867 for evidence of final collapse of INA.

<sup>30</sup> *FP*, 26 Aug. 1865. An account is given here, during Keane’s bankruptcy proceedings, of McCorry’s take-over.



<sup>31</sup> McFarland, 'Fenian panic', p. 219.

<sup>32</sup> *FP*, 5 Aug. 1865.

<sup>33</sup> McFarland, 'Fenian Panic', p. 219.

<sup>34</sup> *Glasgow Herald* (hereafter *GH*), 27 April 1868.

<sup>35</sup> McFarland, 'Fenian panic', p. 209 for list in footnote of suspects. They included 3 iron workers, 2 labourers, a dock worker, a shoemaker, a brassfounder, a pumpmaker and a basketmaker.

<sup>36</sup> *FP*, 11 Feb. 1865.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 Sept. 1864.

<sup>38</sup> Quinlivan and Rose, *The Fenians*, p. 107.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46 on 1908 statement by O'Meagher Condon, formerly in charge of Fenians in the 'Northern Counties' of England. He claimed that Murphy brought 12 Glasgow 'delegates' to a Fenian Convention in Manchester just before the gaol-break attempt of 1867; see also *Ibid.*, p. 106 for statement by the informer Patrick Mullany at Barrett's trial.

<sup>40</sup> *FP*, 27 Aug. 1864.

<sup>41</sup> *FP*, 21 Nov. 1863.

<sup>42</sup> GAA, WD 10/4, Patrick Rogan to Archbishop Manning, 31 Oct. 1867 for Rogan's mention of his SVDP role and comment on Gray's then poor

health. See also Aspinwall, 'Scots and Irish Clergy', p. 67 for his participation in a protest delegation to the District's Bishops in March 1868. The Bishops had issued a pastoral letter condemning the paper in February and it closed soon afterwards.

<sup>43</sup> *FP*, 24 Mar. 1864 for advert placed by Margey. Margey was the publisher of Walsh's book, *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1874), in which Walsh effused that catholics in Scotland owed "to their clergy their finest, fondest, loftiest, and holiest aspirations", for which see *ibid.*, p.580. Margey had business premises in Great Clyde St., close to St. Andrews Cathedral, and in 1871 occupied a house with five windowed rooms in Ibroxholm, just outside Glasgow., for which see Census 1871, District 646-1, Enumerator's Book 18.

<sup>44</sup> GAA, WD 10/11, memo, Bishop Gray to 'Apostolic Visitor' (presumably Archbishop Manning), n.d.

<sup>45</sup> *FP*, 7 Nov. 1863 and 13 July 1867.

<sup>46</sup> *GH*, 8 Feb. 1868.

<sup>47</sup> See *GH*, 25 Dec. 1867, 'Fair Play, Bonhill' to editor, for quotations from letter of 20 Dec. 1867, 'Catholicus' to editor. 'Catholicus' urged "on the authorities to destroy the Free Press".

<sup>48</sup> Quinlivan and Rose, *The Fenians*, p.141; see *GH*, 2 May 1868 for accusations of perjury against McCorry.

<sup>49</sup> *FP*, 11 Feb. 1865.

<sup>50</sup> *FP*, 8 July 1865.

<sup>51</sup> John F. McCaffrey, 'Political Issues and Developments', in W. Hamish Fraser and Irene Maver (eds.), *Glasgow: Volume II, 1830 - 1912* (Manchester, 1996), p. 201.

<sup>52</sup> See *FP*, 11 Feb. 1865 for editorial comment on Dalglish; also McCaffrey, 'Political Issues and Developments', pp. 198-9 and Hutchison, 'Mid-Victorian Glasgow', pp. 161-2 for his political stance in general.

<sup>53</sup> *FP*, 11 Feb. 1865.

<sup>54</sup> GAA, WD 10/6, Peter McCorry to Archbishop Manning, 4 Nov. 1867; *G. H.*, 2 May 1868.

<sup>55</sup> *FP*, 1 and 15 April 1865 for reports on mining dispute of that year; also 20 Oct. 1866 for article praising working men and 2 Feb. 1867 for report on 'social meeting' of *Sentinel* staff. McCorry was derided as a wife-beater in *Glasgow Sentinel*, 4 Dec. 1869.

<sup>56</sup> See McCaffrey, 'Political Issues and Developments', p. 201 on Margey's attendance at a Scottish National Reform League demonstration on 28 Aug.



1868; also *GH*, 17 Nov. 1868 for appearance at a similar meeting by Hugh Margey, junior, son of the latter and ex-seminarian, and a Thomas Tiernan, probably the then catholic member of the Barony Parochial Board in Glasgow's East End.

<sup>57</sup> As Prime Minister, 1868-74, Gladstone produced two important conciliatory pieces of legislation: the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland (1869) and the recognition in law of customary tenant right, the right to compensation for improvements, right to purchase holdings, etc. under Land Act (1870).

<sup>58</sup> See comments in Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 393-394 and T. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846-82* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 120-121. The Amnesty Association was founded in Dublin on 28 June 1869 with the aim of gaining the release of Fenian prisoners. Isaac Butt was president, its secretary was John Nolan and it included men of "all shades of nationalist opinion" according to Moody.

<sup>59</sup> See Rose and Quinlivan, '*The Fenians*', p. 148 for London demonstration of 24 Oct. 1869. Moran, *Lavelle*, pp. 100-1 states that there were, in Ireland, 54 public demonstrations in favour of an amnesty for remaining Fenian prisoners during the closing months of 1869; also *GH*, 9 October 1869

reports that one such 'monster meeting' in Tipperary attracted a crowd of 40,000.

<sup>60</sup> *GH*, 29 Nov. 1869; *NBDM*, 29 Nov. 1869. See Hutchison, 'Mid-Victorian Glasgow', pp. 406, 486 and 516 for details of Henrietta's politics and trade union activity.

<sup>61</sup> *NBDM*, 18 Mar. 1869, however, gives a lack of funds as possible reason for quieter celebrations.

<sup>62</sup> *NBDM*, 18 Mar. 1870 and *GH*, 18 Mar. 1870.

<sup>63</sup> *GAA*, WD 9/6, newspaper clipping, dated by hand 10 Dec. 1867 names James Lindsay as one of the chief organisers of a nationalist lecture. The invited speaker was Father Malone of Belmullet, Co. Mayo, one of Lavelle's active supporters amongst the Irish clergy. See *GH*, 27 Nov. 1868 for mention of his Lindsay's evidence on behalf of Barrett. Lindsay had been born in Fife, occupied a six-roomed house in 1871 and employed two men and four boys in his city-centre business, for which see Census 1871, District 644-5, Enumerator's Book 29 and *Glasgow Post Office Directory*, 1869-70.

<sup>64</sup> See T. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846-82* (Oxford, 1981), p.60 for mention of Michael Davitt's 'organising tour' in Glasgow and other

Scots areas in late 1869; also p. 56 for mention of a visit by a IRB Supreme Council member friendly to engagement with constitutional politics, John O'Connor Power, and *GH*, 19 Mar. 1872 for John Ferguson's friendly acknowledgement of 300 men attending a separate meeting in Bell's Hotel, most likely associated with the Amnesty Association.

<sup>65</sup> See A.M Sullivan, *New Ireland* (London, 1877), pp. 284-99 for his opinion, as a noted moral force nationalist, that protestant John Martin's electoral victory in Co. Longford, Dec. 1869, represented a breakthrough for secular nationalists.



### **Chapter 3**

## **John Ferguson and the Mobilisation of the Irish Vote**

For Irishmen in the Glasgow of the 1870s, the new householder franchise granted by the 1868 Reform Act was in practice often out of reach for them. In order to vote in parliamentary and municipal elections, one was required to pay rates in person: effectively this meant the exclusion of those tenants paying less than £4 annually in rent, for whom landlords generally paid any rates due. In addition, non-payment of rates before the register came into effect in November of each year meant no vote. All of this, on top of a one-year residence qualification and the requirement of non-receipt of 'poor relief' in that same year, operated against a highly mobile, casualised Irish workforce living in the poorest areas of Glasgow.<sup>1</sup> That said, it did increase opportunities for the Glasgow Irish not only to express opinions on local matters but also presented for some the means to agitate for causes of interest mainly to the Irish. With regard to purely catholic matters, local bitterness still remained in the wake of internal struggles already referred to between Irish and 'Scotch' factions within the Catholic Church. However, the appointment of a Yorkshireman, Charles Eyre, as Bishop of the Western Vicariate in 1869 seemed to bring a new professional

and conciliatory tone. The clergy now, encouraged by the new franchise, became more overtly active in mobilising a catholic vote among the Irish. At the same time, lay politicians, appealing to Irishness as much as to catholicity, were to find in John Ferguson an Irishman who not only challenged established local definitions of identity among the Glasgow Irish but also sought to mobilise them in a broader British campaign for his social and political ideals.

Ferguson's personal experience of radical causes and as yet sketchy involvement with Irish nationalism before 1870 indicate an early adherence to radical-secular political causes and point the way forward to his later espousal of what might be described as militant or advanced constitutionalism. Born in Co. Antrim in 1836, the son of a Belfast grocer, a presbyterian with conservative political views, and an episcopalian mother, Ferguson claimed a family connection with the United Irishman William Orr. Coming to work in the stationery trade in Glasgow around 1860,<sup>2</sup> he eventually established himself as a successful printer and publisher in partnership with a like-minded radical, Duncan Cameron, and, by the early 1870s, increasingly occupied himself with politics. Of his early life, Ferguson, in a biographical sketch written for the *Glasgow Echo* in 1894,

only felt it necessary to give details of his Ulster birth, an early involvement with Christian youth organisations, training in the printing trade and attendance at classes given by Prof. Thomas Cliffe Leslie at Queen's College, Belfast, but gave no indication of political affiliations or opinions.<sup>3</sup> However, upon his arrival in Glasgow (he is noticeably unsure of dates in this and other accounts), Ferguson it seems became sympathetic to Irish nationalism.

It is interesting, though, to note the occasion of his entry into public debate, based on what may be accepted as Ferguson's own account to the sketch writer. It appears that an 'animated' discussion on the land question in premises on Nelson St., Glasgow in 1860 (probably those described as the 'Democratic Halls' in the *Glasgow Post Office Directory* of that same year) attracted the attention of a 'passing' Ferguson. He eventually joined in on the side of three Irish Catholics who were struggling, as he said, "against great odds". The sketch goes on to describe Ferguson as more and more associated with Catholics and nationalists in Glasgow, but again no mention is made of personal or organisational affiliations until the 1870s, when he becomes so important to Home Rule.

As has been shown in the previous chapter, those Irishmen in



Glasgow sympathetic to demands for a new constitutional relationship between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom continued to show public solidarity throughout the late 1860s with those advocating more violent, separatist remedies for Ireland's condition. For instance, the often chauvinist Lavelle, vice-president and promoter of the Brotherhood of St. Patrick, was given platform support by the respectable constitutional nationalist James McAulay of Airdrie (later prominent as a Home Ruler) in October 1867. Also, lecturing at the same meeting was John McCorry, from Dublin, founder in November 1868 of the forerunner of the Fenian-led Amnesty Association, The Irish Liberation Society.<sup>4</sup> The fears of many within the ranks of the catholic clergy and custodians of public order that political violence had many advocates and sympathisers among Irishmen in Glasgow were borne out, in their eyes, by an attempt to organise a procession in memory of the 'Manchester Martyrs' on Glasgow Green in December, 1867.

Vigorous opposition from Bishop John Gray and his clergy to an organising committee containing "men full of their own conceit" (who "should be Catholics first and Irishmen afterwards"), and an extraordinary show of military force from the authorities, ensured cancellation of that

particular march.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, there is evidence of an organisation continuing to support the cause of political prisoners, making use of Home Rule meetings in the 1870s to push their case. As an open and legal pressure group the Amnesty Association, at least in Ireland, created and popularised an issue that was elaborated in nationalist terms and overcame an existing tendency to focus on narrow, local political concerns.<sup>6</sup> Thus it created a truly national movement bringing constitutional politicians into formal contact with Fenians. It is not, then, unreasonable to suppose that radical (though ‘moral force’) activists such as Ferguson established, through the Amnesty Association, contacts with Fenians in Glasgow, and beyond, which would prove crucial in the radicalising of Home Rule tactics.

What makes formal contacts with Fenianism even more likely before 1870 is a consideration of Ferguson’s stated activism (stated, that is, in the *Glasgow Echo* article mentioned above) under Charles Bradlaugh and Edmund Beales in Reform League campaigns. It is claimed that Ferguson was one of those “who went in over the rails” at the Hyde Park “emeue [*sic*] which settled the right of public meeting in the park”.<sup>7</sup> Ferguson is known to have had business interests in London<sup>8</sup> and the disturbance referred to is likely to be one of those occurring in the summers of 1866 and 1867, when



Beales and Bradlaugh finally overcame Police Commissioner Mayne's attempts to prevent demonstrations in such an arena. Irish grievances received notable public support from the League and prominent at the successful Reform League rally of May 1867 was the well-known Irish nationalist MP, Daniel O'Donoghue (known as 'The O'Donoghue'), so Ferguson's participation would have been very likely.<sup>9</sup>

It is equally likely that Ferguson would have found much to admire in Bradlaugh's particularly radical views on Ireland and landlordism.<sup>10</sup> These views - when taken together with his early army career in Ireland, his reputation as a free-thinker and republican - certainly made him appear so sympathetic to nationalist grievances that, remarkably, he was approached in the spring of 1867 by two high-ranking Fenians, Gustave Cluseret and Thomas J. Kelly, in order to work on a draft 'proclamation' for a future Irish Republic.<sup>11</sup> Bradlaugh, according to one of his biographers, managed to rid the proclamation of "Celtic racialism and Catholicism" and, what's more, stated a preference for a federal solution to the Irish Question. That said, the willingness of Fenian insurrectionaries to consult a well-known advocate of peaceful methods is indicative of the dialogue possible in a new 'democratic' age between British Radicals and romantic Irish nationalism.<sup>12</sup>



Ferguson himself, in common with Bradlaugh, often alluded to John Stuart Mill, particularly Mill's vision of a peasant proprietorship in Ireland, and certainly admired Gladstone and Bright's rhetoric in praise of the 'masses against the classes'. However, the possibility of Irish insurrection was also used by Ferguson to boost the morale of his listeners and to heighten his prestige among the 'hot-heads'. Evidently he was, therefore, a politician particularly amenable to the first 'new departure' of Fenianism into an alliance with constitutionalism.

It is hardly coincidental or, at the very least, remarkable, in the light of such Fenian-constitutionalist co-operation, that Ferguson makes his first, as far as we know, public platform appearance on St. Patrick's Day in 1870, a Irish 'Gala day' which from that year onwards took on an overtly political tone. Both the *NBDM* and *Glasgow Herald* mention Ferguson's attendance at a soirée in honour of the day and he is described by the *NBDM* as speaking "to the sentiment of 'Our Exiled Countrymen'". This was a favourite topic in his early speeches, often with the stress on the forced abandonment of rural independence for a life of urban degradation. The successful passage of Gladstone's Irish Church Act in July 1869, disestablishing the Church of Ireland, had evidently brought about a new

confidence among local catholic worthies and cleared the way for closer public contacts with protestant nationalists such as Ferguson. James Walsh, “long-standing catholic apologist” and ultramontane defender of church authority in the 1860s, spoke, for instance, quite fulsomely at the same soirée in praise of protestants in the past who had pursued the cause of “Irish liberty”, viz. Henry Grattan, Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet.<sup>13</sup> Such pronouncements in the immediate past would have been tantamount to rebellion against the local Bishop and to an admission of Fenianism, and, therefore, very unlikely to come from Walsh. Now, with a new sense of Irish patriotism unleashed that seemed to overlook the religious struggles of the past, Ferguson rose rapidly to prominence within the year as speaker and organiser. Having by this time put his business on a successful footing in both Glasgow and London, and earning enough to afford the purchase of a substantial villa in the growing commuter village of Lenzie, he clearly had both the financial and personal resources to make an impact beyond the sometimes limited horizons of Glasgow’s catholic Irish.

There is no existing evidence of Ferguson’s attendance at, or knowledge of, Isaac Butt’s initial meetings in Dublin on 19 May 1870 and November 1870 to set in motion a new nationalist pressure group, the

Home Government Association (hereafter HGA), which could give practical purpose to the new mood. Butt (1813-79), barrister and former Tory MP, had defended both Young Irelanders and Fenians before becoming associated with the Amnesty Association in 1869. However, his HGA seems to have been principally intended as a movement for constitutional reform which could build on the disenchantment of protestant gentry with Gladstone's Government over the issue of disestablishment. Whatever Butt's intentions, it is known, nevertheless, that Fenians, John O'Connor Power and Patrick Egan (also active in the Amnesty Association), attended and took a keen interest, winning over other members of the IRB Supreme Council as to the usefulness of their continued collaboration.<sup>14</sup> John Denvir of Liverpool also attended the inaugural meeting in Dublin, and he and John Barry, both active Fenians of a similar caste of mind to Egan and Power, were leading figures behind the HGA's sister organisation, the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain (hereafter HRCGB).<sup>15</sup>

Ferguson's leading role alongside these men in the formation of the HRCGB suggests that he was well known and trusted at an early stage by these Fenians favourable to so-called 'parallel action'. He later denied



knowing Barry, in particular, before the formation of Home Rule associations. However, Barry's status as an IRB Supreme Council member until 1876; his early employment as a commercial traveller based in Newcastle; his known part in Fenian organiser Michael Davitt's 'arms traffic' in the North of England around 1870; and his successful business interest in a Kirkcaldy linoleum factory would all suggest strong connections with, or knowledge of, Glasgow Irish Fenians. This and the fact that Ferguson in 1889 publicly described Barry as an "intimate friend" suggest that he was one of Ferguson's main links with Fenianism and any plan for 'parallel action' they might have for the HGA.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that Ferguson formed one of the first branches (if not the first, as Handley claims<sup>17</sup>) in November 1871, of what was to become a decidedly more plebeian set-up, which went far beyond Butt's idea of a pressure group for Irish self-government, tells us even more about both his political leanings and 'insider' status among Fenians in Britain. For, besides the involvement of high-ranking Fenians as already indicated, it is generally agreed by Irish historians that the Home Rule movement in Britain drew its early inspiration, energy and organisational skills from Fenians in the north of England and Scotland. They sensed its potential ability to mobilise Irish

workingmen behind a unified nationalist body that could combine revolutionary and constitutional elements.<sup>18</sup> It is highly likely that Ferguson was not unaware of Fenian input and the possibility that the HRCGB could merely become a front for physical force activity. Nevertheless, patriotic sentiment and strong common ground on issues such as the land question and the social enhancement of the 'exiles' may have inclined him not only to risk open association, but to throw himself vigorously into the task of organising and campaigning for Home Rule.

Thus, Ferguson and a small group of Fenians, such as Barry and the shadowy figure, 'Captain' Martin W. Kirwan<sup>19</sup>, ensured the creation of local Home Rule associations in the major urban centres of Britain. Ferguson, indeed, presumably making use of London connections formed in the course of his political activities and business trips since the early 1860s, seems to have helped set up one such association in the capital.<sup>20</sup> Later on, a national co-ordinating body, the HRCGB, was felt to be necessary and was duly established on a formal basis in Birmingham in February 1873. John Barry became the chief organiser of the Confederation, responsible to an executive council based initially based in Manchester and from 1875 in Liverpool. Half of the council's twenty members came from the city

wherein the executive was based.<sup>21</sup> Local associations were to have their activities co-ordinated by five 'district councils' in England (in Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and London) and one in Scotland (based in Glasgow).<sup>22</sup> These district councils were abandoned according to O'Day in 1875. However multiple branches continued to exist within towns such as Glasgow and Birmingham,<sup>23</sup> and efforts at co-ordination, certainly in Glasgow, persisted.

At the highest levels of the Confederation, Ferguson's role from the beginning was a key one, chairing its first public meeting in Manchester and accepting executive council office later as vice-president alongside Barry, with Butt as president. Also, Ferguson, in charge of the Glasgow council, in common with officials elsewhere was given much leeway in the type of management and guidance he could offer locally.<sup>24</sup> What is more, in Belfast, very likely with encouragement from Ferguson, a committee under Rev. Isaac Nelson, a protestant Home Ruler associated with Ferguson's efforts in Glasgow, put in motion preparations in September 1877 for a 'Home Rule Confederation of Ulster'. This was "intended to be independent of the Home Rule League or any other Home Rule organization" but with the same purpose and principles as the British body,



and may have been an attempt by Ferguson to toughen up the Home Rule movement in Ireland itself.<sup>25</sup>

If there was, as the name and set-up of the HRCGB seemed to imply, a strong measure of autonomy given to the exiles in different British cities, this new body had a tone and purpose distinct from that of the parent body in Ireland. First of all, as was clear from eyewitness reports, the Confederation was to be quite different in its initial social composition from the Dublin-based HGA Irishmen gathered at a 'private' meeting held immediately prior to the main Manchester assembly were said to be "working men for the most part". Also, notwithstanding the rather "better" nature (in the opinion of the *Times* correspondent) of the evening's participants, Ferguson still felt it appropriate to refer expressly to the hardships of local Irish migrants, "banished Celts in this city of the stranger". Secondly, the predilection to secrecy evident in the practice of holding conferences behind closed doors (leading to the exclusion even of a reporter from a "Catholic journal" to the first conference) and the release of carefully worded conference press releases afterwards, reveals a determination to present a unified front and yet allow physical and moral force voices to be heard.<sup>26</sup> Both of these phenomena tend to support the

now accepted opinion that there was a key Fenian input into the HRCGB.

As for specific aims, the HRCGB sought: federal government for Ireland, the education of the exiles in their political rights, the registration of potential nationalist voters and the obtaining of pledges of support for Home Rule from all candidates in forthcoming elections.<sup>27</sup> Most of these aims and activities again contrasted greatly with even the re-vamped Dublin organisation, the Home Rule League, which replaced the HGA in May 1873. The League “had no other organisation than an annual general meeting and a council of one hundred, meeting once a month” to issue policy statements. Thus, Butt had no intention of creating a popular movement, let alone the basis of a mass political party with pledge-bound MPs.<sup>28</sup> In line with its mobilisation of an Irish vote at national level, the HRCGB likewise thought that it had a role to play in relation to British local government politics. The particular arena could be a ‘training ground’ for future Westminster politicians, but more specifically in Glasgow could be a way of obtaining for catholics “that position in the political and municipal affairs of Glasgow to which our numbers and intelligence entitle us”.<sup>29</sup> The use of the term ‘catholics’ rather than ‘Irishmen’ is highly indicative of Ferguson’s difficulties, however, and as his importance grew

in the wider national movement, he was dogged by such entrenched local attitudes which, added to a number of practical problems, made for comparative electoral failure in such a numerically promising area.

To counter sectarian prejudices on both sides, which as an Ulsterman he must have been all too aware of, Ferguson early on made use of his capacity for making an intellectual case for Home Rule and of his protestant connections. He attempted quite deliberately to promote the often complex and shifting political arguments on federalism, extending the principle to cover possible Home Rule for Scotland. This diverted accusations of Irish disloyalty and plans for a separate and anti-protestant Ireland.<sup>30</sup> Also, he made special efforts to feature protestant Home Rule enthusiasts, such as the above mentioned Belfast radical, the Rev. Isaac Nelson, in lectures and meetings held on or near St. Patrick's Day and the annual demonstration in August commemorating Daniel O'Connell. Nelson in fact in April 1873 attacked fellow protestants over sectarian violence in Belfast that year and, in 1874, in response to wild claims that protestants would be imprisoned, dispossessed and driven out of the country, he publicly expressed his trust in catholics.<sup>31</sup>

One particularly close colleague of Ferguson and regular visitor to



Glasgow was another protestant and Ulsterman, Joseph Biggar. Born into a comfortable presbyterian middle-class family, Biggar had an unprepossessing appearance and a rough manner. He, however, became a prosperous provision merchant and won a seat as a Home Rule MP for Cavan in 1874. He was clearly an 'advanced' constitutionalist, moving on to the IRB Supreme Council in 1875 and gaining fame and notoriety in equal measure as the pioneer of the tactics of 'obstruction' in the House of Commons in 1874-77.<sup>32</sup> Ferguson, so Handley claims, encouraged Biggar, by that time president of the Belfast Home Rule Association, to establish the movement in Belfast and Derry.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, in November 1872, Ferguson worked as an organiser for Biggar in his bid for the Londonderry City seat, appealing in a series of letters to Butt for HGA help and more overt backing. However, Biggar was in real difficulty in Derry from the beginning: he was a protestant, publicly non-committal on the issue of denominational education and, in any case, the catholic clergy backed a catholic, Christopher Palles, the new Liberal Attorney-General for Ireland. Butt is said to have "shunned the whole desperate exercise", despite Ferguson's status as a member of the HGA Dublin 'Central Council' and perhaps partly as a result of the 'advanced' connections of both men. There

were in fact accusations in the *Glasgow Herald* that both men had, in concert with local nationalists, effectively ‘highjacked’ an election meeting arranged on behalf of Palles.<sup>34</sup> There can be no doubt that Ferguson followed with great interest (and perhaps even influenced) Biggar’s performance in parliament.

Keen to present protestant speakers as part of a non-sectarian nationalist movement, Ferguson was also keen to be even-handed towards local protestants who took a more hostile view. By means of letters to the local press and at meetings some time after various reported clashes, he defended the right of Orangemen to march and on one occasion declared that they “had as much right to a national platform” as any catholic.<sup>35</sup> In July 1874, after one particular street clash in Govan and the conviction of three catholics for attacking Orange banners, he disowned such attacks as the work of troublemakers.<sup>36</sup> He even on one occasion spoke of meeting one particularly fiery evangelical and Orangeman, the Glasgow School Board member Harry Long, and of being treated by him “as a gentleman”.<sup>37</sup> Ferguson was equally mindful of catholic sentiment, always taking care to have catholic priests in platform support at nationalist gatherings – the Revs. Henry Murphy and Michael Condon being conspicuously outspoken.

It was difficult, nonetheless, to ignore the reality and nature of clerical influence in the lives of catholic Irishmen and the appeal of populist anti-catholic rhetoric to many working-class Glaswegians. Ferguson, thus, found himself having to take up an uneasy stance in local electoral politics, allied to particular established interests.

As an illustration of this one only has to look at two attempts to mobilise an Irish vote in Glasgow elections. Firstly, in November 1872, James Lynch, pawnbroker, made a bid for a municipal seat in the city's Sixth Ward, comprising an area around the Saltmarket with a large Irish population, under circumstances which were unlikely to enhance the chances of future success for any candidate of Irish extraction. Against a pro-temperance candidate, John Neil, fully backed by the local Ward Committee, Lynch chose to have not only Alexander McLaren, wine merchant and active Conservative, as a leading organiser but also a Mr. William Smith, secretary of the local Wine, Spirit and Beer Association, as his agent. Any would-be Irish businessman found the drink trade easier to enter than most, little capital being required in order to set up shop, and, indeed, in Britain and Ireland by the late nineteenth century the trade was often seen as a conduit to respectability and community politics. Important



also as the pub was in immigrant life - as a meeting-place, centre for informal politics and even serving as a makeshift labour exchange - it would therefore not have been seen as untoward by Irish people for a man such as Lynch to have allies in the trade.

There is evidence even that Lynch was backed by the same men in his attempt to become a member of the local Parish Board around the same time. Bad enough as this might appear at a time of great middle-class concern over the drink trade, the very visible support of Rev. Alexander Munro, Glasgow's leading catholic clergyman (even though he had not been particularly pro-Irish in the past), and several keen Irish nationalists, such as the printer James Lindsay, was only to confirm the prejudices of many. This was to ensure persistent suspicions well into the next century among Liberal politicians and journalists that behind every catholic Irish candidate was a "whiskey and holy water" conspiracy.<sup>38</sup>

There is no evidence of Ferguson's involvement in Lynch's failed attempt, although he heartily approved of Irish bids for a voice in local affairs. However, he did appear on a electoral platform alongside Lynch to back Francis E. Kerr in the General Election of 1874. Ferguson had to approve of Kerr's candidature in defensive tones before a platform

containing Rev. Munro. Kerr was obviously a 'catholic' candidate and it was made very clear by Ferguson that no questions were to be asked of the candidate as "he [Kerr] was their guest" and a question indeed asked on "political prisoners" met with a refusal to reply. The speeches of Kerr and Munro were an attempt to identify the Irish vote with that for denominational education and seemed to make perfunctory mention of the case for Home Rule, quite in contrast to previous or later Irish political meetings.<sup>39</sup> Kerr, despite success in school board elections in 1873, could only manage 4,444 votes in the General Election poll – this, along with Lynch's poor showing in 1872, seems to have ruled out any further attempts to put up Irish or catholic candidates in the latter half of the decade. Ferguson, meanwhile, had to contend with an open challenge to his leadership of the Home Rule movement in Glasgow, indeed of the direction in which he was leading the Irish community in Glasgow.

In 1875, on the occasion of the centenary of Daniel O'Connell's birth, a demonstration was arranged for 7 August. However, in the preceding week, disagreements (at one level personal and, on another, reflecting a struggle between lay politicians and clergy) had revolved around Ferguson and the Rev. Bernard Tracy, 'missioner' in Pollokshaws.

Derry-born Tracy had been one of the twenty-two priests to sign the 1864 'Resolutions' document referred to earlier. However, he became one of the most vociferous against the *Free Press* in their attempt to use the document against the hierarchy. Later on, he established a reputation as a catholic champion against protestant prosyletisation, writing pamphlets on the subject and pressing local schools and Parochial Boards to release orphaned children into the care of catholic families and institutions. He also obtained sympathetic support from highly influential local protestants, such as Sir William Stirling Maxwell and the Crum family of Thonliebank, and, as a Parochial Board member and vigorous campaigner, had an influence that seems to have kept him in regular contact with Archbishop Eyre.<sup>40</sup> Clearly, Ferguson was challenged by a formidable figure among the Glasgow Irish.

On the day of the march, Tracy made a dramatic and obviously effective appeal to the assembled Irishmen on the Glasgow Green to turn away from "Protestants and Renegade Irishmen" and follow clergymen to a site near Langside, on the outskirts of the city. More than half the crowd apparently did follow, led it seems by a group of 15 clergymen that included the Revs Alexander Munro (by that time, Vicar-General, and a key member of the diocesan executive) and Thomas Donnelly, both very



outspoken against Irish nationalists in the 1860s.<sup>41</sup> Ferguson and his followers led, as a consequence, less than half of the crowd to another destination, Eastmuir, in the east of Glasgow.

Speeches of the day at either meeting place chose to highlight different aspects of O'Connell's career. In Langside, Tracy spoke of O'Connell as successful "because he carried with him the agency of the priests" and Munro warned that "only by constitutional organisations and efforts" could Irish Catholics achieve their rights. Meanwhile, at Eastmuir, Ferguson praised O'Connell as an agitator for "repeal of the accursed union" and characterised the assembly as "on behalf of amnesty and Home Rule". It is not easy to say conclusively whether the dispute was a matter of the honesty and competence of Ferguson's leadership, his protestantism or his willingness to accommodate political extremists – extremists such as a Mr. Connell who said at Eastmuir that every true Irishman "should die with arms in his hands". On the day of the march, both Ferguson and Michael Clarke, secretary of the local Home Rule organisation, seemed to indicate that a resolution in favour of an amnesty for remaining 'political' prisoners was the cause of the split.<sup>42</sup> That said, at meetings in August and October of the same year, figures such as John Barry, Captain Kirwan of the HRCGB

and Rev. Henry Murphy chose to stoutly defend Ferguson against Tracy's perceived anti-protestantism.<sup>43</sup>

Ferguson himself seems to have been conscious not so much of his protestantism, but of the fact that he was seen as a politician of increasing significance among the exiles and yet not bound by the spiritual guidance of the Catholic Church. This is in all likelihood revealed by his decision (quite before any "struggle" claimed by Tracy) to resign in 1875 as president of the Home Rule Association in Glasgow.<sup>44</sup> Ferguson, apparently, could maintain a high profile within the HRCGB, the Home Rule League and among Fenians, but not be seen as openly at the head of Glasgow's Irish catholics.

Nevertheless, his standing within Irish circles, in Scotland and elsewhere, remained high, no doubt reinforced by his active support of the 'obstructionists' in Parliament. He is seen by one of Parnell's biographers, F. S. L. Lyons, as perhaps the first Home Ruler to publicly endorse Parnell as possible leader<sup>45</sup> and his criticisms of Butt's lacklustre performance as parliamentary leader became steadily more insistent in the late 1870s. In January 1875 he indeed publicly called for a policy of obstruction, a few months before Biggar began his own pioneering use of such tactics.<sup>46</sup> Butt

was not interested in a tightly disciplined parliamentary group of selected and controlled party delegates, holding instead to the tradition of MPs as constituency representatives. He clearly valued the traditions of parliament and, though he accepted the need for obstruction when making a particular point, did not accept the Biggar and Parnell's policy of persistent and indiscriminate interference in parliamentary business. The frustration of the small coterie around Parnell in conjunction with Butt's lack of firm leadership was discrediting him in the eyes of the Irish electorate – he could not even muster a united corps of Irish MPs behind his vision of federal government in a parliamentary debate in June 1876.<sup>47</sup> Also, more significantly for parallel action MPs such as Biggar, Barry and F. H. O'Donnell, hardline Fenians were turning against participation in parliamentary politics. Ferguson, therefore, in speaking out in favour of Parnell, was probably expressing what many advanced constitutionalists were thinking.

O'Donnell, MP and a colleague of Parnell, visited Glasgow in August 1877, as both new honorary general secretary of the HRCGB and president of the local association, to praise Glasgow's contribution to the movement, expressing the hope that Ferguson would soon join him in



parliament.<sup>48</sup> O'Donnell's praise was to be expected considering Ferguson's public declaration for Parnell, but was also probably a recognition of Ferguson's long-standing status as one intimately involved in Fenian tactics with regard to Butt. Ferguson was present at a meeting on the eve of the transformation of the HGA into the Home Rule League in 1873 at which it was agreed that Butt's movement would receive Fenian support for a trial period of three years.<sup>49</sup> Not only, it seems, was this policy adhered to by Ferguson, in that support does seem to have been removed after three years, he took even many of his closest colleagues by surprise with his early criticism of Butt and promotion of Parnell.

This he achieved while continuing to maintain the constitutional line against hardliners, notable among them men such as the Fenian ex-convict, Dr. Denis Mulcahy – who in 1877 denounced Home Rule as a “sham” - and C. G. Doran, secretary of the IRB Supreme Council and former supporter of ‘parallel’ action. In 1876 and 1877, Supreme Council members Barry, Biggar, O'Donnell and O'Connor Power, faced with an eruption of hostility from hardliners, resigned or were expelled. Before and after their respective departures, they were forced to endure orchestrated disruption, even physical assaults, at their public meetings.<sup>50</sup> Ferguson it seems did not

suffer such maltreatment and was able not only to smoothly guide local nationalists behind Parnell, but also to arrange Glasgow meetings as a forum for obstructionists. Parnell, before being placed at the head of HRCGB - in a successful but discreet 'coup' against Butt in late August 1877 - had visited Glasgow on three occasions to put the case for obstruction and witnessed local branches turning into his loyal promoters almost immediately.<sup>51</sup> Neither Ferguson's confidence nor his leadership of local nationalists, it appears, had been in any way shaken by the events of 1875.

As for local politics in the 1870s, the fact remains that the Irish electorate could not deliver, nor was anyone willing or able to stand before the Irish as a Home Rule candidate. There does seem to have been a tacit agreement to allow Rev. Munro and his supporters to continue unhindered on the School Board in lobbying for the right to a separate catholic education, against protestant extremists such as the aforementioned Harry Long. However, in municipal elections, there are only vague hints of any Irish or catholic input. These elections in the 1870s were very much contests, if contested at all, between the temperance and drink lobbies. Thus, whereas in Liverpool in August 1877, delegates at the HRCGB

conference could hear congratulations offered to the success of Liverpool's four Home Rule councillors, the Glasgow Irish, at a time when Catholics made up around one quarter or one fifth of the city population, could not boast of a single nationalist councillor.<sup>52</sup>

Glasgow's Home Rulers certainly knew how to organise disruption of Liberal Party and Ward Committee meetings, targeting in particular the labour-friendly but anti-Home Rule Glasgow MP, George Anderson.<sup>53</sup> They also had able individuals, such as Gorbals shopkeepers Michael Clarke and Robert McKillop, who were consistent enough in their active support for Home Rule and had the financial means to be ward politicians.<sup>54</sup> Likewise, the local movement had expanded under the auspices of the HRCGB, with seven branches coming into existence, all governed by a Glasgow 'Central Council', and a large hall and reading room in the Trongate.<sup>55</sup> All this and enthusiastic crowds at meetings, political or otherwise, did not bare fruit for would-be Home Rule politicians. Under notoriously difficult franchise conditions for the poorer, more mobile Irish, drink trade interests and Catholic Church concerns, in a sometimes bitterly sectarian climate, meant that they made little impact at the polls.

For Ferguson and his followers among the Glasgow Irish, a real



change in their political standing was only to come about as a result of Ferguson's preoccupation with anti-landlordism. This was the substantive reason why he helped move nationalism in a yet new direction. Both he and Michael Davitt were to become leading figures in a new flowering of Fenian-constitutionalist co-operation aimed at harnessing land-reform agitation to the nationalist cause. Using his standing among radical land-reformers and nationalists, Ferguson would also manage to readily transform local Home Rule Associations into branches of the Irish Land League with little difficulty. As for any political ambitions he or his supporters might hold, it was this phase which was to make tangible gains for the radical-secular organisation he had managed to bring about and the political identity it had endeavoured to inculcate among the Glasgow Irish. This identity allowed for and built upon connections that were established with Scottish land-reformers and radicals, giving the Glasgow Irish the means whereby they might have access to municipal and national politics. Ferguson, nevertheless, would have to continue to compete against other loyalties, and the forces which sustained and encouraged them, among the catholic Irish. If anything, the 1870s had seen them develop organisations and programmes of their own which could potentially undo Ferguson's

work and they now have to be examined in order to shed light on the scale of Ferguson's later achievements.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> J. McCaffrey, 'Irish Vote', pp. 33-6. See also W. Hamish Fraser, 'Labour and the Changing City' in G. Gordon (ed.), *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen, 1985), 164-5 and D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party: 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 443-4 for comments on distinctly restrictive franchise conditions in Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> See Handley, *Irish in Modern Scotland*, p. 269; also *Glasgow Echo* (hereafter *G.E.*), 1 Sept. 1894. Both of these accounts agree on his date of birth, but the latter dates his settlement in Glasgow from 1859. Ferguson was noticeably unsure of dates, as for instance in his testimony to the Parnell Commission of 1889, for which see *Times*, 25 May 1889.

<sup>3</sup> *G.E.*, 1 Sept. 1894. Cliffe Leslie (c.1827 - 1882), born in Co. Wexford as the second son of Edward Leslie, rector of Annahilt, Co. Down, was a friend of John Stuart Mill and held the Chair of Jurisprudence and Political Economy from 1853 in Queen's College, Belfast.

<sup>4</sup> *NBDM*, 15 Oct. 1867.

<sup>5</sup> *NBDM*, 16 Dec. 1867.

<sup>6</sup> A. Jackson, *Ireland: 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999), p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> *G.E.*, 1 Sept. 1894.



<sup>8</sup> *Evening Times*, 24 April 1906. According to this article Ferguson had a “very extensive business in London” at the time of his death.

<sup>9</sup> D. Tribe, *President Charles Bradlaugh, M.P.* (London, 1971), pp. 93 and 97; see *NBDM*, 31 Oct. 1867 for mention of a League discussion on constitutional reform in Ireland.

<sup>10</sup> See Charles Bradlaugh, *The Land, The People, and The Coming Struggle* (1877), p. 16; reprinted in John Saville (ed.), *A Selection of the Political Pamphlets of Charles Bradlaugh* (New York, 1970) for Bradlaugh’s plea (and implicit warning) to Irish landlords: “you who have wrought her shame and made her disaffection - you who have driven her children across the broad ocean to seek for life - even for you there is the moment to save yourselves, and do good to your kind”.

<sup>11</sup> Rose and Quinlivan, *Fenians in England*, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> Tribe, *Bradlaugh*, pp. 97-8.

<sup>13</sup> *NBDM*, 18 March 1870; *GH*, 18 March 1870, for reports of ‘soirée’; Hutchison, ‘Mid-Victorian Glasgow’, p. 488 and GAA, WD 9/1, broadsheet entitled ‘The Troubles and Trials of Harry Kane’ for comments on Walsh.

<sup>14</sup> Moody, *Davitt*, pp. 123-4.

<sup>15</sup> L. W. Brady, *T. P. O’Connor and The Liverpool Irish*, (London, 1983),

pp. 39.

<sup>16</sup> See *The Times*, 25 May 1889 for Ferguson's testimony to the Parnell Commission (set up to investigate Parnell's links with Fenians during the Irish Land War, 1879-82) and his statements regarding Barry. See also Handley, *Irish in Modern Scotland*, p. 270 and Moody, *Davitt*, pp. 125-6 on Barry's role in creating the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain in 1873. For his role in Davitt's arms traffic and other biographical details, see *ibid.*, p. 68. Barry went on to become an Irish MP.

<sup>17</sup> Handley, *Irish in Modern Scotland*, p. 269.

<sup>18</sup> Moody, *Davitt*, p. 126; Lyons, *Parnell*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>19</sup> This 'Captain' Kirwan is probably the same individual, described as a sergeant in the Irish Papal Brigade, who jointly led a successful Fenian raid on Stepside and Glencullen police stations on the night of 5 and 6 March 1867. This was one of the few successes in the generally uncoordinated and poorly led Dublin Rising of that night. Kirwan was also later, sometime around late 1876, a leading figure in spreading the word on Home Rule amongst the Irish in Canada. See Shin-ichi Takagami, 'The Fenian Rising in Dublin, March 1867', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. xxix, no. 115 (1995), p. 362; also *The Times* 27 August 1877 for mention of Kirwan's departure

to Canada and Moody, *Davitt*, pp.126-7 details of his work there. Frank Hugh O'Donnell, for a time later 'Honorary Secretary' of the HRCGB, described Kirwan as a "strict disciplinarian", for which see F.H. O'Donnell, *A History of the Irish, Vol. 1* (London, 1910), p. 163.

<sup>20</sup> *The Times*, 25 May 1889.

<sup>21</sup> O'Day, 'Political Organisation of the Irish', p. 197.

<sup>22</sup> *The Times.*, 9 and 25 Feb. 1873; also O'Donnell, *History of Irish*, pp. 161 and 163.

<sup>23</sup> O'Day, 'Political Organisation of the Irish', pp. 194 and 197.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 Sept. 1873; also Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 55 on Ferguson's role within the HRCGB.

<sup>25</sup> *The Times*, 12 Sept. 1877. Nelson went on to become a Home Rule MP.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 Jan. and 25 Feb. 1873; 23 Aug. 1876; 27 Aug. 1877. The latter report on the Liverpool convention spoke of the press being "rigidly excluded" and delegates "specially pledged to reveal nothing" beyond resolutions given out to the press by the Confederation secretary.

<sup>27</sup> *Times*, 9 and 25 Feb. 1873.

<sup>28</sup> Moody, *Davitt*, p.126.

<sup>29</sup> *GH*, 18 Sept. 1872.



<sup>30</sup> See *GH*, 17 Aug. 1874 for one of Ferguson's most detailed speeches promoting federalism above other options (a straightforward return to pre-1800 parliament or complete separation); also *ibid.*, 19 March 1872 for one early mention by Ferguson of benefits of Home Rule for Scotland and 18 March 1875 for early use of 'Home Rule for all' slogan by him.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 April 173 and 17 Aug. 1874.

<sup>32</sup> *GH*, 19 March 1872 for Biggar's first recorded public visit.

<sup>33</sup> Handley, *Irish in Modern Scotland*, p. 270.

<sup>34</sup> D. Thornley, *Isaac Butt and Home Rule* (London, 1964), pp. 133-4; *GH*, 6 and 7 Nov. 1872. Biggar only gained 89 votes, a 'humiliating' result in Thornley's eyes.

<sup>35</sup> *Glasgow News* (hereafter *GN*) 6 May 1874.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 July 1874.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 Aug. 1875.

<sup>38</sup> See *GH*, 6 and 29 Nov. 1872 and I. Sweeney, 'Municipal Administration of Glasgow', pp. 796-798 for details of Lynch's bid. On the subject of Irish pubs and publicans, see Malcolm, *Ireland Sober*, pp. 207-8 and 298; S. Fielding, 'Irish politics in Manchester 1890-1914', *International Review of Social History*, vol. xxxiii (1988), p. 266 and Sweeney, 'Municipal

Administration of Glasgow', pp. 800-1.

<sup>39</sup> *GH*, 4 Feb. 1874. Francis E. Kerr, a cousin to the Marquis of Lothian, was fully backed by the "Central Committee of the Catholic Association" in a handbill issued in 6 March 1873 and described as "late officer in the Pope's Zouaves", for which see GAA, WD 5, Notebooks and Diaries of Father Michael Condon, handbill placed therein. He was also married to one of Robert Monteith's daughters. The Zouaves had helped defend the lands of the Papacy against the troops of the new Italian Republic from 1860-71 and Monteith was a well-known catholic benefactor.

<sup>40</sup> See GAA, WD 5, Father Michael Condon's Diaries and Notebooks, notebook dated 23 May 1870, pp. 636, 639-40, 644-50 for details of Tracy's early life and work; also *ibid.*, pp. 561-3 on his quarrel with *FreePress*. For some indication of his cordial relations with local leading gentry, "anxious to comply with the wish of the Catholics", see GAA, GC 7/10, Tracy to Eyre, 21 Dec. 1875 and IP 3/19, Stirling Maxwell to Tracy, 4 Nov. 1875.

<sup>41</sup> GAA, WD 5, Father Michael Condon's Notebooks and Diaries, diary dated by hand "1874-5-6-7-8", entry for 7 Aug. 1875.

<sup>42</sup> *GN*, 9 Aug. 1875.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 Aug. 1875; *GH*, 7 Oct. 1875.

**PAGE  
NUMBERING  
AS ORIGINAL**



**Chapter 4**  
**The Catholic Church and the Drink**  
**Trade: Their Competing Claims to**  
**the Irish Vote**

John Ferguson was able successfully to create both an organisation and a loyal following of Irish nationalists, which he in turn used to pressurise local Liberal politicians and provide a forum for the ambitions of Parnell. In achieving this he, nevertheless, did have to work alongside more locally-oriented political figures and a specifically catholic body energised into hardening its position, against what might be seen as more overt manifestations of protestant evangelism in civic life. The central issues for all concerned parties were, firstly, the religious dimension in the education of Glasgow's urban poor and, secondly, the use of legislation against the moral and physical degradation brought about by drink. Public debates and local elections focusing on such moral concerns were neither particularly promising nor safe for a temperance sympathiser of protestant stock such as Ferguson.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, they might be viewed as threatening to upstage the latter's secular, non-sectarian promotion of self-government and social progress. While Ferguson may have kept noticeably (and sensibly) quiet

about questions of education and temperance, their impact on the political identity of the Irish in Glasgow cannot be underestimated.

In education, first of all, we find in Irish political circles of the late nineteenth-century an overwhelming concern for a 'catholic' version of the same. For the priesthood in Scotland, the moral education of the poor had always been seen as a primary responsibility, and there is ample evidence of the personal efforts required (and privations undergone) by Irish-born parish priests in taking it seriously. In providing for this need, however, catholics often depended on the benevolence of local well-to-do protestant families, such as the Crums of Thornliebank and the Stirling Maxwells of Pollok.<sup>2</sup> Others, as in the case of schools run by the Glasgow Catholic Schools Society, allowed their children to be educated outwith the exclusive control of the Church, sometimes side-by-side with protestants.<sup>3</sup> Mixed schools continued, especially in the less charged atmosphere of Edinburgh, Galloway and the Highlands. In 1828, however, Bishop Scott of Glasgow withdrew the Church's support from the Glasgow Schools Society, acting on the belief "that the loyalty of catholics raised in a Protestant society could not be maintained without the existence of a church educational system". In other

words, there were perceived to be dangers in not having catholic-only, Church-run schools in Presbyterian Scotland.<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1860s, then, the norm in catholic education provision was for individual clerics to build, maintain and manage schools, with funding coming from parish donations and Privy Council grants. Indeed, by 1857, all 14 catholic parish schools in Glasgow were in receipt of some measure of government aid.<sup>5</sup> Grants were conditional upon inspection (by a catholic inspector) and, to judge by official inspection reports, these same schools suffered from “the inadequacy of their accommodation, and as a natural consequence, the unsatisfactory nature of much of the instruction”.<sup>6</sup> In 1869, the Western District administration under Scott’s successor, Bishop John Murdoch, was criticised by the Secretary of the London-based ‘Catholic Poor Schools Committee’, T. W. Allies, for not organising collections for the Committee’s central funds more effectively. Allies, likewise, quoted from a circular, dated 18 September 1869, bemoaning the poor uptake, by Western District schools, of grants available from these very same funds.<sup>7</sup> The message seemed to be clear and all the more urgent with legislation on compulsory education in the offing: Archbishop Eyre had to



co-ordinate school-funding strategies to a far greater degree or risk losing pupils to new publicly-financed schools.

Liberal progressives in general, at that time, increasingly saw education in modern terms, as both *the* essential prerequisite to further economic growth and the remedy to the 'moral chaos' of contemporary urban life. In practical terms, there was a perceived need to bring more children into schools, to provide them with better learning conditions and, consequently, for the sake of efficiency, a greater co-ordination of disparate efforts. To get around the problem of existing denominational control of school provision there were strong and vocal lobbyists for secular instruction, such as in the National Education League (and its equivalent in Scotland, the Scottish National Education League). Nonconformist largely in matters of religion and Liberal in their politics, these secularists were keen to promote basic skills, principally in the '3Rs'. In Scotland, the Leagues were often misrepresented as fundamentally opposed to religious instruction in schools. However, as for instance in Glasgow School Board elections of 1873, they declared themselves for limited Bible lessons ('read but not explained'), thus seeking to obviate charges of proselytisation on behalf of any one sect.<sup>8</sup> Quite apart from the difficulties that this formula gave

ordinary protestant churchgoers, reluctant to give up one of the long-accepted purposes of education, it was not one likely to appeal to the catholic clergy.

By 1869, the clergy in the Western District were determined almost to a man to have denominational schooling remain. At a meeting of the District's priests held in that very year, with Eyre in attendance, Rev. Thomas Keane, of St. John's mission in Barrhead, was one of only "a few" who thought that they "ought to make some effort to meet Protestants". He seems to have had great fears of a 'crush' before new radical forces in politics and preferred a strategy of dialogue with other denominations to that of determined isolation.<sup>9</sup> Whatever Keane's motivation was, it became clear after the passage of the 1870 Education Act in England that, if denominational schooling was to remain a viable option, catholics would indeed have to actively cultivate the support of non-catholics. New, more stringent, guidelines (with their stress on 'efficient' schools) for Privy Council grants and the competition from modern, rate-funded public schools would simply place too heavy a strain on local congregations and individual benefactors. What is more, the English Act itself gave catholics some grounds for optimism, since it recognised the right of 'voluntary schools' to

continued government funding – although this was for building maintenance only, and even then grants had to be matched on an equal basis by private subscription. In addition, other assistance, for instance towards the payment of fees for poor scholars, could be forthcoming from school boards and boards in England were given great leeway in deciding on the nature of any religious instruction provided. These powers and the possible financial strength of the proposed boards, receiving as they did a rates payment from all ratepayers whatever their religious adherence, supplied both catholic laity and clergy with ample motivation to seek support for publicly-funded denominationalism.

The chief Catholic Church spokesman in the education wrangle was none other than one of the fiercest critics of the recently defunct *Free Press*, Rev. Alexander Munro of St. Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow. An influential second-in-command to the recently appointed Archbishop Eyre, he challenged speakers at a meeting for "Religious Instruction in Day Schools" to acknowledge the case for an alliance, an alliance of those who saw religion as a "principle as well as a doctrine, living and pervading both our moral and intellectual nature" against state-controlled, secular education.<sup>10</sup> At the meeting, the threat of modern-day 'speculating', of



“people educated for Communism” (with the Paris Commune still fresh in everyone’s mind), was certainly a major concern of platform speakers such as future ‘use and wont’ candidate William Kidston.<sup>11</sup> However, the brusque refusal by the Chairman, James Baird of Cambusdoon, to allow Munro a hearing confirmed the latter in his opinion that it was nothing more than a “vulgar, No-Popery gathering”. Perhaps Munro’s intervention was nothing more than a stunt since, soon after the meeting, he was to allude bitterly, in somewhat inflammatory terms, to the “immediately and necessarily subversive doctrines” in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith.<sup>12</sup> Also, three months later, at a public meeting apparently organised by members of the Catholic Poor Schools Committee, he was to second a motion, by wealthy convert Robert Monteith, protesting against any bill which forced denominational schools to be open to children of every sect.<sup>13</sup> Stunt or not, the scene was set for an acrimonious and religiously-focused School Board election campaign in the following year and, even if lay Irishmen were not to be prominent as speakers or candidates in these elections, the Irish vote was to prove surprisingly effective for the first time.

For the School Board elections of March 1873, a cumulative system of voting, whereby each elector was to have fifteen votes to use and

distribute as he/she saw fit, was favourable to highly organised efforts and gave unprecedented opportunities to smaller religious and political groups. Even more significantly for the Irish, the franchise was considerably wider than at municipal or parliamentary elections: all householders, male or female, paying more than £4 annual rent could vote, regardless of whether or not rates had actually been paid for that current year.<sup>14</sup> This had the effect of nearly doubling the number of eligible electors. Indeed, the local press made it a point to remark upon the numbers and boisterous participation of female voters. Equally, the *Glasgow Herald's* election correspondents were keen to remark upon the numbers of illiterate Irish voters in the areas to the west and north of Glasgow Green, to be precise in the fourth and sixth electoral wards.

However slyly reporters made their point about the questionable nature of such voters, their recurrent claim as to the almost “perfect organisation” of the catholics is well borne-out by poll statistics. They managed to get all three of their candidates on to the Board: Francis E. Kerr and two priests, Revs. Munro and Chisholm. Since this meant the choice of exactly the right number of candidates, based on the expectation of a certain minimum number of disciplined voters, and the successful allocation by

their voters of an equal number of votes to each candidate, they could be justifiably proud of their performance.<sup>15</sup> The Kidstonites, or ‘use and wont’ candidates, were also successful; with Harry Long, evangelist and Orangeman, coming out top of the poll. The great losers in the contest, however, were those candidates jointly endorsed by the Scottish National Education League and ‘Glasgow Trades’ Delegates Electoral Committee’, all eight of their candidates missing out on a seat. Notable among these promoters of ‘undenominational’ education was George Jackson, former Secretary of the Scottish National Reform League, an activist who seems to have found it difficult to attain public office after his early promise.<sup>16</sup> Religious squabbles threatened to dominate the proceedings on the newly-appointed Board and, when the *Herald* turned its anger on the Kidstonites for attempting to push prayers “down the throats of unwilling brethren” at the first meeting, it was drawing attention to what it saw as the dangers and impracticality of having uncompromising religious views on public bodies.<sup>17</sup>

The electoral organisers of the local Catholic Association were to feel sufficiently emboldened by the School Board poll of 1873 to give their full support to Kerr’s candidacy in the 1874 Westminster elections. Kerr’s platform policy has already been noted, but it is interesting to detail Kerr’s



background and thus note some of the influences behind a more explicitly catholic political identity for Glasgow's Irish population.

Kerr was a son of the catholic convert Lord Henry Kerr (1800-82), at one time Anglican rector of Dittisham in Devon, and grandson to William, the sixth Marquis of Lothian (1765-1824). He was thus part of a long-established and politically influential family. His uncle, John, seventh Marquis, served as Tory MP for Huntingdon from 1820 to 1826; one cousin, Lord Walter Talbot Kerr, eventually became senior naval lord at the Admiralty in 1900 and another, the ninth Marquis, Schomberg Henry Kerr, active in the Conservative party, was to serve as Secretary for Scotland from 1887 to 1892.<sup>18</sup> Francis Kerr's strong ties with the peerage undeniable, the Lothian family in general had also undoubted affinities with Roman Catholicism. The seventh Marquis' wife, Lady Cecil Chetwynd, daughter of the second Earl Talbot, converted to Catholicism soon after her husband's untimely death, raising her younger children, including Walter Talbot Kerr, as catholics. Her two eldest sons, William and Schomberg, remained Episcopalian, but not only did William, as eighth Marquis, ensure that "his mother's independence was respected", they seem also to have continued good relations with the catholic side of the family. It would come as no great

surprise if further research was to show that Francis Kerr's father had in fact been the chief influence in bringing about Lady Cecil's conversion to catholicism.<sup>19</sup>

The evident strength of Kerr's religious loyalties, although his origins were a matter of some speculation to contemporary Glaswegians, only seemed to add fuel to suspicions concerning his political motivation for standing. His published residence was in the Borders and he was described slyly as a 'gentleman' on more than one occasion, blood ties with a titled family not known for its attachment to Liberalism eventually coming to light. It was not difficult for Glasgow's Liberal establishment to characterise him as a surrogate Tory and meddler in Glasgow's affairs.<sup>20</sup> His marriage to the daughter of Robert Monteith (resident in Carstairs, Lanarkshire, and son of a former Glasgow Lord Provost) certainly could be used to demonstrate his connection, even affection, for the city. However, Monteith's early career as a Tory MP would probably deepen rather than diminish suspicions among Liberals that Kerr was simply there to reduce the Liberal vote.<sup>21</sup> Kerr's showing in the elections, where he gained around 4.000 votes, only seemed to make things difficult for the catholic Irish. In showing support for someone with such a social background, and with a clearly religious vision

of politics, they had irritated local Liberal politicians (some of whom, such as Robert Dalglish or Sir John Stirling Maxwell, in the past had shown themselves sympathetic to local Catholics) and left themselves open to the attack that they were irreconcilable 'spoilers', plainly out of step with the Liberal values of civic Scotland.

Whatever the reasons, and lack of any other genuinely wealthy or able laymen may have been one of them, converts of his social background continued to play a pre-eminent role in the Catholic political lobby. To verify this, one only has to examine the list of Scottish representatives at a meeting on Catholic Poor Education Committee of 1875, with Lord Henry Kerr, the Master of Lovat and Monteith sitting down with the elite of English Catholicism, such as the Duke of Norfolk. It is also revealing that Kerr and Joseph Monteith, Robert's son, were the only lay Catholic representatives on the Glasgow School Board up until 1879.<sup>22</sup>

Given the influence of wealthy converts in church affairs, perhaps enhanced as a consequence of Archbishop Eyre's own gentry background in the North of England, it would be a mistake nonetheless to ignore the contribution of Irish-Scots laymen to Catholic organisations. If the Catholic political community was indeed the 'creature' of a conservative



hierarchy and considerable landowners,<sup>23</sup> there was also an active cohort of largely first- and second-generation ward politicians who had the wealth, the standing and the interest to volunteer their services. They flourished in self-help organisations, such as the parish 'conferences' of the SVDP, or in, for example, the local management of insurance societies, and were keen to participate on civil Parochial Boards and the Town Council.<sup>24</sup> The efforts of Henry Murphy, Patrick Rogan, James Lynch and Thomas Tiernan, to name but four, had, by the early 1870s, established an Irish/catholic voice in the committee rooms of Parochial Boards and, even if we accept that the upsurge of temperance sentiment, rather than prejudice, put a block on their municipal ambitions, their quite remarkable success in Parochial elections, in which we might expect anti-catholic prejudice to be a factor, requires an explanation.

Parochial Boards of Management in Scotland had been responsible, since 1845, for poor relief and gathered powers in relation to the schooling of the poor, registration and public health up until their replacement by Parish Councils in 1894.<sup>25</sup> For Irish migrants, the often impermanent nature of their living and working environment made parish relief a difficult, yet very necessary, last resort in times of hardship. To gain relief, even the

dubious boon of poorhouse accommodation, required continuous residence of five (later three) years in one parish, a requirement that no relief had been claimed in that time and, in the case of any succeeding claim, the passage of one relief-free year in the interim.<sup>26</sup> Bad enough as this was, failure to meet these requirements could mean the forcible removal to another parish or indeed to Ireland. Cases of recently widowed Irish women and orphans being 'returned' to the nearest port in Ireland were the stuff of several contemporary court cases.

Clearly, there was a great incentive for the Irish to return sympathetic managers to the Parochial Boards in Glasgow. The franchise, however, was particularly unfavourable towards the less well-off, and would appear to rule out significant participation. Anyone, for instance, who had paid his rates in the civil parishes of Barony, City, Gorbals and Govan had a vote, but the greater the value of property then the greater the number of votes he might dispose of. Also, the very short time between the issue of rate assessments and the annual elections in November effectively meant the disenfranchisement of those without regular and adequate income.<sup>27</sup> At a meeting, in 1879, of the City Board, responsible for meeting the needs of many Irish people in areas such those adjacent to the High Street and the

Saltmarket, a Finance Committee member spoke of “not more than a quarter [of all City ratepayers] paying their rates by December”, thus rendering the remainder ineligible to vote.<sup>28</sup> If one adds to this the fact that those elected needed to possess property, within the boundaries of said parish, valued at a figure approved by the Board of Supervision in Edinburgh (£40 being the figure set for Barony parish), then it is unsurprising that managers tended to be largely substantial property-holders.<sup>29</sup>

Looking closely at both the City and Barony parishes (caring for areas to the north, east and west of the city - some of which came under the jurisdiction of the Town Council in other civic matters), we can see that wealth, connections and a degree of non-catholic concern may go a long way to explain the success of individual Irish/catholics. Certainly this is the case if success is to be measured by the ten years of uninterrupted service which both Thomas Tiernan and James Lynch gave to their respective Boards.

Taking Lynch first of all (long before his appearance at the municipal hustings), he had advertised his services in the *Free Press* as a coach-hirer, and apparently operated for some time as funeral arranger and pawnbroker on Glasgow's High Street. According to the census return of 1871, he had been born in Stirling, and, at the age of 52, resided in a



substantial house with ten windowed rooms, located in one of the more expensive developments in the city's West End.<sup>30</sup> Attending a meeting in November 1863 in response to an effort by Patrick Rogan to boost Parochial Board participation, he might also have been one of those assisted three years later, according to the *Free Press*, by "Protestant interest" in his successful bid for election.<sup>31</sup> In fact, he was nominated for parish office by fellow local Board members, presumably non-catholic, in 1866 and 1867<sup>32</sup> and remained in office for another six years. Even accusations in the 1872 municipal elections that he had been put forward by drink interests does not seem to have put off his Board colleagues or parish electors.

His role on the City Board, representing electors from the strongly Irish Third Ward, centred on the Saltmarket, seems to have been a respected and effective one: this is evident in his successful calling to account of the Board Chairman, a Mr. Robert Muir, for public remarks attributed to him on the 'boarding out' of catholic children with protestant families.<sup>33</sup> The Children's Committee of the Board, upon which Lynch served from around 1865 up until 1873, was indeed often prepared to have disabled children educated by nuns in Ireland, so keen apparently were they to meet the religious preferences of catholics.<sup>34</sup> Lynch's position in 1869 as Deputy

Chairman of the 'Glasgow Catholic Industrial Schools and Orphanage Board' probably owed much, no doubt, to his experience on the Parochial Board and added to his standing amongst Irish catholics.<sup>35</sup> It could be argued however that his position owed a great deal to the anxiety of other individuals, neither Irish nor catholic, for adequate representation of this section of the city's population.

The career of Dublin-born Thomas Tiernan would seem to confirm this view. Occupied in the 1870s as a cattle salesman, he was, again, a man of some substance, residing according to the 1871 census at Newton Place, in the fashionable West End of the city, in a house with nine windowed rooms.<sup>36</sup> By 1862, he had already been placed on the Barony Board as member for the First District (Maryhill) and subsequently took on the role of Sub-Convenor of the 'House Sub-Committee', dealing with the management and provision of the Board poorhouse.<sup>37</sup> Certainly, Patrick Rogan and early Irish/catholic activist, Henry Murphy, were prominent ratepayers in Barony parish prior to 1862 (noticeably attending nomination meetings), but, again, Tiernan was regularly returned, unopposed, as part of an apparently self-selected group. These fellow Board members, presumably non-catholics, were probably among those lending him support in one case concerning the

disputed religious affiliation of an orphaned child.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps not so regular an attender as some others at Board meetings, Tiernan nevertheless gained a respectable vote in successive elections and was eventually chosen as Convenor of the House Committee in his final year as parish manager.<sup>39</sup>

It is striking that Tiernan and Lynch both figure more prominently in written records when there were animated responses from interested Catholics to instances of suspected proselytism. The actions of both managers would seem to show accord with the sentiments expressed by the *Free Press* in 1866, when it spoke of the need to protect destitute Catholic children “from the snares of the proselytiser”.<sup>40</sup> Catholic opinion had already been fired-up in the 1860s by the very public campaigning of clerics such as Fr. Bernard Tracy in Pollokshaws (himself a member for a time of the Levern School Board, responsible for an area just to the south of Glasgow)<sup>41</sup> and Parochial Board managers reacted with alacrity and sensitivity to the concerns of Lynch and Tiernan. There is however, in the early 1870s, a noticeable increase both in the numbers of Irishmen standing and in the number of contested elections for seats on the City and Barony Boards. An occupational profile of these candidates would feature mainly self-made, small businessmen, a number of them engaged in the distinctly less



respectable drink and pawnbroking trades. At a time of raised temperature in civic politics, even Irish/catholic leaders themselves showed some unease with the kind of interests promoted by these candidates.

To understand this unease it is important to note the structures and very personal contacts that would help maintain support for ward politicians such as Lynch and Tiernan. They were active in their local parish and diocesan bodies, dispensing relief through bodies such as the SVDP, which stressed the value of home-visits to the needy. They also provided much needed funding for school- and church-building, and were very much part of a 'respectable' layer within the catholic and wider community.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, new would-be managers, such as James Casey, John Conway or James D. McWade, as pawnbrokers or wine and spirit merchants, gave, at a time of feverish temperance activity, the appearance of involvement with an organised 'whisky ring'. In addition, with no obvious past career in catholic self-help organisations, they perhaps lacked the 'safe' credentials of Lynch and Tiernan. The evidence for an alliance of Trade interests is patchy, however, and a great deal was made of what may have been casual friendships at the time within a close community. Nevertheless - at a time when the publican or wine merchant was considered the epitome of

selfishness and socially-destructive behaviour - community worthies, voters, and clergy displayed distinct nervousness. Ultimately, at a time when the Catholic Association had done much to inspire denominational unity in the education debate, the integration of a new, more secular breed of ward politician into its active ranks may have influenced Irish voters to interpret temperance as nothing but the war-cry of a specifically anti-catholic evangelicalism.

The temperance movement in mid-century Scotland was indeed largely inspired, and continually boosted, by the efforts of American evangelicals and eventually took political shape in bodies such as the Scottish Temperance League and Scottish Permissive Bill and Temperance Association.<sup>43</sup> The latter was strongly inclined towards 'blanket prohibition' along the lines of existing legislation in the American state of Maine, but as it turned out was prepared to co-operate with the former in making use of local magistrates' powers. The aim was to restrict the number of alcohol outlets and to strictly police sale and consumption.<sup>44</sup> With William Collins (1817-95), son of the founder of the Collins publishing empire, as its most determined and distinguished spokesman, the temperance movement began to upset the comfortable assumptions of Glasgow's city fathers. Collins,

nicknamed 'Water Willie' by supporters of the drink trade, was, in common with many in the movement, apparently eager for confrontation with many of the city's (formerly) respectable citizens who happened to earn their living from the licensed trade. By the late 1860s, Permissivites such as James Leitch Lang, John Burt and James Torrens were contesting council seats. Some quickly gained seats on the magistrate's' bench, thereby intending to quite unashamedly make transfers, renewals and applications for 'certificates' (licences) dependent on a policy of containment, if not reduction.

Purveyors of wine, beer and spirits had seen the writing on the wall with the passage of the Forbes-Mackenzie Act in 1853 (responsible for the introduction of Sunday closing and some restriction of licences) and soon afterwards a deputation of Glasgow publicans, including Alexander McLaren, had lobbied Liberal MPs, Robert Dalglish and Viscount Melgund, for action against the problems it caused them.<sup>45</sup> Also, about ten years later, in 1864, the Glasgow Wine Spirit and Beer Trade Association (hereafter GWSBTA) was formed to agitate against Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Permissive Bill.<sup>46</sup> Turning their attention to municipal elections in 1868, just after the local government franchise was extended, and with the immediate aim of



stopping temperance 'zealots' reaching the magistrates' bench, it began to put forward a somewhat motley collection of GWSBTA members and outspoken populists, including the colourful James Steel and ex-Chartist James Martin. With Alexander McLaren, by now a well-established member of the Barony board for the Third District (which included the Bridgeton and Shettleston areas), it had one of its most satisfying municipal victories, defeating as he did James Leitch Lang in November 1869.<sup>47</sup> However, their generally unhappy choice of candidates and personal attacks on temperance candidates led to crushing defeat in November 1872. Even the *Glasgow Herald*, generally middle-of-the-road on the drink issue, was of the opinion that "few sensible people will regret that they [the Trade candidates] have been placed at the bottom of the poll".<sup>48</sup> After 1872, the temperance party was in effective control of the Town Council and Collins became Bailie, then Lord Provost in succeeding years. While Steel and Martin continued to publicly mock Collins for his teetotal public celebrations, it was Collins who seems to have captured the mood of the times, at any rate as experienced or felt by the majority of voters.<sup>49</sup>

Class was clearly one weapon in the Trade's armoury. They attempted to contrast the eccentric 'ways' of the West End middle classes

with those of the East End working class, and indeed Steel found strong backing in the 1870 municipal elections from the radical *Glasgow Sentinel*. Hence, perhaps, the success of McLaren, Martin, Steel et al. in working-class East End wards, at both municipal and parish level, up to 1872.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the ethnic and religious makeup of these wards is also a factor in their success, short-lived as it was. Fellow Trade member, the East End brewer George Dalrymple, had nominated McLaren in 1869 as a suitable municipal candidate, at a largely hostile meeting of the Sixth Ward Committee. However, interestingly, a Mr. Kelly was the first to promote McLaren as an alternative to Leitch Lang at the meeting and a Patrick Cairney seconded Dalrymple's motion.<sup>51</sup> Close Irish interest in the contest can also be inferred from the *Glasgow Herald's* observation that Lang's defeat had been partly down to his perceived anti-catholicism. Lang himself referred to a letter from a "highly respectable Roman Catholic" claiming that he had at one time, in performing his duties as an lawyer, sought to discredit the judicial oath and evidence of a catholic witness in proceedings before a Glasgow Sheriff.<sup>52</sup> Laing denied the charge but, in defeat, his public contrition for any 'slip' that might have given cause for offence among "our friends the Roman Catholics" showed the perceived importance

of the local Irish/catholic vote. The support, catholic or otherwise, for Trade candidates was however no match for the evangelical fervour, peaking around 1874, exercised on behalf (and often against the wishes) of the working classes.<sup>53</sup> Indeed Irish/catholic Board candidates with explicitly Trade-oriented occupations were noticeably unsuccessful in 1871-2. At around the same time McLaren's fellow Trade activists, Dalrymple and John Scott, lost their Third Ward seats on the Barony Board.<sup>54</sup> The defeat of Irish Trade candidates cannot be wholly attributed to non-catholic voters, however, as Lynch's foray into municipal politics reveals.

Lynch's candidature was always characterised by himself, by his supporters and by the not-altogether unsupportive *Glasgow Herald*, as occasioned by a desire to see some municipal representation of the city's catholic inhabitants, reckoned at the time to be around a quarter of the total population. In the aftermath of his defeat, there was however some evidence that Lynch had not had the support of all catholic electors and that he had been promised votes that did not materialise. Lynch was not a publican; nevertheless the prominence of GWSBTA officials and members on his electoral committee may have turned co-religionists against him.<sup>55</sup> At the same municipal election, it is interesting to note that a James McWade (or



'McQuade', as he was referred to by GWSBTA Secretary William Smith, in correspondence with the *Glasgow Herald*) was to speak out in support of Bailie James Torrens. McWade, standing as a candidate later that month in the Second Ward of Barony Parish, had made a remarkable about-turn. He had apparently urged fellow Trade members at a pre-election meeting "to take steps for ejecting Mr. Torrens from the Council" and headed a deputation to Thomas Tiernan, asking him to stand against Torrens in the Tenth Ward. Tiernan refused to put himself forward and, at the close of polling, McWade explained that "although a publican, he supported Mr. Torrens because the liquor trade had got hold of the Catholics". That this Damascene conversion had followed on from a visit to Tiernan gives great significance to McWade's statement.<sup>56</sup> The high probability that anti-Trade sentiments were expressed by one of the longest serving Irish/catholic Barony Parish managers, au fait surely with the interests and personal associations of Board colleagues, Alexander McLaren and George Dalrymple, is, at the very least, indicative of disquiet among some respectable catholics over drink trade alliances.

Catholics in the West of Scotland had not been averse to temperance, witness the existence of the Catholic Total Abstinence Society

at the time of Father Mathew's tours of Ireland and Britain. Formal large-scale organisation may have fallen into abeyance, but individual clerics such as Fathers Condon and Tracy tried to encourage local pledge-taking societies. Tracy, indeed, maintained contacts with catholic temperance activists elsewhere, such as James Nugent, owner of the Liverpool-based *Catholic Times*.<sup>57</sup> However, the convert from Anglicanism, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Henry Edward Manning, head of the Catholic Church in England from 1865 to 1892, went beyond the 'moral suasion' line usually adopted by local lay groups and became the most significant catholic advocate in Britain for the "legislative suppression" of the drink trade. Indeed, in September 1872, just over a month before the Trade-temperance municipal clash of that year, he came to spread the word in Scotland and stood on a platform with Torrens and other officials of the Scottish Temperance League and Scottish Permissive Bill Association.<sup>58</sup> Archbishop Eyre and a good number of Glasgow priests, including Valentine Chisholm (soon to be a member of the new Glasgow School Board), made up part of the platform party. James Steel, in a letter published soon afterwards, tried to claim that Eyre was a reluctant participant at the event, however, there is no doubting the promotion and appeal of Manning's League of the Cross in

Eyre's diocese during the 1870s.<sup>59</sup> With teetotalism given such vigorous backing by the catholic hierarchy, and given the personal abstinence of locally influential nationalists such as Ferguson, Biggar and Richard McGhee, not to mention the outright hostility consistently shown towards 'whisky rings' by advanced nationalists such as Frank Hugh O'Donnell, it is easy to see that open political alliances with the drink trade might very well be counter-productive in Glasgow Irish politics.<sup>60</sup>

This is underlined by the continued success of both non-Trade Irish and Scots catholics on parish boards in the later 1870s and for the remainder of the century. Individuals such as James Brand, an engineering contractor and later Glasgow 'correspondent' of the London-centred Catholic Union and George Hanley, a clothier, were able to gain and retain seats in Barony wards at the height of pro-temperance fever. Indeed Brand's candidacy in the First District (Barony) in 1873, and later in 1875 his nomination as part of an incumbent group of managers, may be seen as a deliberate effort to keep a respectable catholic representative involved after Tiernan's probable death around early 1873.<sup>61</sup> There was increasing success in this important arena for Irish/catholic ward politicians and yet the question again has to be asked: why was this success not matched at the municipal level, given that at



the Westminster level Irish/catholic electors simply did not have the numbers to make a significant impact?

The answer would seem to lie with the increasing antagonism between temperance evangelicals and the catholic communities at a very local level. Whatever views Manning or Eyre might have on the drink trade, the fact is that, particularly in more out of the way parishes, publicans, wine and spirit merchants were often a key source of finance for school- and church-building and leading figures in the lay community, and as a consequence probably developed close working ties with the clergy. Condon, himself president of the 'Cartsdyke Catholic Temperance Society' in 1874, kept newspaper clippings praising Irish-born Arthur Skivington, "one of the largest wholesale spirit merchants" in Greenock and president of the local Wine, Beer and Spirit Association, for his career in local politics and large contributions to RC church and school construction.<sup>62</sup> Later, also in Greenock, a St. Patrick's Day speech by Neil Brown, full of emotional references to the "true faith" and "the sincere efforts of a brave people to be free", was given fulsome front-page treatment by the Trade journal, the *Scottish Standard*. He was later, in the same journal, to attack the handling of licence transfers by local magistrates, pointing to the better treatment in

Glasgow. Brown was given publicity, as it explained rather defensively (presumably on account of his ethnic and religious identity), as “one of the leading Trade gentlemen in Greenock...highly respected amongst all circles”.<sup>63</sup> In Glasgow the Trade’s standing may not have been so pronounced, parishes such as that of St. Andrews in the city centre being able to call upon various non-Trade businessmen like Lynch for capital. That said the leading churchman of that parish, Alexander Munro, was unusually vociferous by the late 1870s against the scapegoating of Trade members and, possibly as a corollary to this, combined this with a sympathetic regard for Irish nationalist grievances quite at odds with his earlier hostility.<sup>64</sup>

Munro had been responsible for aspects of diocesan finance in the late 1860s and, in early 1870s, sat on the catholic District Board of Education and so would have some wider knowledge of sources of parish funds.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, however much Munro’s views towards temperance might have been influenced by the increasing financial burdens of the diocese, it must also be said that temperance zealotry betrayed an impatience with him, verging frequently on a general intolerance and prejudice towards his co-religionists. In a decade of serious sectarian rivalry in Glasgow - on the streets, in the press and even in the boardrooms of bodies such as the

Hutcheson's Hospital Trust – the League's *Temperance Journal* comments in 1879 on School Board squabbles, to the effect that it would “perhaps be too much to expect that he [Munro] would accept the doctrines of modern science”, were bound to inflame Munro's co religionists. Munro had made it clear at one such meeting that he was not against temperance as such, rather he feared that compulsory teaching of “total abstinence”, using scripture to support its case, would strengthen evangelicalism and only served to encourage what “was becoming a political party in the State”.<sup>66</sup> At the meeting in question, A. Glen Collins, the Lord Provost's son, was notably a seconder of a resolution in favour of one compulsory lesson on temperance per month, and there seems little doubt that Munro resented the increasing reach of the Permissivites, going, as they now were, beyond town-hall politics. Those candidates standing, in areas with a reputedly high Irish/catholic population, against known sympathisers of Collins were already often accused, as in James Fullerton Shaw's contest for the Sixth (Calton) Ward in 1877, of being supported by publicans and catholics in equal measure.<sup>67</sup> Whatever truth there may have been to these accusations, a nexus of Irish nationalists, catholic activists and publicans, maintaining regular contacts through self-help bodies and leisure-time activities were



effectively being marginalised from the political mainstream of Liberal Glasgow. This at a time when the confidence and experience of a stable, middle-class cohort of Irish/catholic ward politicians was visibly enhanced by their School and Parochial Board success.

There is no doubt that the resentment of publicans, clergymen and respectable Catholic Association activists against what they saw as a paternalistic evangelicalism might lead them not only to offer platform support to Home Rulers but also that such a public mood might incline Irish politicians to look for a working alternative to Glasgow Liberalism as it then stood. Certainly, it is worthy of note that, in the 1880s and 90s individual Irishmen could take part in the Scottish Trade Defence Association (formed in 1879) at the highest level. This was true in the case of Patrick O'Hare<sup>68</sup> and William McKillop,<sup>69</sup> both later serving as Scots-domiciled Irish Nationalist MPs. Each man had a clear interest in catholic Irish affairs from an early age, with O'Hare having perhaps more radical sympathies and friendships, and they were also both very successful in the drink and catering trade. They were prepared to act together as 'parliamentary agents' for an association executive containing notable Conservative backers such as George Younger, at a time when Gladstone's Government seemed to adopt a

more restrictive line on the Trade.<sup>70</sup> However, in the 1870s, Conservatism at the popular level benefited from the reaction of traditional religious sentiment to the intrusion of the secular state into the everyday care and education of the poor. Even the beginnings of the Tory 'Glasgow Workingmen's Association' were bound up with the 'use and wont' party. Personal contacts between those representing different religious denominations were possible on School Boards and Parish Councils, thus helping to mitigate the hostility often displayed on the streets.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to see any really fundamental political rapprochement of Irish/catholic interests with Conservatism.

In the 1870s at any rate, it is also fairly clear that there was not a consistent overlap of personnel between the Glasgow Home Rule Association and catholic/publican interests. Irish/catholic ecclesiastical and civic parish worthies, such as Hugh Margey, senior and junior, Thomas Tiernan, James Lynch, Patrick Rogan and Henry Murphy made the occasional public appearance on Gala days, particularly at St. Patrick's Day festivities. However, and without in any way discounting the contribution of these individuals, particularly that of Margey senior in the early 1870s, Ferguson relied upon enthusiasts such as Michael Clarke, the bookseller and

printer James Lindsay, and the Lanarkshire-based nationalist James McAulay for more overtly political lectures and regular organisation. If Irish political identity in Glasgow was not to be fashioned exclusively by sectarianism or anti-temperance sentiments, coloured as temperance was by its association with evangelical protestantism, then Ferguson had to rely on the practical involvement of the latter men in a secular campaign. Ferguson would and, indeed in later pamphlets did, explicitly acknowledge the grievance of catholics per se against British rule,<sup>72</sup> but the issue of land ownership and a socially-just political economy was to give him the opportunity to have that secular campaign and reinvigorate a radical identity for the Glasgow Irish.



**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Smyth, 'Labour and Socialism in Glasgow', p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Mary McHugh, 'The Development of the Catholic Community in the Western Province (Roman Catholic Dioceses of Glasgow, Motherwell and Paisley), 1878-1962', University of Strathclyde Ph.D. thesis, 1990, p. 115.

Mill-owner James Crum provided his Irish employees with a Sunday School and, in GAA, WD 5, notebook, dated by hand 23 May 1870, p. 654,

Condon speaks of Pollokshaws children under the charge of Father Bernard

Tracy being entertained within the 'policies' (grounds) of Walter Crum's

Thornliebank residence. Also, see footnote in John F. McCaffrey, 'Roman

Catholics in Scotland in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries', *Records of the Scottish*

*Church Society*, vol. 21 (1983), p. 287 on Rev. Bernard Tracy's success in

getting a school off the ground with the help of local non-catholics, Stirling

Maxwell of Pollok and Crum of Thornliebank.

<sup>3</sup> McHugh, 'The Development of the Catholic Community', p. 115.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116-17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

<sup>7</sup> GAA, ED 18/1, T. W Allies to Archbishop Eyre, 10 Nov. 1869.

<sup>8</sup> See *GH*, 19 Mar. 1872, for Rev. Walter Smith of Glasgow's rejection of term 'secularist' as "odious description of his beliefs" at a Scottish National Education League meeting in Dundee. He was nonetheless against denominationalism, preferring to educate children on the basis of a common Christianity.

<sup>9</sup> GAA, WD 5, notebook, p. 406.

<sup>10</sup> Rev. Alexander Munro, *Religion in the School: Letter to James Baird* (Glasgow, 1872), p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> See *GH*, 21 Dec 1871 for an account of 'use and wont' meeting attended by Munro. It was convened under the auspices of the Scottish Education Association and had the platform support of A. Orr Ewing, Conservative MP.

<sup>12</sup> See Munro, *Religion in the School*, p. 7 for 'No Popery' comment; also p.19 for his views on Presbyterianism.

<sup>13</sup> *GH*, 12 Mar. 1872.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 Mar. 1873. See also GAA, WD 5, handbill issued by 'Central Committee' of Catholic Association, 6 Mar. 1873 exhorting catholics to vote

under these newly favourable conditions. It also spoke of treason to the 'cause' if any catholic elector did not make proper use of his/her vote!

<sup>15</sup> *GH*, 25 and 26 Mar. 1873.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 Mar. 1873.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 April 1873.

<sup>18</sup> See *Scots Peerage, Vol. V* (Edinburgh, 1908), pp. 483- 485 for brief details of Lord Henry Francis Charles Kerr's immediate family; also *Border Story: The Name and House of Kerr* (place of publication unknown, n.d.), p. 40-41, for portrait of Lord Henry Kerr and note on his conversion. Individual biographies of Walter Talbot Kerr and Schomberg Henry Kerr are to be found in J. R. H. Weaver (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1930* (London, 1937), pp. 469-471 and Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee (eds.), *Dictionary of National Biography: Vol. XXII* (London, 1917), pp. 933-34 respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Kerr wrote enthusiastically to the widow of William, 8<sup>th</sup> Marquis of Lothian, of his visit to Rome in 1887, where he saw the Pope in state. He made particular mention of Walter Talbot Kerr and his mother, Cecil, both catholic members of the Kerr family. See National Archives of Scotland,



Edinburgh, Lothian Muniments, GD 40/9/438/5, Henry Kerr to Constance Harriet Kerr, 26 Mar. 1887.

<sup>20</sup> *GH*, 21 and 31 Mar. 1873.

<sup>21</sup> For biographical details of Monteith, see Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 604 and B. Aspinwall, 'Robert Monteith, 1812-84', *Clergy Review*, no. 63 (1978), pp. 265-72.

<sup>22</sup> *GAA*, ED/18/3/2, Report of 28th Annual Meeting of Catholic Poor School Committee, 1875.

<sup>23</sup> B. Aspinwall, 'The Catholic Irish and Wealth in Glasgow', in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants in Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), p?

<sup>24</sup> See McHugh, 'The Development of the Catholic Community', p. 221. The SVDP was founded in Paris in 1833 by Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam to provide charitable relief, chiefly as a reaction to what he saw as the moral decay amongst the city's poor. Irish/catholic insurance societies included the Liverpool-based 'St. Patrick's Sick and Burial Society'. Founded in 1832, it

was publicly defended by Hugh Margey and James Walsh against charges of mismanagement in June 1865, for which see *Free Press*, 17 June 1865.

<sup>25</sup> W. H. Fraser, 'Labour and the Changing City', in G. Gordon (ed.), *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen, 1985), p. 163; also D. Moody, *Scottish Towns* (London, 1992), pp.107 and 111.

<sup>26</sup> Poor Law Act, 8 & 9 Vict. c. 83, 4 Aug. 1845, s. lxxvi, as restated in *Parochial Law: Barony Parish* (Glasgow, 1881), p. 38-39.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, s. xviii in *Parochial Law: Barony Parish*, p.12; also *Copy of Correspondence between the Parochial Boards of the City and Barony Parishes (Glasgow) and the Board of Supervision, relative to a proposed Change in the DATE OF ELECTION of MANAGERS of the POOR in these Parishes (London, 1883)*, p. 7 for memorial from Barony on its plea for a change in the date of elections from November to February because it "disfranchises a great number of the electors". The Board of Supervision rejected their proposal on legal grounds.

<sup>28</sup> *GH*, 2 Dec. 1879.

<sup>29</sup> Glasgow City Archives (hereafter GCA), D-HEW 2/1/4, Minute Book of Barony Parish Parochial Board, No.8, Secretary of Board of Supervision to Inspector of Poor, Barony Parish, undated.

<sup>30</sup> *FP*, 30 May 1863; Census 1871, District 644-8, Enumerator's Book 89.

<sup>31</sup> *FP*, 21 Nov.1863 and 12 May 1866.

<sup>32</sup> *GH*, 30 Nov. 1866 and 29 Nov. 1867.

<sup>33</sup> GCA, D-CH 1/2, Minute Book of Children's Committee (City Parochial Board): Vol. 2, pp. 101-3. After the Committee's acceptance of Muir's explanation, it ordered that the minutes referring to Muir's reported words before a Parliamentary Committee be 'expunged'. In fact, a red line was drawn through the relevant section. This is perhaps an indication of Board sensitivity to the entire issue of proselytism.

<sup>34</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 174-6 and 181 for report of visit by Mr. Thomas Kyle (selected by the Kirk Sessions within the City Parish as one of their representatives on the Board) to two institutions near Dublin. Kyle talked admiringly of the "brave and noble hearted women" who ran these residential schools and Lynch seconded a motion of thanks to Kyle for his efforts.



<sup>35</sup> McHugh, 'The Development of the Catholic Community', appendix 3 based on original report in GAA, RI 28, Glasgow Industrial Schools and Orphanage, printed report, 1869.

<sup>36</sup> Census 1871, District 644-8, Enumerator's Book 100.

<sup>37</sup> GCA, D-HEW 2/1/4, Minute Book, No. 8, p. 157 for Tiernan's first meeting as a manager.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212-17, for correspondence on case of the boy Charles Callan and Tiernan's narrow defeat, by 5 votes to 6, on a motion opposing the child's transfer to a catholic school.

<sup>39</sup> GCA, D-HEW 2/1/4, Minute Book: Barony Parish Parochial Board, No.9, p. 376 for Tiernan's nomination by new Board Chairman, Bryce Martin. Martin, as previous Convenor of House Committee, had obviously worked alongside Tiernan.

<sup>40</sup> *FP*, 12 May 1866.

<sup>41</sup> GAA, IP 3/20, Thomas Carlin to Bernard Tracy, 12 Mar. 1876 requesting that Tracy allow himself to be "put in" for catholics on Lavern School Board (co-opted, presumably) and thus avoid an election.

<sup>42</sup> McHugh, 'The Development of the Catholic Community', p.221. See Bernard Aspinwall, 'The Formation of the Catholic Community in the West of Scotland: Some Preliminary Outlines', in *Innes Review*, vol. 33 (1982), p. 52 for view that, after the demise of the British Catholic Defence Association in the 1850s, the SVDP seemed "the only potential national political base" for catholics.

<sup>43</sup> See Bernard Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia Glasgow and the United States, 1820-1920* (Aberdeen, 1984), p. 108-9 for one view on American influence.

<sup>44</sup> Elspeth King, *Scotland Sober and Free: The Temperance Movement, 1829-1979*, (Glasgow, 1979), p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia*, p 120; *National Guardian*, 6 Nov. 1889.

<sup>46</sup> Irene Sweeney, 'The Municipal Administration of Glasgow', p. 621; see also Norma Logan, 'Drink and Society: Scotland 1870-1914', University of Glasgow Ph.D. thesis, 1983, pp. 397.

<sup>47</sup> *GH*, 3 Nov. 1869.

<sup>48</sup> *GH*, 6 Nov. 1872.

<sup>49</sup> See David Keir, *The House of Collins* (London, 1952), p. 188 for account of James Martin's speech at an annual soiree of the GWSBTA Martin

referred sarcastically to Collins' first teetotal 'conversazione' offering water as "food and drink for the month of December". Steel, likewise, in one diatribe described Collins and his colleagues as "motley starvings of the puritan species" and mocked the Liberals in another as "witch burners, publican haters and haters of everybody and everything but themselves; Dissenters who allow nobody to dissent", for which see *Steel Drops*, Nov. and Feb. 1875. It has to be said that Steel in this same occasional journal, owned and written by himself, also gave vent to his strong distaste for Irish nationalism, for which see *Ibid.*, Nov. 1881.

<sup>50</sup> Irene Sweeney, 'The Municipal Administration of Glasgow', pp. 618-20. The *Sentinel* even described Steel admiringly as a "sharp-tongued brewer and publican", leaving the reader in no doubts about his Trade interest.

<sup>51</sup> *GH*, 20 Oct. 1869.

<sup>52</sup> *GH*, 29 Oct. 1869.

<sup>53</sup> 1874 was the year of Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey's "massive evangelical revival" in Scotland and also saw women's prayer groups target drink outlets in Glasgow's Saltmarket, for which see Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia*, p. 135 and King, *Scotland Sober and Free*, p. 17.



<sup>54</sup> *GH*, 30 Nov., 6 and 8 Dec. 1871; also 4 and 12 Dec. 1872.

<sup>55</sup> *GH*, 6 Nov. 1872. Alexander McLaren and William Smith, Secretary of GWSBTA, were on Lynch's organising committee. See also *GH*, 28 Nov. 1872 for list of guests at post-election soiree. Significantly, McLaren presided, and Councillors Steel and Martin attended. It is also worth pointing out that Rev. Alexander Munro and various catholic worthies attended.

<sup>56</sup> *GH*, 6 and 7 Nov. 1872.

<sup>57</sup> GAA, WD 5, inserted in notebook labelled 'Diary 1874-5-6-7-8', pledge card, 1874. Condon is described as president of 'Cartsydyke Catholic Temperance Society' in that year, 1874. Also GAA, IP3/18, Bishop McFarlane to Tracy, 31 Mar. 1874 and IP3/20, Archbishop Eyre to Tracy, 14 May 1876 refer to an 'Abstinence League' involving Tracy in a leading role. See GAA, IP3/19, Nugent to Tracy, 23 Sept., 16 and 22 Oct., 9 Nov. and 25 Dec. 1875 for correspondence with Tracy on problem of catholic 'street children'. Nugent (1822-1905) was behind the organising of the League of the Cross in 1872 and founded a number of social care institutes, such as a Refuge for Homeless Boys in 1865. See John J. Delaney and

James E. Tobin (eds.), *Dictionary of Catholic Biography* (published in Britain, 1962), p. 860.

<sup>58</sup> *GH*, 25 Sept. 1872.

<sup>59</sup> *GH*, 28 Sept. 1872 for Steel's letter. See Aspinwall, *Portable Utopia*, p. 124 on promotion of League; also B. Aspinwall, 'The Formation of the Catholic Community in the West of Scotland: Some Preliminary Outlines', *Innes Review*, vol. 33. (1982), p. 53 for the "formal espousal of temperance" by early Catholic football teams and supporters clubs. In the case of the latter, this in practice meant individuals had to be "fully fledged members" of the League of the Cross.

<sup>60</sup> See Malcolm, *Sober and Free*, p. 298 for comments on O'Donnell. He was admired enough in Glasgow nationalist circles to be appointed in 1875 the president of the local Home Rule Association. In a pamphlet, published in 1912, he was to write, though apparently by that time a "bitter and vindictive" man, of "drink money" as the "principal paymasters" of the clergy's political agitation and that this "whiskey and holy water" alliance was vital to the Home Rule party in Ireland.

<sup>61</sup> Tiernan's last appearance at a parish board meeting was on 20 May 1873 for which see GCA, D-HEW2/1/4, Minute Book, No.9, p 384. Also in *GH*, 25 Nov. 1873, Bryce Martin, as Chairman of the Barony Board, referred to the death of "his successor as chairman of the House Committee", i.e. Tiernan.

<sup>62</sup> GAA, WD 5, inserted in notebook labelled 'Diary 1874-5-6-7-8', clippings from *Greenock Telegraph* and *Greenock Advertiser*, both 5 Dec. 1877.

<sup>63</sup> *Scottish Standard*, 30 March 1878 and 22 February 1879.

<sup>64</sup> See *GH*, 24 April 1876 for Munro's desire to have "the teetotal samples now in the Council swept out with the besom of destruction". Also, Alexander Munro, *Proselytism in Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1883), pp. 5-8 has Munro referring to his early prejudices, extending "equally to the religion and to the people of Ireland" (Munro was indeed a convert from Presbyterianism), but also to the fact that "legitimate contact for over thirty years with Irishmen of every class has changed all that". Munro's views seem to have changed so much that he now borrows the language of



nationalism and mentions "daring men" as the "the outcome of ages of hostile occupation and misgovernment".

<sup>65</sup> GAA, WD 5, notebook, dated by hand 23 May 1870, pp. 401 and 404; GAA, ED1/1, Minute Book of [Western] District Board of Education, p. 3 lists presence of Munro, Condon and Tiernan at first meeting of the Board on 4 Oct. 1870.

<sup>66</sup> *League Journal*, 15 Nov. 1879.

<sup>67</sup> *GH*, 7 Nov. 1877.

<sup>68</sup> Patrick O'Hare (1849-1917) represented Monaghan North, 1906-7, and had left his home in Co. Monaghan for Glasgow in 1870, soon after he had been arrested and imprisoned for a short period of time. He had apparently been politically active before this time, though the nature of his activity is not clear. Managing a pub in Blochairn, Glasgow for a short time, he went on to own around four or five outlets. Some of these biographical details are drawn from taped interview with the grandson of O'Hare, Dr. Patrick Connolly, 31 July 1998.

<sup>69</sup> William McKillop (1858-1909) represented Sligo, 1900-6, and Armagh South, 1906-9 and, though born the son of an Irish 'iron miner' in Dalry,

Ayrshire, went on to become the joint owner of several licensed premises in Glasgow. In fact, the Unionist weekly, *The Bailie*, in 1901 featured him and his partners in glowing terms as owners of the ‘Grosvenor Restaurant’, “acknowledged to be one of the handsomest establishments of the kind out of London”; for which see *The Bailie*, 28 May 1901. The same weekly made no secret of the fact that McKillop had just been returned as Nationalist MP for North Sligo. Additional biographical details are from Miss W. MacAuley, great-niece of McKillop.

<sup>70</sup> Norma Davies Logan, ‘Drink and Society: Scotland 1870-1914’, p. 397; also Moira Simmons, *The Scottish Licensed Trade Association, 1880-1980: The Centenary History* (Edinburgh, 1981), p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> It is interesting, for instance, to note how leading ‘use and wont’ member of the Glasgow School Board, Michael Connal, could work constructively as chairman with catholic representatives such as Francis Kerr and yet still have strong feelings about the place of religious instruction in schools. His politics were clearly Conservative and yet very much actively concerned with the betterment of the working classes, hence his evangelical work in the

East End of Glasgow. See John C. Gibson, *Diary of Sir Michael Connal: 1835 to 1893* (Glasgow, 1895), p. 143-48.

<sup>72</sup> Ferguson, sometime after 1893, published a pamphlet in which he attempted to explain his views on religious divisions in Ireland. At one point, he stated: “As a Protestant, I am a firm believer in the superiority of Protestantism to Catholicism”. Elsewhere in the same pamphlet he had written , however, “that England betrayed Protestantism in her dealings with Ireland” by going against the “Protestant principles” of civil and religious liberty. He thus looked forward to a self-governing Ireland in which protestants and catholics would “grow to tolerate and love each other as fellow-country-men”. See John Ferguson, *Three Centuries of Irish History* (Glasgow, n.d.), p. 6, 8 and 78.



## Chapter 5

### The Glasgow Irish and the Politics of Land Reform

In August 1874, promoting a federalist formula for Irish Home Rule, John Ferguson perhaps articulated publicly for the first time what motivated his particular brand of nationalism: using colourful and melodramatic imagery he revealed, in short, his passionate concern for the notion of progress.<sup>1</sup> Federalism clearly for him meant the possibility of social reform that could not get attention under existing constitutional arrangements. Thus pauperism and hunger would be attended to through the cultivation of wasteland, education would combat the ‘boiling ocean of rowdyism and ignorance’ and infrastructural improvements such as ‘penny trains’ would enhance the living standards of the urban worker. This vision of deliberate large-scale intervention by local or central government in such projects as sewage disposal (so that ‘their cities might no longer vomit forth miasma and death’) did not distinguish him greatly from many concerned British Liberals in an age of rapid urban expansion. What was unusual was the connection he made with specific plans, arising out of his understanding of Ireland’s past, for a decentralisation of Westminster’s powers.

To be more precise, Ferguson, in common with other nationalists,

put Ireland's poverty down to misgovernment by England ('England' had connotations for Irishmen which could not be easily expressed by use of the term 'Britain'). For him it seemed obvious that if English government could do so much harm, then an Irish Parliament could not only undo that harm but also be the chief force for progress in Ireland. This view of misgovernment in Ireland was heavily influenced by John Stuart Mill's writings on political economy and by the studies of Thomas Cliffe Leslie (a Queen's College, Belfast academic) into the impact of land tenure in continental Europe on modern industrial development.<sup>2</sup> Thus, almost from the beginning Ferguson explicitly saw the issue of English government in Ireland as intimately bound up with an unjust and inefficient system of land ownership and tenure.

Mill, in several editions of his influential *Principles of Political Economy*,<sup>3</sup> had highlighted the Irish landlord's culpability for the continuing backwardness of the island's agriculture. Eventually, and quite unexpectedly, in his 1868 pamphlet *England and Ireland*, Mill was to publicly express the view that the disaffection of Ireland would only be assuaged, with or without Home Rule, by the establishment of a *de facto* Irish peasant proprietary.<sup>4</sup> He had no real answer to the problem,

acknowledged by himself in the *Principles*, of the possible entrenchment of small, inefficient farms implicit in this policy. Rather, in the light of contemporary Fenian actions, as a Liberal Radical and humanitarian, he accepted the justice of the peasantry's claims to a stake in the land. He had in the past been inclined, though not always consistently, towards tenant rights such as compensation for improvements and greater security of tenure, but in 1868 he definitively called for fair and fixed rents and a permanent, transferable "right of occupancy".<sup>5</sup> The vision of a 'sturdy' and prosperous class of capitalist farmers was one that Mill, Cliffe Leslie and Ferguson held up as the vital ingredient for future commercial and industrial development in Ireland. Since the role of the state in the creation of this class was seen as fundamental, even if there might be debate as to the responsibility of successive British governments for the existing system of landownership and tenure, Ferguson took it as a thoroughly apt policy for nationalist politicians to pursue.

Promoting and clarifying the Home Rule cause in Glasgow on these lines, Ferguson's main early achievement nevertheless was to give Irish patriotism a focus in the form of a distinct political goal and organisation. However, the concomitant defining of a sense of Irishness, which could



operate in the cosmopolitan industrial towns of Great Britain as much as in the rural isolation of the West of Ireland, did not simply require repeated references to 'civil and religious liberty'. It required, in addition, allusions to the consequences of economic neglect and mismanagement that migrants from a rural, agricultural Ireland to an urban, industrial Scotland could relate to their own experience. A land system dominated by absentee, rack-renting landlords, notions of exile and the loss of a rural idyll were thus part of Ferguson's rhetoric. They corresponded well with long-standing traditions of popular radicalism throughout the British Isles, possibly also with older Gaelic cultural views of emigration<sup>6</sup>, and were used by many Irish political activists. Ferguson here was not so very different from these other (often financially-secure) community leaders of the Irish Diaspora in stressing 'push', rather than 'pull', factors leading to emigration - factors which had forced so many away from the fondly remembered 'ould country'. These leaders not only offered explanations for the immigrants' current situation, but also provided them with a means to transcend it through agitation for Irish self-government. Activists such as Ferguson, in other words, sought to harness a sense of immigrant degradation and disorientation, often felt in their new urban, industrial surroundings, to a

specifically nationalist agenda.<sup>7</sup>

Acknowledged then by all sides, Irish and non-Irish, as the *de facto* leader of Irish nationalists in Glasgow, Ferguson was to modify once more the political identity of the Glasgow Irish when Michael Davitt and Parnell adopted the land question in 1879 as the chief grievance of disaffected Ireland. He apparently first heard of Davitt in 1873 through John Nolan,<sup>8</sup> then leading organiser of the Amnesty Association, and when they finally met in 1877, they established an immediate rapport. Their close and enduring friendship as fellow intellectuals and nationalists was to add significant impetus to the phase of Fenian-constitutionalist co-operation known as the 'New Departure'. This co-operative phase was all the more remarkable for the way in which Parnell, then in the ascendant at Westminster, appeared to enter into an alliance with physical-force organisations on both sides of the Atlantic, thereby lending insurrectionary separatism a popular yet highly respectable figurehead.

Michael Davitt (1846-1905) had been born in Co. Mayo, raised in Haslingden, Lancashire and from his late teens, despite the loss of an arm in a mill accident, served as one of the most able Fenian activists operating in England. Travelling throughout the North of England and Scotland as an

organiser in the late 1860s, he is known to have visited Glasgow in December 1869. Working at the time alongside unreliable young hotheads such as the would-be poet Arthur Forrester, he was arrested soon afterwards in connection with a of a gun-running operation (an operation, incidentally, involving John Barry, Ferguson's future colleague on the executive of Home Rule Confederation).<sup>9</sup> Newly released from gaol in December 1877 after serving over 7 years on a conviction of 'treason-felony',<sup>10</sup> Davitt apparently met Ferguson for the first time as one of a reception committee in Dublin and in the spring of the following year was to see him again in Glasgow.<sup>11</sup> Here, as Ferguson recalled more than ten years later, the two men began discussions on the "opening of a land movement in Ireland" and indeed Ferguson claimed that Davitt broached this issue after reading some articles by the Ulsterman.<sup>12</sup>

Ferguson certainly subscribed to, and possibly corresponded with, Patrick Ford's American-based *Irish World*, a well-known proponent of land reform, before the founding of the Land League and had apparently already gained a reputation among nationalists forth of Scotland for his intellectual arguments in favour of land reform.<sup>13</sup> Whatever his reputation, there is good evidence to believe that he was a significant voice in the



planning of the '79-'82 land campaign. In a letter published in 1888, for instance, he referred cryptically yet proudly back to his collaboration with five like-minded agitators in Dublin and to their decision to link certain "forces of self-interest" to the "generous historic ideal" of self-government in order to revive the movement.<sup>14</sup> According to another statement by Ferguson elsewhere, Davitt had indeed consulted with Ferguson, Patrick Egan, Thomas Brennan and Andrew J. Kettle - all known for their advanced views on land reform - on possible courses of action and it seems reasonable to conclude that these were among the six at this Dublin meeting.

The upshot of all these discussions, at any rate, was the now famous meeting at Irishtown, Co. Mayo in April 1879, generally recognised as the first major public demonstration in the so-called 'Land War'. Ferguson saw himself as playing a key role at this meeting, describing himself as "Davitt's representative" in the perhaps intentional absence of the campaign leader; local police appear to have agreed, seeing the main purpose of the meeting as the promotion of Ferguson as a future MP.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, although Ferguson's speech was barely reported in the press, Davitt, many years later and by then convinced of a strategy based on a labour-nationalist

alliance, chose to highlight Ferguson's early espousal of just such a strategy. The latter's contention at Irishtown was that the division of the land among peasant proprietors had become "one of vital interest to the artisans and working men of the great manufacturing towns of England".<sup>16</sup>

The Land War itself, which was to continue until the summer of 1882, was at first, at a time of acute agrarian distress, a tenant-landlord struggle for rent reductions. It rapidly, however, became an attack on the legitimacy of 'landlordism' itself and its role in maintaining the British connection. Advanced nationalists, led by the circle around Davitt, made use of their Fenian connections and enthusiasm to orchestrate a legal campaign against eviction under the auspices of the Land League. They were also strongly suspected of organising social ostracism, 'boycotts', against various landlords and unsympathetic tenant farmers. The campaign leaders always saw the revolutionary potential in these activities; however, it was only when Parnell agreed to assume the leadership of the new Land League in October 1879 that the Land War took on the aspect of a significant threat to the political status quo.

It was also at this time that Ferguson accepted an invitation to be a member of a 'foundation' committee of the new League. He later served in

1881, as a frequent visitor to Dublin, on the executive of the 'Central League' during some of the bitterest confrontations of the land campaign, when many of its leading spokesmen were in gaol. In spite of his Scottish base, Ferguson was undoubtedly a great asset to Irish nationalism at this time: he served the League as both an able propagandist and organiser, one not easily discounted or attacked as representing the voice of fanatical separatism.<sup>17</sup> Every effort made in 1889 by the London *Times* counsel, Sir Henry James, to characterise him as such before the Special ('Parnell') Commission failed. This Commission, set up by the then Conservative government in the hope of demonstrating Parnell's collusion with terrorist acts, in general backfired and only served to enhance the reputation of the Irish leader. It has to be said, nonetheless, that although Ferguson's repudiation of violence and his commitment to "the unity of the two peoples" of the British Isles were clearly in evidence, James was able to show his capacity for intrigue and close association throughout the 1870s with men of less certain views, such as John Barry and Patrick Egan.<sup>18</sup> For Ferguson, as with these one-time Fenians, nationalist unity sometimes meant 'generous' toleration towards those still inclined towards physical-force.



As the dramatic events of the Land War unfolded in Ireland, in Glasgow Ferguson redirected local nationalists into agitation which, for some, might seem to want far more than the constitutional reforms demanded in the early days of Home Rule. Both Davitt and his Glasgow colleague initially re-assured Home Rulers as to the 'real' purpose of the land agitation: it aimed in effect to expose the fact that the British constitution was not adhered to in Ireland. Accordingly a 'manifesto' to Home Rulers, on the occasion of Davitt's arrest in November 1879, saw this very act as attempting to bring about the 'death of constitutional agitation'.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, when Davitt did eventually visit Glasgow in December of that same year, he stressed that Irish landlords were 'an institution that had fulfilled the duty of a garrison of conquest and confiscation'. In other words, Irish landlords were first and foremost oppressors of the Irish people on behalf of an alien government and not simply the Irish manifestation of a ubiquitous agent of social injustice. Thus, at this point in Davitt's career the land question had, for him, as its chief strength the ability to unite the 'Nationalist [separatist], Home Ruler, [and] the Repealer'. However, in expressing the hope that the English and Scots would rise one day against "poverty and degradation", he was already

hinting at his later change of emphasis based on concern for the landless and labouring classes.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the Home Rule manifesto referred to above sought to engage the sympathy of industrial workers by making parallels with local struggles: it stated that the “farmers of Ireland have a right to combine to bring down rents, just as the miners of Lanarkshire to limit output”.<sup>21</sup> This theme of the ‘rights of labour’ was to play an increasing role in the rhetoric of an active core of Glasgow nationalists.

It is important at this point to underline the release of energy in Glasgow Irish circles, as a result of bitter Parliamentary and sectarian struggles, coinciding with the at times murderous conflict in Ireland from late 1879 to early 1882. In Parliament, the Home Rulers gathering round Parnell seemed to invite confrontation in equal measure with both British parties as their popular appeal grew among the Irish. This policy of ‘independence’ from either Tory or Liberal in Parliament was not a new one to John Ferguson and indeed in 1879, much against his own personal inclinations, he was at pains to assert the right of Irishmen to vote Tory, if only to show their unity as a nation under Parnell’s leadership.<sup>22</sup> Coming at a time when Glasgow was witnessing, according to the *Glasgow Herald*, an upsurge in street confrontations along Orange and Green lines,<sup>23</sup> both local

Liberal newspapers, the *North British Daily Mail* and the *Glasgow Herald*, in apparent exasperation turned on Ferguson personally. They accused him of incitement and provocation for making an attack on the House of Lords and dubbed him the “champion of political economy of the Commune”; in attacking Ferguson and his followers they also came very close to condoning sectarian attacks on nationalists.<sup>24</sup>

The activists who made up the backbone of the Glasgow branch of the Land League (formed out of existing Home Rule Confederation branches in October 1879) did not back away from such verbal attacks. Michael Clarke, formerly secretary of the Glasgow Home Government Association in the early 1870s, and Edward McHugh, a young newcomer to Glasgow Irish politics, revealed themselves to be more than capable of substantiating Irish claims of injudicious, even inflammatory, behaviour on the part of both the press and magistrates. Both men went on to be noteworthy figures on a wider platform than that of constitutional reform for Ireland and were able to lend valuable support to Ferguson’s considerable efforts at organisation and propaganda.<sup>25</sup> Clarke, for instance, did not forget the use of local police powers in street riots of 1880 and, amidst a hostile assembly, vigorously questioned prospective town



councillors in 1882 over their extension.<sup>26</sup> McHugh, on the other hand, turned his energies towards 'spreading the light' of land reform in the Highlands - he was one of those "secret agents" (stirring up "the pious, law-abiding Highland people" into demanding rent reductions) so demonised in testimony to the Napier Commission in 1884.<sup>27</sup>

By the end of 1880, the vigorous and outspoken Glasgow Land League branch had drawn into its ranks two non-Irish social radicals, James Shaw Maxwell and John Bruce Glasier.<sup>28</sup> Increasingly, it became attractive to like-minded individuals, providing a platform for advanced views on land reform offered by the American Henry George or the champion of land nationalisation, Alfred Russell Wallace. Davitt and Ferguson had made no secret of their interest in the ideas of British social radicals, even if it meant apparent support for something more than the straightforward transfer of land to existing occupiers as officially advocated by the Central League in Dublin. Both had attended as delegates of the latter, for instance, a conference of the English Land Law Reform Association, presided over by Charles Bradlaugh, at St. James Hall, London in February 1880. Also Ferguson, a few weeks later, had spoken of their "common cause", even though the English body, as Ferguson admitted, sought land

nationalisation.<sup>29</sup> Gaining Parnell's apparent approval for a more formal association of Irish land campaigners and leading British radicals, and buoyed up by a healthy flow of American money into the League's coffers, a National Land League of Great Britain and Ireland was formally inaugurated on March 25, 1881.<sup>30</sup> This "independent auxiliary", having the same general objectives as the Irish League, did have Parnell and other Irish MPs on its executive, but was in fact run by former Home Confederation stalwarts, Barry and Ferguson. Short-lived and possibly only regarded by Parnell as a mere tactical device, this organisation was not entirely successful in attracting the numbers of non-Irish originally hoped for. In Britain, however, it was not only a source of useful friendly propaganda, it lent credibility to Davitt's stated belief in a "community of interests" with the British working classes.<sup>31</sup>

As for the Glasgow colleagues of Ferguson, the more advanced members of the Glasgow branch followed Edward McHugh and Richard McGhee, an Ulster protestant, and showed their keen advocacy of this new approach by re-constituting themselves in November 1881 as the 'Michael Davitt' branch of the new London-based League. The membership of this branch was of such a clearly radical temper that in the same month ("after a

discussion lasting three Sundays”) it decided to reject the advice of John Ferguson, at that time a member of the national executive, and Edward McHugh, paid Scottish organiser for the executive. Backing the Irish League’s radical ‘no rent’ manifesto to the Irish farmers by five hundred votes to two, with Shaw Maxwell voting with the majority, it also called for an Irish “independent republic” and the “abolition of private property in land”. For its stand, the branch was expelled from the British organisation, only to be re-instated six months later when the threat of proscription had passed.<sup>32</sup> The Michael Davitt branch went on to intensify its reputation over the following year for fostering some of the most radical nationalists and reformers in Britain, deliberately fashioning itself as a champion of the ‘rights of the democracy’, whatever the ethnic origins of the same.

For the leadership of the Irish party in Westminster, however, whatever line its followers might occasionally pursue, what really mattered, both during and after the Land War, was still the *reaction* of a British government of whatever colour to a ‘disturbed’ rural Ireland. For them, harsh restrictions on civil liberties mainly served to dramatise before the world not only the fundamental disaffection but also the misgovernment of the Irish people. T. P. O’Connor, soon to emerge as Parnell’s leading



organiser of the Irish in Britain, relentlessly pushed this very line. As a London-based journalist, he had clearly established his Radical credentials well before his entry into Parliament in 1880 and consolidated his popular standing by his parliamentary efforts on behalf of Irish emigrants and rural labourers. On behalf of the latter, for instance, in 1883 he had successfully steered an extension to Disraeli's 1875 Artisans' Dwellings Act through Parliament, thereby allowing them the prospect of improved housing. As a result, O'Connor gained sympathy and respect at an intellectual level from many on the Liberal benches, if not the desired political response to demands for Home Rule. Davitt repeatedly accused O'Connor of orchestrating press attacks against him and his friends in the years following the Land War. However, O'Connor, in common with the more radical Davitt, also made great play of the similarities between the boycotting campaign and those waged by trade unionists in pursuit of the 'rights of labour'. Nevertheless, for all his concern for British constitutional values and his interest in the rights of the democracy, O'Connor, as his treatment of Davitt seems to confirm, exercised a determined personal and organisational loyalty to Parnell and the Irish party.<sup>33</sup>

If radicalism and questions of social justice were "always liable to

re-emerge if the nationalist aim appeared remote or not worth fighting for”,<sup>34</sup> then it has to be said that, under the firm management of O’Connor, it was to be increasingly difficult for such issues to figure in the proceedings of the post-Land War ‘Irish National League of Great Britain’ (hereafter INLGB). This British version of Parnell’s Irish National League was formally established at a nationalist conference in Leeds at the end of September 1883 and, in its purpose and leadership, accorded well with the constitutionalist tendency of the parent body. This meant neither organisation was particularly willing to involve non-MPs in any real capacity at the highest level, especially those more advanced political and social radicals who had worked alongside Davitt in the Land League. The Irish-based League’s ‘Central Council’, though mainly comprised of lay and clerical worthies to give the appearance of a “confluence of people, priests and party”, was in practice, in the words of one historian, “controlled by a Dublin and London clique loyal to Parnell”.<sup>35</sup> Davitt indeed, long afterwards, complained bitterly of an “MP takeover” of the League by Parnell’s “young lieutenants”, citing O’Connor, T. M. Healy and W. O’Brien as among the more prominent of these.<sup>36</sup> O’Connor, president of the INLGB from September 1883 onwards (and of its successor, the United

Irish League of Great Britain, until 1921), ran it very much as a ‘pragmatic affair’, with the aim of providing the Parnellites with an effective electoral machine at constituency level and concentrating on “what could be immediately achieved”. Quite clearly it was not intended to be a means for Irish immigrants to form an independent political strategy, let alone become again the ‘wild card’ that the Confederation had been in the 1870s.<sup>37</sup>

Probably around late 1882, the so-called ‘Home Government Branch’ (hereafter HGB) of the new Irish National League was established, merging again the Michael Davitt branch with their former colleagues in the original local Glasgow Land League.<sup>38</sup> However, members such as Ferguson, McGhee, McHugh and Clarke, who formed the backbone of the H.G.B., were not so easily reconciled to the stringent and centralised national authority headed by O’Connor. Personal ties with a diverse number of non-Irish land reformers and social radicals, for one thing, had been cultivated during the period of the Land War. Several indeed of these “more active spirits in the Scottish Democracy”, besides Glasier and Shaw Maxwell, were much later, in the nationalist *Glasgow Star*, proudly named as members of the pioneering Davitt branch in Glasgow. They included among their number Angus Sutherland, later to serve as MP for Caithness



and Chairman of the Scottish Fisheries Board, and John Murdoch, editor of the pro-crofter newspaper, *The Highlander*, and long-time friend of Irish nationalism.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, the personal involvement of such individuals probably facilitated, and indeed was the result of, a sharing of ideas, money and public speakers with other radical land reform organisations of the time. Among these were the Scottish Land Law Reform Union, set up by Ferguson's business partner, Duncan Cameron, in 1881, and, much more significantly, the Highland Land Law Reform Association, founded during the 'Crofters' War' of the early 1880s. Both bodies basically sought the 'three Fs' for Scottish tenant farmers and the latter, in addition, advocated the redistribution of land.<sup>40</sup> There is evidence, indeed, that Davitt and Ferguson not only responded to appeals for financial aid to distressed crofter families but were also active fundraisers and speakers for the so-called 'Crofters' Movement' in 1887. Ferguson's widow - writing in 1908 in response to a request by Davitt's widow for material for a planned biography - went so far as to credit the start of the "Crofters' Movement in the Highlands and Islands" to the two Irishmen.<sup>41</sup> In 1887, Parnell took advantage of such friendly ties with Sutherland and others by asking them

to 'follow' and speak against leading Liberal Unionist, Joseph Chamberlain, on his Highland tour of that year. What is more, according to Davitt, Parnell also handed over funds to Sutherland in order "to defray all legitimate expenses in connection with the tour". The latter was more than willing to make use of money handed over since it saved the crofters own campaign funds, even though the crofters' friend, Davitt, was genuinely upset at not being enlisted by Parnell to speak against Chamberlain.<sup>42</sup>

In general, Davitt was very solicitous of the efforts of McHugh, McGhee and Ferguson to bring about a coalition of interests with the more radical land reformers in Scotland. He did express his strong desire at one point, however, for a limited public role for Irishmen in one such resultant campaigning organisation: it should "be run by Scotchmen of course". Again, when asked to undertake a speaking tour in 1885, he was keen to tour "under Scotch rather than under Irish auspices". Davitt here was obviously conscious of the awkward impression that active Irish participation in Scottish land reform might give to potential supporters of an Irish radical alliance.<sup>43</sup> This sensitivity to public opinion was probably all the more pressing given the outcry over several 'outrages' carried out by the so-called Irish 'dynamitards' in 1883.

Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, founder of the Phoenix Society in the 1850s and then significant in early IRB campaigns, from his new home in USA directed a destructive bombing campaign in Britain, which from 1883 until 1885 marked a new turn in physical force strategy. Glasgow in particular witnessed three explosions in the first half of '83 – one of them, on 20 January, took place at the Tradeston gasometer in the south of the city and resulted in injuries to nine nearby residents.<sup>44</sup> Particularly worrying from Ferguson and Davitt's point of view must have been the close association of one of those arrested and later convicted, Thomas Devaney, with both the Michael Davitt branch and its successor, the HGB. This fact compounded the impression created by an informer's testimony. This witness, George Hughes, had described how a regular haunt of Irish radicals, the Democratic Halls in Glasgow's Nelson St., had actually been the scene of a 'lecture' to the conspirators on the use of dynamite by an organiser of the British campaign, Edward O'Brien Kennedy (using the name 'Timothy Featherstone').<sup>45</sup>

Ferguson was so concerned about the effects of the campaign on radical friends in Britain (probably also about the apparent support of Patrick Ford, veteran land campaigner, for the bombings) that he urged



Davitt in March 1883 to bail himself out of Dublin's Richmond Prison and proceed immediately to the USA. There it was hoped that Davitt might prevent dynamitard activity getting encouragement among the American-Irish. Davitt was not prepared to accede to Ferguson's plea, but it was clear where he stood: "firing ameliorative social reform into the heads of England's toiling millions is infinitely more likely to hasten the solution of our own national and social problems".<sup>46</sup> For all their anxieties about the effect Irish input might have on Scots land reform campaigns, it also has to be said that for Davitt, as it turned out, ostensibly Scots-run tours could serve as useful outlets for views that might not find approval with the INLGB or Irish party leadership. Nor possibly might such tours excite divisions at sensitive times in Irish politics. Though some Scots might have distanced themselves after 1883, both Davitt and Ferguson continued to find Scots willing to agitate alongside them.<sup>47</sup>

Links with Scots radicals were all cultivated at a time when Davitt's ideas, on the need for the unity of the different 'democracies' of the British Isles, received the full backing of Parnell. Sanctioned from on high as this development was, in Glasgow John Ferguson went even further: with extraordinary freedom he was able to make use of Irish 'national' days to

provide a platform for Henry George, advocate of a 'single-tax' on land and author of *Progress and Poverty*. Always a particularly enthusiastic friend and advocate of secular radical causes, in addition to his involvement with nationalism, the Ulsterman had maintained an interest in like-minded personalities flourishing on the Radical wing of the Liberal Party. When asked, for instance, at the Parnell Commission in 1889, about his involvement with the Irish Republican Brotherhood, he somewhat mischievously mentioned his membership of a Glasgow 'Republican' society in the early 1870s. He had, he said, tried "in co-operation with Sir Charles Dilke, to start a movement for the propagation of Republican principles" by holding a public meeting in Glasgow.<sup>48</sup> Dilke, an unconventional but influential figure in the Liberal party of the day and later cabinet minister, won early notoriety for his outspoken attacks on the institution of monarchy. Intellectually, Ferguson was very much in tune with this kind of independently-minded English Radical, notable among them Charles Bradlaugh and Joseph Cowen, Newcastle MP from 1873 till 1886. Both Bradlaugh, the atheist, and Cowen, accomplice and public supporter of European revolutionaries, besides being early proponents of

Irish home rule, challenged in their own ways the conventional world view of nonconformist, *laissez-faire* Liberalism.

Ferguson's continued public appeals to the conscience of Liberal politicians and voters, his appearance on platforms with Radicals, his formal membership of Liberal associations and his fondness for quoting Gladstone, Bright, Mill et al are all further evidence of an ingrained political instinct. This instinct was not always easy to reconcile with his emotional attachment to Irish nationalism. That being the case, he nevertheless continued to form close friendships with a great variety of radicals in his regular meetings with like-minded individuals in the 'Democratic Halls' in Glasgow's Nelson St. It was here that he probably made initial informal contacts with Shaw Maxwell<sup>49</sup> and Bruce Glasier, both later to figure large in the formation of the Independent Labour Party. Also, in his choice of business partner, Duncan Cameron (mentioned earlier in connection with the Scottish Land Law Reform Union), he had evidently found someone sympathetic to his political views. From all of this, it is not difficult to see the policy of 'land for the people' as expressing much of Ferguson's intellectual response to the all too apparent ills of urban, industrialised Britain in the nineteenth century.



With Davitt, who developed his own formula of land nationalisation while in Portland gaol, Ferguson, therefore, did not regard Gladstone's 1881 Land Law (Ireland) Act, "that unscientific and impracticable compromise",<sup>50</sup> as going far enough to deal with the problems of rural poverty or offer Ireland a new commercial and industrial future. The three Fs granted under this Act were not sufficient in his view to cripple landlordism, nor would they redistribute land, let alone redistribute wealth in order to bring about the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Specific measures to deal with Ireland's land question were detailed by Ferguson in his pamphlet, *The Land For The People* - published just before Gladstone's Act was finally approved by Parliament in August 1881 and amidst controversy within the League's leadership over the acceptability of the statute. These measures depended essentially on the notion of a free trade in land and the appropriation of 'unearned increment' in the value of land for the benefit of the entire community. To bring about free trade in land, Ferguson proposed the removal of legal impediments to the breaking-up of estates, i.e. the laws of primogeniture, entail and settlement. In addition, to ensure the sale on to those willing to work and improve their holdings, he proposed a tax on landowners (and *not* on tenant farmers) which bore down

heavily on those who did not carry out such improvement. Ferguson was clear that under Gladstone's scheme, without these two initiatives, grazier-farmers would gain at the expense of the nation. Keeping what he described as a 'sturdy peasantry' on the land, "prosperous farmers who own the soil" similar to the owner-cultivators of France and most of northern Europe,<sup>51</sup> did not mean in Ferguson's eyes that they were free to reap the rewards of increased land values in place of the landowners of old. He indeed at one point explicitly asked for an end to the Irish Land War that meant land "not for the landlord, nor yet for the farmer, but for the nation".<sup>52</sup> His proposed tax on land would also remove the existing burden from industry and labour and mean the end of a "wasteful monopoly" in land ownership.

John Stuart Mill and John Bright had quite clearly influenced Ferguson's analysis of, and solutions to, Ireland's economic woes. He also showed an allegiance to the key principles of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. George, journalist and champion of local popular causes in San Francisco, had viewed land speculation on the American West Coast as a primary cause of the depression that had hit the area in 1873-78. Land that had increased in value largely as a result of the expansion of American railway networks was in George's view a significant burden on local

industry and labour.<sup>53</sup> From his observations of this phenomena, he drew the general conclusion that any unearned increase in the rental value of land; i.e. any increase that was not due to any productive use of said land by the owner, was owed to society as a whole. His “simple yet sovereign remedy”, a single-tax on land, designed to effectively appropriate rental value for the common good, would discourage the ownership of unproductive land (for “no one could afford to hold land that he was not using”). It would also ensure tax relief for the rest of the economy.<sup>54</sup>

George’s solution to the problems of nineteenth-century economic change was all the more attractive to audiences if the burden of the new tax was likely to fall on traditional social and political elites, the Irish landed gentry among them. He showed an awareness of this by taking immediate steps to influence leading Irish Land Leaguers - very soon after the first publication of his book in 1879, he was distributing copies to Home Rule MPs, A.M. Sullivan and John O’Connor Power. Later, he also sought out Davitt in 1880 when he visited the U.S. on a fund-raising tour and claimed that the latter had pledged to ‘push’ his book in Britain. Significantly, for our purposes, he also sent a copy of his book to Ferguson, addressing him as an “advocate upon your side of the Atlantic” of land reform on similar



lines to his own.<sup>55</sup>

As the Land War intensified, George benefited from the “truly powerful backing” of Ford’s *Irish World*, addressing sixty-two city meetings with its assistance, and saw an American Land League formed, partly as a result of his own oratorical efforts, during Parnell’s U.S tour in early 1880. His direct involvement in Irish affairs did not end with Parnell’s visit, however, for he also wrote a pamphlet, *The Irish Land Question: What It Involves and How Alone It Can Be Settled*, in the winter of 1880-81.<sup>56</sup> This analysis of the problem in Ireland saw a remedy in “the common ownership in land, by taking, through the medium of taxation the rental value [of land] for all the people”.<sup>57</sup> George was now contracted by Ford to travel to Ireland and report on events for the Irish –American readership of the *Irish World*, sailing for Liverpool on October 15 1881. Writing to the *Irish World* on November 5, George was already thoroughly in tune with his intended readership by talking of “despotism sustained by an alien force, and wielded in the interests of a privileged class”. Nevertheless, in private correspondence he noted the confusion of aims within the ranks of the League - “Like all great movements, it is a blind groping forwards”- and complained of its poor management to Ford.<sup>58</sup> The American’s lectures

were greeted with enthusiasm, however, and Davitt, once released from jail in May 1882, sought out financial backing for a new edition of George's work.<sup>59</sup> George became, to the distaste of moderates within the Irish Parliamentary party, a key speaker to the Irish in Britain in the year of greatest crisis in the land conflict.

Notwithstanding this, Davitt was wary of too close an association with George. George felt, for instance, that Davitt was reluctant to appear publicly with him in Ireland just after Parnell's release from Kilmainham gaol on May 2 1882.<sup>60</sup> Ferguson in Glasgow, however, displayed no such reluctance and, as he had done so in the past, was prepared to use his time, standing and money to promote George's ideas within the nationalist community. He invited George to come and speak on St. Patrick's Day, March 1882, thus giving an important established celebration of Irishness over to a social radical with popular appeal among the non-Irish.<sup>61</sup> As mentioned earlier, Ferguson claimed receipt of a copy of *Progress and Poverty* in the late 1870s and had been one of three British publishers of George's pamphlet on Ireland.<sup>62</sup> Clearly appreciative of his views on the Irish land question, the Glasgow audience heard George condemning "the Land Act [Gladstone's] in the roundest terms" on the same day that A.M.

Sullivan, long-standing constitutional nationalist, expressed his approval for the concessions gained for tenant-farmers. George even had Irishmen applaud such definitive statements as that they were part of “more than a national movement” and that the ‘Republican’ institutions of a ‘free Ireland’ “would amount to very little” without a single-tax to maintain the “natural equality of men”.<sup>63</sup> The times were, it is true, highly unusual for Irish nationalism (and Davitt and Parnell were in gaol, unable to give leadership), the City Hall was not full and Ferguson for his own part was careful not to refer to the Land Act in George’s terms. That said, the later record of the activists around Ferguson confirms the fact that the impact of social issues, or even the language of class conflict, on their political identity was not short-lived, nor so dependent on the policies of the INLGB.

Parnell, under pressure to end the escalating violence in Ireland and the relative failure of the ‘no rent’ strategy gave way to Liberal Government overtures. The resulting deal made with the Government, known later as the ‘Kilmainham Treaty’, saw Parnell accept the essence of Gladstone’s Act, obtain promises to relieve tenants of the burden of accumulated arrears and offered in return a winding down of the League’s more notorious activities. Parnell and Davitt were both released at the same time in May 1882; now,



however the latter had a much more clearly defined goal in view. He agreed with the principle, expressed notably by Mill, that the land was a 'natural agency', and therefore not the absolute property of any individual, and with George's view that tax should be paid "equal to annual value" of unused or uncultivated land. The state, however, under Davitt's system, would be the direct owner and indeed overall manager of all holdings. Davitt did envisage limited interference in production and the 'virtual freehold' of land, but in the state he was clearly anxious to see a guarantor of a future for small, yet viable family farms.<sup>64</sup> His scheme was often likened by himself and his supporters (Glasgow's Michael Clarke among them) to the so-called ryotwari system (or 'Bombay settlement') imposed on parts of India by the British in the late eighteenth century. This system gave individual ownership to peasant cultivators (ryots) on condition that they paid taxes to the British administration. George was more conventional for the time in that he preferred to see the free market operate in conjunction with the single-tax. That, however, did not stop him from rejoicing in the apparently decisive break Davitt had made with the tenant-farmer ambition for outright ownership.<sup>65</sup>

Ferguson, similarly, was inclined to play down any differences with

Davitt on the issue of land nationalisation. He was prepared to see the forced transfer of land from landlords to peasants in accordance with the ancient right of the state to retake “possession for the public good”.<sup>66</sup> However, he stuck with the idea of a single-tax, and the pressure this would put on landlords to sell up, as the best way to redistribute land. That said, the language used by Ferguson, Davitt *et al.* was often ambiguous, usually with the aim of maintaining solidarity with the forces of nationalism and radicalism. For example, phrases such as ‘common ownership’ or ‘state alone as landlord’ disguised real differences between them on the long-term role of government. The state as manager, in line with Davitt’s preferred scenario, could be seen as impinging on the liberty of individual cultivators, in both Ireland and Great Britain, to use and dispose of land as they saw fit. On the other hand, Ferguson and Davitt do seem to have agreed on the need for some kind of state-funded compensation for landlords, quite in contrast to George.

As for extending the powers of public bodies to directly intervene in urban landlord-tenant affairs, Ferguson early on, in December 1880, seemed to reject the idea that the state should try to regulate rents or in any other way interfere in property contracts. He was very keen to see a tax on ground

values, though, as a means of reducing aristocratic profiteering at the urban community's expense.<sup>67</sup> Davitt became bolder on this and extended further the principle of state ownership and management in launching his weekly, *Labour World*, in September 1890. By that time, he clearly saw the municipal or central government ownership and management of 'monopolies' (markets, docks and railways among other things) as compatible with his view on the nationalisation of land.<sup>68</sup> In the end, it has to be said that Ferguson's later advocacy of municipalisation (particularly in housing and as a means of regulating the drink trade) also seemed to take him beyond classical economics.

On the issue of land, then, Davitt and Ferguson continued to use the catch-all term 'peasant proprietary'; and yet they both opposed a simple handover to existing tenants that did not entail the redistribution of land *and* any income that didn't come from the productive use of land. Davitt did distinguish his own policy on land by the occasional use of the term 'national proprietary'<sup>69</sup> and yet his position was not so apparent at first, largely because he himself chose not to make a great public issue of differences. For all his misgivings, Davitt appeared in 1882 to be reconciled to Parnell's leadership and the aspiration of an outright transfer of land



ownership to existing tenants. In actual fact, as a letter to McGhee in January 1883 shows, Davitt believed that he had made a deal with Parnell just before the formation of the Irish National League in October 1882. In return for his compliance with the new League's stated objective of a peasant proprietary, he believed that he had been given license to continue arguing for his own 'principles' of land reform. In his own words, Davitt said Parnell had agreed that "I should be at liberty to advocate my own views" after the launch of the League.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, in Glasgow on October 26 1882, he called for continued support of the new Irish National League and its stated primary object of self-government.<sup>71</sup> Yet, at this very same meeting, he stated his contention that the state (and here he was careful to talk of a future *Irish* state) had a right to the unearned increment on land in order to mitigate "the misery of the masses" and ensure "the social elevation of the whole community". This was part and parcel of his 'democratic' agenda that included, among other things, a call for the extension of the franchise, elected County Boards in Ireland and the improved education of the working classes. In its almost evangelical tone and, at times actual vocabulary, Davitt was re-affirming not just the traditional alliance of Irish nationalism and advanced liberalism,

but also making direct demands for wealth redistribution through government effort.

He was accorded a rapturous reception by this particular Glasgow audience and continued to receive almost adulatory welcomes over the next two years. Two thousand people in 1884, for instance, “crowded to its utmost limits” a Glasgow city hall in order to hear him speak.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, there was an unquestionable and abiding affection for Davitt in Glasgow which remained up until his death in 1905. Likewise he found enthusiastic audiences in other major urban centres of Great Britain, *viz.* in Lancashire, Tyneside and London.<sup>73</sup> Even more remarkable was the fact that he continued to find audiences despite the efforts of ‘Tay Pay’ O’Connor to turn Irish and Irish-American newspaper readerships against him. In August 1883, for instance, an exasperated Davitt declared that the ‘Porker’s’ machinations in the USA against him surpassed “anything I have experienced in their unblushing mendacity”.<sup>74</sup> O’Connor’s circle of friends and press contacts was to be an unceasing source of misinformation and ‘rumour-mongering’. There was also a suggestion in early 1883 that the circle of Irish MPs on the ‘Irish Executive’ (presumably of the INLGB) colluded with physical force nationalists in disrupting Davitt’s meetings in

Oldham, Manchester and elsewhere in Northern England.<sup>75</sup> Davitt, quite simply, had a way of captivating exile assemblies, assemblies of the Irish ‘democracy’ which his more ‘pragmatic’ colleagues were sometimes uncomfortable with.<sup>76</sup>

As for Ferguson and the Home Government Branch, if anything, they increased their contacts with a variety of radicals in the years immediately following the Land War and came to be seen as head of a dedicated band of Georgeites within the ranks of the League. Edward McHugh, for one, won general high regard in Scottish advanced circles. Following on from his experiences as Scottish organiser of the League, he had given assistance to Skye crofters from the ‘Battle of the Braes’ of April 1882 onwards and had been appointed ‘advance agent’, on behalf of the English-based Land Reform Union, for Henry George on his 1884 tour of the British Isles.<sup>77</sup> Davitt described McHugh as a “quiet, self-contained man” and frequently referred to him as ‘McSkye’ in honour of his achievements and continuing connections with the island.<sup>78</sup>

In a similar fashion, Richard McGhee developed a reputation among land reformers and social radicals both in England and Scotland as a dedicated advocate of the single-tax. He had chaired one of the American’s



first Glasgow meetings in Oct 1882, had been on the executive of Hyndman's Democratic Federation in 1881 and helped to introduce it to Glasgow audiences. He was also one of the Land Reform Union's 'conspicuous movers' according to Henry George's biographer.<sup>79</sup> A regular correspondent with Davitt throughout the 1880s, he was also a valued colleague and friend, maintaining Davitt's connection with and relevance to radical politics in the West of Scotland. In the Davitt-McGhee correspondence there is ample evidence of McGhee's important role in keeping Davitt abreast of developments and, similarly, in urging the latter to play an active part in Scottish-based campaigns. That said, at times, Davitt felt that he was being asked to do too much and turned down McGhee's requests for written statements and Scottish visits.<sup>80</sup>

One initiative in which both McGhee and McHugh seem to have played a significant initiating role, and to which Davitt lent his blessing once it was established, was the Georgeite 'Scottish Land Restoration League'. It was formally launched at the second of two meetings addressed by George (and chaired by John Murdoch) in February 1884. This new body - named by McGhee, apparently, in an attempt to distinguish it from more orthodox Liberal land reform associations current at the time - created

a significant platform for Irish and Scots co-operation in radical politics that was free, in line with Davitt's thinking, from direct association with Irish nationalism.<sup>81</sup>

As for the debate over the land, and any alliance with labour, within purely Glasgow Irish activist circles, Davitt had a valuable and determined ally in Ferguson. The latter seemed to be straining the bonds of support and affection which he had up until then cultivated with the city's exiled Irish. The *Glasgow Herald* in 1882, indeed, had already spoken of him as the "one-time leader" of nationalism in the area.<sup>82</sup> He had given every encouragement to Davitt in his differences with Parnell over the future settlement of the land question, insisting publicly that they continue the campaign "into Africa" in spite of the new National League's moderate approach adopted in late 1882.<sup>83</sup> Over the next two years he increasingly used meetings, under the auspices of such bodies as the noticeably pro-labour 'Young Ireland Society' (of which McHugh was a notable member), to stress, for him, the essentially redistributive and democratic aims of Irish nationalism.

In 1884, for instance, he spoke, at a session of a 'Glasgow Irish Lectures League', which again seems to have been strongly associated with

local Irish labour activists - tailors, to be precise, apparently following in the radical footsteps of Peter Henrietta, nationalist and Glasgow Trades Council member in the 1860s and 70s.<sup>84</sup> Ferguson at this session spoke of the “social revolution” ahead due to the granting of the franchise to “millions” of the industrial classes under forthcoming legislation. Strikingly, not once during this St. Patrick’s Day meeting did Ferguson mention his thoughts on current Irish party policies or strategies. What he chose to stress was pride in being “a citizen of that great [British] empire and an Irish Nationalist”.<sup>85</sup>

This kind of rhetoric, insincere or not, may have left Ferguson open to accusations that he was conducting an ‘anti-national’ propaganda campaign (to borrow the phrase used by leading U.S.-based Fenian, John Devoy, to describe Davitt’s actions). However, it was scarcely out of tune with Davitt. In February 1884, he himself lectured a sympathetic Glasgow Irish audience, with National League officers notably in attendance, on the need to see the “existing labour system...merged into co-operation and the power of capital to regulate the price of labour...reduced to a minimum”. Echoing Henry George, he also went on to say that ‘the National cause was simply the social question of Ireland in another phase’.<sup>86</sup> Later, in June,



Davitt like Ferguson, looked forward to the “victory of the Franchises” possible with upcoming Liberal Government legislation, although he was referring just as much to his struggle with Parnell and his followers as to the struggle for social change.

Such campaigning, as has been already indicated, found active critics in both physical force and constitutionalist camps. For example, Devoy in America and Thomas Sexton, Parnellite MP, on a visit to Glasgow in 1883 saw land nationalisation and an alliance with labour as running contrary to the interests of political nationalism.<sup>87</sup> It was in April 1884, however, that Parnell, at Drogheda, delivered his own very “resounding rebuke” of Davitt’s continued promotion of both nationalisation and an alliance with British radicals. Nationalisation, he declared, was simply a “new craze” and an alliance with labour was “not [a] practical or likely solution” to the problem of the Irish poor.<sup>88</sup> Davitt and Ferguson’s position was now explicitly at odds with the Irish party leadership and speculation, in the press, on the possibility of electoral challenges by both men to sitting Parnellites MPs is an indication of the raised temperature of debate. Ferguson dismissed such speculation in later years as unfounded and the result of “vile slander” by one or two opponents

in a letter to an American newspaper.

Davitt, however, as his correspondence with Ferguson shows, was urged by the latter to respond publicly to Parnell's attack – in the Ulsterman's words, “bring P. [Parnell] to task”. Nevertheless, in this instance, as indeed on many later occasions, he counselled restraint on his more fiery Scots-based followers. He wanted nothing to “excite divisions” in the months before an expected general election and strongly advised Ferguson to “continue to preach ideas & [sic] not men”.<sup>89</sup> Ferguson here seemed impatient for a rebuttal, at the very least, and McGhee, also making a written appeal for action to Davitt soon after the Drogheda pronouncement, may in fact have been so unable to suppress his indignation as to become the unwitting source of rumours of an electoral challenge to the ‘uncrowned king’. McGhee's words to a “party in England”, “that Davitt would snap half Parnell's following out of their Irish representation at the next General Election”, would seem, if somewhat over-optimistic, to be a strong indication of the frustration felt by the ‘Fergusonians’.<sup>90</sup> Davitt, himself, despite (in the opinion of one reliable historian) the distinct possibility of Irish-American financial support, followed his own advice and kept largely silent for the remainder of the year.<sup>91</sup>

Given Davitt's standing amongst the Irish public, especially in Britain, the O'Connor-led machine did not dare to denounce him in personal terms; and yet the question of co-operation or independence with regard to the two main British parties was a major cause for concern for the leadership. Davitt was convinced of the wisdom of co-operation with Liberals, even if he preferred those of a distinctly radical and labour-friendly hue and saw great possibilities for advanced Liberals in newly formed constituencies. Besides this, he envisaged a "magnificent movement ...slowly forming itself among the industrial classes" which would act against those "parliamentary gadflies" in the Irish Party, against those who opposed his vision of land nationalisation and a democratised nationalist movement. Co-operation with advanced Liberals in Britain would ensure a continuing momentum for radical politics in Ireland and Davitt was convinced that Irish parliamentary party awareness of this was reason enough for them to consider opposing the Liberal's 1884 Reform Bill.<sup>92</sup> Ferguson for his own part, in appearing at a National Liberal Association conference in 1883 as a 'delegate' of the Glasgow Irish, seems to have again been the cause of an open split between radicals and loyal League members in the HGB. In itself, in one historian's view, the invitation to



Ferguson might have been a mere tactical ploy by one faction of the Glasgow Liberal Association to wrongfoot the other.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, the willingness of Glasgow's leading nationalist to associate so formally with Liberalism was not appreciated by those loyal to the INLGB thinking – that is on the issue of formal distance from the two British parties. In early 1884, leading branch officials put forward a resolution condemning Ferguson, were subsequently outvoted and went off to form another ('Glasgow') branch.<sup>94</sup>

Dialogue with organised Liberalism was always important to Ferguson. Indeed, in the summer of 1885, he seems to have played a pivotal role as a 'go-between' in talks with Radical luminaries, Chamberlain and Dilke, when they were busy seeking out the views of nationalists in Scotland and Ulster.<sup>95</sup> Yet now the very radicals that he had come to be associated with were going further and adopting their own strategy of independence in electoral contests. Scottish land reformers and Irish nationalists alike were talking-up the possibility of working-class MPs standing and acting independently from Liberal or Tory party machines. Ferguson himself had already initiated an Irish-based campaign in pursuit of public salaries for MPs in August 1882 as a means of encouraging such

politicians.<sup>96</sup> In the light of the Liberals proposed extension of the franchise and redistribution of seats in 1884-85, there was therefore a certain anxiety in the Irish parliamentary party over its effect on Ireland's rural workforce and urban exiles. If Irish working-class voters in Great Britain were to opt for working-class MPs in the future, Parnell was anxious that they did not damage the Irish party's ability to freely choose its allies in the pursuit of self-government. Thus, Ferguson and Davitt in the new electoral arrangements would be faced with difficulties in contending with a vigorous and centralised Irish party machine. They had to square their loyalty to the latter with their own attachment to radicalism, likewise to social radicals who did not necessarily put constitutional change in Ireland at the top of their agenda. That said, the later record of the activists around Ferguson confirms the fact that the impact of social issues, or even the language of class conflict, on their political identity was not short-lived, nor dependent on the policies of the INLGB.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *GH*, 17 Aug. 1874.

<sup>2</sup> See T. E. Cliffe Leslie, *Land Systems and Industrial Economy* (London, 1870), *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> See E. D. Steele, 'J. S. Mill and the Irish Question: The Principles of Political Economy, 1848-1865', *Historical Journal*, vol. xiii, no.2 (1970), pp. 216-236 for a full discussion of Mill's thoughts on Irish land system.

<sup>4</sup> J.S. Mill, *England and Ireland* (London, 1868).

<sup>5</sup> E. D. Steele, 'J. S. Mill and The Irish Question: Reform and the Integrity of The Empire, 1865-1870', *Historical Journal*, vol. xiii, no. 3 (1970), p. 430

<sup>6</sup> See P. Joyce, *Visions of the People* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 38-39 for a discussion on 'visions' of the land held not only by English radicals but also by Feargus O'Connor; cf. J. Ferguson, *The Land for the People: An Appeal to All Who Work By Hand Or Brain* (Glasgow, n.d.), *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, John Denvir's comments on the degrading influence of Britain's "worst class of society" in L. W. Brady, *T. P. O'Connor and The Liverpool Irish* (London, 1983), p. 42; also Ferguson, *Appeal*, p 5.

<sup>8</sup> *GO*, 26 Mar. 1887.



<sup>9</sup> See T. W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution 1846-82* (Oxford, 1981), p. 51 for mention of Ferguson as the publisher in 1869 of Forrester's verse collection, *Songs of the Rising Nation*, and pp. 59-60 for mention of Davitt's letter to Forrester written in Glasgow in same year; also *Ibid.*, p. 68 for Barry's role in "Davitt's arms-traffic".

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-116 for details of Davitt's trial and conviction.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 188 and 201.

<sup>12</sup> See *The Times*, 25 May 1889 for Ferguson's testimony to the Parnell Commission.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, for his connection with the *Irish World*; also Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London, 1904), p. 147 for reference to Ferguson's reputation as a "veteran land reformer", a reputation established before the onset of the Land War.

<sup>14</sup> *Scottish Leader*, 21 May 1888.

<sup>15</sup> *The Times*, 25 May 1889; also Gerard Moran, 'J. Daly and The Rise and Fall of the Land League in The West of Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. xxix, no. 114 (Nov. 1994), p. 197 for footnote on Ferguson's presence in Irishtown.

<sup>16</sup> Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, p. 150.

<sup>17</sup> See Moody, *Davitt*, pp. 334-337 and 573, appendix h, for record of Ferguson's attendance at Central Land League meetings.

<sup>18</sup> *The Times*, 25 May 1889.

<sup>19</sup> *GH*, 22 Nov. 1879. Quoted from a 'manifesto' issued after a 'council' meeting of the Glasgow Home Rule Association, probably written by Ferguson.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 Dec. 1879.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 Nov. 1879.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 Aug. 1879.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 Aug. 1879.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 Aug. 1879

<sup>25</sup> See *GH*, 16-19, 23, 27, 28, 31 Aug. and 6 Sept. 1880 for detailed exposition of magistracy bias by McHugh and Clarke, among others, against an increasingly defensive and weary *Herald*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 Nov. 1882.

<sup>27</sup> *The Times*, 25 May 1889. Quoted, during the proceedings of the Parnell Commission, from *Irish World*, 30 April 1887, John Ferguson to editor. This letter ridiculed in ironic tones the view of many appearing before the Commission that McHugh "had gone from cottage to cottage, teaching the

communism of Henry George and the *Irish World*'.

<sup>28</sup> John R. Frame, 'America and the Scottish Left: the Impact of American Ideas on the Scottish Labour Movement from the Civil War to World War One', University of Aberdeen PhD thesis, 1998, pp. 82-3.

<sup>29</sup> Moody, *Davitt*, pp. 366 and 368.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 481; also Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, on Parnell's public claim of £1,000 a week coming into the League from USA.

<sup>31</sup> Moody, *Davitt*, p. 481.

<sup>32</sup> Frame, 'America and the Scottish Left', p. 83; see also *GO*, 8 Oct. 1887 for brief account of Home Government Branch's history up to that time, probably written by one of the branch secretaries, Hugh Murphy or John O'Doherty.

<sup>33</sup> Brady, *O'Connor*, pp. 44-75.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> A. O'Day, *Irish Home Rule 1867-1921* (Manchester and New York, 1998), p. 81.

<sup>36</sup> Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, pp. 371-379.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>38</sup> *GO*, 8 Oct 1887.



<sup>39</sup> *Glasgow Star*, 2 Mar. 1907; see also James Hunter (ed.), *For the People's Cause: From the Writings of John Murdoch* (Edinburgh, 1986), *passim* for Hunter's introductory remarks and Murdoch's own account of his work as a journalist, his time in Ireland and long-term friendship with Irish nationalists.

<sup>40</sup> See *GH*, 9 June 1881 for founding of 'Scotch Land Law Reform Union'; also T.M.Devine, *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2000* (London, 2000), pp. 429-36 on activities of Highland Land Law Reform Association.

<sup>41</sup> Dublin, Library of Trinity College (hereafter TCD), Michael Davitt Papers, MS 9375, f. 993, Mrs Ferguson to Mrs Davitt, 13 Jan. 1908.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, MS 9251, f. 5953, Davitt to McGhee, 9 April 1887 and f. 5957, Davitt to McGhee, date added as "c. 1 May 1887".

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, MS 9238, f. 180/10, Davitt to McGhee, dated originally only as "1884" and MS 9251, f. 5938, Davitt to McGhee, 28 Sept. 1885.

<sup>44</sup> *GH*, 1 Sept. 1883.

<sup>45</sup> See Charles T Couper (ed.), *Report of the Trial of the Dynamitards* (Edinburgh, 1884), p. 16 for list of membership cards, pamphlets (including a copy of Ferguson's *The Land for the People*), etc. found in Devaney's home. Also found in his home was a "Five –Chambered Revolver, and a

Tin Box containing Thirty-Four or thereby cartridges". For lecture, see *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>46</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9399, f. 1501, Davitt to Ferguson, 25 Mar. 1883.

This was written in response to a letter by Ferguson of 23 March 1883.

<sup>47</sup> See Hutchison, 'Mid-Victorian Glasgow', p. 512 for drift of Scots reformers away from Irish radicals after bombings.

<sup>48</sup> *Times*, May 25 1889; also Hutchison, 'Mid-Victorian Glasgow', pp. 514-15 for details of visits by Dilke to Glasgow and founding of Republican Club in January 1872. Duncan Cameron, Ferguson's partner, and Peter Henrietta, prominent local trade unionist of Irish origin and early supporter of Ferguson's Home Rule efforts, were certainly members.

<sup>49</sup> Shaw Maxwell in October 1883 launched a weekly newspaper, *Voice of the People*, "in the hope that the labouring classes will look upon it as their own". Among other things, he gave a forum to those promoting land nationalisation and blamed landlords in Glasgow for the "overcrowding and insanitation in cities", for which see *Voice of the People*, 27 Oct. and 17 Nov. 1883. He clearly had much in common with Ferguson's radical views.

<sup>50</sup> Ferguson, *Appeal*, p. 18.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York, 1951), p. x; Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers* (New York, 1986), p. 188.

<sup>54</sup> George, *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 397-472 for George's exposition of his remedy for the "increase of want with increase of wealth".

<sup>55</sup> Henry George Jr., *The Life of Henry George* (London, 1900), pp. 345-7; John Ferguson, *The Taxation of Land Values: A Retrospect and a Forecast* (n.d.), p. 2 for Ferguson's recollection of first acquaintance with George and his book.

<sup>56</sup> Ferguson's firm, according to George's son, was one of two British publishers of this pamphlet, probably in 1881, for which see George, Jr., *Henry George*, p.348.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359, 361 and 365 for this quote and several extracts from correspondence with Ford and others.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 380-81.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 379-80

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389; see also *GH*, 18 Mar. 1882 for report of George's address.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p 348 for publication details.



<sup>63</sup> *GH*, 18 Mar. 1882 for both speeches.

<sup>64</sup> Michael Davitt, *Leaves From A Prison Diary, Vol. II* (London, 1885), pp. 69-80; also T.W. Moody, 'Michael Davitt' in J. W. Boyle (ed.), *Leaders and Workers* (Cork, 1966), pp. 49-50.

<sup>65</sup> George, Jr., *Henry George*, p. 382.

<sup>66</sup> Ferguson, *Appeal*, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup> Moody, 'Michael Davitt', p. 433. Ferguson had reacted to plans for a 'House League' against rackrents in Dublin by writing to *Freeman's Journal* (8 Dec. 1880):

We lose educated authority if we mix up the laws of natural agents [land] with the laws of human products [houses]. Our reform of the land laws will reform the only evil existing in connection with house property, *viz.* the land upon which houses stand.

<sup>68</sup> *Labour World*, 21 Sept. 1890.

<sup>69</sup> *GH*, 5 Feb. 1884.

<sup>70</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9251, f. 5901, Davitt to McGhee, Jan 2 1883.

<sup>71</sup> George, Jr., *Henry George*, p. 382; also *GH*, 26 Oct. 1882 for Glasgow

speech.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 Nov. 1884.

<sup>73</sup> Moody, 'Michael Davitt', p. 51.

<sup>74</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9521, f. 5907, Davitt to McGhee, 1 Aug. 1883.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, Davitt Papers, MS 9328, f. 180/11-12, Davitt to McGhee, date added "1884"; see also F. Sheehy-Skeffington, *Michael Davitt* (London, 1967), p 116-17 for account of these meetings by self-professed admirer of Davitt.

<sup>76</sup> See Brady, *T. P. O'Connor*, p. 3 for O'Connor's distaste for meetings with his constituents. It was also noticeable that Parnell held relatively few public meetings in Britain after his release from gaol in May 1882.

<sup>77</sup> For details of McHugh's work with George, including extract from speech in Portree on Skye, see George, Jr., *Henry George*, pp. 428 and 433; also Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol. III* (Manchester, 1978), pp. 156-7.

<sup>78</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9328, f. 180/17, Davitt to McGhee, 5 Mar. 1885.

<sup>79</sup> See George, Jr., *Henry George*, pp. 389, 421, 422 and 434 for McGhee's contribution to the Georgeite cause; also Bellamy and Saville (eds.), *Labour Biography*, pp. 152-3 for other early political activities.

<sup>80</sup>. See TCD, Davitt Papers, MSS 9328 and 9521, Davitt-McGhee correspondence, *passim* for several references to McGhee's detailed accounts of radical politics in Scotland and his requests for Davitt to give lectures, write public statements, etc. in Scotland; also *Ibid.*, MS 9328, f. 180/33, Davitt to McGhee, date added "Dec. 87" for Davitt's insistent refusal to visit Scotland again in that year as McGhee seemed to wish; he was "resolved not to go again until next year".

<sup>81</sup> Bellamy and Saville (eds.), *Labour Biography*, p. 153; George, Jr., *Henry George*, p. 434 and *GH*, Feb. 26 1884. See note 43 above.

<sup>82</sup> *GH*, Mar. 27 1882.

<sup>83</sup> George, Jr., *Henry George*, p. 389.

<sup>84</sup> See TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9328, f. 180/11-12, Davitt to McGhee, date added "1884" and MS 9521, f. 5929, Davitt to McGhee, 7 Jan. 1885 for mention of tailors

<sup>85</sup> *GH*, 18 Mar. 1884.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 Feb. 1884.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82* (Dublin, 1978), p. 230 for Devoy's arguments against land nationalisation.

<sup>88</sup> Moody, 'Michael Davitt', p. 51.



<sup>89</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9375, f. 992, Davitt to Ferguson, 25 Jun. 1884,

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, MS 9328, f. 180/5-9, Davitt to McGhee, 15 Apr. 1884.

<sup>91</sup> *GO*, Mar 13 1886 for Ferguson's reference to rumours; also Moody, 'Michael Davitt', p. 51 on Irish-American money.

<sup>92</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9328, f. 180/5-9, Davitt to McGhee, 15 Apr. 1884.

<sup>93</sup> Hutchison, 'Mid Victorian Glasgow', pp.506-8 for fuller discussion of rivalries between Whigs, Lib-Labs and Radicals (essentially religious dissenters and quite different from English Radicals). The latter are accused of using Ferguson for their own ends.

<sup>94</sup> *GO*, 8. Oct. 1887.

<sup>95</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9521, f. 5933, Davitt to McGhee, 14 July 1885.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 Aug. 1882.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Politics of 'The Democracy' and Irish Political Identity.**

The turbulent times of the Land War had a definite energising effect on would-be politicians within the nationalist community in Glasgow. The problem was, however, that nationality alone was not sufficient to get support at the polls. It continued to be the case that, depending on the electoral arena (for the return of members to parochial board, school board, council or parliament), Irishness was always qualified in a way which suited current issues in that arena, if indeed it was mentioned at all. The Irish National League created a strong organisational base for anyone interested in standing for local public office, but it continued to be the case that special interests (viz., the Church, social radicals, labour and pro- and anti-drink lobbies) made it difficult to offer a consistent view of Irish political identity. What was characteristic of the 1880s, however, was the degree to which individual activists came closer to consistency by adhering to formally distinct political groups. This hardening of lines between political associations created difficulties for those who preferred to see the Irish vote as conditional and made any alliances more likely to be long-term and more genuinely based on a shared vision. It also meant that no arena was

contested exclusively in terms of the issues – political advancement as part of a political association now involved experience at all levels of public life and any views had to comply with those collectively agreed. For nationalist politicians there were choices to be made with regard to vision and strategy, and this did not necessarily place nationality at the centre of things.

First of all, as seems to have been the case in Ireland,<sup>1</sup> we see politicians formally linked to nationalist organisations renewing their efforts to become the representatives of the local Irish community on Glasgow's civic authorities. In elections for the Glasgow School Board, for instance, Rev. Henry Murphy, in March 1882, openly challenged the catholic basis of Irish representation on said Board. Murphy, born in Glasgow, but trained in France and England then ordained in Ireland, was an early platform supporter of Home Rule and publicly defended Ferguson in October 1875 against the "ruinous principle of sectarianism". His very public collaboration with Home Rule politicians meant that he was eventually to fall foul of Bishop John McLachlan of Galloway (closely identified with the 'Scotch' faction in the internal church wrangles of the 1860s and a particular associate of leading Glasgow cleric, Rev. Alexander Munro). In 1880, McLachlan accused Murphy of persistent political agitation and



neglect of his priestly duties. Murphy's political challenge was no doubt strongly coloured by personal animosity towards McLachlan and Munro, but the *Glasgow Herald* did see the wider significance of his efforts. It clearly identified his supporters as belonging to that "*political section of Irishmen* [my italics] who once owned John Ferguson as their leader" and saw this as part of a general weakening of "the spirit of sect" in Glasgow.<sup>2</sup>

Despite Murphy being "unacknowledged by his brother priests" and his notoriety as a banned priest (dismissed from his post, in his own words, for "political agitation" and "canonically dead" in the eyes of the Catholic Church),<sup>3</sup> Murphy's enthusiastic supporters ensured that he would come out higher up the poll than Munro, the leading candidate of the Catholic Association.<sup>4</sup> This result is even more remarkable for the determination of his supporters to 'plump' for him rather than share out their fifteen votes and for the fact that the poll took place at a time when the *Herald* acknowledged the 'energy' of catholic organisers. Reporters gave particular attention to catholic activists getting out their voters and directing them as to voting procedure on the very day of the poll itself.<sup>5</sup> Little is known about Murphy's time on the Board, but he was certainly not to have his vote determined by sectarian loyalty alone. In his first recorded appearance at a

Board meeting, he actually voted against Rev. Cuthbert Wood, one of the Catholic Association representatives, in a vote on public admittance to Board meetings. Even more revealing was the fact that Murphy voted on the same side as Rev. Robert Thomson of Ladywell, a protestant clergyman who had declared his opposition to 'Popery' before the elections and yet later, in May 1882, was to stand on a platform with John Murdoch, long-time friend of Irish nationalism, in a protest against evictions on Skye.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to this open and successful defiance of clerical management of Irish/catholic representation on local bodies, another Home Ruler of the early days, shopkeeper Robert McKillop, entered a contest for the Fourteenth Ward (Hutchesontown) in November 1882 municipal elections and lost ignominiously, winning only 251 votes. His campaign was a very low-key affair: he promoted himself as a working-class candidate and, according to the *Glasgow Herald*, confined himself to "working for" the Irish vote which bulked "largely in the south-eastern part of this city".<sup>7</sup> A comparison of these two results shows both the opportunities and the pitfalls for Irish candidates - Home Rule and a determination to resist clerical influence were strongly supported in some quarters, but nationalist credentials alone, at least until the potential voting

strength of the Irish-born community in the Fourteenth Ward is known with more precision, apparently were not a sufficient guarantee of a substantial vote in local elections.

Much more successful in elections, to parochial boards and school boards at any rate, were Irishmen who had a record of commitment to catholic lay bodies such as the SVDP. Murphy in 1882 may have managed to bring about to the loss of a Glasgow School Board seat by the then president of the local SVDP, Francis Henry, but elections in April 1885 once more saw the return of three approved catholic representatives. With no renegade figure in the polls, from the INLGB camp or otherwise, the *Glasgow Observer* was probably right in saying that these candidates enjoyed the “united and solid vote of the Irish and Catholic residents of Glasgow”.<sup>8</sup> However, even tighter organisation of the vote under the Catholic Union, in co-operation with INLGB branches, probably played no small part in their success. The Catholic Union, taking over from the apparently more fitful and clerically dominated Catholic Association in the winter of 1884-85, seems to have created a more reliable mechanism for supporting laymen’s efforts. As recommended by a London-based committee, its local committees, under the chairmanship of the local ‘senior



priest' were designed to operate more effectively within the boundaries of Glasgow's civil parishes (City, Barony and Govan). It also had in James Brand an able 'local correspondent' (apparently responsible for ensuring close links with the London Union). Born in Montrose and making himself a highly successful career as a civil engineering contractor, he personified respectable catholicism, enjoying the status of being a Barony parish board member and Justice of the Peace.<sup>9</sup> Under Brand, the Union concentrated on giving practical advice and assistance on the registration of potential voters and the effective use of Irish/catholic votes.

At its first 'Central Committee' meeting in February 1885, Union delegates included INLGB activists Francis J. Doran and Thomas Kelly and noted catholic ward politician, Charles McGuire.<sup>10</sup> McGuire, gaining a seat on the City parish in 1884 at a time when the "organisation and voting power of the Catholics were at their lowest", was a vigorous opponent of perceived proselytisers, and his career was indicative of a more determined bid for Irish/catholic success at the polls. Not only did McGuire's early success in the City board's Northern district provide the spur for the establishment of a new INLGB branch, it also paved the way for a respectable showing in municipal elections. By 1888, he was obviously

prominent enough to be added to the Union's list of candidates in the 1888 School Board contest, thus leaving Munro as the sole clergyman on the catholic side.<sup>11</sup> Irish/catholic representation in all three civil parishes continued to grow into the 1890s with five unopposed candidates returned in City parish alone in 1891.<sup>12</sup> The *Glasgow Observer*, a forthright proponent of the catholic basis of any Irish vote, expressed satisfaction in that same year at the way in which the Catholic Union by then faced "little difficulty" in getting Managers of the Poor elected.

INLGB/Catholic Union co-operation and discipline no doubt boosted success at the polls; nevertheless, there was an inherent tension in aims and strategy operating at the higher levels of each body. Rev. Alexander Munro, just before the triennial School Board elections of April 1888, made it plain that in that arena at least contests "should be considered a matter of religious principle", and therefore presumably not the business of Home Rule candidates, as Murphy ostensibly had been. Likewise, the *Observer*, from its inception in 1885, doggedly held to the view that where education and the protection of the poor (from proselytisers) were concerned, "we must vote entirely irrespective of [party] political issues, and support those who will defend Catholic issues".<sup>13</sup> At the national level,

relations in general between Irish nationalism and the Church had improved considerably after the Land War. In fact, the Irish hierarchy in October 1884 formally resolved to have Parnell's party speak for them on education demands, thus marking a significant change of attitude towards the kind of militant, secular nationalism he represented.<sup>14</sup> This co-operation had obvious advantages for both sides. For the party, it gained them the goodwill and energy of middle-class laity (and priesthood), thus providing useful networks and facilities at parish level. For the Church, in Ireland *and* Great Britain, it meant the protection of a major parliamentary party in facing up to the uncertainties of democratic government.

However, although denominational education was favoured by High Church Conservatives and helped to create a potential for deals with Parnell in 1885, the Liberals were perceived as having brought about real social and political progress for the Irish, as Catholics or otherwise, and were always going to be the natural allies of an Irish nationalist party. The problem for the Church was that the Liberals had a strong nonconformist base and were at the forefront of campaigns for undenominational, even secular, education. What is more, Parnell was not averse to underscoring the overriding secular concerns of the Irish party – and when, in 1883, the papal



government's Congregation of Propaganda Fide publicly decried efforts by nationalists to raise a Testimonial Fund for Parnell, the Irish public, by contributing generously, showed official Church views did not always rule supreme with them either. Noises were made by prominent Glasgow catholics such as Charles Diamond, editor and later owner of the *Observer*, in favour of the formation of a confessional political party similar to those found in continental Europe. Munro, for his own part, was accused by INLGB members of seeking to put forward two "Catholic candidates" without INLGB sanction in the general elections of 1885.<sup>15</sup> However, as long there was no national party with an explicitly catholic identity (and national party alignments intruded more and more into local, ward politicking), the Glasgow catholic Irish electorate and its politicians would be increasingly forced to make public demonstrations of electoral loyalty that were consistent and yet might compromise the conditional nature of their support.

Before 1885, the question of where hard and fast loyalties lay with regard to the two main parties was not a pressing one for the Irish in Glasgow, activists or otherwise. Despite Ferguson's threats and bluster, he personally was not averse to open association with local Liberals - as his

presence, as a 'delegate' of the Glasgow Irish, at a National Liberal Association conference in November 1883 bears witness to.<sup>16</sup> The apparent lack of a thoroughgoing spirit of independence in Ferguson personally tells us as much about the fluidity of politics in general at the time as about the ill-defined nature of Irish nationalism in Glasgow. Nevertheless, given that nationalism based on strict adherence to the centralised machine of the INLGB was too narrow a sphere of interest for men like Ferguson and McHugh, it seems that, without formal sanction, the 'Democratic Halls' in Nelson Street, Glasgow became, in the immediate aftermath of the Land War, a recognised forum for a wider debate on 'the social question' and its bearing on the Irish in the two islands.

Some of these 'social' nationalists, notably Patrick 'Pete' Curran (later Labour MP for Jarrow),<sup>17</sup> were drawn into formal allegiance to socialist associations, but for most the land reform movement and its general 'democratic' programme, advocating working class candidates for working class areas, was the more attractive. This movement had a momentum established in Glasgow and was quite forthright about laying claim to the Irish vote. One of its chief manifestations, The Scottish Land Restoration League, had, at its foundation in Glasgow in February 1884,

Henry George as its main speaker and, in the chair, John Murdoch. As previously outlined, both men were by this time well-known public advocates of land reform *and* friends of Irish nationalism. Besides, both McGhee and McHugh were evidently key founder members and Davitt gave his blessing after its inception, thus adding strongly one would assume to its acceptability among Irish nationalists. Thus, they made a point of sending out emotional appeals on behalf of “those Irishmen and descendants of Irishmen who had been driven from their homes at the behest of men who in many cases had never set foot in Ireland”. This movement unequivocally sought the support of the “working class of the great cities” and was to provide the first real challenge to the Liberal ‘alliance’ of Whigs, Radicals and Lib-Labs in Glasgow.<sup>18</sup> It also, in refusing to be a part of the Liberal efforts at moderate land reform for the Highlands, gave Irish social nationalists the chance to be so within a British context without compromising their desire for ‘distance’ from the two main British parties.

As it turned out, 1885 was to be the year in which the Nelson St. politicians would test the loyalties of the Irish vote. Ferguson in 1885, it has to be said, was not the central player in exclusively nationalist politics that



he had been. On St. Patrick's Day in 1884, he had stressed the dominance of the 'industrial classes' in the new franchise before a platform of Scottish Land Restoration League supporters and Irishmen, hardly mentioning self-government, let alone Ireland. For perhaps the first time before a nationalist audience, he had experienced some heckling; on the same day in 1885, he was plainly taking a back seat in the proceedings.<sup>19</sup> Also, when T. P. O'Connor visited Glasgow in late October 1885 to attend the League's Convention, the on-going process of INLGB centralisation aroused the open hostility of HGB branch members. They objected to the lack of consultation in the appointment of area organisers and afterwards expressed their disapproval of O'Connor's conduct as chairman at the Convention.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps, given the way in which Ferguson, a pivotal figure in the defunct HRCGB, was sidelined by O'Connor in favour of the young and relatively inexperienced Owen Kiernan, himself a HGB member, their objections were more a reflection of HGB resistance to the perceived marginalising of Ferguson.

On a purely political level, O'Connor, despite appearing on the same platform as Ferguson earlier that evening, was to deliver later a pointed

speech against support for Land Restoration candidates such as James Shaw Maxwell and declared that:

It was perfectly incompatible for an Irish Nationalist to say in one breath that he would wait the decision of Mr. Parnell and his colleagues with regard to the general election and before that decision was given to go on a platform and pledge his support to any candidate.<sup>21</sup>

That Ferguson was being referred to here is highly probable, as is Ferguson's determination plain, because he was to appear and speak briefly at *three* meetings before polling day in the December 1885 general election on behalf of Shaw Maxwell, standing in the Blackfriars and Hutchesontown division. It was clearly difficult for the likes of Ferguson, McHugh, Hugh and Arthur Murphy to deny the claims of Shaw Maxwell and John Murdoch (another 'Land Restoration' candidate of that same year, in Partick) to their support. Given the high degree of Irish involvement in the Restoration League's formation; indeed, there was clearly an expectation of exceptional consideration from Parnell and the INLGB. McGhee had asked Davitt,

some time before 23 November 1885, to lobby the Irish leader on behalf of these candidates. At that point in time, Davitt, however, plainly saw any approaches as unrealistic, given Parnell's recent 'bombastic' manifesto to the exiles in Great Britain. The more radical nationalist saw Parnell as going for a "new form of Toryism": "Priests, Parsons, Parnellites and Peers appear to be on the one platform now, and the programme is – Keep the Democracy out of Westminster".<sup>22</sup> Given the Home Rule 'renegade' Mitchell Henry's candidature for the Liberals,<sup>23</sup> in a three-way contest which also included Conservative W. S. Maughan (an 'Orange landlord Tory', in the words of Michael Davitt), Davitt's exasperation was probably shared by more than a few Irish electors in the Blackfriars division.

Applying what could be ostensibly considered different standards in Glasgow elections from those applied in English contests (both the atheist Bradlaugh and radical Joseph Cowen were backed), Parnell was to apply strictly his policy of tactical support for the Conservatives and to reject an exception in this case. What is more, in order to ensure Glasgow Irish conformity, John Redmond, later leader of the Home Rule party, was sent on an urgent visit to Scotland. Ferguson, significantly, did not appear on the platform of Redmond's hastily convened gathering of the Irish. However,



the *Glasgow Observer* did record an appeal to Redmond from Edward McHugh (“received with a storm of hisses and booing”) on behalf of “John Murdock [sic] who, for forty years past, had been working in connection with the Irish movement”.<sup>24</sup> The threat in Glasgow posed to Parnell’s strategy seems to have been considered urgent enough for an eve-of-poll telegram to be sent by T. P O’Connor, and made public by local organiser Frank Doran, reassuring electors “that Mr. Parnell...had again declared for Mr. Maughan”.<sup>25</sup> Shaw Maxwell did in the end record a respectable vote, but the poll, as Davitt predicted, was to give Mitchell Henry, an ex-Home Ruler and avowed anti-Parnellite, victory.

The question as to whether or not the Irish vote could really have kept Henry out is perhaps not as significant as the fact that in all of the above there was a scarcely concealed passion on one side (essentially from the HGB) for Shaw Maxwell and other Land Restoration candidates; and, on the other side, men such as Frank Doran determined to steer clear of electoral association with them. Doran’s ‘14th Ward Irish Electoral Union and Mutual Improvement Association’, formed soon after McKillop’s council bid in 1882, played an active role in disciplining the Irish in Glasgow’s ‘South Side’ and there are strong hints of a campaign against the

HGB's zeal for Land Restoration politicians. As early as April 1885, Doran was cautioning that certain parties were getting ready to forward candidates "but Irish should await advice from the National League". He also presided at Redmond's meeting mentioned above and was perhaps the "Burning Bush' from the South Side" branch attacked at a HGB meeting for fomenting disagreements within the branch after the Glasgow Convention.<sup>26</sup> It would come as no surprise then if further research were to show to that he was in fact responsible for eliciting the above mentioned telegram from O'Connor.

It was not just from other nationalists that opposition to Ferguson's views could be found. In the first copies of the *Glasgow Observer* sly observations were made against the Ulsterman and his associates. A weekly newspaper, combining local and national catholic/nationalist news, it was behind Parnell until the infamous O'Shea court case and gave ample coverage of INLGB branch meetings. After a quick succession of three Irish editors, the Ulster-born Charles Diamond assumed control in July 1887 (and eventually owned it outright from 1894) and, though orthodox in its support of the Parnellites, the paper came to be more interested in catholic issues *per se* and more openly opposed to the influence of the drink trade in

Irish/catholic politics.<sup>27</sup> In one article, eulogising Scots-based Charles O'Neil's candidature for the West Donegal seat, Ferguson was apparently slighted on citing Captain Kirwan (who indeed seems to have worked alongside Ferguson and John Barry in setting-up the HGA in Glasgow) as *the* 'pioneer' of Irish politics in Scotland. Even more pointedly, allusions were made to O'Neil's working relationship "with men who were at least once trusted by the Irish people".<sup>28</sup> Much of this is conjecture, of course, but there is no doubt that by 1885, although he was a figure much revered by many ordinary nationalists (witness the noisy calls for a speech from him at the 1885 St. Patrick's Day meeting and at the Convention), Ferguson was no longer operating at the heart of Irish politics in Glasgow with the full backing of influential catholic Irish representatives. Indeed, Ferguson was to suffer the consequences of his December 1885 actions over the course of the next two years and at one point publicly appeared to contemplate severing himself from the nationalist movement he had helped to create. For all this, he never fully explained nor, more significantly, ever apologised for his actions in December 1885.

The London-based National Executive of the INLGB chose to make an issue of Ferguson's traditional role as chief initiator and chairman of St.



Patrick's Day celebrations, and were seemingly abetted by certain branches and individuals who resented his standing among local nationalists. In what Ferguson took to be a calculated insult, he was only the so-called 'Organising Committee's' second choice for the chairmanship of the planned 1886 rally, a clergyman with no obvious claim to the honour being the preferred choice of the majority.<sup>29</sup> In a complicated wrangle, it turned out that Ferguson only accepted the role (once, presumably, the clergyman was for some reason no longer an option) upon the advice of Davitt, and then suffered the further public humiliation of an about-turn by the Committee. The Committee was forced to reject Ferguson when the London Executive emphatically stated that he was not to be offered the role of chairman as he had "acted openly in hostility to the policy of the Executive" in the 1885 elections. Some less partisan delegates to the Committee had opted apparently for Ferguson only because the sight of Ferguson and Irish MPs, representing the more orthodox nationalists, on the same public platform would have indicated an essential unity among nationalists. However, the Executive was determined to show its authority on this and on other, finance-related, matters, and found enough supporters among the other Glasgow branches to get its way.

The vote in favour of following the Executive instructions on Ferguson was a narrow one, 22 for and 18 against. However, it was fairly clear that he had his determined and bitter detractors as well as his own loyal admirers. Unsurprisingly, HGB delegates voted in accordance with the unanimous support given him beforehand by the branch membership. However, equally forthright and vehement, but in their opposition to him, were representatives of the 'Glasgow Branch', formed around 1884 as a result of an internal struggle in the HGB between supporters and opponents of Ferguson's. The cause of the dispute then was Ferguson's perceived maverick behaviour in attending the Liberal convention of 1883. What these delegates chose to highlight now in 1886 was the 'rebellious' nature of Ferguson and the fact that in their opinion "certain branches had never been out of war with the Executive since the last Convention" in 1885.

As proof of the seriousness of affairs, an opponent of Ferguson made the claim that already on one public occasion since the Convention (in the Glasgow City Hall to be precise), MPs John Redmond and T. M. Healy had given the Ulsterman, still the most prominent nationalist in the city, the cold shoulder. The fact also that John Brady, Secretary of the London Committee, had chosen to inform some branches, the Glasgow and

'Northern' notably among them, of its displeasure and ignore others, can be taken as evidence of Executive ill-will and a degree of connivance with local leaders. Indeed, it was said that feelings against Ferguson in Westminster were so strong that the parliamentary party had met specifically to agree on action against him and, locally certainly, attacks were characterised by a bitter, indeed personal tone. One delegate at the meeting, Hugh Johnston of the Glasgow Branch, went so far as to label the Ulsterman as "Nero, the self-constituted minister". In the end, Ferguson wasn't allowed the option of a dignified waiver of his right to the chair, rather harsh voices seem to have won out and a delegation was chosen to simply 'inform' him of the organisers decision.<sup>30</sup>

It was the manner of the snub more than anything which probably prompted Ferguson to raise the possibility for the first time of his retiral "from the National movement altogether". In, according to him, his first public pronouncement on the matter, he spoke of the disrespect shown him, of three men in particular who had referred to him contemptuously, and of the enemies he had made in defending Davitt over the previous two years. Before a large sympathetic gathering, he made what for him was a highly personal reference to the fact that his resolution had been "tried



harder...than ever before in his lifetime". Urging his supporters to refrain from public defiance towards the INLGB Executive, Ferguson did nevertheless assert his right to disagree on policy and reiterated his adherence to Davitt's "great truth". Even more significant perhaps than his deeply-felt outburst against his enemies was his final thought that, even though he was still confident of his popularity among the Glasgow Irish, his future politically might now lie elsewhere. Now for him there was a new career possible:

What little time he had could be well employed among those they used to call their Scotch enemies, but whom they now called their Scotch friends.<sup>31</sup>

To his audience, this speech may have sounded simply like a retreat before the centralising strictures of a INLGB machinery dominated by Parnell's "young lieutenants".<sup>32</sup> It may also however be the first sign that Ferguson was prepared to put himself forward for public office. He, like several other leaders of the Land League had declined offers to stand as an MP, presumably for an Irish constituency, despite his apparently comfortable income and obvious stamina for travel and electioneering, and

up until then had shown little obvious interest in local government.<sup>33</sup> He could not stand as a Catholic Union candidate, now however there were formal organisations and informal networks outwith the League, the Church and the Liberal Party which might back him in future efforts. At a deeper level, his words here, taken together with his later actions, may be evidence of a growing conviction that the cause of Irish Home Rule and radical land reform would only be assisted effectively by his own efforts if he actively allied himself to social radicals and advanced Liberals in local electoral politics. The nationalist vote was limited in ways which McCaffrey has already pointed out: it had previously failed to influence municipal or national contests significantly and the new franchise offered new opportunities to would-be politicians of his kind.

Whatever his thoughts on a future career the tussle over control of St. Patrick's Day gatherings was to continue in 1887 and 1888. The 1886 event had gone ahead with Edward Vallely, a member of the HGB, in the chair, and with at least one protest from the floor disrupting proceedings, however the HGB was now in militant mood. It contrived to regain its control by simply making use of its connections and wealth to get the speakers and premises necessary to promote its democratic agenda and put

the efforts of its rivals in the shade. Davitt and R. B. Cunninghame Graham, newly elected as advanced, labour-friendly Liberal MP for North-West Lanarkshire, were accordingly invited by the HGB to address a Glasgow City Hall meeting on 21 March 1887. There, Davitt not only asserted Ferguson's "hereditary right" to chair celebrations at that time of the year, he also stressed that Parnell "at last recognised the true value of the father of the Irish movement in Scotland".<sup>34</sup> Again, in preparation for the 1888 celebrations, the HGB had booked the City Halls by late November 1887 and, rather than enter into discussions with other branches, boldly presented details of date, speaker and chairman (Ferguson, of course) to the Organising Committee for acceptance.<sup>35</sup> The HGB did not really show itself as willing to engage in compromise, in this and in other matters, such as sending funds to the Executive or coordinating the registration of friendly voters. Even faced with the possibility of suspension by the much-resented Scottish Organiser, Owen Kiernan,<sup>36</sup> one-time member of the HGB and now one of its most outspoken critics, this body continued to set its own decidedly radical agenda and chose its own political friends.

When Ferguson therefore, in April 1888, backed Keir Hardie's bid to become MP for Mid-Lanark quite against the express wishes of the



INLGB leadership, it shouldn't have come as any surprise at all to anyone acquainted with his personal political friendships nor with the temper of the branch so loyal to him. He had even, at a time when his actions were prompting local and national attempts to isolate him and his colleagues, intensified his efforts to rally the Irish to individuals and causes such as that of the crofters and Scottish Home Rule. These causes, of course, did not necessarily meet with the priorities of any of the major parliamentary parties, the Irish included. Local Liberals of a more radical inclination, such as Gilbert Beith, Rev. James Cruikshanks and Provost Cochrane of Paisley, were invited to share platforms with Georgites McHugh and McGhee. Also, Ferguson even used the columns of the *Glasgow Observer* to publicise the 1888 St. Patrick's Day demonstration as one at which Cunninghame Graham, as "leader of the Scottish Democracy", would feature. In praising the latter, Ferguson went so far as to liken him to Parnell: "Graham represents in Scotland what Parnell represents in Ireland – the popular feelings, instincts and principles".<sup>37</sup>

The *Observer* was not best pleased with the character of this meeting nor with the way it was announced. It not only resented the recent closeness of Irish and Liberal ward politicians, but also, since Gladstone's conversion

to Home Rule in 1886, it was very uneasy about the possible identification of nationalism with a myriad of social critiques and remedies advanced on the fringes of radical politics. The secular world-view of Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant and H. M. Hyndman was seen as a particularly dangerous one gaining from Ferguson's zealous efforts. Ferguson, undeterred, was determined to pursue a policy which was in tune with the 'popular feelings' and that meant increasing his association with those who were attempting to improve the conditions of the majority of the population in Britain, the "industrial classes".

However radical his language, Ferguson always contended that he was animated by a desire for social cohesion rather than class conflict, and he frequently expressed his preference for the improvement of social conditions led by a principled and right-minded Liberal Party. Thus, in a letter to the Liberal journal, the *Scottish Leader*, he demonstrated his own peculiar, and long practised, strategy of appealing to the consciences of mainstream party leaders and followers, and yet, at the same time, aligning himself publicly with more advanced elements. In line with his predisposition to class harmony, he argued that "The duty of reformers is to destroy class as well as national prejudice" and that "Labour and capital

have common interests". What he wanted was to have labour and capital represented within the ranks of the Liberal Party and for "labour right consistent with the common good" to be obtained with the aid of the machinery of local Liberal Associations.

Not content with persuasion, however, he also seemed to make veiled threats by referring to the danger for "social progress" posed by organisations like the recently-established Knights of Labour. Originating in America, the Knights sought to "secure to the workers the full enjoyment of the wealth they create" by political campaigning and not by the usual means of industrial action. If the machinery of state was ever in their hands, their policy was to redistribute wealth through the state ownership of land and a "graduated income tax", and to have a legal framework that protected employees and improved relations with employers. The 'danger', and indeed the threat, represented by the Knights, according to Ferguson, was not in these aims as such but rather in the fact that it styled itself explicitly as a workers' association run solely by workers. He quite clearly sympathised with the Knights general aim of improving the material conditions of the working classes, however, and, acknowledging the leading role of his close collaborators Davitt and Richard McGhee (organiser for



Scotland) in the new body, he announced his intention to help them in Scotland. It is typical of his approach to politics that even as he moved in one direction, he pointed out the benefits of unity for all to a reluctant mainstream.<sup>38</sup>

As Ferguson continued to develop his ties with advocates of a new political alignment, the HGB itself not only demonstrated its apparently fierce loyalty to him when faced with the 'ruling spirit' within O'Connor's INLGB, it also persisted in being much more than part of an electoral machine. Building on its reputation of openness to radical debate, it cultivated the current interest in collectivist remedies for social ills. The specific role of the state in the economy was, for instance, the subject of a debate between Georgites and socialist Patrick Curran at one particular meeting, and involved in the discussions were Liberal Association members, William Nicol and David Willox.<sup>39</sup> Also, Curran defended, and indeed promoted Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation in correspondence with the *Observer*, though couched in language that Georgites would appreciate: the state he declared must be the "sole landlord and the sole capitalist".

The radical branch also invited long-time friend of Home Rule and self-proclaimed atheist, Charles Bradlaugh, to speak in the HGB hall, earning the public disapproval of the *Observer*. Curran, in the same letter referred to above, defended Bradlaugh's right to speak to an Irish audience, even though Bradlaugh considered himself an "enemy of socialism", and in any event the 1,500-strong audience which reportedly crowded in to listen to the famous Radical was visible testimony to the ordinary members' support for the HGB's invitation.<sup>40</sup> By this time also the HGB was adopting a much more proactive role in municipal elections, providing approved radical candidates with their premises for electioneering purposes.<sup>41</sup> In sum, the HGB, with its non-Irish speakers and members, and free rein given to advanced opinion, gave ample opportunity for a variety of individuals to cement ties and construct an Irish-Radical agenda. It also appeared to be able and willing to challenge the way in which the Irish took part in elections.

Given the precedents for cooperation with social radicals, Ferguson's wholehearted collaboration with Hardie, however, was not to meet with the approval of many ordinary members in the HGB ranks. His actions, even accompanied by Davitt's endorsement of Hardie, put too

much of a strain on the deepening national partnership with the Liberal Party at both parliamentary and municipal level. Davitt, this time, had lobbied both Parnell and Francis Schnadhorst, secretary of the National Liberal Federation and the party's chief electoral organiser, on Hardie's behalf. Even he knew, however, that Hardie's association with H. Champion, the London-based socialist, made things difficult for national let alone local Liberals, dependent on wealthy "timid elements" who were funding a necessary drive to register potential voters before general elections. Before the election, therefore, and in spite of his public backing for Hardie, Davitt was not wholly convinced of the wisdom of Hardie's actions.<sup>42</sup> In Glasgow, this was a time when even old enemies such as the temperance reformer Peter Burt, standing as a Liberal municipal candidate in the strongly Irish and catholic Fourth Ward, could gain or even want to gain entry to the meeting halls of the League.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Ferguson's actions may have been difficult to stomach for many but the most loyal or the most animated by the possibility of a labour-Irish alliance, such as McGhee or McHugh.

Individual nationalists besides Ferguson did assist Hardie, but as McHugh, presumably one of those lending his support, found out, when he



tried to move a resolution condemning the Parnellite *United Ireland* and to thank electors for voting for a “labour candidate” in Mid-Lanark, he was in a minority. In any case, a majority of his HGB colleagues had endorsed the Liberal candidate, the London-based John Wyndham Phillips, in advance of polling day and thus Ferguson et al were acting out a strategy which threatened to undermine their nationalist credentials beyond recovery.<sup>44</sup> Ferguson as it turned out was only formally censured over the affair and certainly was not put off committing himself even further to the cause of labour. In June 1888, for instance, Davitt wrote ironically of “whingeing Fergusonians” in an election campaign in Ayr who, by preventing “Owen Kiernan going there to organise victory”, tried to disrupt the plans of orthodox nationalists. In the same letter Davitt even offered his help to the Fergusonians, asking for “reliable facts” of any attempt in the press aimed at encouraging Owen Kiernan to attack Cunninghame–Graham.<sup>45</sup>

By this time, in May to be precise, Ferguson (despite continued appeals to the INLGB executive for the toleration of his views<sup>46</sup>) had become a founder member and ‘Honorary Vice-President’ of the Scottish Labour Party (hereafter SLP) and had made what appeared to be his most serious move yet in the direction of his ‘Scotch friends’. The SLP from the

outset aimed to get working-class MPs and it seemed prepared to stand against Liberals in order to force the issue. Ferguson went along with this approach, though he still preferred to see labour work within the Liberal Party. Obviously, however, he influenced the decision to make Home Rule for Scotland and Ireland a key SLP aim. That said, the SLP always had an ill-defined, ad hoc existence and Davitt and Hardie soon fell out. One particular reason for this was Davitt's role as one of the first and most virulent opponents of the scandal-hit Parnell, cited as co-respondent in a divorce action brought by a former Home Rule MP, Capt. William O'Shea on Christmas Eve 1889. Davitt attacked Parnell principally on political grounds, it has to be said: the 'Uncrowned King' had apparently lost the support of grass-roots Liberal activists and ignored a vote against his leadership by a section of the Irish parliamentary party. The Liberals were now seen as committed beyond doubt to Home Rule and hopes were high of a new Liberal government passing legislation through both houses of parliament. Ferguson's personal loyalty had been very much with Davitt since the early days of the land campaign: together they had withstood animosity from their fellow nationalists and each had developed in his own way their early notions of an alliance of the democracies in the two islands.

When Hardie, at the Liberal Conference of November 1891, attacked a decision on land taxation that Ferguson had helped to get through, Ferguson felt that he had to rebuke the former in order to protect ongoing Irish-Radical co-operation centred on Home Rule and land reform.<sup>47</sup> Thus, personal animosity and politics now ensured that both Davitt and Ferguson turned away from backing Hardie's candidates in parliamentary elections.

If Ferguson in parliamentary elections seemed to shrink from creating a radical alternative to the Liberal Party, it may also have been due to the increasing success of the labour cause in municipal elections. Glasgow's local government elections were increasingly fought on party lines, much to the distaste of the city's patricians, and the rapid expansion of municipal services at this time gave many interests and individuals reason to take contests seriously.<sup>48</sup> Increasingly having powers which he had already foreseen in a Home Rule Ireland or Scotland, it was surely promising ground for his ideas on greatly improved infrastructure and increased social provision for the city's poorer inhabitants. His ideas on this were wholly in line with many progressive Liberals and his arguments for the single-tax remedy, though still anathema to many Liberals, were not as outlandish as they had appeared a decade before. It could be argued at the



time that he was merely offering new collective ways of achieving the common goal of a healthy, well-ordered Glasgow. Ferguson, of course, by now also had a reputation as a people's champion, gained as much in his home area around Lenzie<sup>49</sup> as in his association with Scottish land reformers and social radicals. No longer was he solely judged on the issue of his nationalism. If attacked at all, certainly in the press, it was now on the basis of his putative extremism – or as the Liberal Unionist *Glasgow Herald* put it, on the basis of his 'iconoclasm' and plans for "municipalisation and confiscation".<sup>50</sup>

Other "emotional visionaries" dismissed by the *Herald*, whether they stood for a single-tax on land, land nationalisation or socialism were finding it possible to win over a respectable number of voters in particular city wards and they were openly asking for an Irish vote. McHugh, for example, by now General Secretary of the Glasgow-based National Union of Dock Labourers, stood in the Anderston ward in 1889 explicitly as a labour candidate, complaining at one point of recent poor pay increases for municipal workers.<sup>51</sup> He was one of four candidates put forward by the Glasgow Trades Council and, even though temperance was still a crucial factor in municipal elections, showed Irish votes could be sought without

charges of catholic or Home Rule ploys playing significantly in opposition rhetoric. One labour candidate, R. Chisholm Robertson, the “highly controversial miners’ leader from Stirling”, an SLP colleague of Hardie and Ferguson, may have experienced some bigotry after admitting his catholic upbringing. Even the *Observer*, however, when it backed them in the polls, did so on the understanding that they were labour not catholic representatives. Obviously, swimming against the tide in favour of radical workingmen candidates, especially where they happened to be catholic or Irish, was not considered a popular option at the time. The *Observer* sounded increasingly on the defensive against a labour agenda, saying that it knew “it was not popular” for saying so, but preferred politics out of municipal affairs. It did, however, say in the same breath that at that point in time a ‘Catholic Party’ was a “vital necessity”.<sup>52</sup>

Ferguson did not himself stand in 1889, but he did give public endorsement to a supporter of taxation on ground values “up to the neck”, J. Glen Edgar, in the Fourteenth Ward, showing that he was behind the SLP decision to target local as well as national bodies, and perhaps flagging up his own interest in a bid.<sup>53</sup> Certainly the *Herald* in a scathing assault on him, the “Orator of Benburb” (a reference to Ferguson’s house in Lenzie,

named after the site of a famous Gaelic Irish victory), interpreted his involvement as such and was decidedly displeased.<sup>54</sup> By now, it was clear that Ferguson's connections - and the remarkable alignment that had come about between INLGB members, labour and advanced members of the Glasgow Liberal Association (of which he remained a member) - made the chance of an Irish nationalist, if not catholic Irish, gaining a council seat a surer bet. No reference at all being possible to his catholicism and the fact that Ferguson could, as a Teetotaler, present himself as a temperance man might have worked to calm the fears of traditional pro-temperance Liberal voters. Add to this his radical history and his nomination by the Liberal Association and he seemed the ideal candidate to overcome any prejudice resulting from his recognised status among the city's catholic Irish.

When he did stand in November 1893, however, it was up against someone who was an opponent of Home Rule and was backed by the extremely influential anti-drink trade Liberal, Bailie Samuel Chisholm. Ferguson's support of municipal ownership and management of drink outlets may have helped him win over some traditionally hostile voters, but in general his victory can surely be understood as the continuation of a trend in favour of worker-friendly policies which the post-1886 Liberal



Party was not arguing against. Again in 1893, the *Observer* went along with the popular choice and backed the three labour candidates, which meant support of Ferguson and Chisholm Robertson. It clearly sensed that it had much to gain by swimming with the tide in making an open endorsement of such social radicals. For Ferguson and for electoral politics that radical, secular Irish politicians could engage in and win seats from, his victory was indeed a major breakthrough. It must also be remembered that Ferguson, even if he was no longer a member of the SLP by 1893 (he had been expelled in 1892 for publicly supporting rival candidates in Westminster elections), was still fundamentally a part of the radical labour ticket in that year along with Chisholm Robertson and J. Glen Edgar.<sup>55</sup> Once in the council chamber, he was in a position to finally gather together various strands of his career and directly influence public policy and, when the Workers Electoral Council was formed on the basis of his programme in 1896, he finally brought his experience as a radical and nationalist to bear effectively on the mainstream of Glasgow's political life. If the Stalwarts did not last, still he had in fact molded an alliance of radicals, nationalists and organised labour which could act as a model for the future of Labour Party politics in Glasgow.

Ferguson's victory showed the way for *catholic* Irish representatives, such as Patrick O'Hare in Springburn in 1897, to obtain municipal seats, even when they were seriously in league with drink trade interests as O'Hare was. Still, it continued to be the case that Catholic Union organisation and political experience at school/parish board level mattered. Defence of denominational education and sectarian fears would still feature highly in any rhetoric whenever nationalists would meet in Glasgow. There also remained the issue of attitudes to the regulation of the wine, beer and spirits trade. Labour candidates still faced opposition from these special interests in local electioneering, and these same interests did find some catholic Irish willing to whip up feelings against their fellow nationals.

McHugh in 1889, for instance, despite making his rival's performance in the licensing courts an issue, did not according to one report enjoy the "undivided support" of all Irishmen in Anderston. Likewise, in the same round of elections, an official of the GWSBTA, P. Tosney Queen, maintained that "several hundred" Home Rulers had pledged for the Trade's favoured candidate, Hugh Caldwell, described by one historian as a "pro-Orange Ulsterman". Caldwell was up against the advanced Liberal and

temperance advocate, Peter Burt, already openly favoured by branches of the INLGB and the *Observer*. Perhaps Tosney Queen was mischief making, but the Young Ireland Society, a staunch defender of the rights of labour and of which McHugh was a member, felt aggrieved enough to decry the “action taken by some of our countrymen in the [municipal] General elections in opposing workingmen candidates”.<sup>56</sup>

Notwithstanding this, the momentum nationally and locally was moving firmly in the direction of a close alliance of Irish and social radicalism. It is true that attitudes to drink regulation, to the interests of the Catholic Church could allow candidates access to Irish voters and organisation. However, the identification of interests between the Irish and social radicalism, the adoption of a particular language, meant that what would decide their political careers, even eventually in school or parochial boards, was where they stood on questions concerning the material well-being of the ordinary voter. Radicals, such as Ferguson, McHugh and McGhee, along with many others in the HGB, did not formally abandon a electoral commitment to Liberalism and nationalism in Westminster elections. What did become possible, however, was the engagement with a



changing mood, at the local government level, in favour of working class representation and collectivist schemes for social progress.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule 1867-1921* (Manchester and New York, 1998), p. 83 for evidence that Home Rulers effectively took over the elected positions on Irish Poor Law Boards.

<sup>2</sup> *GH*, 31 Mar. 1882 for reports on School Board elections and for details of a court case brought by Murphy against a Coatbridge cleric, Rev. McIntosh, who apparently repeated, before his congregation, accusations made by McLachlan in correspondence; see also *Ibid.*, 7 Oct. 1879 for Murphy's public defence of Ferguson.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, from testimony given during the McIntosh case.

<sup>4</sup> Hutchison, 'Mid-Victorian Glasgow', pp. 500-1.

<sup>5</sup> *GH*, 25 Mar. 1882.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 Jun. 1882 for report of School Board meeting ;also *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 6 and May 1882 for mention of Thomson's activities.

<sup>7</sup> Handley, *The Irish*, p. 275; *NBDM.*, 8 Nov. 1882.

<sup>8</sup> *GO*, 25 April 1885

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 Dec. 1887; also GAA, CU2/19, *Catholic Union Gazette*, Jun. 1885. Brand was president of the 'Caledonian Catholic Association', a

mutual aid association for catholics of “Scotch origin”. Lord Lovat was its Honorary President. Brand made the interesting comment that associations, presumably also catholic ones, do “best on the basis of nationality”.

<sup>10</sup> GAA, CU 2/4, Minutes of Central Committee of Catholic Union (1885-91).

<sup>11</sup> *GO*, 14 Jan. 1888.

<sup>12</sup> McHugh, ‘The Development of the Catholic Community’, p. 262.

<sup>13</sup> *GO*, 2 Nov. 1889.

<sup>14</sup> O’Day, *Home Rule*, p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> Hutchison, ‘Mid-Victorian Glasgow’, p. 482

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 507.

<sup>17</sup> J. J. Smyth, ‘Labour and Socialism in Glasgow, 1880-1914: The Electoral Challenge Prior to Democracy’, University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1987, 160. Curran was to join the incipient Social Democratic Federation in 1884 and was to become the Labour MP for Jarrow (1907-1910).

<sup>18</sup> *GH*, 26 Feb. 1884.

<sup>19</sup> *GH*, 18 Mar. 1884 and 1885.

<sup>20</sup> *GO*, 7 and 14 Nov. 1885.

<sup>21</sup> *GO*, 7 Nov. 1885.



<sup>22</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers , MS 9521,f. 5941, Davitt to McGhee, 23 Nov. 1885.

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell Henry (1826-1910) was MP for Galway from 1871-1885 and had been a ‘Council’ member of the Home Rule League since its foundation. He had spoken out against Land League tactics and was unseated by a Parnellite in 1885. He was to vote against Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill in June 1886.

<sup>24</sup> *GO*, 28 Nov. 1885.

<sup>25</sup> *NBDM*, 28 Nov. 1885.

<sup>26</sup> *GO*, 25 April and 14 Nov. 1885.

<sup>27</sup> O. D. Edwards and P. J. Storey, ‘Irish Press’, in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds), *Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985), pp. 161 and 173-4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 21 Nov. 1885.

<sup>29</sup> *GO*, 20 Feb. 1886.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 6 Mar.1886 for full report of lively meeting of delegates from “local and district branches”, held on Sunday previous, and for short reports from branch meetings themselves.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 Mar. 1886.

<sup>32</sup> Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, pp. 378 for list of Parnell’s closest colleagues in the party, among them O’Connor, Healy, James O’Kelly, William

O'Brien and Thomas Sexton.

<sup>33</sup> See Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, p. 240. Davitt claimed that Ferguson (along with Thomas Brennan and Patrick Egan) had been 'sought out' by constituencies, presumably in Ireland, in 1880 and that he had turned them down on the grounds that his "business would not permit him to make the necessary personal sacrifices". Interestingly, it seems that both Egan and Brennan, unsurprisingly given their ongoing involvement with Fenianism, refused to serve in the British Parliament as a matter of principle.

<sup>34</sup> *GO*, 26 Mar. 1887.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 Dec. 1887 and 28 Jan. 1888.

<sup>36</sup> See Ian Wood, 'Irish Immigrants and Scottish Radicalism', p. 71 for beginnings of hostility to Kiernan; also *GO*, 10 Sept. 1887, 28 Jan. and 5 May 1888 for evidence of ongoing mutual animosity between Kiernan and the HGB. Kiernan, secretary of the Michael Davitt branch in early '83, interestingly had been closely watched and had his house searched by the police following the Tradeston gasometer explosion. It seems he was not the most diplomatic of officials but, in the end, was caught between two determined camps, the HGB and the London Executive. For a short biography of Kiernan, see *Glasgow Star*, 2 Feb. 1907.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1888.

<sup>38</sup> *Scottish Leader*, 21 May 1888 also Frame, 'America and the Scottish Left', pp. 127-9.

<sup>39</sup> *GO*, 24 Mar. 1888.

<sup>40</sup> *GO*, 3, 10 and 17 Sept. 1887.

<sup>41</sup> *GO*, 12 Nov. 1887.

<sup>42</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9328, f. 181/4-5, Davitt to McGhee, dated "Sunday 1888". It is worth pointing out here that Davitt's tone towards Parnell was noticeably supportive: "It would be wrong to quarrel with him [Parnell] over this".

<sup>43</sup> *GO*, 2 and 9 Nov. 1889. Burt was given a "hearty reception" by the Sir Charles Russell Branch and offered "names and addresses of all members who were electors in the Fourth Ward". It was however reported to the same branch that he was opposed by some Irish voters and indeed some of them asked for money in return for their services as canvassers.

<sup>44</sup> *GO*, 19 May 1888; also Wood, 'Irish Immigrants', p. 78

<sup>45</sup> TCD, Davitt Papers, MS 9521, f. 5964, Davitt to McGhee, 13 June 1888 and f. 5964, Davitt to McGhee, 21 May 1888.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, MS 9328, f. 180/35-36, Davitt to McGhee, 5 Oct. 1888. In this



latter, Davitt advised Ferguson against intended written appeals to the INLGB executive: “ I do not like to see a man of his high unselfish and stainless nature seeking recognition or even justice from men who judge him by their own standard and believe him to be activated by some hostile motive when he is but manifesting his disinterestedness and brotherly feeling”.

<sup>47</sup> Smyth, ‘Labour and Socialism’, p.168.

<sup>48</sup> See W. Hamish Fraser, ‘Labour and the Changing City’, pp. 160-76 on municipalisation and labour.

<sup>49</sup> See *Glasgow Echo*, 1 Sept. 1894 on right of way dispute against Barony Parochial Board.

<sup>50</sup> *GH*, 8 Nov. 1889.

<sup>51</sup> *GH*, 4 Nov. 1889. See William Kenefick, ‘*Rebellious and Contrary*’: *The Glasgow Dockers, 1853-1932* (East Linton, 2000), pp. 189-198; also, by the same author, “‘The Impact of the Past Upon the Present’: Experience of the Clydeside Dock Labour Force c. 1850 to 1914, with Particular Reference to Port of Glasgow’, University of Strathclyde Ph.D. thesis, 1995, pp.256-66 and ‘Irish Dockers and Trade Unionists on Clydeside’, *Irish Studies Review*, no. 19, summer 1997, p. 26 for details of McHugh and McGhee’s success in

establishing a union among the largely Irish and Highland workforce on Clydeside's docks.

<sup>52</sup> *GO*, 2 Nov. 1889.

<sup>53</sup> *GH*, 1 Nov. 1889, Smyth, 'Labour and Socialism', p. 66 for details of SLP 'Constitution and Programme'.

<sup>54</sup> *GH*, 8 Nov. 1889.

<sup>55</sup> See *GH*, 6 Nov. 1893 for resolutions of support passed by Sir Charles Russell Branch of INLGB in favour of such radicals.

<sup>56</sup> *GO*, 2, 9 and 11 Nov. 1889; also Sweeney, 'Municipal Administration of Glasgow', p. 799 for details of another defeat suffered by Caldwell in 1893.

## Conclusion

Current inquiry and debate on the Irish in nineteenth century Britain has at times tended to assume that the Irish-born had an inherent sense of Irishness which informed their political identity. Certainly, there was a conceptual framework by which others represented them and historians have analysed this in terms of stereotypes and racial prejudice. However, the point about the nineteenth century is that notions of nationhood, as with that of class, were part of a historical process. They were part of a dynamic process at a time of extraordinary change in the material and conceptual world of groups and individuals. An age of industrialisation, greatly expanded communications and institutional growth was bound to affect how individuals understood their Irishness. Time, place, those who formed and led any 'Irish' community or activity - all of these made political identity.

For the Irish in Britain, the socio-economic context meant rapid and unsettling change but also opportunity. One only has to read the biographical details of key members of the Irish middle classes in cities such as Liverpool, London and Glasgow to see the social mobility possible in urban Britain of the time.<sup>1</sup> Living in one of Britain's boomtowns of the



nineteenth century, the Glasgow Irish undoubtedly had opportunities for wealth and influence. A dramatically expanding population, both host and migrant, and the development of a public infrastructure of regulatory and administrative bodies gave them those opportunities. Of course, Irish-born participants in civic and wider political life brought their own cultural baggage with them. There are also questions necessary, only recently explored by historians such as Fitzpatrick, as to their expectations, hopes, ambitions and fears in their new environment. Whatever their world view was when they arrived in Glasgow, association became possible there on a political, cultural and purely social level which many perhaps had little need or opportunity for in their original communities. It was engaging in these activities and organisations, that Irishness took shape as something more than simple love of homeland. Now, it took on a positive, pro-active and object-driven purpose.

As both Mitchell and Aspinwall have shown in detail, Irish-born participation in popular associations in Glasgow took on many forms in the early part of the century. Trade Unionism, Ribbonism, O'Connell's Catholic Emancipation and Repeal campaigns, Chartism and the temperance movement all enjoyed the enthusiastic support of many Irish

people. In all of these activities, Irishness generated and fed on contemporary political and social understanding. What is more, participation in the formation of a 'democracy', that is in the formation of bodies of organised opinion capable of influencing political institutions, meant that the notion of a common intrinsic Irishness was useful to both individuals and organised groups. However, these same individuals and groups faced the problem of forces and institutions that did not come together or promote themselves exclusively on the basis of Irish nationality.

The world view of Irish men and women was strongly affected by the differing doctrines and practices of Christianity. For Catholics in particular, loyalty to an elaborate historical understanding of a fundamentally *Irish* Catholic Church was always available to would-be community leaders. Much was made of Irish sufferings and glories in the name of their faith and it was a genuine source of community pride. Alongside this, and not necessarily sitting comfortably within such a socially conservative church, there was also loyalty to radical views formed by an experience of industrialisation and popular politics. The perceived 'wrongs' done to Ireland gave impetus to the campaigning of many radicals, both Irish and otherwise. For the Glasgow Irish, in engaging with these two

predominant visions, each with its own language and organised personnel, conflicts or fusions of loyalties could occur. Individuals could certainly construct their own 'personal cosmology', in the words of Dorothy Thompson, but the fact remains that both of these organised visions provided Irishness with a ready-to-hand outlet in the early nineteenth century.

The Catholic Church in Scotland did not initially accept or seek to promote lay-inspired committees claiming to represent the views of a catholic community. It was also reluctant to allow formal lay interference in any administrative or financial functions. The reasons for clerical opposition in the Western Vicariate would seem to reside in a fear of the *demos* and no small degree of prejudice against Irish political culture. Nevertheless, laymen, such as the eminently respectable Charles Bryson, did eventually assert their right to act as active citizens on behalf of other catholics, with or without the approval of the local hierarchy. Middle class catholics thus became engaged in the administration of education and social care of the catholic poor in bodies such as the SVDP or the Catholic District Education Board. By the 1870s, these confident and relatively wealthy



catholics acted as a role model for others and were particularly valued by Archbishop Eyre as defenders of Church interests in a democratic age.

Catholic social action and mutual-aid associations no doubt gave status and assurance to a growing body of educated, middle-class Irish-Scots. However, a secular-radical thread of activism offered an alternative course for the Irish-born. Obviously, temperance, O'Connellite and Chartist campaigning would involve elements of personal development in the setting up of committees, the collection of funds and the smooth running of meetings and rallies. Inevitably, also, contacts would be formed, and causes engaged in, which took individuals beyond their 'daily round'. All the political activity they took part in, in general terms, provided them with more public space for expressions of support for Irish national rights and a sense of a unique Irish identity encouraged accordingly. However, consistency and continuity of organisation, of something that could be more than a fund-raising or propagandist adjunct to Irish-based bodies, did not emerge until the 1860s.

Fenianism at that time provided an energy, determination and cohesion which previous nationalism lacked- it certainly seems to have given skilled workers and artisans an organisational prominence previously

lacking. It was, however, the crossing of the threshold by the 'middling classes', small self-made businessmen in the main, into the realm of secular politics that really marks this period out. The more the local clergy attacked political Irishness in its extremist form (and any of those representing its right to the loyalty of the catholic community), the more there developed the basis of a long-term political machine that was not clerically controlled. A cohesive body of advanced nationalists, who agitated vigorously in favour of self-government for Ireland yet saw political violence only as a last resort, formed around defence campaigns for the *Free Press*, Patrick Lavelle and A.H. Keane. The short-lived Irish National Association also provided a model for future attempts to finance and form an electoral machine in support of Irish political identity. Essential to this model was the idea that regular cultural and social activities within premises explicitly identified with the cause of Irishness would reinforce, even engender, a common sense of political purpose. In addition, would-be ward politicians would also have facilities outwith parish control and a ready network of fellow enthusiasts to draw on.

John Ferguson almost certainly followed these developments with great interest and may indeed have been in regular contact with advanced

nationalists before his public entry into nationalist politics in 1870. Though his own personal religious beliefs are not easily discerned, he cannot be described as having his roots in any tradition of nationalism that exalted catholic values above others. Responding to what he saw as injustice in Ireland, he enthusiastically embraced social and political solutions which many advanced British Liberal thinkers could agree with. He was a democrat, a believer in the social and economic progress of the 'industrial classes' and at the same time in the maintenance of class harmony. Advocating federalism as a means of ensuring progressive social policies in Ireland, attracting locally respectable catholic Irishmen to his cause and yet having wide-ranging and friendly contacts within Fenianism, Ferguson gave a new dynamism, effectiveness and unity to local Irish patriotism. His apparent business acumen, his ability to travel widely throughout the British Isles and the many contacts he made among exile communities suited him well for the task of mobilising an Irish vote. John Barry, a known Fenian at the time, had similar freedom to travel and make contacts in Scotland and the north of England. It is not surprising therefore that both men played a major role in founding and maintaining the HRCGB.

The HRCGB was the first serious attempt to have an organisation that could coordinate the propaganda and electoral efforts of the Irish in Great Britain. It also sought to influence the more cautious Home Rulers in Ireland. The nationalist mobilisation in Glasgow, therefore, has to be seen as part of a wider effort to radicalise the new democracy in existence after the passage of the 1866 Reform Act (1868 in both Scotland and Ireland). As Ferguson indicated in May 1871, organisation of the Irish was “an end as well as a means. It is educational and improving, and it indicates life”.<sup>2</sup> His participation in Francis Kerr’s bid for a Westminster seat, however, showed that real compromises were necessary if he was to win and maintain the loyalty of a Glasgow Irish vote. Sectarianism, the politics of temperance reform and Catholic Church interests dominated local debate in the 1870s; it therefore needed a continuing and determined propaganda effort on Ferguson’s part to steer opinion in the direction of Home Rule.

Throughout, he had, albeit at irregular intervals, the practical and platform support of activists such as Michael Clarke, James Lindsay and Robert McKillop, all owners of small businesses. These are exactly the kind of men of independent means who might in other circumstances be involved in catholic self-help associations. Their open contribution to



Ferguson's efforts at moulding an Irish electoral constituency was a clear expression of confidence in the leadership of a secular politician - a secular politician not prone to commenting upon controversies which had overtly sectarian fault-lines. It was above all his focus on events in Ireland or at Westminster in the 1870s which seemed to provide him with enough distance and esteem to overcome local squabbles with the clergy. In 1875, when it seemed to his supporters that clerical distrust had taken on the unpleasant appearance of religious prejudice, it was his English-based HRCGB colleagues who defended his right to stand at the head of local nationalism, irrespective of his protestantism. Thus Ferguson's personal skills, contacts and resources, applied on behalf the Home Rule movement in Glasgow, won for Irish catholics an independent forum in which relatively free debate, on a range of issues, was possible. That debate again fed an existing radical tradition which was soon to find a new outlet in calls for social reform.

Ferguson was always enthusiastic about a harder line in Westminster and he was one of the earliest to see Parnell's leadership qualities. However, the question of land reform was clearly central to Ferguson's political identity from the earliest days and it was seen by him

as holding the key to future social progress and, indeed 'social cohesion', in the new industrial world. Thus when Fenian Michael Davitt was released from prison in 1877 and showed a similar vigorous interest in land redistribution and the social question, Ferguson must have then hoped that his own particular intellectual affinities would find expression in a movement led by not one but two able men. Though Parnell's enthusiastic adoption of land reform may have been more down to tactical expediency than genuine interest, he did indeed come to see peasant proprietary as a vital remedy for Ireland's ills. For Ferguson and Davitt, however, land reform always meant something much more fundamental. To them, it also involved an ongoing redistribution of wealth and offered real benefits for the wage earner in cities such as Glasgow. It was also a potent symbolic focus for the same workers' aspirations towards a better life.

Home Rulers in Glasgow had apparently little difficulty in agreeing with these views, following Ferguson enthusiastically into the Land League. Likewise, as before, non-Irish radicals saw the Irish Land War as a cause which opened up wider issues, this time the possibility of land and wealth redistribution throughout Britain. Now, however, it was Ferguson's loyal Irish supporters who would provide a model campaign for Scottish radicals,

both in the way they agitated and the specific reforms they sought. The alliance of Irish nationalists and Scots radicals clearly visible in the Home Government Branch received the endorsement of Davitt. He also worked closely with the Branch members in promoting alliances with land campaigners in Scotland and their interest did not wane with the achievement of the '3Fs' in Ireland after 1882. By this time, the cry of 'The Land for the People' had for both Davitt and Ferguson (never discounting the strong emotional association it had for both of them with the cause of Irish self-government) clearly transformed into a shibboleth indicative of social demands which went beyond its original 'catalytic' political nature.

The nexus of radicalism that was the HGB during and after the Land War did not meet with the approval of T. P. O'Connor's INLGB. His black propaganda against Davitt et al and pragmatic view of the INLGB left little room for any debate on 'lines of principle'. To make matters worse, Ferguson was showing serious signs of using an 'alliance of principles' as the basis for an electoral alliance of Irish and Scots radicals. Ferguson, no doubt along with McHugh and McGhee, felt public backing for Shaw Maxwell and Murdoch in 1885 was a recognition of a certain esprit de corps among like-minded radicals, both of whom were in any case HGB

members. The problem was that such attachment, to individuals acting as an alternative to the two main British parties at a time when the Parnellites stressed their own parliamentary independence, was interpreted as arrogant disloyalty by the INLGB.

Given Ferguson's stature among the Glasgow Irish, his actions seemed to pose a serious danger to a now independent and disciplined Irish party. Also, an increasingly settled and prosperous party membership regarded the INLGB and Irish Parliamentary party as part of a support network for both aspiring ward politicians and their own social advancement. As John Belchem has noted in Liverpool, the INLGB, as indeed with all Home Rule associations, gave political experience, confidence and mutual support to this leading sector of the exile community.<sup>3</sup> Ferguson's intellectual vision of a socially radical Irish party continually pushing the boundaries did not find much favour among those content to have a stable community of interests serviced by Parnell's government-in-waiting.

The experience of 1885 and Parnell's last-minute support for Conservative candidates, was a particular strain on Ferguson and the HGB's loyalties – they had been asked to choose in Hutesontown between a



nationalist 'turncoat', a land reformer and a Tory tainted by association with Orangeism. Ferguson also was personally attacked by the London executive and by those who had never really gone along with his style of leadership. He was undeterred, however. By the late 1880s, he had not only regained organisational control of St. Patrick's Day celebrations, he had also deepened the public association of Irishness with advocates of the rights of labour and state ownership, quite unashamedly making use of these same celebrations. Davitt also continued to visit and draw in the crowds with rhetoric very much upon the same lines, remaining popular even among the kind of respectable 'lace-curtain' Irish which Ferguson antagonised.

After an unhappy association with Hardie's SLP and probably out of deference to Davitt's strong loyalty to Gladstonian Liberalism, Ferguson turned his attentions increasingly towards local government elections. Here he was more comfortable with an agenda that included the adoption of Henry George's single tax remedy, a greater priority to the demands of labour and municipalisation. Recognised by the general public for his championship of these causes and not just for his advocacy of Home Rule, a municipal seat did eventually come. He did not cease to be an active propagandist and event organiser in the Irish Home Rule cause; and yet he

was not now solely defined in terms of his Irishness. This in itself was a major breakthrough for the Glasgow Irish - whatever weight his credentials as a protestant and teetotaler might lend him, he had been characterised for around twenty years as the unacceptable face of Irish political identity in Glasgow. Over time, through his interest in social issues and the changing political context, he and others in the HGB had changed that political identity into something with more hope of a practical electoral outcome.

Of course, Ferguson did not displace other loyalties; he simply added to what was already there. There remains the question of, for instance, the drink trade. The degree to which the oldest and largest organisation of Irish nationalism in Glasgow, the HGB, was simply reflecting the special, perhaps material, interests of an established vanguard of 'independent' Irish worthies remains a key question for research. The leading role often played by the publican is part of received wisdom in Ireland's political history, but his role in Glasgow's nationalist politics has yet to be examined in any great detail. As I have tried to show, however, the temperance movement was a powerful influence on Glasgow Liberals and its Evangelical connections alienated many Irish catholics. That fact may

have caused Irish publicans to collaborate with known Conservatives, at parish and possibly municipal level.

Notwithstanding all of this, it remains the contention of this thesis that Irish political identity, as expressed by the HGB majority, involved elements of a radical political culture which was not unknown among publicans in Ireland. It therefore is not surprising that the more comfortable option for Irish publicans was increasingly the politics promoted by various labour candidates in municipal elections. It also not surprising that their role would be seen in the worst possible light by some of the guardians of local Liberal morality. However, by the late 1880s, advanced Liberals, even those who continued to campaign for a local veto on pub licences, were actively seeking and receiving the cooperation of INLGB branches in municipal electioneering. Cooperation at Westminster and joint interest in collectivist action for these progressives seemed of more importance than the hounding of any publicans within nationalism.

Also worthy of mention is the very real contribution of catholic lay activity to the political loyalties of Irish people. The 1870s were a critical period for the Catholic Church. With the temporal powers of the Papacy severely reduced in Italy, its spiritual authority also seemed to be threatened

by liberal states' interest in providing elementary education for the poor. The defence of denominational schooling in Glasgow, building on previously vigorous anti-proselytisation actions, made an expressly catholic political party a real possibility. With Conservatives openly lining up on the side of those who wanted little change in the existing dominance of the Church of Scotland in parish schools and notable Liberals opting for non-sectarian schooling, it is no surprise that positions seemed to harden dangerously on religious lines.

That a catholic party did not come about, certainly locally, can be partly put down to a noticeable desire on the part of leading Parochial and School Board members to avoid conflict. Records and correspondence bear testimony to a strong desire to smooth over difficulties and conciliate the most outspoken defenders of separate treatment for catholics. Also by the late 1880s, the Church was in a difficult position nationally. It had built a special relationship with Parnell's party and yet saw him, once the principle of Home Rule had been conceded, aligning his party increasingly with the parliamentary policies of Gladstone's Liberals. It indeed had particular interests in education and a body of catholic peers which drew them closer if anything to Conservatism. All of this made it very difficult, at a time



when formal party organisation reached into areas of public life as never before, to offer a coherent, all-encompassing political vision relevant to the times that might attract Irish exiles.

What did offer such a vision to Irish people in Britain was the notion of the 'democracy'. One only has to witness HGB members' complaints in November 1885, on hearing of Charles O'Neil's candidature in West Donegal, that the "Donegal Convention was not conducted on sufficiently democratic lines", and the ensuing debate over the merits of 'democratic' procedure in Irish nationalist circles, to see the currency of such political language.<sup>4</sup> If as might be contended the sentiments were insincere or showed little concrete understanding of the nature of democratic procedure, the very use of such language made it difficult for Irish politicians to be openly seen on the side which did not at least pay lip-service to the 'rights of the democracy'. As the *Glasgow Observer* had to recognise by the 1890s this effectively meant acceptance of labour candidates and Ferguson's efforts in municipal elections. The voting at School Board level would still involve consideration of sectarian arguments, but it was members of organised democratic bodies, Irish

nationalists or socialist, who displaced openly sectarian representatives and closed off mainstream local politics to them.

So to conclude. As it has hopefully been demonstrated, there is enough evidence to show that John Ferguson and others, drawing on an existing radical and secular discourse among the Glasgow Irish, elaborated a social nationalism which could draw those Irish so-inclined towards labour politics. The organisation and representation of Irishness in Glasgow had existed before Ferguson; however, he made it even more distinctly secular, durable and relevant to the needs of local migrants. He was a member of a social group which had the money and time to participate successfully in the popular politics of a more democratic Britain. In doing so, as a believer in a socially pro-active state, whether local or central, he made an appropriate intellectual case for the recognition of the claims of an Irish nation. From the beginning, Irishness for him was about achieving some state form for that nation and for that nation to prosper as a result. With the Land War, he seems to have become more aware of the possibility that these views did not necessarily mean intellectual and political isolation in his adopted homeland. There is no doubt that he took Davitt's strategy of a labour-Irish alliance further than the latter intended, continuing to publicly

align himself with all those in Scotland favouring wealth redistribution. Even if he refrained eventually from pro-labour electioneering in Westminster elections, Ferguson played a significant role in focusing Glasgow Irish politics on the attainment of material improvement as part of a social movement. With Davitt and like-minded local Irish nationalists, he identified Irishness by his example with a critique of social conditions in industrial Britain. Other Irishmen, such as Patrick O'Hare, found that Ferguson's ideological stance and example could open doors to public office. In the longer term, the genuine integration of both Irish activists and voters into Glasgow mainstream politics, based on a shared loyalty to a secular, collectivist political culture, was more possible as a result.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Belchem, 'Class, creed and country', *passim* for his revealing examination of Irish business and political success in urban Britain.

<sup>2</sup> O'Day, 'Irish in Britain', p. 189.

<sup>3</sup> Belchem, 'Class, creed and country', pp. 207-211.

<sup>4</sup> *GO*, 25 Nov. 1885.



## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### **Manuscript Materials**

#### **Glasgow Archdiocesan Archives, Glasgow**

CU 2/4, Minutes of Catholic Union Central Committee, 1885-91.

CU 2/19, *Catholic Union Gazette*, Jun. 1885.

ED 18, Education Papers, General, 1869-80.

ED/18/3/2, Printed Report of 28th Annual Meeting of Catholic Poor School Committee, 1875.

ED1/1, Minute Book of [Western] District Board of Education, 1870-8.

GC 7/10, Rev. B. Tracy-Archbishop Eyre Correspondence, 1875.

IP 3, Dean Tracy's Personal Papers, Correspondence, 1857-80.

RI 28, Glasgow Industrial Schools and Orphanages, Printed Reports, 1869-89.

WD 10/11, Bishop Gray and other memorials.

WD 10/4, Miscellaneous Correspondence (mainly to Archbishop Manning), 1867-8.

WD 10/6, Peter McCorry-Archbishop Manning Correspondence, Nov. 1867.

WD 5, Diaries and Notebooks of Father Michael Condon.

WD 9/1, Broadsheet, *The Troubles and Trials of Harry Kane* (bundle of 6 copies).

WD 9/6, Newspaper Cuttings, dates unknown.

**Glasgow City Archives, Glasgow**

D-CH 1/2, Minute Book of Children's Committee (City Parochial Board), Vol. 2.

D-HEW 2/1/4, Minute Book of Barony Parish Parochial Board, No.8.

D-HEW 2/1/4, Minute Book: Barony Parish Parochial Board, No.9.

**Mitchell Library, Glasgow**

Census 1871, District 644-5, Enumerator's Book 29.

*Ibid.*, District 644-8, Enumerator's Book 89.

*Ibid.*, District 644-8, Enumerator's Book 100.

*Ibid.*, District 646-1, Enumerator's Book 18.

**Trinity College Library, Dublin**

Michael Davitt Papers, MS. 9328, Richard McGhee Correspondence, 1883-1906.

*Ibid.*, MS. 9375, Miscellaneous Correspondence.

*Ibid.*, MS. 9399, John Ferguson Correspondence..

*Ibid.*, MS. 9521, Richard McGhee Correspondence, 1883-1905.

**National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh**

Lothian Muniments, GD 40/9/438/5, bundle of ten miscellaneous letters.

**Private Collections**

Ms W. MacAuley, Glasgow, Miscellaneous Papers collected by George Quinn, brother-in law of William McKillop.

**Printed Materials*****Contemporary Books and Articles***

Bradlaugh Charles, *The Land, The People, and The Coming Struggle* (1877); reprinted in John Saville (ed.), *A Selection of the Political Pamphlets of Charles Bradlaugh* (New York, 1970).

Cliffe Leslie T. E., *Land Systems and Industrial Economy* (London, 1870).

*Copy of Correspondence between the Parochial Boards of the City and Barony Parishes (Glasgow) and the Board of Supervision, relative to a proposed Change in the DATE OF ELECTION of MANAGERS of the POOR in these Parishes* (London, 1883).

Couper Charles T., *Report of the Trial of the Dynamitards* (Edinburgh, 1884).

Davitt Michael, *Leaves From A Prison Diary, Vol. II* (London, 1885).

- Davitt Michael, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London, 1904).
- Dictionary of National Biography: Vol. XXII* (London, 1917).
- Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1930* (London, 1937).
- Ferguson J., *The Land for the People: An Appeal to All Who Work By Hand Or Brain* (Glasgow, n.d.).
- Ferguson John, *The Taxation of Land Values: A Retrospect and a Forecast* (n.d.).
- Ferguson John, *Three Centuries of Irish History* (Glasgow, n.d.).
- George Henry, *Progress and Poverty* (New York, 1880); reprinted with foreword by Henry George Jr. (New York, 1951).
- George Jr. Henry., *The Life of Henry George* (London, 1900).
- Gibson John C., *Diary of Sir Michael Connal: 1835 to 1893* (Glasgow, 1895).
- Glasgow Post Office Directory, 1869-70* (Glasgow, 1869).
- Glasgow Post Office Directory, 1881-2* (Glasgow, 1881).
- Groome Francis C. (ed.), *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland: Vol.1* (Edinburgh, 1882).
- Mill J. S., *England and Ireland* (London, 1868).
- Munro Rev. Alexander, *Proselytism in Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1883).



Munro Rev. Alexander, *Religion in the School: Letter to James Baird* (Glasgow, 1872).

O'Donnell F. H., *A History Of the Irish, Vol. 1* (London, 1910).

*Parochial Law: Barony Parish* (Glasgow, 1881).

*Scots Peerage, Vol. V* (Edinburgh, 1908).

Sullivan A.M, *New Ireland* (London, 1877).

Walsh James, *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1874).

### *Newspapers and Periodicals*

*Evening Times*

*Glasgow Chronicle*

*Glasgow Echo*

*Glasgow Free Press*

*Glasgow Herald*

*Glasgow News*

*Glasgow Observer*

*Glasgow Saturday Post*

*Glasgow Sentinel*

*Glasgow Star*

*Greenock Advertiser*

*Greenock Telegraph*

*Labour World*

*League Journal*

*National Guardian*

*North British Daily Mail*

*Scottish Leader*

*Scottish Standard*

*Steel Drops*

*The Bailie*

*Times*

*Voice of the People*

### **Other Sources**

Taped Interview with Dr. Patrick Connolly, Glasgow, 31 July 1998.

### **Secondary Sources: books and articles**

Allen Theodore W., *The Invention of the White Race, Vol.1: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (London, 1994).

Anson Peter F, *Underground Catholicism in Scotland* (Montrose, 1970).

Aspinwall B., 'Robert Monteith, 1812-84', *Clergy Review*, no. 63 (1978), pp. 265-72.

Aspinwall B., 'The Catholic Irish and Wealth in Glasgow', in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants in Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 91-114.

Aspinwall Bernard, 'Scots and Irish Clergy Ministering to Immigrants, 1830-1878', *Innes Review*, Vol. xlvii, no.1 (1996), pp.45-68.

Aspinwall Bernard, 'The Formation of the Catholic Community in the West of Scotland: Some Preliminary Outlines', *Innes Review*, vol. 33 (1982), pp. 44-51.

Aspinwall Bernard, 'The Welfare State Within the State: The Saint Vincent De Paul Society In Glasgow, 1848-1920' in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History: Voluntary Religion* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 445-59.

Aspinwall Bernard, *Portable Utopia Glasgow and the United States, 1820-1920* (Aberdeen, 1984).

Belchem John, 'Class, Creed and Country: the Irish Middle Class in Victorian Liverpool' in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds), *The Irish In Victorian Britain: the Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999), pp.190-211.

Belchem John, 'English Working Class Radicalism and the Irish, 1815-1850', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985), pp. 85-97.

Belchem John, 'The Liverpool-Irish Enclave', in D. M. MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin, 2000), pp.128-46.

Bellamy Joyce M. and Saville John (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography, Vol. III* (Manchester, 1978).

Bew Paul, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82* (Dublin, 1978).

*Border Story: The Name and House of Kerr* (place of publication unknown, n.d.).

Brady L. W., *T. P. O'Connor and The Liverpool Irish*, (London, 1983).

Brown Callum G., *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997).

Cameron Nigel M. de S. (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993).

Collins B., 'The Origins of Irish Immigration to Scotland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries' in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 1-18.



Comerford R. V., *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1842-82* (Dublin, 1985).

Connolly S. J., 'Introduction', in S. J. Connolly *et al.* (eds.), *Conflict, Identity and Economic Development: Ireland and Scotland, 1600-1939* (Preston, 1995).

Corish Patrick J., 'Cardinal Cullen and the National Association of Ireland', *Reportorium Novum*, vol.3, part 1(1961-2), pp. 13-61.

Darragh James, *The Catholic Hierarchy of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1986).

Delaney John J. and Tobin James E. (eds.), *Dictionary of Catholic Biography* (published in Britain, 1962).

Devine T.M., *The Scottish Nation: 1700-2000* (London, 2000).

Diner Hasla R., "'The Most Irish City in the Union": the Era of the Great Migration, 1844-77' in Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (eds), *The New York Irish* (London, 1996), pp. 87-106.

Edwards O. D. and Storey P. J., 'The Irish Press in Victorian Britain', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985), pp. 158-78.

Fielding S., 'Irish politics in Manchester 1890-1914', *International Review of Social History*, vol. xxxiii (1988), pp. 261-84.

Fielding S., *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1780–1939* (Buckingham, 1993).

Fitzpatrick D., 'The Irish in Britain: Settlers or Transients', *Labour History Review*, vol. 57, part 3 (1992), pp. 3-5.

Fitzpatrick D., *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Emigration to Australia* (London, 1994).

Foster R. F., *Modern Ireland* (London, 1988).

Fraser W. Hamish, 'Labour and the Changing City' in G. Gordon (ed.), *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen, 1985), pp.160-79.

Gallagher T., *Glasgow: The Uneasy Peace* (Manchester, 1987).

Garvin Tom, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (New York, 1981).

George Henry, *Progress and Poverty* (New York, 1951).

Handley J. E., *The Irish in Modern Scotland* (Cork, 1947).

Handley James E., *The Irish in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1973).

Harris Ruth-Ann, *The Nearest Place That Wasn't Ireland: Early Nineteenth-Century Labor Migration* (Ames, IA, 1994).

Heilbroner Robert L., *The Worldly Philosophers* (New York, 1986).

Hunter James (ed.), *For the People's Cause: From the Writings of John Murdoch* (Edinburgh, 1986).

Hutchinson John and O'Day Alan, 'The Gaelic revival in London, 1900-22: limits of ethnic identity' in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Victorian Britain: the Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 254-76.

Hutchison I. G. C., *A Political History of Scotland, 1832-1924: Parties, Elections and Issues* (Edinburgh, 1986).

Jackson A., *Ireland: 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999).

Jackson J. A., *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1963).

Joyce P., *Visions of the People* (Cambridge, 1991).

Kanya-Forstner Martha, 'Defining Womanhood: Irish Women and the Catholic Church in Victorian Liverpool' in D. M. MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Dublin, 2000) pp. 168-88.

Keir David, *The House of Collins* (London, 1952).

Kenefick William, 'Irish Dockers and Trade Unionists on Clydeside', *Irish Studies Review*, no. 19 (1997), pp. 22-9.

Kenefick William, '*Rebellious and Contrary*': *The Glasgow Dockers, 1853-1932* (East Linton, 2000).

King Elspeth, *Scotland Sober and Free: The Temperance Movement, 1829-1979* (Glasgow, 1979).

Lees Lynn H., *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Manchester, 1979).

Lowe W. J., *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire: The Shaping of a Working Class Community* (New York, 1989).

Lyons F.S. L., *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1977).

MacRaild Donald M., *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922* (Basingstoke, 1999).

Malcolm Elizabeth, *Ireland Sober: Ireland Free* (Syracuse NY, 1986).

McCaffrey J. and Aspinwall B., 'A Comparative View of the Irish in Glasgow and Edinburgh in the Nineteenth Century' in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London, 1985).

McCaffrey J. F., 'The Irish Vote in the Later Nineteenth Century. A Preliminary Survey', *Innes Review*, vol. 21(1970), pp. 30-6.

McCaffrey J., 'Irish Immigrants and Radical Movements in the West of Scotland in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Innes Review*, vol. 39 (1998), pp.46-58.

McCaffrey John F., 'Irish Issues in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century: Radicalism in a Scottish Context' in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants*



*and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp.116-37.

McCaffrey John F., 'Political Issues and Developments' in W. Hamish Fraser and Irene Maver (eds.), *Glasgow: Vol. II, 1830-1912* (Manchester, 1996), pp.186-226.

McCaffrey John F., 'Roman Catholics in Scotland in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries', *Records of the Scottish Church Society*, vol. 21 (1983), pp.275-300.

McFarland Elaine W., 'A Reality and Yet Impalpable: the Fenian Panic in Mid-Victorian Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review*, vol. lxxvii, no. 2 (1998), 199-223.

McLean Iain, *The Legend of Red Clydeside* (Edinburgh, 1983).

Miller Kerby A., *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford, 1985).

Miskell Louise, 'Irish immigrants in Cornwall: the Camborne experience, 1861-82' in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds), *The Irish in Victorian Britain: the Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 31-51.

Mitchell M., *The Irish in the West of Scotland 1797-1848: trade unions, strikes and political movements* (Edinburgh, 1998).

Moody D., *Scottish Towns* (London, 1992).

Moody T. W., 'Michael Davitt and the British Labour Movement, 1882-1906', *Transactions of the British Historical Society, 5<sup>th</sup> series, vol.3* (1953).

Moody T., *Davitt and the Irish Revolution 1846-82* (Oxford, 1981).

Moody T.W., 'Michael Davitt' in J. W. Boyle (ed.), *Leaders and Workers* (Cork, 1966), pp. 47-55.

Moran Gerard, 'J. Daly and The Rise and Fall of the Land League in the West of Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. xxix, no. 114 (Nov. 1994), pp. 189-207.

Moran Gerard, 'Nationalists in Exile: the National Brotherhood of St. Patrick in Lancashire, 1861-5', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds), *The Irish in Victorian Britain: the Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 212-35.

Moran Gerard, *A Radical Priest in Mayo, Fr. Patrick Lavelle: The Rise and Fall of an Irish Nationalist, 1825-1886* (Dublin, 1994).

Nolan Janet, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920* (Lexington, KY, 1989).

North John S., *The Waterloo directory of Scottish newspaper and periodicals, 1800-1900* (Waterloo Ontario, 1989).

O'Cathain Mairtin, 'Sean Mac Toirdealbhaigh', *Scottish Workers Republic*, Vol. ii, no. ix (n.d.).

O'Connor Thomas H., *The Boston Irish* (Boston, 1995).

O'Day A., 'Revising the Diaspora', in D. George Boyce and A. O'Day (eds), *The Making of Modern Irish History* (London, 1996), pp.191-7.

O'Day A., 'The Political Organisation of the Irish in Britain, 1867-1890', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939* (London, 1989), pp. 183-211.

O'Day A., *Irish Home Rule 1867-1921* (Manchester and New York, 1998).

O'Leary Paul, 'A Regional Perspective; The Famine Irish in South Wales', in R. Swift and S. Gilley (eds), *The Irish In Victorian Britain: The Local Dimension* (Dublin, 1999), pp.14-30.

Quinlivan Patrick and Rose Paul, *The Fenians in England, 1865-1872: A Sense of Insecurity* (London and New York, 1982).

Sheehy-Skeffington F., *Michael Davitt* (London, 1967)

Simmons Moira, *The Scottish Licensed Trade Association, 1880-1980: The Centenary History* (Edinburgh, 1981).

Sloan William, 'Religious Affiliation and the Immigrant Experience: Catholic Irish and Protestant Highlanders in Glasgow, 1830-1870' in T. M.

Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp.67-90.

Smyth J. J., *Labour in Glasgow, 1896-1936: Socialism, Suffrage, Sectarianism* (East Linton, 2000).

Steele E. D., 'J. S. Mill and The Irish Question: Reform and the Integrity of the Empire, 1865-1870', *Historical Journal*, vol. xiii, no. 3 (1970), pp. 419-50.

Steele E. D., 'J. S. Mill and the Irish Question: The Principles of Political Economy, 1848-1865', *Historical Journal*, vol. xiii, no.2 (1970), pp. 216-36.

Takagami Shin-ichi, 'The Fenian Rising in Dublin, March 1867', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. xxix, no. 115 (1995), pp. 340-62.

Tanner D., *Political Change and the Labour Party: 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1990).

Thernstrom Stephan, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, MA, 1964).

Thernstrom Stephan, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (London, 1973).



Thompson D., 'Ireland and the Irish in English Radicalism before 1850' in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience* (London and Basingstoke, 1982), pp.120-51.

Thornley D., *Isaac Butt and Home Rule* (London, 1964).

Treble J.H., 'O'Connor, O'Connell and the Attitudes of Irish Immigrants towards Chartism in the North of England 1838-1848' in J. Butt and I. F. Clarke (eds), *The Victorians and Social Protest: a Symposium* (Newton Abbott, 1973).

Tribe D., *President Charles Bradlaugh, M.P.* (London, 1971).

Tyrell A., *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain* (London, 1987).

Walker Graham, 'The Protestant Irish in Scotland', in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants in Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 44-66.

Wilson A, 'The Suffrage Movement' in P. Hollis (ed.), *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England* (London, 1974), pp. 80-104.

Wilson A., *The Chartist Movement in Scotland* (New York, 1970).

Withers Charles, 'The Demographic History of the City, 1831-1911' in W. H. Fraser and I. Maver (eds), *Glasgow: Volume II* (Manchester and New York, 1996), pp. 141-62.

Wood Ian, 'Irish Immigrants and Scottish Radicalism, 1880-1906', in I. S. McDougall (ed.), *Essays in Scottish Labour History* (Edinburgh, 1978).

Wright L. C., *Scottish Chartism* (Edinburgh, 1953).

- **Theses**

Frame John R., 'America and the Scottish Left: the Impact of American Ideas on the Scottish Labour Movement from the Civil War to World War One', University of Aberdeen Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

Hutchison I. G. C., 'Politics and Society in Mid-Victorian Glasgow, 1846-1886', University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1974.

Kenefick William, '“The Impact of the Past Upon the Present”: Experience of the Clydeside Dock Labour Force c. 1850 to 1914, with Particular Reference to the Port of Glasgow', University of Strathclyde Ph.D. thesis, 1995.

Logan Davies Norma, 'Drink and Society: Scotland 1870-1914', University of Glasgow Ph.D. thesis, 1983.

McHugh Mary, 'The Development of the Catholic Community in the Western Province (Roman Catholic Dioceses of Glasgow, Motherwell and Paisley), 1878-1962', University of Strathclyde Ph.D. thesis, 1990.

Sloan W., 'Aspects of the Assimilation of Highland and Irish Migrants in Glasgow, 1830-1870', University of Strathclyde M.Phil. thesis, 1987.

Smith Joan, 'Commonsense Thought and Working Class Consciousness; Some Aspects of the Glasgow and Liverpool Labour Movements in the Early Years of the Twentieth Century', University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1980.

Smyth James J., 'Labour and Socialism in Glasgow, 1880-1914: The Electoral Challenge Prior to Democracy', University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1987.

Sweeney Irene, 'The Municipal Administration of Glasgow, 1833-1912: Public Service and the Scottish Civic Identity', University of Strathclyde Ph.D. thesis, 1990.