

Ireland and the Irish in Post-War British Politics

A Thesis

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Abstract

Despite the research that has been previously published concerning both the Irish in Britain and Ireland in British politics little of this examines the reaction of the Irish in Britain to events that bring Ireland into British post-war politics. Neither does this work place Ireland within a British context. Whilst some authors have not ignored those in Britain that wish to raise the saliency of Ireland in British politics, most have either reduced it to a few paragraphs or sentences. This is especially true within popular British historiography which dislikes challenges to the many warming myths found within Whig narratives. However, myths concerning the Irish in Britain can be found in Irish historiography as well, such as those concerning the power of Irish voters in Britain. There remains a tendency to look at Irish political activity in post-war Britain in a thin and superficial manner. This study is intended to fill several gaps. It will examine the reaction of the Irish in Britain as it emerges from beneath the surface of British politics. It will look at those groups that attempted to put pressure on successive British Governments even when Ireland was not in the public eye. This will also include those that wanted to protect Northern Ireland's position within the Union. Another goal of this research is to place Ireland within a wider British context. Previously when the importance of Ireland has increased in British politics, it has been studied within a strictly Irish context. This thesis will show that the British response to Ireland is framed as much by British issues as Irish ones. This research will also seek to debunk some of the myths concerning the Irish vote in Britain, showing that they are a modern European population, making deliberative decisions that reflect this. It will conclude that despite the many myths, Ireland has little political saliency for British politicians and for all but a small section of the Irish population in Britain. The Irish in Britain are a modern, deliberative civic population, not a 5th column ready to rise in the name of Irish nationalism.

For Stephanie,

Without her support, confidence and endless patience this would not have been possible.

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My heartfelt thanks to you all.

The Boat would get into Liverpool in the morning. Though it would take them days to figure out what had happened, he would travel on to Manchester before getting a haircut and change of clothes. From Manchester, the teeming cities of the North stretched out: Leeds, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Glasgow....

Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Glasgow – they were like cards spread out on a green table. His only regret was that he hadn't hit out for one of them years before, he would miss nothing.

*John McGahern
Eddie Mac – Creatures of the Earth*

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Notes on Terminology and Text.

In this thesis, the specific terms will be used to describe the following geographical areas, groups, text and theory: Ireland will be used to describe the geographical area of the island of Ireland. The Republic of Ireland, Éire or the Irish Free State will be used to signify (depending upon the period) the Irish state. Ireland will also be used when describing political events that appertain to the whole of the island of Ireland. Northern Ireland will appertain to the six counties of Ulster that remain part of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom will be used when commenting on constitutional and political issues that concern the British state. Great Britain will relate to the geographical area containing England, Scotland and Wales. The noun Diaspora will always be capitalised as per accepted convention. When quoting from primary source materials, the original spelling and grammar will be used, any spelling or grammatical errors will not be corrected. Irish Nationalism and Irish Republicanism will be capitalised to recognise them as political concepts, when referring to general theories of nationalism, the lower-case will be used. The term 'Irish' will be used to describe those first-generation migrants from The Republic of Ireland. This is due to United Kingdom archival records making no distinction or allowance for second and third generation identities.

List of Abbreviations

APL	Anti-Partition League
ASTMS	Association of Scientific, Technical and Management Staffs
ASU	Active Service Unit
BICO	British and Irish Communist Organisation
CB	County Borough
CDU	Campaign for Democracy in Ulster
CLP	Constituency Labour Party
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GLC	Greater London Council
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
ICRA	Irish Civil Rights Association
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IWG	Irish Workers Group
LB	London Borough
MB	Municipal Borough
MP	Member of Parliament
NEC	National Executive Committee
NALGO	National and Local Government Association
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association

List of Abbreviations Cont/d.

NHS	National Health Service
NUI	National University of Ireland
NUJ	National Union of Journalists
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUS	National Union of Students
NUT	National Union of Teachers
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PPC	Prospective Parliamentary Candidate
QC	Queens Counsel
PTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act
RCT	Revolutionary Communist Tendency
RD	Rural District
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SOGAT	Society of Graphical and Allied Trades
TD	Teachta Dála
TOM	Troops Out Movement
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UB	Urban District
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UK	United Kingdom
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UWC	Ulster Workers Council

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Introduction – A Question of Influence?

'The Irish community in the US has a lot of political clout. Why is it that the Irish in Britain has much less? It really should have more political influence' – Lord Dubs'.¹

'There is no horde of proletarian Irish, enraged by Army Brutalisation of Catholic areas of Belfast, ready and waiting to pour out from Camden Town, Cricklewood and Kilburn to stop the heart of Empire'. – Eamonn McCann²

Taking the two divergent views of Lord Dubs' and Eamonn McCann as a starting point this thesis explores Ireland in British politics and the nature of the politics of the Irish population in Britain in the years following the Second World War. It looks at the form that those politics took and the various, political, social and economic forces that shaped them in this period.

Lord Dubs' argument is that as a Diaspora, the Irish in Britain should be producing a Diasporic politics focused on the reunification of Ireland. In contrast, McCann argues that although the Irish in Britain may display all the traits of a Diaspora, it does not necessarily follow that they create a recognisable form of Diasporic politics comparable to that of the Irish-American experience. At first glance, Lord Dubs' assumptions are not unreasonable. He is looking for something that we expect to see. The collected data available both from census material and sources gathered by Delaney, Hickman, Jackson and Walter indicate the importance of Britain as a location for Irish migrants and indeed, considerable numbers have made their home in Britain for over two centuries and consequently, Lord Dubs' expects to find a Diasporic politics of exile.³

¹ M. Hennessy, 'Call for Irish in Britain to exert more political power', *The Irish Times*, 22nd February 2010; Lord Dubs' is the former MP for Battersea South and former director of the Refugee Council. He was born in Czechoslovakia, arriving in the UK on a Kindertransport, 'Dubs', *Who's Who 2017* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), online edition [accessed 3rd July 2017].

² E. McCann, 'Stirring the U.K. Irish', *The Irish Times*, 22nd March 1971; Eamonn McCann is a social justice campaigner, journalist and political commentator from Derry, <http://www.eamonnmccann.com/biography.html>, [accessed 3rd July 2017].

³ E. Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); M. Hickman, 'Locating the Irish Diaspora', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, Vol.11.2, pp. 8-26, 2002; M. Hickman, 'Differences, Boundaries, Community: The Irish in Britain', *Advances in Art, Urban Futures*, Vol. 2, 2002; M. Hickman, 'Census Ethnic Categories and Second-Generation Identities: A Study of the Irish in England and Wales', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.37, No.1, January 2011; J.A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963); B. Walter, 'From a flood to a trickle: Irish Migration to Britain 1987-2006', *Irish Geography*, 41:2, 2008, pp.181-194; National Economic and Social Council, *The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration* (Dublin: The National Economic and Social Council, 1991).

Despite the work of Delaney *et al*, the fact that Lord Dubs' felt it necessary to pose his question also reveals that research concerning the Irish in post-war British politics remains sparse and old assumptions and myths that orbit around Diaspora endure and are difficult to dislodge. Thus, it will be argued that McCann's conclusion was correct; not only did a Diasporic politics fail to emerge, but also that the Irish in Britain rejected those groups that attempted to call them to the banners of Irish Nationalism or Republicanism. It will be argued that there is a complex and dynamic relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland, as states, but between Irish and British citizens as well.

The themes of continuity and change remain important and will be reflected in the chronological structure of the latter sections of this thesis. It will show that as Britain and Ireland change, then so does the nature and character of the Irish arriving in Britain. The assumptions of Lord Dubs' and those that expect to find a Diasporic politics of exile in Britain often try to either fix or freeze the character of the Irish population, or even worse present it as an unchanging, ahistorical stereotype. They ignore the reality of post-1922 politics in Ireland, that despite plenty of bitter words concerning the consequences of partition, the majority in Ireland accepted the primacy of constitutional, consensual politics. Those looking for a Diasporic politics fail to recognise that the radical population they are looking for are reduced to something of a green rump, isolated on the fringes of Irish politics. The Irish leaving Ireland after 1922 are leaving a developing Ireland that is busying itself with at first creating the state, then consolidating its sovereignty and would later turn their attention to the idea of Ireland itself.

They would arrive in a United Kingdom that was also changing. The Irish would find themselves in a post-imperial state that needed to define its identity and its place in the world. The United Kingdom would become embroiled in a crisis of identity and character that it has still not found an answer for. The Irish in Britain would experience these periods of crisis many of which would have nothing to do with Ireland but would have consequences for the Irish in Britain. However, despite the emphasis on change, it will be shown that most of this would be short-term reactions to immediate political problems and that the constitutional and legislative position of the Irish in Britain would remain unaltered. The Irish in Britain would also make short-term modifications to their participation in British civil-society. Despite these

adjustments, they would continually reject calls from the political fringes and remain embedded within the British body-politic.

This research is based largely on primary source evidence from a wide range of archival primary sources. This will include extensive use of the Harold Wilson papers and the Labour Party archive. It will be supported by other printed materials, such as biographies, political diaries and other extensive secondary reading. Further materials will include demographic data and survey information. Despite the intention of this research, there remain gaps that still need further research. Full and comprehensive histories of the Connolly Association and the Troops Out Movement still need to be completed. Whilst Scotland is not ignored, a full account of Ireland in Scottish politics and society needs to be completed to escape the fog of oppositional identity that surrounds Celtic Park and Ibrox. The complexity of Scotland, especially concerning religion has been explored by Rosie and in wider Scottish historiography by Bruce and Devine.⁴ Their work collectively establishes that post-war Scotland is undergoing its own questioning of Scottishness and that events in Scotland should not be consigned to margins and footnotes of Anglo-Centric versions of British history. Many of the historical stereotypes concerning the Irish in England and conceptions of Northern Ireland are comparable to those arguments presented regarding Ireland and the Irish in Scotland.

Another problem has been collecting and collating information regarding the electoral behaviour of the Irish in Britain. This is difficult to measure: whilst this research has used what few sources are available, it does not separate first or second-generation voters. This would require large scale surveys that are beyond the scope of this thesis and would not supply a window into historical elections. Due to the methods used to collect historical data, (UK census categorisation allowing expressions of Irish identity was not expanded until 2001) this means that when the Irish vote is examined and the term 'Irish' is used, it will refer to first-generation migrants. Further problems indicated by examination of archival surveys is that there are few efforts to separate nationality from religious denomination, which makes it very difficult to interrogate patterns of voting for religious reasons.

⁴ S. Bruce, 'Sectarianism in Scotland: A Contemporary Assessment and Explanation', *Scottish Government Yearbook* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1988); T. Devine, *Scotland's shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2000), M.J. Rosie, *Religion and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland* (PhD Thesis), University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 2001.

The first chapter, *Reading Britain, Ireland & Diaspora* examines the previously published literature. Notwithstanding important contributions such as those by Delaney and Hickman, there remains a paucity of material regarding the Irish in British politics.⁵ There is a considerable amount of published material regarding Northern Ireland, but most of this ‘troubles’ literature remains rooted in Northern Ireland or within the confines of Westminster. The overwhelming majority of this is concerned with elite-level politics and pays no attention to the reaction of the Irish in Britain. Few discuss the impact of political events on the Irish in Britain. Fewer still consider the consequences for the Irish in Britain due to patterns of change in Britain as it adjusts to the loss of empire, economic trauma, political instability and uncertainty concerning Britishness itself.

The historiography of post-1945 Britain and Ireland are remarkably similar. Both expose the uncertainty concerning national identity. In Ireland this is a battle between those who continue to view Irish history as a morality tale, a virtuous battle for liberty and the revisionists who argue that it is something far more complex encompassing the idea of Ireland. This has also encompassed the arguments between those who view emigration as a shameful experience, still welded to themes of exile, with those who take a broader view of the experience of emigration.

British historiography is a contest between those who continue to treasure orthodox Whig narratives and those who want to view history beyond an Anglo-centric lens. Scholars such as Aughey and Nairn, have recognised that freezing the nation is impossible; nations and identity are temporal.⁶ It is therefore necessary to read both the history of Ireland and Britain alongside the history of the Irish in Britain and to do so in combination with theoretical studies of migration, Diaspora and identity and the ways they challenge both historians and governments. The danger in failing to include any of these elements not only risks intellectual impoverishment, but leaves individual topics isolated within their own walls.⁷ This is

⁵ Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*; Hickman, ‘Locating the Irish Diaspora’, Hickman, ‘Differences, Boundaries, Community: The Irish in Britain’; Hickman, ‘Census Ethnic Categories and Second-Generation Identities: A Study of the Irish in England and Wales’.

⁶ A. Aughey, *Politics of Englishness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); A. Aughey, ‘Devolution in the United Kingdom: asymmetry in territorial politics’, in J. Coakley, B. Laffan, J. Todd (eds), *Renovation or revolution, New territorial politics in Ireland and the United Kingdom* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005); T. Nairn, *The Break Up of Britain* (London: Verso, 1981).

⁷ A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Shape of Irish History* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001), pp.1-14.

currently being displayed by the atavism of Anglo-Nationalism that is scared that it is losing control of the United Kingdom.

Chapter Two, *From Muckshifters to Punks, the Irish in Post-War Britain*, provides an overview of the changing patterns of settlement and migration to Britain. This chapter will show that the nature of emigration from Ireland to Britain is constantly changing and evolving. Whilst this is not a study in demographics, it remains necessary to understand not only the movement of people, but to consider the changing nature of that population. It is crucial to recognise that, just as it is a mistake to fix or freeze the nation, it is folly to try and do the same with patterns of migration or the reasons why people emigrate. The reasons why the Irish emigrated to Britain are multiple, they are economic, political, cultural and social. There are also differences between rural and urban emigration, gender, age and educational attainment. These are created by political, social and economic conditions in Ireland and Britain. Freedom of movement and the legislative status of the Irish in Britain also means that any measure of the population is only a snapshot at a given time. Thus, it remains difficult to measure the Irish population in Britain. Alongside this, it is still problematic to differentiate between first-generation and second and third generations. Historical records make no attempt to recognise the ability of people to have plural identities. Individual identity cannot be essentialised or frozen. Identities are never singular and are always incomplete and temporal. Even the way we think about identity changes over time. In the 1980s the idea of identity and group recognition became increasingly politically significant and popular. The thought of belonging to a Diaspora became fashionable, even if thinking about definitions of Diaspora did not. Sometimes Diaspora even became an escape, whilst for others it was a form of political engagement. This was not a classic exiling but the creation of a Diasporic identity by those born outside the geographical confines of the Republic of Ireland, they were using Irishness to escape narrow definitions of identity imagined by their respective governments'. There is no universal experience of being Irish in Britain and each generation brought with them their version of Ireland. It will conclude that the Irish in Britain are a contiguous Diaspora, which is willing to make short-term adjustments to make allowances for changing themes in British society whilst retaining its cultural features.

The following chapters then progress chronologically. They are divided into subsections examining the complexities of political life during each period. This is done to

recognise the changing nature of society and politics in Britain and Ireland. The first, *Interrupting the Rebuilding of Britain*, covers the period from 1945-1963. This was a period when Britain was rebuilding, however despite such significant events such as the creation of the welfare state, Britain was to be rebuilt with its pre-war structures and traditions intact. It was not just a physical rebuilding, but the reconstruction of the *nation*.⁸ The National Health Service served the whole, not merely individual well-being.⁹ The monarchy, Parliament and Anglican Church would all remain pillars of British society. Unlike other post-war migrants the Irish in Britain would not be excluded from this *national* rebuilding.¹⁰ This period would see the first of a series of ‘interruptions’ by Ireland into British politics. The sources of these would be found in Dublin, not Liverpool or London. However, there was little room for Ireland within British politics, which was more concerned with India, Palestine and retaining its position as a global power. When the Republic of Ireland was declared in 1948, Clement Attlee, with consummate political skill, ensured that potentially complex issues concerning citizenship, identity, the constitution and Commonwealth were all avoided. He did this by declaring that the Irish in Britain were ‘not foreign’. When Irish groups in Britain, such as the Anti-Partition League (APL) and the Connolly Association, tried to raise the saliency of partition in British politics, the Irish in Britain ignored them. In many ways the APL was the last kick of the type of Diasporic community that Lord Dubs’ was looking for. The final decade of this period saw the fragility of lingering claims to global power status were unmasked at Suez. The second-half of the 1950s also incubated the individuals and groups that would form the nucleus of the semi-Trotskyist British left that would come to prominence post-1968.¹¹ The Irish in Britain would be part of this and many would take the view that the APL and Connolly Association were old fashioned and out of step with the political, cultural and social changings occurring in Britain and Ireland. In 1963 this period would end as it had begun, with questions over citizenship, identity and the nation-state; Ireland would break the surface of British politics once again for British reasons, not because of pressure over partition.

The next chapter, *Upsetting the Plans of ‘Good Old Mr Wilson’* explores the era dominated by the ministries of Harold Wilson. The early years of Wilson’s time as leader of

⁸ C. Wills, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (Allen Lane: London, 2017), pp.37-38.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Italics included by author for emphasis.

¹¹ E. Smith & M. Worley, *Against the Grain: The British far left from 1956* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp.4-6.

the Labour Party and his first term as Prime Minister was a point where the remnants of pre-war traditions met Wilson's modernising project. It was his version of the modernity thesis that would dictate the direction of British politics until 1974. Wilson would not be alone in this: Terence O'Neill and Seán Lemass both had their own interpretations of the modernity thesis; sadly, for Northern Ireland, each man was using it to achieve very different goals. This belief in modernity, progress and technology had consequences for those that wanted to lobby Wilson over Northern Ireland, civil rights or partition. Wilson believed that his ability to deliver deals in the classic Labour style of arm twisting in back rooms over beer and sandwiches would allow his modernity thesis to provide a solution to the problems in Northern Ireland. He failed to understand that this sort of deal making would not work on the other side of the North Channel. This chapter will also examine the myth that Wilson had more Irish voters than the Taoiseach.¹² It will show that there was no large-scale lobby in Huyton shaped by partition, civil rights or violence in Northern Ireland. This is confirmed by Wilson's own papers, which reveal he was just as likely to get letters and telegrams from Bletchley and Lichfield rather than Liverpool. Wilson's papers expose a man who despite having a cabinet that contained genuine intellect, found himself devoid of ideas and tactics when those that were used to broker deals in Britain failed in Northern Ireland. They also expose a leader and his party under no significant pressure from either the Irish in Britain or the wider British electorate over Northern Ireland.

The following two chapters, *Moral Government verses the 'other'*, and *The Labour Party, Northern Ireland & the Awkward Squad*, cover the period from the fall of Heath to resignation of Margaret Thatcher. *Moral Government verses the 'other'* seeks to place Northern Ireland within the context of a Conservative Party promoting itself as the party of moral democracy. The moral democracy of Thatcherism would concern itself with answering questions of British economic decline, political stability and law and order. These beliefs were set out in her speech at the 1975 Conservative Party Conference.¹³ This would allow libertarian philosophy to provide the freedom for individual success. Sandel argues that globally, society 'drifted

¹² The view that Wilson had large numbers of Irish voters comes from a typical Wilsonian act of *bonhomie*. First with Charles Haughey on St Patrick's Day 1965 at the London Irish Club (Eton Square) when he joked that he had more Irish voters in his constituency than Haughey. He would later say the same to Jack Lynch.

¹³ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, (hereafter 'MTF'), Speeches, Interviews & Other Statements, *Speech to Conservative Party Conference*, 10th October 1975.

from having a market economy to being a market economy'.¹⁴ Even if this conclusion is regarded as sound, in the United Kingdom, this drift was certainly encouraged and accelerated by the Conservatives under Thatcher.

Previously published material concerning Northern Ireland during this period concentrates on the trauma and tragedy of the Hunger Strikes and leaves them firmly within the confines of Ireland and Westminster. This chapter seeks to go beyond these environs, and as with previous chapters, examines the response of the Irish in Britain and wider British political issues. These would include the Conservative reaction to the myths of British decline and the incorporation of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and Sinn Féin into those that Thatcherism regarded as the enemy within. They would become part of the 'others' that had to be defeated so that moral government could be returned to the United Kingdom.

Going beyond the Conservative Party, *The Labour Party, Northern Ireland & the Awkward Squad* will investigate another under-researched subject, the Labour Party and its response to Northern Ireland whilst in opposition. It will scrutinize the factionalism in the Labour Party as it divided between those who supported Troops Out and immediate withdrawal and those who took a more pragmatic approach. This will include an examination of how this debate intruded into the disputes about party direction and leadership. Outside of Westminster the chapter will also address the rise of identity politics and community empowerment promoted by Ken Livingstone and the GLC and how he became 'Red Ken' for the Conservatives and leader of the 'Awkward Squad' within the Labour Party. It will investigate the failure of the radical left in Britain to gain support from the Irish in Britain for their alternatives to bipartisanship. Further, it will show that they had failed to learn lessons from the past as they continued to search for the Irish vote in Britain. The Irish in Britain would however, continue vote for the dominant British parties.

The final period that concerns this thesis is that which covers the Premiership of John Major until his defeat by Tony Blair in 1997. Although never straying too far from Thatcherism, Major was far less concerned about the cultural essentialism and imperial melancholy that lingered within the Conservatives. This would later provide him with difficulties concerning his policy towards Europe, but when it came to Northern Ireland it allowed him to escape the rhetoric of the past and with others, such as John Hume and Albert

¹⁴ M. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Staus and Giroux, 2013), p.10.

Reynolds, begin to construct a history of the future. John Major in one significant way differs from previous British Prime Ministers; he was not content to simply wait for Ireland to force its way into British politics. He made finding a way to stopping the violence in Northern Ireland a political priority, something which his predecessors, Wilson, Heath, Callaghan and Thatcher, never did. Whilst Major was committed to pushing forward with the peace process, he would have to contend with those from within his own party that objected to it. Many of these would become members or supporters of groups such as The Friends of Union and the Bow Group. Previous research has largely ignored these organisations and their objections. Major would also have difficulties with the Lilliputian Imperialists in the Conservative Party over Europe. Bruce called these troublemakers ‘the last imperial generation’.¹⁵ Yet, Bruce was incorrect to call them the last generation. Their successors have voices in MPs such as Michael Gove, Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg and who are leading the current Brexit campaign. They have all attacked the Good Friday Agreement, with the loudest objections being put into print by Gove with his own ahistorical diatribe *The Price of Peace*.¹⁶

As Major was struggling with his own party over Europe, sovereignty and the nature of the British nation-state, Labour was facing its own continuing battles with factionalism within which had been fermenting since 1956 and exploded into open political warfare following the resignation of James Callaghan. While Neil Kinnock was looking for solutions to Labour’s internal problems, he offered little when it came to Northern Ireland. If there was any Labour leader that was guilty of regarding Ireland as a political museum, it was Kinnock. However, he was not alone in this, the loose collection of groups that made up the far-left ‘Awkward Squad’ suffered from political jet-lag and were out-manoeuvred. Those that remained supportive of the utopianism of the Troops Out faction within the Labour Party were late to recognise that the peace process was focusing on the creation of a history of the future, with the old signposts and rhetoric of the past either being removed or ignored. One person who did recognise that was Tony Blair, seeing that he could make the peace process fit with his own vision of mature politics.

The conclusion brings these chapters together to show that the Diasporic politics that Lord Dubs’ is searching for does not emerge in Britain. It will show that those who are calling

¹⁵ S. Bruce, ‘Wee John’s only true Loyalists’, *The Guardian*, 4th February 1995.

¹⁶ M. Gove, *The Price of Peace: An analysis of British Policy in Northern Ireland* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 2000).

for a homogenous Irish community to create an Irish fifth column ready to rise in support of Irish nationalism or Republicanism, will find no such thing. What they will find instead is something much closer to what Eamonn McCann found in 1971, a dynamic and changing population, and one that is not constrained by historical stereotypes the character of which has transformed as Ireland itself has changed.

Chapter One

Reading Britain, Ireland and Diaspora

The reception of the Irish in Britain today is conditioned by the past history of relations between the sister isles. Stereotypes have developed over the years as a combination of ignorance, propaganda, rumour, history and hearsay.¹

John Archer Jackson's conclusion remains as true today as when it was written in 1963. The reason for this is that in both British and Irish historiography the Irish in Britain remain a thin vein to mine. When looking for the Irish in Britain readers might expect to find a Diaspora that conforms to classic definitions of exclusion and exile. They look for the immutable nation, not a diverse, pluralist community containing people bonded by gender, religion, class, sexuality and culture. At the centre of his conviction is that when individuals want to find the Irish in Britain they start with the stereotypes, rumour and hearsay. Part of the reason for this is that the literature remains dominated by North-American definitions. It is from this experience that emigration becomes linked with feelings of exile and shame. The arguments about the history of migration and exile to North America have been played out in print between Lawrence J. McCaffrey and Kerby Miller.² History remains for many in Ireland a living link providing strong communal roots. These communal roots are not just in the imaginations of individual communities, but remain strong within the study of Diaspora, especially within North-American narratives and is often presented as a historiography of unity.³ The temptation remains to look for what is considered 'authentic' and this search has been summed up by John Belchem;

In the lucrative market for heritage publications, the unadulterated image of the lowly Irish 'slummy', reckless and feckless, has been adopted as the foundation character in popular history and working-class autobiography, a

¹ J.A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p.152.

² L. McCaffrey, *Textures of Irish America* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998); K. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

³ P. O'Sullivan, *The Irish World Wide - History Heritage, Identity Volume Two, The Irish in the New Communities* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), p.7.

symbolic figure of inverse snobbery in the evolution of the real Liverpoolian, the true Scottie Road scouser.⁴

His work, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, is a superlative example of urban biography.⁵ He has, with forensic detail, revealed the history of the Irish in Liverpool from 1800-1939. Belchem says the reason for this periodisation is the final political separation of Britain and Ireland. Liverpool's importance as the 'great Victorian seaport' was already declining and would continue to do so.⁶ He also argues that the period from 1800-1939 was the period that politically Ireland and the United Kingdom experienced the traumas and difficulties of Union and then separation. He also recognises that those that are Irish, Protestant and Scouse are missing from his work and are yet to be discovered. Belchem is correct to challenge the myths that surround the foundation characters of history. These remain difficult to dislodge within the historiography of the Irish in Britain and is part of the reason why individuals such as Lord Dubs continue to search for what they expect to find. Belchem does not dispute the experience of poverty, hard work and racism. He recognises that for many this was the experience of emigration. However, he contends that it was not the only experience. Benedict Anderson described his own difficulties with authenticity, writing how 'in English schools we were marked as 'Irish', as we had been 'American' in Waterford and 'English' in California'.⁷ As his family moved from place to place Anderson revealed that his own experience, identity and character was questioned. His story adds to the conclusions formulated by Graham Davis and Donald Akenson that there was a broad range experience of emigration.⁸

Answers to why little attention continues to be given to broader experiences of emigration and immigration can be found in British and Irish historiography. Sean O'Faolain condemned Irish historians as 'nationalistic, patriotic, political, and sentimental. I had not a single book to turn to which is not either preoccupied with national ego and a delusion of its self-sufficiency, or else a cursive record of political events'.⁹ Irish historiography has taken a

⁴ J. Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse, The History of the Liverpool-Irish 1800-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 332-333.

⁵ Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, 2007.

⁶ O. Sykes, J. Brown, M. Cocks, D. Shaw, C. Crouch, 'A City Profile for Liverpool', *Cities*, 28th March 2013.

⁷ B. Anderson, 'Selective kinship', *the Dublin Review*, Spring 2003, pp.5-29.

⁸ G. Davies, 'The Irish in Britain 1815-1939', in, A. Bielenberg (ed), *The Irish Diaspora* (London: Pearson Education, 200), pp. 19-36; D. H. Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Belfast: Queens University Belfast, 1996).

⁹ S. O'Faolain, *The Irish* (West Drayton: Penguin, 1947), p.6.

long time to answer this criticism, in particular the immediate post-independence period, which is why work such as *The Irish counter-revolution* by John Regan has been welcomed by some and with controversy by others.¹⁰ This is the latest volume which has challenged the institutionalised history of Ireland which for some, such as Ferriter, had become a collection of 'delusion and denials' with few willing or interested in offering a version of Irish history as anything other than a morality tale.¹¹ This has resulted in a continuing battle between those who continue to protect orthodox Irish historiography and the 'revisionists' who want to focus on a new question: 'what sort of Ireland did we create'? It was the idea of Ireland that became central to historians such as Roy Foster and F.S.L Lyons.¹² It was not just the idea of Ireland that was being discussed but also the character of Irishness. Emigration in Irish historiography was not left out of this battle. This continues to be fought between those who view emigration as an experience of shame and others who argue that emigration was an opportunity.

British historiography has undergone its own battles and controversy. This began with Butterfield and *The Whig Interpretation of History* and his reappraisal of the triumphal nature of British history writing.¹³ E. H Carr argued that 'History was full of meaning for British historians, so long as it seemed to be going our way; now that it has taken a wrong turning it has become heresy'.¹⁴ This challenge to British history writing has been summed up by Michael Bentley who with justification argues that despite devolution and the popularity of the 'tele-don' there is no place for Ireland, Scotland and Wales in British history.¹⁵ In many ways 'heresy' was comparable with the arguments taking place in Ireland. In the UK the history and character of the state and the British become embroiled in a crisis of Britishness. Kenneth Morgan concluded that 'In many a variety of ways, often instinctively felt, the Second World War supplied images that were satisfying and self-confirming. It was

¹⁰ J. M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution, 1926-1936: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999).

¹¹ D. Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland* (London: Profile Books, 2005), p.8.

¹² F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (Fontana Press, 1985); R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Allen Lane, 1988).

¹³ R.A. Cosgrove, 'Reflections on the Whig Interpretation of History', *Journal of Early Modern History*, Vol. 4, Issue 2, 2000, pp.147-167.

¹⁴ E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.43.

¹⁵ M. Bentley, 'British Historical Writing', in A. Schneider & D. Woolf, *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 5: Historical Writing Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.291-293.

crucial to Britain's usable past'.¹⁶ The crucial part of this statement is its final three words, 'Britain's usable past'. It would be to the usable past that British historians and politicians would constantly return. What Morgan has revealed in this search for a usable past is that following the end of the British Empire, the United Kingdom began to experience a post-imperial crisis of identity. This has been hidden within what Clair Wills has called 'self-congratulatory' popular history that only grudgingly recognises the contribution of others, emphasising British separation from the rest of Europe.¹⁷ The orthodox interpretation of the end of the war placed it within a British tradition of Protestantism, Monarchy, Parliament and its peoples defending democracy from the tyranny, totalitarianism and absolutism that stretched back to 1688. This meta-Whiggery is jingoistic and a myth.¹⁸ Ireland is an uncomfortable interruption in British history, the result of this, is as Childs concludes, that, 'Ireland is all too often seen as a far-away country of which we know little'.¹⁹ Ireland is not far away, but it is too often reduced to a footnote or to a collection of historical stereotypes in British historiography and the result is that many in Britain still know little about Ireland. This historical selectivity is not unique to British or Irish writers; Tom Paulin has correctly called into question Ulster Unionists' own historical memory.²⁰

There remains a temptation concentrate on what the reader expects to find. It still comes as surprise for many that there could be an experience of being Irish in Britain beyond the slums of Liverpool or the building sites of London. Further, the search for historical stereotypes has resulted in a failure or refusal to recognise that the Irish in Britain are a population that has accepted the primacy of constitutional politics. One of the primary reasons for completing this thesis has been to challenge the myths that continue to mask the heterogenous nature of the Irish population in Britain and that must begin by identifying the gaps within the current literature.

¹⁶ K. Morgan, *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.4.

¹⁷ C. Wills, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (Allen Lane: London, 2017), pp.27-28.

¹⁸ Whig History is the historiographical approach to history as a narrative of constitutional progress, liberal democracy and personal freedom ultimately arriving at the current British constitutional settlement. For further explorations of Whig History see J. Tosh & S. Lang, *The Pursuit of History* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006) and J. Black & D MacRaild, *Studying History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

¹⁹ D. Childs, *Britain since 1939: Progress and Decline* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.2.

²⁰ T. Paulin, *Ireland & The English Crisis* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe books, 1984), pp.16-17.

(1.1) Reading the Irish in Post-War Britain

During the immediate post-war decades the first significant inquest produced into Irish emigration came from John A. O'Brien and his work *The Vanishing Irish*.²¹ This volume was written primarily for an American audience and its contents reflect that, despite the best of intentions of the author to 'engender light' on the subject.²² However, it is still worthy for two reasons; the first is that the word Diaspora is used, which provides evidence to show that as a descriptive term, it was being used decades prior to its growing popularity in the 1990s.²³ Secondly, the essay by Seán O'Faolain, in which he punctured the comforting and mythical visions of Ireland which proved controversial for both American readers and cultural guardians in Ireland who did not like their vision of frugal, virtuous Ireland disturbed.²⁴

In 1963 John Archer Jackson produced what must still be regarded as the starting point for the study of the Irish in post-war Britain. In his seminal 1963 work, *The Irish in Britain* Jackson provides a demographic, cultural and sociological view of almost 200 years of history.²⁵ It is a ground-breaking exploration, dispelling many of the earlier myths surrounding the Irish in Britain. It also remains invaluable as an introduction to the activities of the Anti-Partition League and the Connolly Association. As an introduction to the subject it remains essential reading.

However, despite the efforts of Jackson, this was not enough to provide a noticeable increase in the volumes produced concerning the Irish in Britain. The next study of the Irish in Britain would emerge because of the modern troubles. Kevin O'Connor returned to *The Irish in Britain* in 1972.²⁶ This was a journalistic response to the prevailing conditions in Northern Ireland and whilst this does not devalue its contribution, it would be left to others to provide new scholarly additions to sit beside Jackson.

In post-war Britain Irish labour was a vital resource. Ultan Cowley reveals just how important it was and that it could be found on building projects throughout the UK.²⁷ It is not

²¹ J.A. O'Brien (ed), *The Vanishing Irish: The Enigma of the Modern World* (London: W.H. Allen, 1954).

²² O'Brien, *The Vanishing Irish*, p.9.

²³ O'Brien, *The Vanishing Irish*, p.8.

²⁴ S. O'Faolain, 'Love among the Irish', in, J.A. O'Brien (ed), *The Vanishing Irish*, pp.105-116; B. Inglis, 'The Vanishing Irish', *The Spectator*, 24th April 1953, p.9

²⁵ Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).

²⁶ K. O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972).

²⁷ U. Cowley, *The men who built Britain: a history of the Irish navy* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2001).

an exaggeration to say that the Irish rebuilt post-war Britain. It is from within the 'heavy diggers' and 'muck shifters' that Dónall MacAmhlaigh provides the reader with his experience of being Irish in Britain.²⁸ His work *An Irish Navy, The Diary of an Exile*, is a vivid picture of not only the life of the Irish labourer in Britain, but an insight into the community brokerage that supported them.²⁹ This is the experience of the immediate post-war generation that sadly would often find themselves isolated and alone as the United Kingdom moved into the economic turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s. His diary was not his only contribution, as he also produced articles for the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Democrat*.

Cowley and MacAmhlaigh provide the reader with a distinctly masculine vision of emigration to Britain. A number of authors offer important insights beyond the muscular world of the building site. Using Coventry as a case-study, Louise Ryan challenges the gendering of roles within patterns of migration to show the complexity of decision making and the role of family and community brokerage in the decision to emigrate.³⁰ Another author to use Coventry as a case-study is Henrietta Ewart. Although not distinctly a study of gender and migration, Ewart discovered that the narrative of exile and dislocation was not the dominant memory of the Irish in Coventry. It was something that all were aware of, but the overwhelming response Ewart found was that 'it wasn't like that for me'.³¹ Throughout the post-war period the Catholic Church continued to play important roles in Irish community brokerage in Britain. The experience of Irish female migrants and their reminiscences of the Catholic Church in Birmingham has been explored by Sarah O'Brien. This is a discourse examining the interaction between Irish and English Catholics. The conclusion formulated by O'Brien is that Irish women in Birmingham created systems of community brokerage that emphasised their gender and their Catholicism and not their Irishness.³² Her arguments that the Catholic Church wanted to ensure that Irish Catholics were primarily Catholics and not Irish Catholic Nationalists is valid but lacks the subtle nuances of the varied experiences revealed by Ewart and Ryan.

²⁸ Cowley, *The men who built Britain: a history of the Irish navy*, p.226.

²⁹ D. MacAmhlaigh, V. Iremonger, (Trans), *An Irish Navy the Diary of an Exile* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2003).

³⁰ L Ryan, "I had a sister in England': Family-Led Migration, Social Networks and Irish Nurses', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.34, April 2008, pp. 453-470.

³¹ H. Ewart, "Coventry Irish': Community, Class, Culture and Narrative in the formation of Migrant Identity'', 1940-1970, *Midland History*, Vol. 36 No.2, Autumn, 2011, pp. 225-44.

³² S. O'Brien, 'Irish Women's Involvement in Birmingham's Union of Catholic Mothers', 1948-1978, *Midland History*, Vol.38 No.2, Autumn 2013, pp. 213-25.

The experience of Irish women using emigration as an escape from prevailing societal norms in Ireland has been documented by Paul Michael Garrett.³³ His work on the repatriation of unmarried mothers uncovers not just the double 'othering' of Irish women by their gender and identity, but also that arguments concerning the role of women in Irish society and in particular the issue of reproductive rights remain unresolved. Garrett offers a counter-point to the more populist style of Patricia Kennedy, who falls into the trap that Belchem wants researchers to avoid and provides a picture of what readers expect to find, rather than concentrating on the intricacy of and consequences of gendered experiences of emigration.³⁴

One of the most important authors studying the Irish in Britain is Enda Delaney.³⁵ In *The Irish in Post War Britain* he uses a thematic approach, examining experiences of migration, identity and acceptance. Significantly he does not just focus on the character of Irish emigrants but also examines the reaction of the native British population and their role in the acceptance or non-acceptance of the Irish in Britain. He combines this with the role of the Irish State and the Catholic Church and their contribution to the perception of the Irish in Britain. He not only provides an examination of the Irish in Britain but places them within the context of events in Britain. Thus, by rejecting a linear approach to the Irish in Britain, Delaney shows that there was no universal experience of being an Irish emigrant to Britain.

Some of the most recent and important publications published concerning the Irish in Britain and British society's reaction post-war immigration are those by Clair Wills. The reason for this importance is that Wills has reminded the reader that 'It is not only the immigrants who had to learn to live in two places at once, and two time zones, but their neighbours too'.³⁶ It is a timely prompt to stress the need to examine the experience of both emigration and immigration. In *The Best are Leaving*, Wills examines literary and artistic responses to emigration.³⁷ In this work Wills goes beyond cliché and stereotype and engages with the themes of 'shame' and 'getting on' to show the diversity of experience of those who

³³ P. M. Garrett, 'The abnormal flight: the migration and repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers', *Social History*, Vol. 25 No.3, October 2000, pp. 330-343

³⁴ P. Kennedy, *Welcoming the Stranger: Irish Migrant Welfare in Britain Since 1957* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2015).

³⁵ E. Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁶ Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p.364.

³⁷ C. Wills, *The Best are Leaving: Emigration and Post-War Irish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

emigrated in the 1940s and 1950s. In *Lovers and Strangers*, Wills expands her study of immigration to include a wide range of experience, not just the Irish.³⁸ Wills provides the reader a way into each community or experience that she surveys. She then places this experience in context with British society's changing response to immigration which ranged from confusion to racism.

Another important element within *Lovers and Strangers* is that it provides a comparative account of immigration to Britain.³⁹ While approximately one in three arrivals during the first decades after the Second World War were from Ireland, it was Commonwealth immigration that would conceal the Irish from public gaze, even though 'New Commonwealth' migrants were far fewer in number than their Irish counterparts.⁴⁰ This 'concealing' of the Irish in Britain was reflected in the literature reacting to post 1945 immigration. Typical of these are *Colour, Citizenship and British Society* and *Race, Community and Conflict A study of Sparkbrook*. Both these volumes remain crucial studies of migrant communities in Britain, however they concentrate on migrants from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent. The reason for this is made explicit from within both volumes; the authors of *Colour, Citizenship and British Society*, argued that 'very little was known in 1963 about the coloured immigrant communities' and Rex and Moore argue that 'The problem of race relations which confronted and perplexed the people of Birmingham in the early 1960s was one of immense practical political importance'.⁴¹ These two explanations and the majority of literature concerning post-war immigration support Charles Husband's view that 'Racial distinctions along colour lines may be the dominant expression of racial thinking in contemporary Britain but it is not the only form of racial categorization and has not always been predominant'.⁴² Clair Wills has shown that Husband's conclusion is correct.

What remains largely missing are investigations and explorations of Ulster Unionists and Northern Ireland Protestants living in Britain. Whilst it is clearly a mistake to regard Northern Unionists as a monolithic population, those Unionists that move to Britain fail to produce anything similar in scale to the *Irish Democrat* or create a system of community

³⁸ Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Delaney, *The Irish in Post War Britain*, pp.117-119.

⁴¹ N. Deakin, *Colour, Citizenship and British Society* (London: Panther, 1970), p.11; J. Rex & R. Moore, *Race Community and Conflict: A study of Sparkbrook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p.1.

⁴² C. Husband (ed), *Race in Britain: Continuity and Change* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p.12.

brokerage comparable to those from the Republic of Ireland. Northern Unionist identity finds it difficult flourish or to even cross the North Channel. When John Hewitt was in England he took part in the Aldermaston marches, yet instead of expressing this experience through his poetry, he chose to give the reader a rather dull reflection of meeting Irish Catholics in Coventry.⁴³ It is the title of his poem *An Irishman in Coventry* that is its most significant element.⁴⁴ The title reflects the recognition that in Britain he was regarded as Irish and his own self-recognition that he was both Ulsterman and Irish. Louis MacNeice provides further experience of life in the Midlands with his poem *Birmingham*.⁴⁵ Although primarily remembered as an associate of W.H. Auden and Cecil Day-Lewis, Edna Longley uncovers intricate themes of oppositional identity and that MacNeice was more than a 'thirties poet'.⁴⁶

It is Tom Paulin that provides the most visceral criticism and examination of Northern Protestantism and Unionism in Britain. In multiple volumes he explores, with a combination of wit and acidity both his own identity and that of Northern Unionists. He came to regard the type of identity imagined by the Unionist-Ultras as 'an unusually fragmented culture and a snarl of superficial or negative attitudes. A provincialism of the most disabling kind'.⁴⁷ As shown later in this thesis, a consequence of this disabling provincialism would be the rejection of the Britishness claimed by Northern Unionists by wider British society and politicians. Paulin provides a form of confessional criticism with his poetry. In *Fivemiletown* he admits that he may never 'fit in', and this inability to fit in is a recurring theme within his writing.⁴⁸ It is from his work *An Ulster Unionist Walks the Streets of London* that his literary and personal experience expresses what demographers, historians and sociologists have found difficult, he went looking for Northern Unionists in London, once again confessing his inability to fit in.⁴⁹ Paulin finds multiple reasons for his inability fit in, from his own family background to his

⁴³ J. Hewitt, *Collected Poems 1932-67* (Bristol: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968), pp.111-112; W.J. McCormack, *Northman: John Hewitt (1907-87): An Irish Writer, his world, and his times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 167-174.

⁴⁴ Hewitt, *Collected Poems 1932-67*, pp. 111-112.

⁴⁵ L. MacNeice, 'Birmingham', in E. Longley (ed), *The Bloodaxe Book of 20th Century Poetry from Britain and Ireland* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 2000), p.154.

⁴⁶ E. Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), pp.38-39.

⁴⁷ Paulin, *Ireland and the English Crisis*, p.17.

⁴⁸ T. Paulin, *Fivemiletown* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), pp. 15-17; Paulin, *Ireland and the English Crisis*, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁹ T. Paulin, 'An Ulster Unionist Walks the Streets of London', in Paulin, *Fivemiletown*, pp. 42-43.

own republicanism, which is rooted in the eighteenth-century traditions of Thomas Paine, not Irish Nationalism or Republicanism.

Paulin was also correct to search for Northern Unionists in London. The reason for this is that demographic studies all concur that the most important location for emigrants from Ireland during the 20th Century is London. Although John Archer Jackson covered the demographics of the Irish in Britain, it was not until Enda Delaney and Bronwen Walter turned their attention to the Irish in Britain that single volume studies of post-war Irish settlement in Britain are produced.⁵⁰ In *Demography State and Society*, Delaney uses a wide range of resources to conclude that there is no single, unifiable theory to explain migration.⁵¹ He examines the relationship between Britain and Ireland and their response to Irish migration. This extensive study shows that the Irish followed the British economy as it moved to the Greater South-East. It is a worthy volume to sit alongside his wider history of the Irish in Britain discussed earlier in this chapter.⁵²

In 2002, Bronwen Walter collated a wide range of statistical data analysing global Irish emigration.⁵³ Her figures confirm the conclusion that the Irish population in Britain is largely clustered in the Greater South-East and that while Irish emigrants do not entirely abandon older areas such as the North-West, those arriving in areas other than the Greater South-East is reduced to a trickle. Using these statistics Walter shows that the Irish in Britain are a large and diverse group. However, the arguments concerning Diasporic identity and second-generation expression of identity are problematic. This is due to the findings of Devine, Bruce and Gallagher in Scotland, the deficit of information within political biography and the latest census returns' failure to show any significant increase in those claiming Irish identity.⁵⁴ The

⁵⁰ Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*; B. Walter, 'From a flood to a trickle: Irish Migration to Britain 1987-2006', *Irish Geography*, 41:2, 2008; B. Walter, *A study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad* (Cambridge: Anglia Polytechnic University, 2002); E. Delaney, *Demography, State and Society: Irish Migration to Britain 1919-1971* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

⁵¹ Delaney, *Demography, State and Society Irish Migration to Britain 1919-1971*, pp.7-35.

⁵² Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*.

⁵³ Walter, *A Study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad*.

⁵⁴ Bruce, Glendinning, Paterson & M. Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland*; Gallagher, 'Holding a mirror to Scotia's face: Religious anxieties and their capacity to shake a post-unionist Scotland', in, Devine (ed), *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland*; Devine (ed), *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland*; Wilson, *Memoirs: The Making of a Prime Minister 1916-1964*; Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-70 A Personal Record*; Wilson, *Final Term, The Labour Government 1974-1976*; Benn, *The Benn Diaries Selected, Abridged and Introduced by Ruth Winstone*; Benn & Winstone (ed), *The End of an Era, Diaries 1980-90*; Benn & Winstone, (ed), *Free at Last! Diaries 1991-2001*; Duffy, *Growing up Irish in Britain and British in Ireland and in Washington, Moscow, Rome and Sydney*; Toole, *Mrs Bessie Braddock MP*; B. O'Neill, 'Why I won't tick the Irish box', *Spiked*, 17th April, 2001; Irish in Britain Representative Group, *Census 2011 Headlines*, December 2012.

2011 UK census continued to show that the Greater South-East remained the primary destination and even in areas such as Liverpool, where many claim second or third generation identity, could not force its way into the top 20 most populous areas in terms of Irish population.⁵⁵ The information produced by Walter is so valuable that it has also produced something of a paradox; at times it weakens claims of those expecting to find a universal Irish community. Her data shows that the experience of Diaspora is far from universal. It exposes that the Irish in Britain, despite the lingering 'othering' by sections of British society, are a contiguous population and do not conform to the classic definition of Diaspora as exile.

Although Northern Ireland has not been ignored by the authors above, it has until recently, lacked its own comprehensive inquiry. This gap has been filled by Johanne Devlin Trew and her volume, *Leaving the North Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland 1921-2011*.⁵⁶ This is a combination of both demographic information and individual experiences of emigration. Whilst the statistics provide comparisons with emigrants from the Republic of Ireland, it is the interviews completed by Devlin-Trew that prove the most valuable. These provide clues as to why Tom Paulin and others have found it difficult to locate Northern Unionists in Britain. The interviews by Devlin-Trew uncover the realisation by Northern Unionists that most of the British either regard them as Irish or that their Britishness was rejected as regressive or extremely right-wing.

It would be impossible to study the Irish in Britain without recognising the prolific output of Mary Hickman. Hickman has examined the various definitions of Diaspora, identity, racism, community and welfare. This has meant changing the frame of Irish identity beyond the geographical confines of Ireland. Hickman argues that Irishness should encompass multiple identities, stratified by class, not nationalism or identity. She encourages a wide view of Diaspora to encourage public debate about Diaspora and the construction of national identity.⁵⁷ Exploring the creation of Irish identity in Britain, Hickman argues that the Irish have a distinct but not homogenous identity that was formed against a backdrop of

⁵⁵ Irish in Britain Representation Group, *Top 20 Irish Rankings in Census 2011 Results*, ONS: Constituency results England and Wales, House of Commons Research Paper 13/20 18th March 2013.

⁵⁶ J. Devlin-Trew, *Leaving the North: Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland 1921-2011* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

⁵⁷ M. Hickman, 'Locating the Irish Diaspora', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, Vol.11.2, pp. 8-26, 2002.

discrimination and incorporation.⁵⁸ Taking this further, Hickman has also challenged the incorporation of white migrant communities and the myth of a smooth assimilation into British society, paying particular attention to the creation of second-generation identity.⁵⁹ Further research by Hickman has also found that second generation identities also at times have suffered a double rejection declared as inauthentic by both Britain and Ireland.⁶⁰ This research into second-generation identity also reveals some of the tensions that surround identity in Britain fuelled by cultural and ethnic guardians who allow little public space for a sensible, frank and open discussion about hybrid identity. This has resulted in the creation of oppositional identities which have little or no foundation. These cultural and ethnic gatekeepers have contributed to increasing public fears surrounding immigration and social cohesion. They fail to recognise that diversity strengthens social cohesion, it does not diminish it.

Whilst most of these volumes profess to canvass the Irish in Britain, the majority concentrate their efforts of the Irish in England. One way to understand this is to take a demographic approach to the Irish in Britain. As will be shown in the following chapter, Scotland does not have its first-generation Irish population refreshed; the Irish follow the British economy as it becomes concentrated in the Greater South-East. This has resulted in few English historians attempting to engage with the Irish in Scotland beyond the geographical confines of Glasgow. In common with the Irish in the rest of the UK, Bruce argues that they shifted their political interests from Home Rule and Independence to local politics during the inter-war years.⁶¹ Gallagher asserts that the economic downturn resulted in some Catholics in Scotland rejecting identification with Scotland or Britain and sought to embrace the imagery of the Irish rebel.⁶² What Bruce, Devine and Gallagher show is that in

⁵⁸ M. Hickman, 'Differences, Boundaries, Community: The Irish in Britain', *Advances in Art, Urban Futures*, Vol. 2, 2002.

⁵⁹ M. Hickman, 'Census Ethnic Categories and Second Generation Identities: A Study of the Irish in England and Wales', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.37, No.1, January 2011, pp. 79-97.

⁶⁰ M. Hickman, S. Morgan, B. Walter, & J. Bradley, 'The limitations of whiteness and the boundaries of Englishness: Second-generation Irish identifications and positioning in multi-ethnic Britain', *Ethnicities*, Vol.5, No.2, 2005, pp.160-182.

⁶¹ S. Bruce, T. Glendinning, I. Paterson & M. Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p.36.

⁶² Gallagher, 'Holding a mirror to Scotia's face: Religious anxieties and their capacity to shake a post-unionist Scotland', in, Devine (ed), *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland*, p.42.

Scotland, the type of Diasporic politics that Lord Dubs was looking for, as in England, has very little traction beyond the urban limits of Glasgow.⁶³

For those attempting to locate a Diasporic politics of exile in Britain the violence that erupted in 1968 provides multiple challenges. *A Troublesome Business* was how Geoffrey Bell chose to describe the history of the Labour Party and the 'Irish Question'.⁶⁴ Written within a few short months following the death of Bobby Sands, Bell's volume in part attempts to answer questions from both the public and the Labour Party about policy and Irish unification. For historians of the Irish in Britain it has been a troublesome business to place the events in Northern Ireland within British historiography. It has been given its own separate history, it has been placed within wider Irish history, investigated by journalists, treated as a political subject, as a study of terrorism and as a rude interruption to British history. Despite the variety of published work concerning Northern Ireland, such as those by McKittrick & McVea, Rose and Bew & Patterson the reaction of the Irish in Britain or attempts to place the 'troubles' within a British context are sporadic.⁶⁵ There is a considerable gap in British literature from the first emergence of Ireland as a political issue in British politics in 1945.

Within Delaney's work *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, in common with Jackson and O'Connor, what is missing is an in-depth investigation into the politics of the Irish in post-war Britain and those that attempted to mobilise them.⁶⁶ Delaney condenses the politics of the Irish in post-war Britain to twenty pages.⁶⁷ This though does not negate the value of this contribution. In common with O'Connor he finds little evidence for political activism focusing on unification. He concludes that class, political divisions and bitterness towards the political regimes that they had left behind in Ireland were all ingredients for this lack of interest. In the same way that previous attempts could not raise the profile of Irish Nationalism, the civil rights campaign and post-1968 Republicanism also failed to create a mass movement. Pride

⁶³ Bruce, Glendinning, Paterson & Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland*; T. Gallagher, 'Holding a mirror to Scotia's face: Religious anxieties and their capacity to shake a post-unionist Scotland', in T.M. Devine (ed), *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland*; T.M. Devine (ed), *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland*.

⁶⁴ G. Bell, *Troublesome Business: The Labour Party and the Irish Question*, (London: Pluto Press, 1982).

⁶⁵ D. McKittrick & D. McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: A History of the Northern Ireland Conflict* (London: Penguin Books, 2001); P. Rose, *How the Troubles Came to Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001); P. Bew & H. Patterson, *The British State and the Ulster Crisis: From Wilson to Thatcher* (London: Verso, 1985).

⁶⁶ Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*; Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*; O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain* (1972).

⁶⁷ E. Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, pp.185-204.

in being members of the Irish nation remained, but there was little affection for the modern Irish state or the new Republicanism emerging from Northern Ireland. Delaney admits that there has been little investigation into the Irish vote in Britain, but what there has been uncovers glimpses of a population that, unlike the Irish in the United States, was being constantly refreshed and thus did not incubate mass feelings of exile. There was no 'English Tammany Hall'.⁶⁸ This absence also exposes further problems in comparing the American experience with the British experience. Tammany Hall was a product of an America that was turning immigrants into Americans, and political parties were using a mix of cultural and class identities to encourage belief in party politics.⁶⁹ It was part of a pioneering narrative of the Irish in America 'getting on', the Irish in Britain were not a pioneering, settler community. Physical and political graft in America brought rewards of money, business contracts and political power. The Irish in Britain did the same, but without the competition with other 'settler' identities. There was also another crucial difference, those attempting to create a political settlement for the post-1922 Irish Free State did not want the 'spoils' system of Tammany politics to develop in the Irish Free State. They wanted to create a stable, European democracy, a deliberative political system based on consensus, not mired in the politics of difference.⁷⁰ In the UK, it was the social reform of Toynbee Hall that would have a far greater impact than any attempt at 'boss politics'. The ideas of moral social reform promoted by Toynbee Hall included an ethical citizenry and a commitment to civic duty that would influence Attlee, Beveridge and RH Tawney.⁷¹

Despite the occasional mention of groups such as the Connolly Association or the Anti-Partition League, any mention of the Irish and Ireland in British post-war politics in the works listed above is sparse. One possible solution to this is via the examination of individual biographies. However, political biographies such as those of Wilson are equally silent when it comes to their Irish constituents.⁷² Even the extensive dairies of Tony Benn show little regard

⁶⁸ Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.194.

⁶⁹ J.J. Connolly, *Elusive Unity Urban Democracy and Machine Politics in Industrialising America* (London: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp.1-27.

⁷⁰ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution, 1926-1936*, pp.129-144.

⁷¹ J. Bew, *Citizen Clem: A Biography of Attlee* (London: Riverrun, 2016), pp.54-55; J. Bew, 'Welfare wrapped in a patriotic flag: The importance of Toynbee Hall', *The Economist*, 4th December 2014.

⁷² H. Wilson, *Memoirs: The Making of a Prime Minister 1916-1964* (London, Weidenfield and Nicolson and Michael Joseph, 1986); H. Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-70, A Personal Record* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974); H. Wilson, *Final Term: The Labour Government 1974-1976* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1979).

for Ireland prior to the 1980/1 Hunger Strikes.⁷³ The exception to this is Paul Rose MP, but even here they soon make way for other issues.⁷⁴ What political biographies do unwittingly reveal is some of the underlying emotion of the debates that were orbiting around Northern Ireland.⁷⁵ In her biography of Bessie Braddock, Millie Toole foreshadows the future direction of politics in Merseyside. She unmasks Braddock's political opponents in Liverpool as the emerging radical left, not an Irish caucus.⁷⁶ Braddock was not the only MP to find minimal interest in Ireland. Sir Patrick Duffy in his memoirs found an Irish population embedded in the British political left and the Labour Party and found little interest in the politics of partition.⁷⁷ The lack of attention given to the Irish in Britain in biographical writing continues. In his comprehensive biography of Clement Attlee, John Bew pays little attention to Attlee's very skilful deliberations over the Ireland Act (1949).⁷⁸ This is doubly surprising given Bew's own background and his recognition of Attlee's adroit handling of both his wartime role and the challenges he faced as a Prime Minister.

In her work, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England*, Moulton argues that the reason why the Irish and Ireland in British politics fail to hold any political saliency can be found during the inter-war years.⁷⁹ Moulton makes a convincing argument that Ireland becomes submerged in British politics for a combination of reasons, many of which are embedded within British political questions, not Irish ones. She develops her ideas further contending that Ireland appears in British politics when economic distribution, social equality and geographical divisions occur, adding to a growing crisis of Britishness. When combined with John Regan's assertion, they create a powerful claim to support the view that the Irish and Ireland in British politics become submerged for reasons that are found in Britain and *Ireland*.⁸⁰

⁷³ T. Benn, *The Benn Diaries Selected, Abridged and Introduced by Ruth Winstone* (London: Arrow Books, 1996); T. Benn & R. Winstone, (ed), *The End of an Era, Diaries 1980-90*, (London: Hutchinson, 1992); T. Benn & R. Winstone, (ed), *Free at Last! Diaries 1991-2001* (London: Arrow Books, 2003).

⁷⁴ P. Rose, *Backbencher's Dilemma* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1981).

⁷⁵ J. Newsinger, 'The truth, the whole truth...: some British political and military memoirs of the troubles', G. Dawson, J. Dover & S. Hopkins, *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain: Impacts, engagements, legacies and memories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); S. Hopkins, 'The memoir writing of the Wilson and Callaghan governments: the Labour Party and constitutional policy in Northern Ireland', in, Dawson, Dover & Hopkins, *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain*.

⁷⁶ M. Toole, *Mrs Bessie Braddock MP* (London: Robert Hale, 1957).

⁷⁷ P. Duffy, *Growing up Irish in Britain and British in Ireland and in Washington, Moscow, Rome and Sydney* (Huddersfield: Jeremy Mills Publishing Limited, 2013).

⁷⁸ Bew, *Citizen Clem*, p.469

⁷⁹ M. Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁸⁰ Author added italics added for emphasis.

The reaction of the British Labour Party during 1945-1951 has been published by Russell Rees.⁸¹ He argues that the Labour Party embarked on a series of missed opportunities to respond to partition and unification. Although Rees provides the reader with a well-researched investigation into the relationships between London, Belfast and Dublin, the conclusion that the Labour Party and the consequences of its actions resulted in a series of missed opportunities must be questioned given the wider international entanglements in the post-war world. This would be the first time that Ireland interrupted British post-war politics. The establishment of The Republic of Ireland would be just one of many occasions that Labour would have to face an unwelcome challenge of creating a coherent policy on Northern Ireland and would have to deal with a wide range of opinions, emotions and ideology from within its ranks. As Aaron Edwards has shown this was complex and often contradictory.⁸² The most recent research on British politics and Ireland has been completed by Laurence Marley.⁸³ Within this collection the most notable contributions are the essays produced by Edwards, Purdie, McNamara and Howe. Stephen Howe, in common with previous investigations, shows that the proliferation of groups on the radical left found that their message was a hard sell to a wider British left.⁸⁴ Despite this attempt to close a significant gap in the published canon, this collection only examines Ireland and the British Labour Party, but it does provide further evidence to show that the belief of the electoral power of the Irish in Britain has been consistently and constantly exaggerated.

Placing the 'troubles' in a British context and examinations of the reaction to them in Britain is slowly beginning to emerge. Leading this trend is the collection of essays produced by Dawson, Dover and Hopkins. Within this it those by Rossiter providing an analysis of British and Irish feminist views, Lelourec and her exploration of the consequences of the Warrington bomb and Combe's essay on the relationship between Jo Berry and Patrick McGee that stand out.⁸⁵ Despite this, there are weaknesses; the section on anti-state activism is a little

⁸¹ R. Rees, *Labour and the Northern Ireland Problem 1945-1951: a missed opportunity* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009).

⁸² A. Edwards, 'Social Democracy and Partition: 'The British Labour Party Northern Ireland, 1951-1964'', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.42, No.4, pp.595-612, October 2007; A. Edwards, *History of the Northern Ireland Labour Party: Democratic Socialism and Sectarianism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

⁸³ L. Marley, (ed), *The British Labour Party and Twentieth-Century Ireland, The Cause of Ireland, The Cause of Labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

⁸⁴ S. Howe, 'Some intellectual origins of the Labour left's thought about Ireland, c.1979-1997', in, L. Marley (ed), *The British Labour Party and Twentieth-Century Ireland*.

⁸⁵ Dawson, Dover & Hopkins, *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain*.

thin and most of the volume is focused on events on London. However, some allowance can be made for this as London was the centre of protest activity and any attempt to include a wide-range of subject matter will result in omissions.

The historiography and literature of the Irish in Britain, although growing, still contains gaps that ensures many of the myths surrounding the politics of the Irish in Britain and their attempts to raise the saliency of Ireland in British politics survive. Whilst authors such as Delaney have not entirely ignored the politics of the Irish in Britain, they have been relegated to a few sentences. This must be regarded as why Lord Dubs felt in necessary to ask his question and why this thesis needs to be completed.

(1.2) Notions of difference, Diaspora, Migration and Identity

Since 1945 migration has become a political issue of global importance. Most arguments about immigration are communal in their nature and construction. Michael Walzer regarded the urge to limit immigration as the idea, or to need to regulate group membership, is at the very centre of how we imagine belonging to a community of shared character.⁸⁶ This shared character binds the community together, ensuring its continuation. Those who argue against immigration contend that it places the continuity of character and the prosperity of the community under threat.⁸⁷ This places a moral value on patriotism and belonging to a community. It also provides foundations for those that argue we have no moral obligation for those outside the group or community. Further, it reveals the political tensions that arise over not just the inequality of nations, but inequality within communities.⁸⁸ The consequence of this is that ideas of difference or separation have increased in political saliency and controversy. In the United Kingdom immigrants were othered by colour, gender, religion and culture. It was an experience of racism, discrimination and exclusion. The Irish were not immune from this. Those groups that experienced this 'othering', through considerable efforts shifted the debate about identity and turned those negatives ascribed to them into positives. This shows that experiences of Diaspora, Migration and Identity are dynamic and changing. The consequences of this have become increasingly studied and examined, yet

⁸⁶ M. Sandel, *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), pp. 208-43.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

authors continue to ignore the need to provide the reader with an understanding and definition of the processes being described. In *The Vanishing Irish* there is no attempt to define Diaspora.⁸⁹ More recently volumes by Catherine Dunne, Seán Sorohan, Miki Garcia and Andy Beilenberg all fail to engage with the theory and definition of Diaspora, migration and identity.⁹⁰ Even in her most recent volumes, Clair Wills, chooses to side-step issues of definition by concentrating on the first-generation experience of migration, but does acknowledge the need for definition and understanding of theoretical concepts.⁹¹

Diaspora is a word that is often used but many make no attempt to define it. The term itself has become a populist meme, often used without care or understanding to describe any group defined by its or other notions of nationality that have moved away from their homeland. It offers a multi-generational identity that goes beyond the act of migration itself. The idea of Diaspora presents older definitions of the ethno-centred state, contained within fixed borders, with some awkward questions. This potentially creates a clash between receiving populations and migrant populations. The intrinsic identity of both is challenged as the two meet and questions of hybrid identities emerge. This can provide foundations for cultural gatekeepers to emerge as self-imposed guardians of identity and history. Before the idea of being part of a Diaspora was 'cherished', the narrative of migration and history as exile and shame was treasured by these self-imposed guardians. The most prominent of the guardians of the 'Irish Diaspora' have emerged from North America. As shown by Patrick O'Sullivan, themes of exile become prominent in North-American scholarship because it fits with the 'pioneering' motif within American history and with the narrative promoted by clerics and bourgeois nationalists in Ireland.⁹² This distinctly North-American approach to Diaspora has been further exposed by Akenson who has shown that North-American writing on Diaspora was used to promote an authentic view of migration that was acceptable to a North American audience and which dovetailed into conservative Irish-American narratives and excluded any mention of Protestant migration.⁹³

⁸⁹ O'Brien, (ed), *The Vanishing Irish*.

⁹⁰ C. Dunne, *An unconsidered people: the Irish in London* (Dublin: New Ireland, 2003); S. Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012); M. Garcia, *Rebuilding London Irish Migrants in Post-War London* (Dublin: The History Press, 2015); Beilenberg (ed), *The Irish Diaspora*.

⁹¹ Wills, *The Best are Leaving*, pp.17-19.

⁹² P. O'Sullivan, *The Irish World Wide, History Heritage, Identity Volume Two*, pp. 8-9.

⁹³ D. Akenson, 'Ever more Diaspora: Advances and Alarums', in, C. Cairns, (ed), *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies, Nations, Diasporas and Identities*, Volume 4, Issue 1, Autumn 2010, p.7.

Although Diaspora has somewhat overtaken migration in popular usage, migration, its place in Irish historiography and its definition must not be overlooked. Diaspora and Migration are not the same. Georg Ernst Ravenstein was a geographer and cartographer and his work provides the foundation for the modern study of migration.⁹⁴ As immigration gained political saliency during the second half of the 20th Century, researchers returned to Ravenstein as a starting point. The most important of these is Stouffer's 1940 paper, *Intervening Opportunities: A Theory relating Mobility and Distance*.⁹⁵ Within this he introduces the concept of intervening opportunities. It is Stouffer's conclusion that as the distance between origin and destination increases, the greater the opportunity becomes for migrants to settle in a location in-between their origin and intended destination. This means the chances of the migrant finding work, housing and social opportunities which satisfy their own reasons for migrating, in locations other than their intended destination, becomes greater the further they travel. In the previous century, an Irish migrant heading towards North America via Liverpool may have found reasons to stay in Liverpool. After the Second World War, the decline in Liverpool's fortunes reduced these opportunities and few migrants viewed Liverpool as anything other than a port of entry. In post-war Britain, Liverpool did not have its Irish populations refreshed or regenerated. In a city in decline, Irish Nationalism was not an issue; it was economic regeneration and the rejection of predatory capitalism that became the chief political issues in Liverpool. This, in combination with the destruction and redevelopment of old areas such as Scotland Road, reduced Ireland and the Irish in Liverpool to a lingering memory, only retained by a few determined individuals wanting to make sure this memory is not forgotten, even if much of this memory is a myth.

Everett S. Lee published his *Theory of Migration* in 1966.⁹⁶ Lee wanted to return to the work of Ravenstein and to investigate migration in the 20th Century. Lee concludes that there are four factors behind the decision to migrate. These four factors are the origin of any potential migrant, the potential destination, intervening obstacles to migration and the personal factors unique to each migrant. Superficially Lee's theory appears to conform to a classic push-pull model of migration. However, it is the concept of intervening obstacles that

⁹⁴ E. Baigent, 'Ravenstein, Ernst Georg (1834–1913)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁹⁵ S. Stouffer, 'Intervening Opportunities: A Theory relating Mobility and Distance', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.5, No.6, December 1940, pp. 845-867.

⁹⁶ E. Lee, 'A Theory of Migration', *Demography*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1966, pp. 47-57.

are the crucial and significant element within Lee's model. Within this thesis it will be Lee's definition of migration that will be used throughout. Lee concludes that 'Migration is defined broadly as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence. No restriction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act, and no distinction is made between internal and external migration'.⁹⁷

The arguments concerning Irish history, Diaspora and migration have been marked by what Donald Akenson has termed 'hyper-emotionalism'.⁹⁸ In 1994, MacLaughlin added his contribution to the argument. He argued that revisionism not only devalued Irish nationalism, it also 'de-nationalised' emigration and that they had replaced it with a simple cost-benefit analysis.⁹⁹ MacLaughlin's utilitarian logic is flawed as it does not consider any individual moral considerations. Taking his argument further he attacked the revisionists for replacing the nationalist ethos with volunteerism and opportunism.¹⁰⁰ This exposes the final weakness in his argument as MacLaughlin fails to recognise that volunteerism and opportunism have long been motives within Irish emigration.

This new wave of hyper-emotionalism and a new, popular internationalisation of Irishness emerged together. Roy Foster in reaction to this concluded that 'Cultural self-confidence can exist without being yoked to a determinist and ideologically redundant notion of unilaterally-declared nation-statehood; political and cultural credentials have for too long been identified together'.¹⁰¹ This interaction with the global and the move away from older forms of isolationist readings of Irish history has been a significant shift reflecting Ireland's and Irish society's engagement with global and transnational issues. Current issues surrounding themes of globalism and social justice have emboldened those who use history as a tool to read backwards and place modern ideals into historical situations which produces results that ignore the nuances and complexity of both Diaspora and history.

Whilst emigration has had a profound impact on Ireland, immigration has been a key element within the post-war crisis of Britishness. Parekh has recognised this has been the

⁹⁷ Lee, 'A Theory of Migration', pp. 47-57.

⁹⁸ Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*, p.11.

⁹⁹ J. MacLaughlin, *Historical and Recent Irish Emigration, A critique of core-periphery and behaviour models* (London: University of North London Press, 1994), p.9.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ R. Kearney, 'The Fifth Province: Between the Global and the Local', in, R. Kearney (ed), *Migrations, The Irish at Home & Abroad* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1990), p.114.

result of pressures from above and below which raise questions not only about the nature of the nation state but also its use as aggregate for social cohesion.¹⁰² The crisis has exacerbated questions of national identity for the English, which, as Husband argues, floats somewhere imprecisely between Englishness and the Britishness of state with its economic and political power in England.¹⁰³ The increasing focus of the economic and political power in London became so dominant that it fractured the previous cohabitation of English, Scottish and Welsh identity within Britishness.¹⁰⁴ This argument for the fracturing of British constitutional settlement potentially offers support for Lord Dubs and his quest to find an Irish political Diaspora in Britain. If the debate about English dominance is accepted, then it should create the conditions for the politics of community activism to emerge and the reawakening of national distinctiveness. Belonging to a Diaspora potentially becomes a tool for escape to be used by those rejecting the form of national identity being promoted by the incumbent government.

However, the previously published literature concerning the Irish in Britain largely accepts the view that few are interested in becoming part of a political Diaspora. An examination of political participation, community and identity provides one route to a possible answer for this. Ekman & Amna and Van Deth, Montero, & Westholm have shown the complexity of the stages between political consumption and activism and protest activity.¹⁰⁵ While transforming latent interest into true participation is difficult, the claiming of a group bonded by a single identity is equally difficult. Although national identity has the potential power to be an organising force and lens to focus self-assertion, as Alberto Meluccci has set out, ethnic and national identities are not reducible to a single form.¹⁰⁶ This is further

¹⁰² P. Bhikhu, *A New Politics of Identity, Political Principles for and Interdependent World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p.1.

¹⁰³ R. Miles, 'Racism and nationalism in Britain', in C. Husband (ed), *Race in Britain: Continuity and Change* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), p.287.

¹⁰⁴ J. Coakley, B. Laffan & J. Todd (ed), *Renovation or revolution, New territorial politics in Ireland and the United Kingdom* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), p.12.

¹⁰⁵ J. Ekman & E. Amna, 'Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards a new Typology', *Human Affairs*, 22, 283-300, 2012; J. Van Deth, J. Montero & A. Westholm (eds) *Citizenship and Involvement in European Democracies: A comparative analysis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁰⁶ P. Schlesinger, 'Europeanness: A New Cultural Battlefield', in J. Hutchinson & A. Smith, (eds), *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.317.

reinforced by Anderson who concludes that communities are not distinguished by 'their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined'.¹⁰⁷

The literature shows that it is almost impossible to reduce the Irish in Britain to a single typology or to find a unified definition of the concept of identity. The Cartesian concept of a universal community has been correctly criticised for failing to recognise that identities are never complete and that it offers little beyond an idealized image of the universal subject. In modern society individuals have progressively become more and more aware of identity beyond the classic conceptions of nation and class and have increasingly reflected upon the nature of their multiple identities.¹⁰⁸ The consequence of this reflection is that identity is temporal and is constantly changing. To be Irish in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s would be a very different experience to that of the 1960s and 1970s. The ability to reflect on individual identity as new experience is gained limits the attraction of the idealized or immutable nation. The process of looking back at the nation for a point of origin brings with it more than the rediscovery of the past, it discovers the new. The result of this is that it reinforces the conclusion that identity is never complete and, as Hall concludes, it does not 'proceed in a straight, unbroken line, from some fixed point of origin'.¹⁰⁹ Hall's conclusion is equally applicable to the history of the Irish in Britain; there is no one fixed line joining 1798, 1803, 1845, 1916 and 1968. Identity is created and shaped by interaction and reflection. This search and looking back also provides a route to Hall's second theory of identity that there is something essential, authentic and intrinsic. These are 'given' before any further historical transformation of identity takes place. It is to the intrinsic and authentic that Dubs is making his appeal.

This ideology of identity politics is a recall to older traditions and communities. By calling to these old cultural ideals, structures and communities that political actors hope to use to mobilise support to challenge the legitimising identities created by the state, to meet the demands of 'the people'. This has resulted in a battle between those defending the universal and those that argue that identity politics divide society. Some, such as Taylor, argue that the failure to recognise a group's or a person's identity is a form of oppression. At

¹⁰⁷ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p.6.

¹⁰⁸ S. Loyal, *The Sociology of Anthony Giddens* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), pp. 129-145.

¹⁰⁹ S. Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in J. Rutherford, (ed), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p.226.

the centre of Taylor's thesis is that recognition provides dignity and that this is central to modern democracy. The argument against this is that the recognition of identity only provides cultural change and does not provide economic redistribution. It may provide cultural recognition and justice, but it cannot provide economic parity. Taylor contends that the recognition of a group's identity is important and especially for the state if the laws and justice dispensed by the state are to be seen as legitimate.¹¹⁰

Other arguments, such as those presented by Barry, posit that culture or religion may prevent individuals from grasping opportunities when they are presented. This though presumes that the state ensures such opportunities are available in the first place. The problem for the state is to ensure that it can create enough comparable opportunities for all.¹¹¹ When these opportunities are felt or seen to be denied, political actors seek to mobilise their supporters to gain access to these opportunities.

Despite the increasing numbers of publications examining the Irish in Britain, their reaction to Ireland and partition in British politics remains under-researched. That which has been published rarely strays out the six-counties of Northern Ireland. There is little reflection or attempt to place it within the modernism of the Wilson years or the drive by the Conservatives under Thatcher to create the British nation-state as the moral democracy of their imaginations. Part of the reason for this has been exposed by Boyce who concluded that British politicians viewed Northern Ireland as a 'political museum'. He was correct, but this was not limited to politicians, with journalists and wider British society still regarding Ireland and the Irish in Britain as museum exhibits.¹¹² This willingness to regard Ireland as a museum exhibit is further exposed by Lord Dubs who felt it necessary to ask why the Irish in Britain had so little political 'clout'.¹¹³ Lord Dubs' question assumes a shared experience of exile and belonging to a political Diaspora which does not exist. The myths that surround the Irish population in Britain have deep roots, but they are now being increasingly questioned. The movement of people from Ireland to Britain is a transfer of modern, European civic societies, not the exiling of a politically-oppressed population. As argued by Regan, it is the monotony

¹¹⁰ C. Taylor, *The Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹¹¹ B. Barry, 'The Limits of Cultural Politics', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.24, Issue 03, July 1998, pp.307-319; C. Taylor, *The Politics of Recognition*, 1992.

¹¹² D.G. Boyce, *The Irish Question & British Politics 1868-1986* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990), p.16.

¹¹³ M. Hennessy, 'Call for Irish in Britain to exert more political power', *The Irish Times*, 22nd February 2010.

of Irish politics that is the most striking facet of post-1922 Free-State politics.¹¹⁴ This exposes uncomfortable questions for those on the far-left and their narratives of the rhetoric of revolution and anti-imperialism. The Irish in Britain (in legislative terms) are not an excluded or oppressed population. When exclusion was experienced it would be for reasons of class, economic status, health or gender. However, whilst the British Government may have removed legislative barriers to the Irish becoming part of the body-politic, wider British society was not always so welcoming. The Irish in Britain would still experience discrimination and prejudice that ranged from crude stereotyping to being regarded as part of dangerous, suspect community. This continues to linger both within and outside Westminster. This prejudice and sense of superiority is now becoming increasing vocal once again to due to Brexit.

The literature of the Irish in Britain displays that emigration, immigration and Diaspora present the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom with the same problem. Diaspora allows for the temporal transmission of identity and challenges the authority of the state as the sole arbiter of legitimising identity. The study of Diaspora also challenges historical orthodoxy, uncovering those portions of history that cultural guardians find uncomfortable. In Ireland the idea that emigration is anything other than shameful or results in exile, is met with disbelief or controversy, despite the best efforts authors such as Akenson or Wills.¹¹⁵ In the United Kingdom, immigration, Diaspora and the idea of plural identities remove the veil of the homogenous nation-state. Those who wish to protect this mythical and nostalgic Britishness continue to blame immigration for deeper problems with British society.

In Ireland the debates about Diaspora and migration resulted in the shift from debating not just the nature of Ireland, or who was from Ireland, but to whom was 'of Ireland'. The uncomfortable truth for many is that history does not provide a way to 'fix' or 'freeze' the nation, even though many still try use to history as tool to achieve this goal. Diaspora has also challenged those who essentialise the nation-state. How we imagine the nation and define Diaspora constantly evolves, both are regularly remade. This renovation provides today's battleground between those who want to ascribe that which they view as intrinsic and those that want to retain choice over their identity. The literature of the Irish in Britain reveals a

¹¹⁴ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution*, p.383.

¹¹⁵ Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*; Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*.

dynamic population, a contiguous Diaspora, which rejected the political, emotional and rhetorical claims to their loyalty. The debate surrounding Diaspora is summed up by Akenson's own writing which has seen him transform Diaspora from a Fabergé Egg to a hand grenade.¹¹⁶ For those who value the idea of the elemental nation this transformation is correct; however, his earlier description of the Irish Diaspora also remains true, especially when it is applied to the Irish in Britain; they remain 'a marvellously complex phenomenon'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*, p.3; D Akenson, 'Is 'Diaspora' a Live Hand Grenade?' in, A. Chowdhury & D. Akenson, *Between Dispersion and Belonging: Global Approaches to Diaspora in Practice* (Belfast: Queen's University Press, 2016), pp. 3-28.

¹¹⁷ Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*, p.3.

Chapter Two

From Muckshifters to Punks, the Irish in Post-War Britain

*Dan was beginning to understand. To pass through this sort of set-up peacefully it was imperative to learn the rules and, having learned them, to abide by them.*¹

*Eddie tried to feel the way an emigrant was supposed to feel. Sentimental songs and snatches of poetry drifted liked remembered smells into his consciousness and then eluded him.*²

Dan and Eddie are fictional migrants living in London separated by 50 years. After arriving, both begin learning the 'rules', understanding what it meant to be an Irish migrant in England. Dan was learning the unwritten laws of the building sites, pubs and dancehalls inhabited by navvies and muckshifters. Eddie was a punk and wanted to find his place in his vision of Irish history linking him with previous generations. Ultimately, he finds himself trapped between the Ireland imaged by Yeats and his own experience of punk rock, squatting, drugs and unemployment. The Ireland of Yeats and the nostalgia of the pubs and dancehalls were, for Eddie, things that others told him were part of him, however for Eddie, these were not actually the parts that mattered. Eddie's exile would not be physical but an imaginary one between tradition and modernity.

These are fictional expressions of the experience of migration to London. Although works of fiction, they act as a reminder that identity is not something that can be fixed, that it is never complete and constantly changes. In the case of Eddie, they also expose something else: people are constantly told by others what they should be and pay little attention to who those people are or what they want. Dan Murray and Eddie Virago represent 50 years of transition and change. They emblemize figures of both continuity and change.

The economic, social and cultural transformation experienced by the Irish in Britain during this period became a constant and continuing interest of Roy Hattersley MP. He was acutely aware of the socio-economic and ethnic mix of his Sparkbrook constituency and would remain an interested observer of those who arrived from Ireland. Contrary to crude popular stereotypes, the local police informed Hattersley that the Irish were no more or no less likely

¹ J. Kean, *The Contractors* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1993), p.50.

² J. O'Connor, *Cowboys & Indians* (London: Flamingo, 1992), p.6.

to be involved in criminal activity and that in one part of Sparkbrook was uniformly law abiding. In 1966 in Birmingham, 74% of crime was committed by the white, UK-born population. The Irish accounted for 20%. When it came to minor offences 36% of crime was associated with the Irish. Although the Irish were over-represented, it was the older migrants, those that still worked on building sites and in manual trades that dominated these figures.³ In Birmingham, it was not young migrants becoming involved in crime, they were too busy 'getting on'. Despite the violence in Northern Ireland, the local police rugby team would tour Ireland and hope to return with Irish recruits. Crucially Hattersley dismisses the idea of local Tammany Hall politics in Britain. He recognised that in areas such as Liverpool a Catholic vote lingered on, but this was not a vote that was intimately linked with Irish Nationalism. However, there is an important point to recognise about Hattersley's comments regarding Tammany Hall. The 'Boss Politics' of the United States did not emerge in Britain, but the Irish in Britain were involved in British politics from the local to the national. As in the United States, the Irish in Britain were also 'getting on' with politics, but they did it via orthodox British political organisation, not by creating political power based on ethnicity. He did not limit his investigations to Sparkbrook and Birmingham. In Yorkshire, he was told that when one protesting student burst into a local Irish centre shouting 'Free Ireland from the British Yoke', the response of the membership was 'Dear me, what is this country coming to'.⁴

Despite literature such as *The Contractors* and *Cowboys and Indians*, and the interest shown by individuals such as Roy Hattersley, it remains convenient and politically expedient for politicians to view populations as monolithic and fixed, protective of national identity. Groups and politicians make claims of loyalty from the 'nation' for several reasons such as social cohesion or political advantage. It remains difficult for both researchers and politicians to resist the gravitational pull of monolithic classification.

Although this research is not primarily a demographic or sociological examination of the Irish in post-war Britain, it is to avoid the dangers of monolithic categorisation that any study should attempt to deconstruct any group and recognise the diverse character of any population. Despite the previously completed literature, it is important to avoid the pitfalls of monolithic classification. This chapter will examine where the Irish in Britain are coming

³ C. Wills, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain*, pp.121-122.

⁴ R. Hattersley, 'The Irish: moving up the social pyramid', *The Times*, 16th February 1971.

from, where they are going to and systems of social and cultural community brokerage they create and use whilst living in Britain.

(2.1) Finding the Irish in Britain - Populace and Residence

Before examining Irish settlement in post-war Britain, it is necessary to provide a brief examination of Irish population patterns prior to 1945. The information in the table below, collated by Bronwen Walter, shows the Irish population had been increasing during the 19th Century, reached its peak in 1971 and then began to decline.⁵

Total Numbers of Irish-born in England/Wales and Scotland			
Year	Total	England/Wales	Scotland
1821	182000		
1831	290000		
1841	415725	289404	126321
1851	726172	519959	207367
1861	805700	601634	204000
1871	774300	566540	207770
1881	781119	562374	218745
1891	653122	458315	194064
1901	631565	426565	205000
1911	550040	375325	174715
1921	523767	364747	159020
1931	505385	381089	124296
1941	ni	ni	ni
1951	716932	627021	89007
1961	870445	870445	80533
1971	957830	891670	66155
1981	850395	789426	60971
1991	837464	788280	49184

In the middle of the 19th Century the majority of the Irish arriving in Britain could be found in the industrial centres of the North of England and in Scotland. Many of those who arrived in Liverpool had the intention of moving onwards to North America, however a

⁵ B. Walter, *A Study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad* (Cambridge: Anglia Polytechnic University, 2002).

combination of intervening opportunities or unsurmountable financial barriers resulted in many remaining in Liverpool.⁶ What is immediately striking from these figures is that although throughout the 19th Century the economic pull of England remained strong, particularly the North-West, in contrast, by 1911 the first-generation Irish population of Scotland began to go into rapid and continuous decline. Another important point to recognise (although not instantly recognisable from census records) is that the United Kingdom replaced the United States of America as the primary destination for Irish migrants during the post-1945 period.⁷ A combination of both increasing administrative controls and economics made the United States far less attractive to potential migrants.

From the beginning of the 20th Century significant geo-economic changes were taking place in Britain. The older Victorian industrial centres began experience sustained economic decline. In 1913 British manufacturing had a 14.3% share of global manufacturing output, by 1938 this had fallen to 9.2%, some considerable distance behind the United States with 32.2%.⁸ These changes had consequences for the Irish arriving in the immediate post-war period. They followed the British economy as it transferred its powerbase from the North to the West-Midlands and the South-East.⁹ Whilst the Greater South-East became increasingly prosperous, for others economic decline was brutal. Nowhere was this more so than Liverpool, which was becoming increasingly enfeebled, dwindling from the second city of empire, which would ultimately result in 2011 being placed in within the 20% worst performing UK cities.¹⁰ The centre of the city was also suffering from overcrowding and old communities were broken up and dispersed to suburbs and new towns. Liverpool would not be replenished with a new Irish population and it was already losing its right to claim to be

⁶ J.A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp.9-16.

⁷ E. Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); M. Hickman, 'Locating the Irish Diaspora', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, Vol.11.2, pp. 8-26, 2002; M. Hickman, 'Differences, Boundaries, Community: The Irish in Britain', *Advances in Art, Urban Futures*, Vol. 2, 2002; M. Hickman, 'Census Ethnic Categories and Second-Generation Identities: A Study of the Irish in England and Wales', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.37, No.1, January 2011; Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*; B. Walter, 'From a flood to a trickle: Irish Migration to Britain 1987-2006', *Irish Geography*, 41:2, 2008, pp.181-194; National Economic and Social Council, *The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration* (Dublin: The National Economic and Social Council, 1991).

⁸ A. Marwick, *A History of the Modern British Isles 1914-1919 Circumstances, Events and Outcomes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.62.

⁹ Walter, *A study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad*.

¹⁰ N. Clayton & R. Mandir, *Cities Outlook 1901* (London: Centre for Cities, 2012).

the Irish capital of Britain, a title that could now be rightfully claimed by London.¹¹ Liverpool simply could not compete with the shifting patterns of the UK economy.

The post-war arrivals followed the economy. Most of those arriving in Britain were from rural Ireland as shown by Delaney and his examination of travel permits revealed that Donegal, Mayo, Sligo and Wicklow all issued significant numbers of permits during 1940-1945.¹² The Irish began to concentrate in London and the South East in increasing numbers and in areas such as Coventry. Coventry not only had an increasing economic pull, but Irish citizens were actively directed to the West-Midlands by the British Government. Employment was guaranteed before any migrant left Ireland.¹³ Between 1940 and 1960 the population of Coventry grew by 31%. In 1951 the Irish represented 3% of the population of Coventry and had grown to 5% by 1961.¹⁴ This was mirrored in Birmingham, which in 1931 had an Irish population of 0.65%; it would peak in 1971 with 5.31%.¹⁵

General Register Office, London, Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Constituency Tables, 1969

Constituency	Total Persons (By Household)	NI Born	ROI Born	NI %	ROI %	All Ireland	All Ireland %
Willesden East	7,822	63	1073	0.81%	13.72%	1136	14.52%
Hammersmith North	7219	58	727	0.80%	10.07%	785	10.87%
Manchester Ardwick	6953	89	610	1.28%	8.77%	699	10.05%
Willesden West	8290	46	780	0.55%	9.41%	826	9.96%
Kensington North	6820	74	583	1.09%	8.55%	657	9.63%
Islington North	7426	62	640	0.83%	8.62%	702	9.45%
Paddington North	5302	37	454	0.70%	8.56%	491	9.26%
Glasgow Gorbals	4556	73	346	1.60%	7.59%	419	9.20%
Barons Court	6593	63	530	0.96%	8.04%	593	8.99%
Birmingham Sparkbrook	6870	85	510	1.24%	7.42%	595	8.66%

¹¹ J. Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse, The History of the Liverpool-Irish 1800-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p.320.

¹² E. Delaney, *Demography, State and Society Irish Migration to Britain 1919-1971* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp.131-161.

¹³ Delaney, *Demography, State and Society Irish Migration to Britain 1919-1971*, p.145.

¹⁴ H. Ewart, 'Coventry Irish': Community, Class, Culture and Narrative in the Formation of Migrant Identity', *Midland History*, Vol. 36 No.2 Autumn, 2011, pp. 225-44.

¹⁵ J. Moran, *Irish Birmingham* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p.238.

After meeting the immediate post-war needs of the British economy, during the following decades Britain remained the primary destination for Irish migrants. Levels for the first-generation Irish population (32 County), of Britain reached approximately 957,830 by 1971.¹⁶ From within this, the British Census showed that approximately 709, 235 were from the Republic of Ireland.¹⁷ This population contained a mix of occupational classes. Most male migrants remained employed in construction or as labourers, but those employed in these occupations had reduced to 25.5% in 1971, down from 33.9% in 1951. The number of male migrants involved in engineering and metal working had increased from 12.4% in 1951 to 18.1% in 1971.¹⁸ The percentage of women outnumbered the number of men within the professions by a considerable distance, but those women in personal services still outnumbered those in other occupations with a total of 33.5%. The numbers of women employed in clerical occupations increased by a considerable margin from 8% in 1951 to 17.7% in 1971.¹⁹

The gravitational pull of London was not diminished.²⁰ The 1966 census showed that only one constituency outside of London and the Greater South-East appeared in top-ten and that was Manchester Ardwick.²¹ Glasgow Gorbals is an anomaly due to the decline in the population of Glasgow and would be abolished in 1974.²² The only constituencies that contained an all-Ireland population greater than 5% outside the Midlands and Greater South-East were Manchester Exchange (6.55%), Manchester Moss Side (8.08%), Glasgow Gorbals (9.2%) and Manchester Ardwick (10.05%). The constituency within the Merseyside area with the highest population was Birkenhead with 2.57%, in terms of population percentage this placed it 116th. The all-Ireland percentage of Harold Wilson's own Huyton constituency was 1.14%, which ranked it 352nd. Constituencies such as West Dorset, West Flint and Conway all

¹⁶ Walter, *A Study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad*, pp.3-49; Akenson, (ed), *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer* (Belfast: The Institute of Irish Studies, QUB, 1996), p.198.

¹⁷ M. Rendall and J. Salt, 'The foreign-born population', *Focus on People and Migration* (Office for National Statistics, 2005), p.134.

¹⁸ Walter, *A Study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad*, pp.3-49.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Delaney, *Demography, State and Society Irish Migration to Britain 1919-1971*, p.264.

²¹ *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Constituency Tables* (London: General Register Office, 1969).

²² *Second Periodical Report of the Boundary Commission for Scotland* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1969).

had greater proportion first-generation Irish populations than Huyton.²³ The Irish were continuing to follow the British economy as it became increasingly concentrated in the Greater South-East. This trend was confirmed by figures collated for the 1971 census. The Irish-born population of the South-East was 359,250, comprehensively outnumbering those for the next most populous area the North-West with 95, 830.²⁴ The Irish also continued to turn away from Scotland; the first-generation population of Scotland had decreased from 32.5% in 1901 to less than 7% in 1971.²⁵ As with the 1966 figures, only the Birmingham, Coventry and Manchester Irish populations interrupt a table dominated by the Greater South-East. Although the Fishguard and Goodwick Urban District also appears, this is due to its very small overall population providing an anomalous figure in terms of its ranking and first-generation Irish population. As with the 1966 figures the area on Merseyside with the highest first-born Irish generation was Birkenhead with 1.49% which placed it 113th.²⁶

The first-generation Irish-born population reached its peak in 1971. In the following years it began to decline. The problems faced by the British economy had serious consequences for the Irish in Britain and had a disproportionate effect on the Irish population in Britain. During 1971-77 Irish-born male employment in Britain fell by approximately 25%; the employment of Irish born women fell by 17%.²⁷ This is in comparison with native male employment that fell by 4% and the total female employment grew by 7%.²⁸

However, this reduction in levels of employment was not entirely a consequence of the downturn in the British economy, with some due to return migration. The closeness of Britain not only encouraged the regular replenishment of the Irish population in Britain, but also facilitated a quick return. By 1971 there was an improvement in the Irish economy and increased employment opportunities. In rural areas, new industrialisation offered employment that had previously been unavailable. In Sligo 21% of the employees of one business had experience of working in Britain and in Clare 13% had experience of working in

²³ *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Constituency Tables* (London: General Register Office, 1969).

²⁴ L. Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain Since World War II', in R. Kearney, (ed), *Migrations: The Irish at Home and Abroad* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1990), p.48.

²⁵ Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*, p.199.

²⁶ 1971 *Census*, UK Data Service Census Support.

²⁷ F.X. Kirwin & A.G. Nairn, 'Migrant Employment and the Recession, the Case of the Irish in Britain', *The International Migration Review*, Vol.17, No.4 (Winter, 1983-1984), pp. 672-681.

²⁸ *Ibid*.

Britain.²⁹ In 1975 Dick Foeken examined return (counter-current) migration to the Carrick-Boyle area in the west of Ireland.³⁰ Foeken found that most of the migrants that had returned were from Great Britain, with those who had moved to Dublin or the United States much more likely to remain in those locations. Those that did return were from the lower end of the occupational scale. The remainder who had managed to carve out a successful career were much less likely to return. Most of those that returned were also unmarried. For male returnees, the dominant reasons for return were economic; for female migrants the primary reasons were being unable to adjust to life in Britain or marriage.³¹

Census 1971 (figures supplied by CASWEB, UK Data Service Census Support)

District/Borough	Total Persons Present	ROI Males	ROI Females	Total ROI	% ROI
BRENT L.B.	280660	10442	11319	21761	7.75%
HAMMERSMITH L.B.	187196	6527	6944	13471	7.20%
ISLINGTON L.B.	201875	6173	6412	12585	6.23%
CAMDEN L.B.	206739	5623	6764	12387	5.99%
STRETFORD M.B.	54300	1572	1565	3137	5.78%
WESTMINSTER L.B.	239748	5598	7197	12795	5.34%
EALING L.B.	301111	7052	7490	14542	4.83%
LUTON C.B.	161408	3987	3617	7604	4.71%
ROYAL LEAMINGTON SPA M.B.	45065	1104	1014	2118	4.70%
COVENTRY C.B.	335239	8353	7312	15665	4.67%
KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA L.B.	188226	3558	4883	8441	4.48%
BIRMINGHAM C.B.	1014669	23301	21018	44319	4.37%
MANCHESTER C.B.	543650	11279	11399	22678	4.17%
LAMBETH L.B.	307514	5918	6426	12344	4.01%
HARINGEY L.B.	240075	4271	5142	9413	3.92%
FISHGUARD AND GOODWICK U.D.	4937	97	92	189	3.83%
WANDSWORTH L.B.	302256	4982	5917	10899	3.61%
SOUTHWARK L.B.	262135	4304	4556	8860	3.38%
HACKNEY L.B.	220280	3317	3660	6977	3.17%
HARROW L.B.	203215	2924	3472	6396	3.15%

²⁹ Delaney, *Demography, State and Society Irish Migration to Britain 1919-1971*, p.273.

³⁰ D. Foeken, 'Return Migration to a Marginal Rural Area in North-Western Ireland', *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* Volume: 71 Issue: 2, 1980.

³¹ *Ibid.*

In the preceding years, in the Republic of Ireland, migration had been a leading political concern and efforts were made to reverse population decline. These efforts concentrated on the findings of the Programme for Economic Expansion.³² Politicians in Northern Ireland were much slower to respond. The rapid decline in engineering, linen and shipbuilding were exposing the problems faced by the Northern Ireland economy. By 1965 things were so dire for Harland and Wolff that Price Waterhouse reported that the business was 'unable to put its financial house in order from its own internal resources'. By the 1970s linen mills and factories had reduced in number from 200 to 20.³³

From 1961 to 1971 net migration from Northern Ireland became increasingly significant with approximately 70% of those leaving for Britain. It is estimated from the limited data available that from 1920-1971 in the region of 30% returned.³⁴ These figures, produced by the extensive research of Devlin-Trew, provides the reader with the most comprehensive picture of migration from Northern Ireland. Her investigation shows that males represented 55% of those migrating and that amongst female migrants at least one-third were married. What is notable in the figures for male migrants from Northern Ireland was that during 1961-1963 those with a skill, trade or profession outnumbered the unskilled. Significant numbers of women from Northern Ireland also had a skill, trade or profession, but the largest number by far during 1961-1963 classified themselves as a housewife.³⁵

These figures do not allow a direct like-for-like comparison with those leaving from the Republic of Ireland. Differences in how data has been gathered, question type and sample size all make any sound conclusions impossible. Another factor was the changing nature of in post-war education in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In 1963 only 52% of 15-year-olds and 25% of 17-year-olds were in school and about one-third of all pupils received no secondary education.³⁶ It was not until 1966 when a report by UNESCO showed an unfavourable comparison between Irish schools and other Europe states that education reform in the Republic of Ireland was finally galvanised.³⁷

³² D. Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland* (London: Profile Books, 2005), pp.541-542.

³³ J. Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2005), p.627.

³⁴ J. Devlin-Trew, *Leaving the North: Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland 1921-2011* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp.48-49.

³⁵ Devlin-Trew, *Leaving the North: Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland 1921-2011*, p.50.

³⁶ M. Clarke, 'Educational Reform in the late 1960s: the introduction of comprehensive schools in the Republic of Ireland', *History of Education*, Vol.39, No.3, May 2010, pp.383-399.

³⁷ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p.597.

1971 Census London Population Figures³⁸

Location	All	UK	Ireland	% ROI born
Brent	274950	194465	21761	7.91%
Hammersmith & Fulham	180645	136172	13471	7.46%
Camden	189670	134359	12387	6.53%
Islington	196124	147678	12585	6.42%
Westminster	205142	136595	12795	6.24%
Kensington & Chelsea	169549	110709	8441	4.98%
Ealing	295608	231141	14542	4.92%
Lambeth	299063	235639	12344	4.13%
City of London	3265	2695	133	4.07%
Haringey	234870	176940	9413	4.01%
Wandsworth	293604	238594	10899	3.71%
Southwark	256398	224422	8860	3.46%
Hackney	216539	170799	6977	3.22%
Harrow	199001	176147	6396	3.21%
Barnet	298367	245629	8952	3.00%
Hounslow	202110	173777	5705	2.82%

Despite the events in Northern Ireland and British economic difficulty, by 1981 the United Kingdom retained its primacy as a destination for Irish emigrants. However, it remained a population in decline. The first-born population had been reduced to 850,395 and by 1991 had declined to 837, 464.³⁹ Most of this population continued to concentrate in the South-East where the first-born population in 1991 was 412, 863. The next most populous area was the North-West, but it was some distance behind with total population of 98,011. The South-East had seen a gain of 7% from 1981-91, while the North-West had experienced a decline of 13.9% in the same period. The first-born population of Scotland continued its rapid reduction and experienced a fall of 19.3%.⁴⁰ The Greater-South East had not lost its gravitational pull for Irish migrants.

³⁸ The London Datastore, *1971 Census*, The Greater London Authority, London.

³⁹ Walter, *A Study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad*, pp.3-49.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

1981 figures supplied by CASWEB UK Data Service Census Support

Local Government District	All person's present.	ROI Population	% ROI
BRENT	246716	17878	7.25%
HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM	140900	9590	6.81%
ISLINGTON	154286	10219	6.62%
CAMDEN	156225	9699	6.21%
WESTMINSTER, CITY OF	158383	9445	5.96%
EALING	273340	12418	4.54%
KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA	120057	5235	4.36%
MANCHESTER	432066	18135	4.20%
COVENTRY	306985	12606	4.11%
LUTON	161922	6591	4.07%
HARINGEY	198937	8089	4.07%
LAMBETH	238848	9666	4.05%
BIRMINGHAM	985205	37375	3.79%
SOUTHWARK	206366	7516	3.64%
WANDSWORTH	246443	8835	3.59%

Although the numbers arriving in Britain were falling, emigration remained a political issue in the Republic of Ireland. Unemployment increased from 7.8% in 1979 to 18.2% in 1985.⁴¹ At the same time, in 1985 26% of the Irish population were living below the poverty threshold of 40% of average income as set by the E.U.⁴² Between 1983 and 1988 this resulted in a net outpouring of 130,000. Most of those were making their way to the United Kingdom.⁴³ However increasing numbers were heading towards other destinations; the United States was becoming popular once again and the decreased cost of air travel also opened new routes in Europe.⁴⁴

One of the consequences of this increase was an investigation by The National Economic and Social Council on the Economic and Social Implications of Emigration.⁴⁵ Amongst the findings of the report was that, although the primary motivation for leaving was

⁴¹ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p.670.

⁴² Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, pp.670-671.

⁴³ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p.672.

⁴⁴ B. Walter, 'From a flood to a trickle: Irish Migration to Britain 1987-2006', *Irish Geography*, 41:2, 2008, pp.181-194; National Economic and Social Council, *The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration* (Dublin: The National Economic and Social Council, 1991).

⁴⁵ National Economic and Social Council, *The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration*, 1991.

the economy, it was not necessarily the lack of a job that pushed individuals into migrating. Some were leaving because of the differential in earnings between the U.K and Ireland.⁴⁶ The report analysed figures from the British Labour Force Survey for 1986, 1987 and 1988. This showed 40% of the Irish-born in the United Kingdom were employed in non-manual occupations, with 42% employed in manual occupations and 18% in 'craft' occupations.⁴⁷ Other revealing factors exposed by the data contained in the report show that Irish migrants, even after the educational reforms in Ireland during the 1960s, still lagged behind their British counterparts in terms of education achievement. Going further, it also exposed a generational difference in educational attainment between older and younger age groups.

The council concluded that migration was a symptom of economic underdevelopment. The recognition of this coincided with the rise of the global city. The idea of the global city is one that has detached itself from the limits of territorial boundaries and is a centre of a network of transnational corporations. At the forefront of this was London following the financial big-bang which began with abolishing exchange controls in 1979 and then the City reforms of 1986.⁴⁸ This was the era of the Yuppie and the Irish could be found amongst their ranks. It was a time filled with the rhetoric of the self, there was 'no such thing as society', that 'greed is good' and that predatory capitalism was something to admire.⁴⁹ The Irish in Britain were to become part of the new global city. In 1980 the number of graduates remaining in Ireland was 84%, by 1986 this had fallen to 64%. They were also far quicker to make the decision to emigrate than those without degrees.⁵⁰

The image of the Irish Yuppie city worker was as fascinating for the Irish media as its British counterpart was for the British media. Irish newspapers reported stories of graduates obtaining salaries, apartments, lifestyles and experience that for the majority were unavailable in the Republic of Ireland. Also, amongst these reports were clues to show that reasons for migrating were not merely the lack of jobs, but impatience with the prosaic nature of progress and promotion in business. One migrant unhappy with this said that when promotion came 'you are going to be fairly elderly' and that 'many Irish industries are family firms' and that

⁴⁶ National Economic and Social Council, *The Economic and Social Implications of Emigration*, 1991.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ A. Cairncross, *The British Economy since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995), pp 239-272.

⁴⁹ Margaret Thatcher Foundation, (hereafter 'MTF'), *Speeches, Interviews & Other Statements*, 'Interview for Woman's Own (no such thing as society)', 23rd September 1987.

⁵⁰ 'Huge Outflow of Graduates', *The Irish Post*, 3rd October 1987.

'management is often the family preserve'.⁵¹ The growth of predatory capitalism and industrial decline also had other consequences for Scottish Catholics and Protestants; a key interview question was no longer 'which school did you go to', but 'what kind of degree do you have?'⁵² In Scotland, where international businesses operated under modern employment laws, there was little room for questions faced by previous generations. The surprise expressed by the media that the Irish were more than McAlpine's Fusiliers not only reveals lingering British prejudice towards the Irish in Britain, but that the existing literature still contains the reverse snobbery that Belchem warned the reader to avoid.⁵³

The success of Irish graduates in the global city only tells one side of the story. In 1985, it was being reported that in the previous 18 months' Irish welfare centres in Britain had reported a 60% increase in the numbers seeking assistance. Another report estimated that 17.5% of all Irish migrants aged 17-21 would experience homelessness.⁵⁴ This exposed something of the educational divide within Irish society. Warnings were issued about becoming destitute, without access to benefits. In the West-End the old spectre of the desperate descending into prostitution was once again being used to dissuade the unprepared, this time though the warning was aimed at young men as well as women.⁵⁵

Between April 1987 and April 1991 147,000 left Ireland for Britain, but during the next four years this figure had reduced to 72,000. The reduction in the outflow to Britain during 1991 to 1995 is also notable for the counter-flow arriving or returning to Ireland which was also 72,000.⁵⁶ By 1991, the only areas with a first-generation Irish population greater than 5% were all clustered in the Greater-South East. Outside of the South-East, only Manchester remained in the top 15 destinations for Irish migrants to the UK. The continuing economic decline and shifting geography of the UK economy made areas such as Coventry far less attractive as it dropped to 16th. Liverpool continued to struggle to replenish its Irish population, with an Irish first-generation population of a mere 0.95% and 0.40% from Northern Ireland, giving it a total all-Ireland first-generation population of 1.35%.⁵⁷

⁵¹ C. Chester, 'Irish Yuppies in London', *The Irish Times*, 7th August 1986.

⁵² J. Devine, 'A Lanarkshire Perspective on bigotry in Scottish Society', in, T.M. Devine (ed), *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2000), p.103.

⁵³ Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse*, pp. 332-333.

⁵⁴ L. Pereira, 'The young Irish in London...lost and lonely: Directions', *The Irish Times*, 12th January 1985.

⁵⁵ E. Shanahan, 'More workless Irish in London', *The Irish Times*, 29th May 1985.

⁵⁶ P. Yeates, 'Survey finds major change in trend of emigration', *The Irish Times*, 10th April 1996.

⁵⁷ 1991 UK Census, UK Data Service, CASWEB.

1991 Census Figures, supplied by CASWEB, UK Data Service

Zone name	Persons Present	NI Male	NI Female	NI Total	NI %	ROI Male	ROI Female	ROI Total	ROI %	All Ireland	% All Ireland
Brent	221090	1034	970	2004	0.91%	9665	10267	19932	9.02%	21936	9.92%
Islington	147611	827	773	1600	1.08%	4744	5379	10123	6.86%	11723	7.94%
Hammersmith & Fulham	129547	774	779	1553	1.20%	3919	4645	8564	6.61%	10117	7.81%
Camden	148029	925	843	1768	1.19%	4336	4923	9259	6.25%	11027	7.45%
Ealing	256957	1184	1154	2338	0.91%	6514	7522	14036	5.46%	16374	6.37%
City of Westminster	146059	777	739	1516	1.04%	3390	4428	7818	5.35%	9334	6.39%
Haringey	180552	924	774	1698	0.94%	4224	4614	8838	4.89%	10536	5.84%
Luton	163166	744	669	1413	0.87%	4002	3851	7853	4.81%	9266	5.68%
Harrow	189891	536	587	1123	0.59%	4107	4645	8752	4.61%	9875	5.20%
Lambeth	211269	1089	971	2060	0.98%	4452	5136	9588	4.54%	11648	5.51%
Southwark	192565	832	756	1588	0.82%	3904	4300	8204	4.26%	9792	5.09%
Kensington & Chelsea	110543	462	534	996	0.90%	1986	2546	4532	4.10%	5528	5.00%
Manchester	379529	1992	1922	3914	1.03%	7165	7386	14551	3.83%	18465	4.87%
Hackney	158360	600	551	1151	0.73%	2889	3140	6029	3.81%	7180	4.53%
Wandsworth	228039	969	1094	2063	0.90%	3819	4693	8512	3.73%	10575	4.64%

One of the reasons for the continued pull of the Greater-South East for migrants can be found in the difference between regional incomes in the UK. From 1971 (previous year's figures were not measured), average regional income in the South-East was constantly above the UK average. The older, industrial heartlands all had regional incomes less than the national average. The UK experience massive regional economic divergence during the 1970s and 1980s. The difference in unemployment between the lowest and highest regions increased from 2.1% during 1959-1976 to 85% by the 1980s.⁵⁸ Prosperity was far from equally distributed throughout the UK. The United Kingdom, however, remains an important destination for Irish migrants, with London and the South-East remaining the primary destination in 2011 the combined total for those areas was 188, 932, almost quadruple the next area, the North West, with 48,456. London and the South East also attract far more from Northern Ireland,

⁵⁸ J. Goodman, *Single Europe, Single Ireland? Uneven Development in Process* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000), p.118.

with 68,118 compared with 36,767 arriving in the North West.⁵⁹ The pull of London and the Greater South-East shows little signs of weakening.

Changes in UK Regional Income⁶⁰

Changes in regional income in the UK 1971-1992 (% of average income)	Personal Income Per Head % of average			
				Proportion of Total %
Area	1971	1989	1992	1992
Northern	87.1	86.9	90.6	4.8
Yorks & Humberside	93.2	88.1	93.2	8
East Midlands	96.5	95	94.3	6.6
East Anglia	93.8	99.3	100.4	3.6
South East	113.8	120.6	114.9	35.1
South West	94.7	5.6	95	7.8
West Midlands	102.7	91.7	93.1	8.5
North West	96.1	91.5	93.3	10.3
Wales	88.4	83.6	84.1	4.2
Scotland	93	93.1	99.1	8.7
Northern Ireland	74.3	76.1	84.1	2.3

Beyond the period covered by this thesis, Irish emigration to the UK continues and it remains the primary destination. However, it has slowed down and has not approached previous levels. Britain has become one of an increasing number of choices on a menu of potential destinations. For those who were still choosing the UK as their destination, the above tables show that Walter was correct in her analysis that the Greater South-East continues to have a far greater economic pull for first-generation Irish migrants.⁶¹ This has not just been the abandoning of the 19th-Century urban centres in the North-West, but also the later rejection during the final decades of the 20th Century of those areas in the Midlands which had seen an influx of post-war Irish migrants.

⁵⁹ L. Ryan, A. D'Angelo, M. Puniskis & N. Kaye, *Analysis of 2011 Census Data, Irish Community Statistics, England and Selected Urban Areas*, Social Policy Research Centre Middlesex University and Irish in Britain, 2014.

⁶⁰ Cairncross, *The British Economy since 1945*, p.316.

⁶¹ Walter, 'From a flood to a trickle: Irish Migration to Britain 1987-2006', in, *Irish Geography*; Walter, *A Study of the existing sources of information and analysis about Irish emigrants and Irish communities abroad*.

One area that does remain problematic is second-generation identity. Despite the considerable output of Mary Hickman and Bronwen Walter, the failure of the 2001 and 2011 census to return large numbers claiming Irish identity adds considerable uncertainty to their arguments.⁶² Devlin-Trew is correct in her view that the little quantifiable information available concerning second-generation identity means that any conclusions must remain under question.⁶³ Some attempt to answer this by suggesting that the census forms make no allowance for hybrid identities, however this is somewhat unsatisfactory as it appears to be an attempt to interpose North-American interpretations of Diaspora into a separate and distinct experience of Diaspora and migration in Britain. This argument also ignores the tremendous detail uncovered by Walter.

The Irish in Britain remain a diverse population. Although their presence to varying degrees can be found throughout Britain, they are now concentrated in the Greater-South-East. This is reflected in the concentration of support services that claim to be national but are in fact centred in London. In the forthcoming chapters, this concentration of the Irish population in the South-East will be reflected in the political activity of the Irish in Britain which would be clustered around Manchester, Birmingham and London.

(2.2) Society and Community Brokerage

As the previous tables and readings show, the primary reason for leaving Ireland for Britain was economic. Some of these were being pushed out by lack of opportunities, others were being pulled by better jobs and wages. However, this is not the only narrative. Some were escaping the prevailing social conditions in Ireland. Others would later transform the negative 'othering' of the Irish in Britain into positive images of Irishness. Whilst this is not intended as an extensive study of societal reasons for leaving, it is important they are recognised and acknowledged. Those arriving in post-war Britain were not a population heading into exile. Upon arriving they found a system of community brokerage waiting for them.

⁶² L. Ryan, A. D'Angelo, M. Puniskis, N. Kaye, *Analysis of 2011 Census Data Irish Community Statistics, England and Selected Urban Areas*, Social Policy Research Centre, Middlesex University, London, July 2014.

⁶³ Devlin-Trew, *Leaving the North: Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland 1921-2011*, p.133.

The systems of community brokerage available show that simplistic explanations of push or pull factors do not suffice. Many of these migrants were making considered decisions; some already had jobs and were 'leaving their jobs for more highly paid employment in Britain'.⁶⁴ It was a period that Cricklewood and Camden became home to an increasingly large Irish population. These were new receiving areas. It was not until after the Second World War that housing shortages resulted in areas such as Cricklewood experiencing social and population change, including an influx of Irish migrants.⁶⁵ Local pubs had long been hubs of community brokerage and one of these was The Crown in Cricklewood. It was built in the 18th Century and after the war it became a local centre for labourers waiting to be chosen for work.⁶⁶ The narrative of the Cricklewood Irish was born out of post-war reconstruction. However, the story of a day muckshifting and heaving lifting is not the only tale to be found. As the previous statistics show, the majority established themselves in the Greater South-East with businesses such as Ford recruiting in Ireland for workers in its motor works in Dagenham.⁶⁷ For those with the ability or the financial means, nursing was viewed as a respectable opportunity for emigration for Irish women, however even here they would find racism and stereotyping. This though did not linger and soon disappeared.⁶⁸

Whilst the economy was the primary driver of London's attraction, stories were also being told back home in Ireland of a London with pubs, dancehalls and city living. The 'craic' was in London, not Liverpool.⁶⁹ Most arriving in post-war Britain had at least a passing familiarity with Britain. Systems of community brokerage in Britain ensured a regular supply of letters to home from Irish migrants in Britain. British newspapers were popular and easily obtained in Ireland and some managed to receive radio broadcasts from the BBC or Radio Luxembourg. The final addition in the flow of information was through film, even if it did provide a fictionalised vision of Britain.⁷⁰ Despite this familiarity, it did not mean that Irish migrants travelled to Britain full of confidence, they also wanted reassurance from the familiar and the most familiar of all was the Catholic Church. The elite of the Catholic Church pursued

⁶⁴ Garcia, *Rebuilding London Irish Migrants in Post-War Britain*, p.21.

⁶⁵ G. Harrison, *The Scattering A History of the London Irish Centre, 1954-2004* (London: Camden Irish Centre, 2004), pp.16-17.

⁶⁶ Garcia, *Rebuilding London Irish Migrants in Post-War Britain*, p.62.

⁶⁷ Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.91.

⁶⁸ Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p.94.

⁶⁹ Ryan, 'Irish Emigration to Britain Since World War II', in, Kearney, *Migrations The Irish at Home & Abroad*, p.51.

⁷⁰ Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, pp 21-29.

an integrationist approach towards Irish migrants. They wanted them to remain members of the church and to become respectable and dutiful citizens in their new British home. They wanted a moral, obedient, Catholic population, they did not want a nationalist population in exile.

The battle for the hearts, minds and political identity of Irish citizens began before they left Ireland. Writing in 1949 in *Christus Rex*, Colm Brogan published his critique of the Labour Government and British elections. This was part of a concerted campaign by Brogan against Labour and Attlee.⁷¹ He was highly critical of socialism and the wave of nationalization that followed the end of the Second World War. He did not limit his criticism to the British political parties; he was also highly disparaging about British voters, stating that the British voter 'shuns the battle of ideologies. He votes for what is under his nose'.⁷²

Shunning what was under their nose was an appeal to stay away from the political and cultural temptations offered by British cities. It is clear from Brogan's conclusions that he was attempting to steer Irish citizens away from what he viewed as the 'self-interest' ideology of Socialism and the Welfare State.⁷³ Brogan regarded the Welfare State as an excuse for the individual to avoid personal responsibility. He was cynically promoting migration as shameful and that the individual was culpable for their own failure in Ireland.

Brogan's article slowly becomes a polemic; a warning to potential migrants of the pitfalls of moving to Great Britain - unemployment, socialism and nationalism are all presented as evils that are designed to remove the freedom of choice for the individual and how to conduct themselves and to see to their own welfare. Finally, Brogan warns that if the individual does not stay away from 'the Socialist delusion' the cost will be 'almost too heavy to be borne'.⁷⁴ Whilst groups such as the Anti-Partition League were attempting to gain support from the Irish in Britain for Irish reunification, Brogan was hoping to make Conservative opposition to Labour attractive to the Irish in Britain by portraying it as something much closer to European socialism than it actually was. Brogan was using Irish immigration as a mask to cover another element in his campaign against Attlee. He was trying to manipulate Irish support systems in Britain for his own political goals.

⁷¹ J. Bew, *Citizen Clem* (London: Riverrun, 2016), pp.478-479.

⁷² C. Brogan, *Christus Rex (July Issue)* (Naas: Christus Rex Publications, 1949), p.18.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ C. Brogan, *Christus Rex*, p.22.

There was logic in Brogan's tactic. Since the late 19th century Catholicism had been attempting to reconcile doctrine with social justice.⁷⁵ Social welfare in Ireland was the remit of the Catholic Church. The transmission of the ideas behind the welfare state threatened the role the church played in social provision in Ireland. The leader of the Catholic Church in Britain, Cardinal Griffin, was dexterous in his response to this. To ensure that Catholic Hospitals and voluntary services could receive funding under the Welfare State, he argued that the voluntary nature of these hospitals was 'in keeping with British tradition.'⁷⁶ Unionists in Northern Ireland could also find support for their reaction to the creation of the NHS from some British nurses. *The British Journal of Nursing* praised the Brooke government saying that 'We are not going to have a State-ridden organisation' and concerned about voluntary hospitals, that 'We realise the vast amount of good done by voluntary organisations'. They ended their support praising a 'Happy Northern Ireland' and 'God Bless William Grant'.⁷⁷ Although the NHS has become treasured by the majority in the UK, it is often forgotten that many objected to the NHS for ideological and economic reasons.⁷⁸

The Catholic Church was also extremely worried about the rise of Communism within the Labour movement. Concerns were expressed about the possibility of Communists gaining positions of authority in the trades unions in Britain and then in turn influencing the future policy of the Labour Party.⁷⁹ In 1949 *The Catholic Herald* was advising its readership to consider voting Liberal. In the *Herald's* view Catholics in Britain should support the Liberals as they offered what it considered a 'third way' that was closest to the teachings of Pope Pius XI.⁸⁰ Catholicism in Britain was at its most comfortable with working-class politics when it could attune elements of British non-conformist traditions, particularly its anti-authoritarian approach to politics with Catholic teaching. It was viewed as a 'Christian task' to defend the rights of people. This included ensuring that people were protected from what it viewed as

⁷⁵ Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII On Capital and Labour* (The Holy See, 1891).

⁷⁶ *The Irish Times*, 'Freedom for British Voluntary Hospitals Urged', 24 April 1946.

⁷⁷ 'Ulster in Regent Street', *The British Journal of Nursing*, April 1947. William Grant was Ulster Unionist Party MP for Belfast Duncairn from 1929-1949 and Minister of Health and Local Government from 1944 until 1949.

⁷⁸ A. Seaton, "Against the 'Scared Cow': NHS Opposition and the Fellowship for Freedom in Medicine", *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.26, No.3, 2015, pp. 424-449.

⁷⁹ *The Catholic Herald*, 23rd February 1945.

⁸⁰ *The Catholic Herald*, 13th May, 1949.

the entrenched and dogmatic positions of groups that it regarded as 'socially dangerous working-class organisations' that could lead to totalitarianism.⁸¹

Throughout this immediate post-war period, church attendance and celebrating Mass remained important. The older ideas of being a Catholic first and Irish second remained strong.⁸² However, the Catholic Church, its leadership and the decisions it was making was increasingly questioned. The Church was also worried about declining attendance.⁸³ Despite this, in 1955 the Catholic Church remained important and popular with the Irish in Britain. In Birmingham six masses took place every Sunday for the 3,500 Catholics in St Andrews.⁸⁴

The *Catholic Herald* estimated that 50,000 young Irish men and women were in Birmingham looking for employment. There was also an acute shortage of housing in Birmingham which exacerbated the problems faced by Irish migrants attempting to find accommodation. The *Catholic Herald* also carried regular reports about the social welfare of Irish migrants to Birmingham. These often focused on the welfare of female migrants. However, when closer examination is given to the contents of the reports, it is impossible to ignore the racism that they contain. They reported Irish girls 'living with coloured men and Poles.' It also warned its readership that Irish girls were exploited by 'coloured landlords offering sums of £20 for Irish girls to be brought over as 'housekeepers' for their lodging houses.' It reported that some of these girls found themselves working in houses that were little more than brothels.⁸⁵ The fear of the loss of female morals and their 'virtue' to foreigners was a serious concern for conservative elements within Catholicism.⁸⁶

The response from the Catholic Church on the issue of race was mixed. Older ideas of Christian and cultural superiority had not disappeared. Inter-marriage also brought with it the fear of children not being raised within the Catholic faith. On the one hand, they were offering warnings to Irish women over mixing with coloured immigrants whilst at other times they were condemning any attempts by trades unions to discriminate on the grounds of race.⁸⁷

⁸¹ *The Catholic Herald*, 20th May 1949.

⁸² A. Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998 Politics and War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p.311.

⁸³ D. MacIvor, 'Sunday Worship', *The Furrow*, Vol.11 No.6, The Lords Day, (Jun.1960), pp. 372-379; L Fuller, 'Catholicism in Twentieth-Century Ireland: From an Atmosphere steeped in Faith to á la Carte Catholicism', *Journal of Religion in Europe* 3 (2013), pp. 484-513; Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, pp.147-149.

⁸⁴ *The Catholic Herald*, 25th November 1955.

⁸⁵ *The Catholic Herald*, 25th November 1955.

⁸⁶ Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p.244

⁸⁷ *The Catholic Herald*, 26th November 1954.

In 1954 Birmingham transport workers had been balloted and asked if they objected to the employment of coloured conductors. The Birmingham Liberal Organisation appealed directly to the many Irish women that were employed as conductresses to 'set a good Christian example in this matter' and that 'no Christian can be a party to this form of discrimination.'⁸⁸

When not expressing concerns over social welfare, Church leaders continued with their battle against the influence of Communism.⁸⁹ Whilst condemning the actions of the radical left in Birmingham, it was also encouraging Irish workers to join trades unions. Church leadership viewed this as an acceptable way to keep them out of the hands of the Connolly Association.⁹⁰ This was also seen as a way of increasing the socialisation of the Irish in Britain. Attacks by the Catholic Church were a constant, claiming the Connolly Association was 'rousing discontent with the British social system.'⁹¹ Catholicism in this period had a dual role. It wanted to ensure that Irish migrants received both social and pastoral support. This dual role was mirrored within the Italian community where it also fulfilled both functions.⁹² The Catholic Church was not the only point of familiarity for the newly arrived in Britain. Irish Associations and societies could be found throughout the United Kingdom, from Plymouth to Glasgow. These associations were listed in the Irish press so Irish citizens were aware of the location of these even before leaving Ireland for Britain.⁹³ Despite the continuing popularity of the Catholic Church, Irish Associations and the support and community brokerage they offered, some leaving Ireland chose to reject both. One such individual was Peter Tyrrell. He sent several letters to Senator Owen Sheehy-Skeffington revealing the years of violence and abuse he had suffered whilst an inmate in Letterfrack industrial school. These letters and his biography were later collected and published by Diarmuid Whelan.⁹⁴ In London he met others who had similar experiences to his own. His letters and memoirs also

⁸⁸ *The Catholic Herald*, 26th November 1954.

⁸⁹ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, pp. 489-491.

⁹⁰ *The Catholic Herald*, 22nd March 1951.

⁹¹ *The Catholic Herald*, 25th November 1955.

⁹² A. Medaglia, *Patriarchal Structures and Ethnicity in the Italian Community in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), p.129; T. Cooke, *Little Italy* (Liverpool: The Bluecoat Press, 2002), pp.47-57; B. Bottingnolo, *Without a Bell Tower, A Study of the Italian immigrants in South West England* (Roma: Centro Studi Emigrazione, 1985), pp.117-141.

⁹³ *Pictorial*, 'London Club now centre of Irish life', 2nd June 1956; *Pictorial*, 'Irish Associations in Britain', 11th February 1956.

⁹⁴ P. Tyrrell & D. Whelan (ed), *Founded on Fear*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006).

reveal his own disenchantment with the Irish of Camden Town and Tottenham Court Road. He was not alone in feeling this way, one migrant to London stated that 'Camden Town or Hammersmith were two areas of London that I determined not to live in when I came to London in 1954. I didn't want to be identified with 'The Paddies''.⁹⁵ Tyrell did not want to associate with the roughest of Camden Town. It was towards the Catholic Church and its power that he exposed his true emotions in the last lines of his memoir declaring that 'the priest has made life intolerable for us at home'.⁹⁶ For those such as Tyrell, Catholic Ireland was something to escape from and once in London, avoided.

Integration and the promotion of Irish respectability was not just the preserve of the Catholic Church. The Irish Club in London had been attempting to promote a respectable image of the Irish and Irishness since it had been established in the splendid setting of 82 Eaton Square in 1947.⁹⁷ By 1960 its membership included a broad cross-section of Irish citizens resident in London. Its members could play billiards, watch TV in the lounge or participate in dances organised at the club.⁹⁸ The next year the annual dinner-dance at the club included a mix of Irish celebrities, businessmen and politicians. National pride was on show, but it was not the establishment of the 32-county State that was at the centre of attention. The central themes of the speeches were the delight in the improving Irish economy and pride at the Republic of Ireland's international role at the United Nations.⁹⁹ This was pride in emigration, not shame.

The National University of Ireland (NUI) also had a club in London. It was established in 1929. As at the Irish Club, the atmosphere was one of positivity and it was hoped that the NUI graduates in Britain would go forward and promote a positive image of the Republic of Ireland. Unlike in the Irish Club, partition was regularly discussed. However, this was not a resistance community willing to take to the streets or act as an Irish fifth Column. Its members supported a statist response and hoped that as relations between the UK and the Republic of Ireland were improving, a solution could be found.¹⁰⁰ This exposé of class divisions within

⁹⁵ K. O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972), p.86.

⁹⁶ Tyrell & Whelan (ed), *Founded on Fear*, p.170.

⁹⁷ A. Cusack, 'No.82, Eaton Square', *Andrew Cusack*, <http://www.andrewcusack.com/2009/12/16/82-eaton-square/>, [accessed 26th June 2015].

⁹⁸ 'London's Irish Club', *The Irish Times*, 6th August 1960.

⁹⁹ 'Irish Club's members dine in London', *The Irish Times*, 17th March 1961.

¹⁰⁰ 'Britain Helped by Irish Graduates', *The Irish Times*, 18th March 1965.

the emigration experience. These organisations were generally not very popular with the younger Irish working class. Padraig Yeates, a young political activist in London, regarded such organisations as 'dominated by people who craved acceptance and middle-class respectability, and very Catholic.'¹⁰¹

It was difficult to avoid involvement with the Catholic Church during the immediate post-war period. One reason for its importance in community brokerage was that Irish State was extremely reluctant to make any financial contribution to support Irish migrants in Britain. The view of the Irish state was that any financial assistance could not be supervised by the appropriate authorities in Ireland. The logic behind this excuse was that the Irish Government was responsible for spending Irish tax-payers' money; if this money was distributed outside the borders of the State then how it was spent could not be controlled. The other reason for lack of support from the Irish Government was that it believed that the social welfare of Irish Citizens in Britain was the responsibility of the Catholic Church and its supporting voluntary organisations could provide a better system of support than the Irish Government.¹⁰² The Catholic Church and Catholic voluntary organisations became significant intermediaries between Irish citizens in Britain and the machinery of the British state.¹⁰³ This was an important role to bridge the divide between wider British society and newly arrived Irish migrants. Whilst some, such as Tyrell, rejected the church, others welcomed their assistance. In Britain the class divide between Priests and their congregations was not the gulf that it was in Ireland. As Clair Wills as shown, the lack of class division resulted in a feeling that both Priest and congregation were sharing the experience of being a migrant in a new land.¹⁰⁴

As Irish migrants were followed the British economy into the urban centres of the Midlands and Greater South-East, they initially clustered in receiving areas with either an established system of community brokerage or that contained cheap and available housing. One such area was Sparkbrook. In 1966 8.66% of its population were first-generation Irish,

¹⁰¹ B. Hanley, & S. Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers Party* (London: Penguin, 2010), p.49.

¹⁰² Delaney, *Demography, State and Society Irish Migration to Britain 1919-1971*, pp.257-259.

¹⁰³ Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.140.

¹⁰⁴ Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, pp.216-127.

which ranked it 10th.¹⁰⁵ Published in 1967, by John Rex and Robert Moore is their study of migrant populations in Sparkbrook had begun in 1963.¹⁰⁶ There were several organisations offering support and services for the Irish population in Sparkbrook, but there was little in the way of universalism.¹⁰⁷ County associations at times exacerbated the distinction between those from Dublin and rural Ireland, although some commercial 'Irish clubs' offered spaces that provided neutral locations where no single county association dominated.¹⁰⁸

In terms of politics, Rex and Moore also found that those Irish citizens that were interested in politics tended to support the Labour Party and that only a few decided to support groups such as the Connolly Association. The Irish in Birmingham, as in other British cities, were already well embedded in British class politics. The majority were not interested in the political fringes which had been fermenting since 1956. Careful reading reveals that what is missing from Rex and Moore's study is any mention of Northern Ireland. There are only individuals that identify themselves as Irish Protestants and Rex and Moore make no mention of their point of origin.¹⁰⁹ Although this study is now over 50 years old it provides the reader with a true academic study of a receiving community in the United Kingdom and the issues faced by both migrants and the receiving population. Rex and Moore expose the tensions experienced by both in a working-class community. These circulate around the issues of employment, housing, aspirations, generational differences and social cohesion. Despite its age, the political language and rhetoric experienced by Rex and Moore remains remarkably like language and rhetoric that is in use today. The depressing result of returning to Rex and Moore shows that within British politics there has been little or no increase in the level of political sophistication shown towards migration or trans-national populations. This lack of sophistication in turn has been rewarded with political success, resulting in a ghastly and cheerless race to show the native population that they will be protected from 'swarms' of migrants and that they will not be 'swamped' by the foreign.

When Harold Wilson won his first General Election in 1964 and followed this with a further victory in 1966 Labour began a programme of social reform. Included in this was the

¹⁰⁵ *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Constituency Tables* (London: General Register Office, 1969).

¹⁰⁶ J. Rex & R. Moore, *Race, Community & Conflict A Study of Sparkbrook*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974).

¹⁰⁷ Rex & Moore, *Race, Community & Conflict A Study of Sparkbrook*, pp.154-155.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Rex & Moore, *Race, Community & Conflict A Study of Sparkbrook*, p.97.

debate about the relationship between church and state. Church attendance in the UK has been in decline since the beginning of the 20th century, but this does not necessarily mean the secularisation of the nation-state.¹¹⁰ Falling Church attendance does not automatically result in a clear separation of Church and State. In the United Kingdom, the head of state is still the head of the established church and Bishops sit in the House of Lords.¹¹¹ Throughout this period the Catholic Church and local Irish clubs remained important within Irish community brokerage. On one occasion, the Mayor of Camden sent a letter to Archbishop McQuaid, the Archbishop of Dublin to 'express our sincere gratitude and thanks to the Rev. Father Owen Sweeney for the magnificent work which he has done'.¹¹² Irish community brokerage and the British economy ensured London remained the primary destination for Irish citizens moving to Britain to look for work or to escape social pressures at home.

Within London, Camden had the third highest first-generation Irish population and the Irish centre at Camden regularly received those who had just arrived and would become an important hub within Irish community brokerage in London. Some had no money or job offer, others were coping with effects of family break-ups, mental health problems and some with no home, either in Ireland or Britain. Another important part of this system of community brokerage was the Marian Employment Agency which received a small grant from Camden Borough Council, the English Catholic Hierarchy and the Irish Hierarchy. The centre had made repeated attempts to obtain financial support from the Irish Government but received none.¹¹³ Irish clubs and centres would also provide support and hot meals over Christmas for those alone, either at the centres themselves or with families who would volunteer and provide meals at Christmas when the factory canteen was shut or building site closed for the Christmas holiday.¹¹⁴ The generation that re-built Britain, after retiring, would later find themselves unwitting subjects of the return myth and would find themselves alone, isolated and often in poor health.¹¹⁵ This was the unforeseen consequence of the short-term

¹¹⁰ S. Bruce, 'Post-Secularity and Religion in Britain: An Empirical Assessment', *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 28:3, 2013, pp. 369-384.

¹¹¹ For further exploration of secularisation see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007) and his definitions of three types of secularisation.

¹¹² 'London Mayor Praises work of Irish Priest', *The Irish Times*, 28th January 1967.

¹¹³ E. O'Brien, 'Irish Wreckage in London', *The Irish Times*, 24th July 1967.

¹¹⁴ B. Hickman, 'Christmas hospitality for Irish Unable to go home', *The Guardian*, 20th December 1967.

¹¹⁵ G. Leavy, S. Sembhi & G. Livingston, 'Older Irish migrants living in London: Identity, loss and return', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 17th May 2006; O'Sullivan, 'All I want for Christmas is company', *The Irish Post*, 14th December 2013; Hennsessy, 'Older Irish in London isolated', *The Irish Times*, 31st October 2012.

expedience of avoiding UK Taxation, by either working for cash or falsifying identity documentation. Much of this was voluntary and not just exploitation by employers or the gangerman.¹¹⁶

Community brokerage systems in London were also important for Irish women who found out that they had become pregnant. The National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child in London estimated that in 1965 approximately 400 pregnant Irish women were approaching them for help. They would often be referred to the local Catholic Diocese for support from the local priest. These systems of community support have been examined by Patricia Kennedy, her chapter on Catholic teaching and Papal encyclicals is a notable and worthwhile addition. However, her work also gives clues as to why the volume was produced, it was published to mark the Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy Golden Jubilee in 2007. Whilst her conclusion that 'it had much to celebrate' is correct and explains the celebratory style of the work, there are notable gaps. The most glaring of these is any mention of the reaction to the crisis of character that engulfed the Catholic Church as various scandals became global news.¹¹⁷

Upon arrival, many reported that they had little or no knowledge of contraception. Some had reported they had been raped; others had little knowledge about sex or sexuality. This lack of knowledge could also be found in British society; Philip Larkin would comment that he and the British only discovered sex 'Between the end of the Chatterley ban and the Beatles first LP'.¹¹⁸ Some came to escape the stigma of being unmarried. Others came to Britain in the belief that if the child was adopted it had better opportunities in the United Kingdom than in the Republic of Ireland. Some individuals were terrified of being put into the care of Nuns and sent to the convent for 'rehabilitation'.¹¹⁹ This again showed that some were not making economic choices but were deciding that Britain offered an escape. Fear over Mother and Baby Homes and child mortality rates are two reasons that Paul Michael Garrett offers to explain the attraction of Britain for unmarried mothers.¹²⁰ Despite these fears

¹¹⁶ Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, pp.287-294.

¹¹⁷ P. Kennedy, *Welcoming the Stranger: Irish Migrant Welfare in Britain Since 1957* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2015).

¹¹⁸ P. Larkin, 'Annus Mirabilis', in, *The Michigan Quarterly Review*, Vol. 9, No.3, 1970.

¹¹⁹ M. Laing, 'The Irish Girls', *The Sunday Times*, 25th April 1965.

¹²⁰ P. M. Garrett, 'The abnormal flight: the migration and repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers', *Social History*, Vol.25 No.3, October 2000, pp.330-343.

between 1948 and 1971 The Catholic Protection and Rescue Society, in combination with assistance from English authorities, returned 2600 unmarried mothers back to Ireland.¹²¹ Unmarried Irish mothers were not just othered by their Irishness, but were also gendered and criminalised.¹²²

For some, social reasons, such as pregnancy, access to safe, legal abortions and sexuality were the primary motivation for migrating to Britain. As exposed by Garrett, unmarried mothers leaving Ireland for Britain had been a concern for the Catholic Church since the start of the 20th Century.¹²³ However, the de-criminalisation of abortion in Great Britain in 1967 brought with it new challenges. This remains an under-researched area, though this thesis will not provide an extensive examination of narratives of migration as escape they undoubtedly deserve attention.

The role of women in Irish society was still defined by article 41.2 of the 1937 constitution.¹²⁴ Gender separation and their respective spheres of influence remained firmly in place but had been under pressure since the 1960s. Women's rights had been continually curtailed since independence. Divorce became unattainable and banned in 1937. There was also a ban on information regarding contraception, and later contraceptives themselves were banned. Abortion had been against the law whilst under British rule and it is still prohibited in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.¹²⁵ In the Republic of Ireland the right to life of the unborn was enshrined within the constitution in 1983 under articles 40.3.3.¹²⁶ Following abortion becoming legal in Great Britain, it has been estimated between 1970 and 1999 that 72,000 travelled to Britain to obtain an abortion.¹²⁷ What is not known is how many provided false details to avoid being stigmatised back at home, nor is it known how many would later make this journey permanent.

¹²¹ P. M. Garrett, 'The abnormal flight: the migration and repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers', *Social History*, Vol.25 No.3, October 2000, pp.330-343.

¹²² P.M. Garrett, 'No Irish need apply: Social Work and the History and Politics of Exclusionary Paradigms and Practices', *British Journal of Social Work*, 32, 2002, pp. 477-494.

¹²³ Garrett, *The abnormal flight: the migration and repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers*.

¹²⁴ *The Constitution of Ireland, Bunreacht NA hÉireann*, The Department of the Taoiseach, Dublin.

¹²⁵ P. García-Moral & A.C. Korteweg, 'The Sexual politics of citizenship and reproductive rights in Ireland: From national, international, supranational and transnational to postnational claims to membership', in, *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 19 (4), 2012, pp. 413-427.

¹²⁶ *The Constitution of Ireland, Bunreacht nA hÉireann*, The Department of the Taoiseach, Dublin.

¹²⁷ García-Moral & Korteweg, *The Sexual politics of citizenship and reproductive rights in Ireland*.

Sexuality was a political and social issue in the Republic of Ireland. Homosexuality would remain illegal in the Republic of Ireland until 1993. This period was not only the Ryanair Generation, the Irish media would also declare it the AIDS Generation.¹²⁸ Many Irish citizens suffering with addiction problems, AIDS and HIV related illnesses were now heading to London. Many reported health care and counselling systems in Ireland that were wholly inadequate. In private one Irish doctor admitted that 'We haven't got the resources to look after them here.'¹²⁹ Emigration became attractive when 'your family don't know you're HIV positive, and you're afraid to tell them'.¹³⁰ The atmosphere they were escaping from can be glimpsed by examining the comments of speakers at a conference to promote traditional family solidarity who viewed Ireland as threatened by 'abortion, contraception, sterilisation on demand, the decriminalisation or legalisation of drug-taking, pornography, divorce and homosexual activity, artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilisation and sex education'. Other threats to the family and social cohesion included Trades Unions which were viewed as 'anti-family' and supported 'secularist feminism'.¹³¹ This very narrow definition of how society defines a family was being challenged in both Ireland and Britain and later by the European Union and by the European Court of Justice. The family became increasingly defined beyond traditional descriptions.

One year prior to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the Republic of Ireland gay men and women could find themselves under surveillance by vigilantes who waited in well-known areas where they would meet, then take photographs and threaten to expose them to the police.¹³² Emigration for many was not about employment, it was simply about being free to live unfettered and without fear. The shared experience of emigration for many was not exile but escape.

In Northern Ireland, the campaign for LGB rights began in the 1960s.¹³³ However, when homosexuality was decriminalised in Great Britain in 1967 this was not extended to Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association was formed in 1975 and

¹²⁸ K. Holmquist, 'Exporting our AIDS problem', *The Irish Times*, 8th February 1988.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ N. O'Faolain, 'Where there's a place for moral fervour', *The Irish Times*, 30th May 1988.

¹³² N. O'Faolain, 'An emigrant forced to leave in the name of unspoken love', *The Irish Times*, 13th July 1992.

¹³³ Note: At this early stage, the campaign did not include a transgender element.

began its campaign for LGB rights and decriminalisation.¹³⁴ In common with homosexuals in the Republic of Ireland, there was the constant threat of exposure and harassment. Most of the churches in Northern Ireland, whilst refusing to accept homosexuality as natural, also thought that it should not be illegal.¹³⁵ The exception to this was the DUP and those that set its moral compass within the Free Presbyterian Church.¹³⁶ The most infamous phase of their objections was Dr Ian Paisley's Save Ulster from Sodomy campaign. As the campaign for decriminalisation increased in Northern Ireland, it gained support from within Britain. Included in the fact-finding visit by the Glasgow Branch of the Labour Committee on Ireland in 1982 was a meeting with the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association. They asked them about life in Northern Ireland and were told that 'People are so busy beating themselves up over the heads because they're Protestant or Catholic that there's not much time left for attacking gays'.¹³⁷ The group also inquired about Sinn Féin and their attitude towards gay rights and were told that they 'had a fairly awful attitude early on, but it's getting better', however the violence of paramilitaries was a problem for NIGRA who told the delegation 'it would be the kiss of death to be applauded by the Provos or the UDA'.¹³⁸ Like their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland, some from the LGBT community in Northern Ireland left for London, in particular to seek the support services for those with HIV. They could find support in London from Positively Irish Action on Aids group which was established in 1989. By 1992 the group was reporting increased numbers arriving from Northern Ireland. What was also reported by the group was reluctance for many to approach any offers of support that were from distinctly Irish support services for fear of judgement and condemnation.¹³⁹ Much remains to be discovered concerning attitudes towards HIV and AIDS in the Republic

¹³⁴ M. Livingston, 'Out of the troubles and into rights: Protection for Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals in Northern Ireland through equality legislation in the Belfast Agreement', *Fordham International Law Journal*, 1207, 2003-2004, pp.1205-1263.

¹³⁵ M. Duggan, *Queering Conflict Examining Lesbian and Gay Experiences of Homophobia in Northern Ireland*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), p.52.

¹³⁶ Duggan, *Queering Conflict Examining Lesbian and Gay Experiences of Homophobia in Northern Ireland*, pp.52-53.

¹³⁷ Working Class Movement Library (hereafter 'WCM' *Delegation to Belfast*), Labour Committee on Ireland Glasgow Branch, 1982.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ David Orr, 'Irish, HIV and in search of care in London', *The Irish Times*, 2nd March 1992.

of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The examination of the Irish gay press by Páraic Kerrigan and the study of Belfast Pride by Jennifer Curtis are welcome additions to the canon.¹⁴⁰

Despite popular memory of the permissiveness of the preceding decades, attempts to reverse the moral compass of the United Kingdom were being pursued by several groups on the political right such as Families for Defence. However, Thatcherism never had a coherent policy on public morality and sexuality. The Conservatives remained divided on moral issues. They were often used as a battle-ground for local political conflicts that were part of a wider battle between left and right.¹⁴¹ This does not diminish the impact of morality as part of Thatcherism, family morality would remain important. While Conservative MPs were by-and-large not 'whipped' on these issues by the party leadership, it also did nothing to prevent or dispel the atmosphere of hostility that it created. Thatcherism would provide fertile soil for the politics of difference to grow. However, the politics of exile failed to germinate. The emergence, study and development of second-generation identity offered an escape and a distancing from Thatcherism. This was not the creation of a resistance identity of the type described by Castells, but a political and cultural rejection taking place whilst remaining within British civic-society.¹⁴² The reaction by Thatcherite Conservatives and their Anglo-Centric definition of Britishness, not only ensured that national hybrid identities struggled to emerge but would also add further to the crisis of Britishness. The current negotiations concerning Brexit may yet have consequences for the future direction of Britishness and hybrid or plural identity. The Thatcherite Conservatives had no time for the 'mutual tolerance' and the diverse Britishness promoted by Roy Jenkins in 1966 if it threatened their own Anglo-Centric imagined Britishness.¹⁴³ Some did grasp the opportunities available as London became a global financial power-house, others rejected the atmosphere created by the predatory capitalism and promotion of self-interest. The real consequence of Thatcherism for the Irish was that their identity offered an escape from its Anglo-dominated Britishness. It

¹⁴⁰ P. Kerrigan, 'OUT-ING Aids The Irish Civil Rights Movement's response to the AIDS crisis (1984-1988)', *Media History*, 23rd August 2017; J. Curtis, 'Pride and prejudice: gay rights and religious moderation in Belfast', *The Sociological Review*, 3rd December 2013.

¹⁴¹ M. Durham, 'The Thatcher Government and The Moral Right', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.42 (1), 1989, pp. 58-71; R. Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009).

¹⁴² M. Castells, *Power of Identity: Economy, Society, and Culture (2nd Edition)* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

¹⁴³ D. Gunning, *Race and Racism in Black British and Asian Literature* (Liverpool; Liverpool University Press, 2010), p.108.

became a way for both first and second-generation Irish, in the words of Shane McGowan, to allow them to 'feel alright about being Irish'.¹⁴⁴

The fictional narratives of Dan Murray and Eddie Virago provide literary bookends for different experiences of migration and Diaspora in Britain. They are examples of a population, although remaining over represented in manual and unskilled trades that is far from homogenous. They also show that it is folly to try and freeze the imagined nation. Those Irish migrants arriving in Britain are much more than navvies and muckshifters, they are an economically diverse population. They rejected the older, declining Victorian cities, such as Liverpool and followed the British economy as it became concentrated in the Greater South-East. Whilst the primary reason for leaving Ireland would remain economic, others were using migration as an escape from social pressures and because they did not fit in with societal norms. This was not a population fleeing into exile from an oppressive political regime. Oppression could be found in Ireland, but this came from societal conventions, morals and traditions. Feelings of exile from modern Ireland would be because of societal pressure as experienced by Eddie in *Cowboys and Indians*; they were not a horde of nationalist exiles. This was a movement of population from one European democratic state to another modern European democratic state. Those that made their home in Britain would find themselves shaped by societal, political and economic changes in Britain and Ireland. They would retain a cultural identity that occasionally looked to the past, however for the majority it would mean living within the daily routine of British civic-society. The Irish in Britain are a diverse population, from muckshifter to punk and each experience of emigration or Diaspora was no less authentic than the other.

¹⁴⁴ S. McGowan, *The Irish Post*, 10th October 1987.

Chapter Three

Interrupting the Rebuilding of Post-War Britain

*What of The Future?*¹

Geoffrey Bing asked, 'What of the Future?' as the 'Irish Question' became an unwelcome interruption to the rebuilding of post-war Britain. Although he was discussing the future of Ireland, the British were asking the same question. Despite this focus on the prospects of the years to come and such innovations as the Welfare State, the rebuilding of the UK was a return to the pre-war British political project which would be held together by the aggregate of the Anglican Church, Parliament and the Monarch. The new Jerusalem of the Labour Party would be created within a traditional, orthodox British state. As shown by Moulton, stability was the key pre-war British political project and British politicians wanted this to continue.² There would be no room for militant nationalism or factionalism; Ireland disappeared within this project, even if the Irish in Britain did not. Ireland, by the establishing of the Republic of Ireland, (although the official name of the state remained Éire), now reminded the British Parliament that it had not gone away.

In 1948 Eamon De Valera lost the General Election and was replaced by John A. Costello. De Valera responded with an old tactic; he took his campaign to the Irish abroad. This included a visit to Britain. He was bringing with him an old message and an old political strategy and, as Kelly has concluded, revealed his inability to formulate anything new when it came to Irish nationalism and partition.³ He remained an old general, fighting old battles on old battlefields. He would visit multiple towns and cities to speak to the Irish in Britain. In Liverpool at the Boxing Stadium somewhere in the region of 7000 people turned out in to hear him speak.⁴ This though was not a universal welcome from Liverpool as a minor scuffle

¹ G. Bing, *John Bulls other Ireland* (London: Tribune Group), December 1950.

² M. Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.5.

³ S. Kelly, 'A Policy of Futility: Eamon De Valera's Anti-Partition Campaign, 1948-1951', *Études irlandaises*, 36-2, 2011.

⁴ *The Irish Times Pictorial*, 'Irish Newsweek Spotlights: Mr De Valera opens anti-partition drive', 16th October 1948; S. Kelly, 'A Policy of Futility: Eamon De Valera's Anti-Partition Campaign, 1948-1951'.

broke out resulting in a photographer's camera being smashed.⁵ This was not the only protest as 1500 members of the Orange Order organised their own public meeting to oppose the visit.⁶ These protests continued in Birmingham as he was showered in Orange confetti entering the Student Guild at Edgbaston and an Orange Banner was draped from the balcony.⁷ De Valera also held events in Cambridge, Cardiff, Glasgow, London, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield. He could attract a sizeable crowd wherever he went. In Manchester, similar numbers to those in Liverpool were recorded as people attended from all parts of Lancashire and coaches carried people from Leeds, Rotherham and Sheffield.⁸

These crowds though give a false indication of the political importance of Ireland and partition to the Irish in Britain. They were an opportunity to attend to the old chief, to applaud and honour fellow comrades. They were not a call to the banners of Irish nationalism for the new generations living in Britain. This chapter will show that despite the efforts of groups such as the Anti-Partition League, The Connolly Association and The Friends of Ireland, they failed to create a political Diaspora. Ireland increased in saliency for British politicians due to actions by politicians in Dublin, not because of pressure being applied by the Irish in Britain.

(3.1) Costello Declares Republic, Otherwise No Change

The banner headline of the *Irish Democrats* December issue in 1948 read 'Costello Declares Republic'; the tagline continued, 'otherwise no change'.⁹ This unwittingly summed up both the legislative situation of the Irish in Britain and their reaction. The lack of excitement for the new Republic expressed by the headline was matched by that of the Irish in Britain. What was the cause of this failure to raise the levels of enthusiasm or interest in partition?

Following the Irish Civil-War Ireland Mahony and Delanty argue that Irish identity was framed by the clerical and the political.¹⁰ The Catholic Church produced a form of

⁵ 'Fight at Irish Meeting Scuffling Mars Liverpool Session Protesting at De Valera Aims', *The New York Times*, 12th October 1948.

⁶ 'Skirmish at Orange Demonstration, Press Camera Smashed', *The Manchester Guardian*, 12th October 1948.

⁷ 'Two Anti-Partition Meetings in Birmingham', *The Irish Times*, 1st February 1949.

⁸ 'Irish Partition Mr. De Valera's Visit to Manchester', *The Manchester Guardian*, 8th November 1948; 'Mr. De Valera Sets Out About Moving a Mountain, Misunderstanding of Eire's Aims', *The Manchester Guardian*, 22nd November 1948.

⁹ 'Costello Declares Republic, otherwise no change', *The Irish Democrat*, December 1948.

¹⁰ P. Mahony & G. Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History Nationalism, Identity and Ideology* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001).

identity based on respectability; it was anti-radical, the promoter of a strict moral code and unreflective obedience, conventional and seeking to reproduce a social organisation that was hierarchical. It wanted to produce respectable Catholics for integration into British society, to reinforce religious identity; it did not want a separatist community bonded by nationalism.¹¹ Mahony and Delanty further argue that the political vision of the Irish state was one based on democracy, political populism, respectability and the dutiful citizen. The conclusion is that these twin identity projects came together to create a national identity based on a clerical-constitutionalist project.¹² They argue that this form of classical Irish nationalism and identity remained in place until the Second World War.¹³ Political extremes would remain unpopular with Irish voters and after the war they continued to cast their lot in with the dominant political parties. Having experienced all points on the political compass growing up in pre-war Manchester, Labhrás Ó Nualláin concluded that he would not become a Christian Brother, a communist or IRA member.¹⁴ Regan was therefore correct to conclude that Irish politics ‘in an age of extremes, remained defined by moderation rather than by excess’.¹⁵ If the Irish were not interested in militant politics, as Moulton has concluded, then British political parties were just as keen to keep the Irish away from political extremes and Ireland out of British politics.¹⁶

During the inter-war years, Liverpool was the exception to this where T. P. O’Connor remained in the House of Commons as the Nationalist MP for the Scotland Division until his death in 1929.¹⁷ The significance of O’Connor has been overplayed and his performance as an MP was not without criticism.¹⁸ The idea of an Irish vote and the power of the Irish lobby began to be exaggerated at an early stage.¹⁹ After 1922 the issue of Ireland in British politics

¹¹ M. Hickman, ‘Differences, Boundaries, Community, The Irish in Britain’, *Advances in Art, Urban Futures*, Vol. 2, 2002.

¹² Mahony & Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History*, pp.134-135.

¹³ Mahony & Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History*, p.156.

¹⁴ L. Ó Nualláin, *Memoir of an Irish Economist Working Class Manchester to Irish Academia* (Conamara: Ardcrú Books, 2015), pp.71-72.

¹⁵ J. M. Regan, *The Irish counter-revolution, 1926-1936: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999), p.382.

¹⁶ Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England*, pp.3-4.

¹⁷ M. Macdonagh, ‘O’Connor, Thomas Power (1848–1929)’, rev. Marie-Louise Legg, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35286>, accessed 20 Sept 2014].

¹⁸ J. Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse, The History of the Liverpool-Irish 1800-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p.147.

¹⁹ G. Ó Tuathaigh, ‘A tangled legacy: the Irish inheritance of British Labour’, in L. Marley, (ed), *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland The Cause of Ireland, the cause of Labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 28.

was largely subdued. Despite O'Connor's continued electoral success, it was becoming clear that Irish nationalism in Liverpool had reached its high water-mark, and by 1923 the *Liverpool Catholic Herald* was reporting that the electorate 'are convinced of the futility of Irish nationalism in England and are aware of the true democrat [sic] reforms which can be made by the Labour Party in power.'²⁰ Further to this, Liverpool was not having its Irish population replenished; its population was also being dispersed to suburbs and new towns. Irish migrants were also being directed and pulled in the direction of a changing British economy. In Liverpool, Irish nationalism was thus rapidly losing its ability to be transmitted by a population that was not being replenished.

In post-1945 Britain the most important outlet for Irish nationalism in Britain was the Connolly Association. The Connolly Association can trace its roots back to 1938, but it was after the Second World War that its most important member joined the organisation.²¹ Desmond Greaves galvanised and organised the Connolly Association. His political outlook was formed during the 1930s as the three great political philosophies of the 20th Century, Democracy, Fascism and Communism, were battling for the control of Europe. Greaves would become a committed Marxist and would remain a member of the Communist Party for the rest of his life. In 1948, he became the editor of its newspaper the *Irish Democrat*. The Connolly Association was a mix of Irish Nationalism, Socialism, Republicanism and internationalism. Its newspaper produced a wide range of articles which included politics, literature and the Irish language. It wanted not only to mobilise the Irish in Britain as a political community, but also to forge links with the wider British working class and British Trades Unions.

It was Greaves' view that the best way to overcome the partition of Ireland was for the Unionist regime in Northern Ireland and its practices to be exposed to the widest possible audience, which would, in turn allow the Connolly Association to form alliances within wider British society and increase the political pressure on Stormont and Westminster.²² He wanted

²⁰ Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse, The History of the Liverpool-Irish 1800-1939*, p.291.

²¹ 'History of the Connolly Association over sixty years of campaigning for Irish unity and independence' *The Irish Democrat*, On-line Edition, <http://www.irishdemocrat.co.uk/about/ca-history/>, [accessed 28th June 2015].

²² A. Coughlan, 'An Obituary Essay for the Irish Labour History Society C. Desmond Greaves', (Dublin: The Irish Labour History Society, 1990), *The Irish Democrat*, <http://www.irishdemocrat.co.uk/greaves/obituary-essay/>, [accessed 25th June 2015].

to use the British Labour movement as a political lever to increase the saliency of partition as a political issue for British politicians.

This idea of discrediting the Unionist regime in Northern Ireland, in the view of Hanley and Miller, was Greaves' single most important contribution to the arguments over the ending of partition.²³ This view is undoubtedly correct. This became the primary strategy of the Connolly Association after the idea was first formulated in 1955. Greaves' philosophy was published in a pamphlet entitled *What 800,000 Irish Can Do, For Ireland and Themselves*.²⁴ It is not surprising that this pamphlet was published by the Birmingham Branch of the Connolly Association. Greaves, during this period, regarded the Irish in Birmingham and Coventry as 'the most advanced in the country' and thought 'that it was tragic that we were never able to provide them with a decent leadership'.²⁵ He argued that the Irish in Britain should join not only the Connolly Association but the wider British Labour movement and that partition could be ended through a united class struggle. Although a staunch believer in the nation-state and self-determination, Greaves' membership of the Communist Party left him and the Connolly Association open to attack. There was no room for Communism in the clerical-constitutionalist politics of post-war Ireland.

In 1958 a small Connolly Association rally in London found itself outnumbered by a larger rally organised by Sinn Féin and the Irish National Union Group who taunted the Connolly Association with cries of 'No Communists in Ireland', 'No Moscow in Dublin' and 'Irish traitors taking Moscow money'.²⁶ The Marxism of Cathal Goulding and liberationist politics was still a few years away. Sinn Féin in London was not a representative of or, perhaps more accurately, could not create, or find, at this juncture, an Irish proletariat in London. To find the reason for this, the researcher needs to return to Ireland for answers. Ireland remained Catholic and conservative and Sinn Féin had not yet returned to the social Republicanism of the 1930s; nor were they ready to embrace the newly emerging international revolutionary movements that appeared around the world.²⁷ Socialism was a word scarcely

²³ B. Hanley & S. Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers Party* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp.36-37.

²⁴ The Connolly Association, *What 800,800 Irish Can Do For Ireland and Themselves* (Birmingham: The Connolly Association, 1955).

²⁵ D. Greaves, *Reminiscences of the Connolly Association* (London: An Emerald Jubilee Pamphlet, 1978), p.26

²⁶ 'Connolly Club Rally Flops', *The Irish Times*, 14th July 1958.

²⁷ Hanley, & Millar, *The Lost Revolution The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers Party*, p.21; J. Bower-Bell, *The Secret Army The IRA* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1997), p.340-341.

found in Irish politics during this period; the merest hint of it would result yet another 'red scare' by politicians and newspapers in Ireland.²⁸ These scares were easily transmitted to Britain by friends, family and newspapers.

Despite the small numbers, the Connolly Association continued with its campaigns; in 1960 it marched in Manchester to protest about prisoners being held in Belfast who had not been charged or undergone trial.²⁹ The march, the picket and the pamphlet were to be the main tactics of the Connolly Association throughout the 1950s and 1960s. These were some of the most active years for the Connolly Association. Jackson estimated that the *Irish Democrat* had a circulation of over 6000.³⁰ However, Greaves makes it clear that selling the *Irish Democrat* was a difficult task and that only 'The Manchester branch fully understood the importance of the *Irish Democrat*'.³¹ He placed sales at 1500 for several years and despite efforts to organise in Glasgow, in Greaves' view, 'the sectarian issue clouded everything'.³² Given the small numbers that actually attended the demonstrations and rallies organised by the Connolly Association, and the figures quoted by Greaves, Jackson's estimate is clearly excessive.

The Pope had declared that the Connolly Association was an organisation used for 'the dissemination of Communist doctrine' and that Communism had been declared as 'intrinsically evil'.³³ Emmet O'Connor regards the period from the 1930s to the end of the 1960s as the 'golden age of Irish-communism'.³⁴ In particular this Irish anti-communism was focused on being anti-Stalinist as it was anti-Communist.³⁵ Communism and Socialism were viewed as a threat to the church. Most European socialism was anti-clerical and for the greater part of the post-war period the Catholic Church leadership made it clear that it did not differentiate between the various forms of socialism. Any migrant leaving Ireland during this period would have been familiar with Catholicism's warnings against Communism. Some of

²⁸ D. Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland* (London: Profile Books, 2005), pp. 492-495.

²⁹ 'Release Irish Prisoners Plea to Government', *The Guardian*, 19th September 1960.

³⁰ J.A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p.125.

³¹ Greaves, *Reminiscences of the Connolly Association*, p.27.

³² Greaves, *Reminiscences of the Connolly Association*, p.28.

³³ 'Irish Clubs used to Disseminate Communist Propaganda', *The Manchester Guardian* 13th Feb 13, 1956. For further reading see Pope Pius XII *Encyclical on Communism & the Church in China* and *The Decree on Excommunication of Communists*, (1949).

³⁴ E. O'Connor, 'Anti-Communism in twentieth-century Ireland', *Twentieth Century Communism* No.6, 2014, pp.59-81.

³⁵ Ó Nualláin, *Memoir of an Irish Economist Working Class Manchester to Irish Academia*, p.71.

these took shape in the form of Lenten letters published in the national press. Migrants were told before leaving Ireland that no sacrifice was too great to defeat communism.³⁶ In 1949 Dr Browne, Bishop of Galway, had attacked the Connolly Association claiming that they were 'trying to make recruits for Russian Communism'.³⁷ English journalist and former Communist, Douglas Arnold Hyde regularly used his column in the *Catholic Herald* to condemn the Connolly Association.³⁸ He regarded the Connolly Association as 'the Church's most cunning and active opponent.'³⁹ In contrast, Sean O'Faolain warned that 'Nationalism has become merged and is indistinguishable from Catholicism' and that because of this Irish Nationalism had failed to create anything new.⁴⁰ The Irish in Britain could find plenty of advice telling them how to be Irish, but almost none asked them how they saw themselves. Despite this bombardment of anti-Communist rhetoric and condemnation of Irish Nationalism, the Connolly Association was selling *The Irish Democrat* under the noses of the Catholic leadership in the United Kingdom, outside Westminster Cathedral. When challenged, the seller denied he was a Communist and was in fact a member of the Labour Party.⁴¹

It was not just the Catholic Church that wanted nothing to do with Communism. The Anti-Partition League was established in 1945. It was nationalist, conservative and Catholic. This would make future relationships with other groups such as the Connolly Association in Britain difficult. In 1951 at its annual conference in Sheffield it banned Communists from its membership.⁴² If the Catholic Church did manage to convince many Irish citizens in Britain not to succumb to the political ideology of the Connolly Association, then for those committed to Irish nationalism there was an alternative. In 1947 at a meeting in Manchester a constitution was created to unify the Anti-Partition League in Britain. In attendance were Hugh Delargy, Cahir Healey, Eamonn McAtee and from Fianna Fail, it's General Secretary, Tom Mullins.⁴³ In October the group's executive council set out its view that 'all Irish people living in Britain,

³⁶ 'No sacrifice too great to defeat Communism', *The Irish Times*, 13th February 1956; 'Danger of Communism Stressed in Pastoral Letters', *The Irish Times*, 29th February 1960.

³⁷ *The Catholic Herald*, 11th March 1949.

³⁸ T. Philpot, 'Hyde, Douglas Arnold (1911–1996)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

³⁹ *The Catholic Herald*, 29th July 1955.

⁴⁰ S. O'Faolain, 'Why I Am not a Nationalist', *Sunday Independent*, 20th June 1948.

⁴¹ *The Catholic Herald*, 11th June 1948.

⁴² *The Catholic Herald*, 1st June 1951.

⁴³ 'Irish Partition League for Its Abolition', *The Manchester Guardian* 3rd February 1947.

irrespective of their politics, should place their duty to Ireland first.' It was concerned over the 'lack of interest' shown by the new Labour Government over partition and that it had now created a plan of campaign to influence the Irish vote in Britain.⁴⁴

As noted, De Valera was invited to Britain in 1948 by the Anti-Partition of Ireland League to campaign against the continued partition of Ireland. He had been carefully constructing his image as 'chief' since 1922 and Alvin Jackson concluded that he had become 'the self-appointed guardian of the national conscience'.⁴⁵ Jackson is only partially correct; his version of the national conscience was constantly supported by the Irish electorate. It was his carefully constructed image as the chief that would be presented to the Irish in Britain. The *Guardian* reported that much of what De Valera said to the gathered crowds was largely 'historical' but did contain references to Northern Ireland, attacking gerrymandering in Northern Ireland and telling the audience that 'one partitionist vote can count for as much as two anti-partitionist votes'.⁴⁶ The visit did not escape counter-demonstrations from the local Orange Order and cries of 'throw him in the Mersey' when his visit was raised at the Conservative Party Conference that was being held in Llandudno.⁴⁷

De Valera would carry his campaign to other British cities. In Birmingham, he again raised the issue of gerrymandering in Northern Ireland.⁴⁸ A booklet produced for his visit to Birmingham in 1949 reveals much about the nature, content and context of the campaign. The leaflet demanded the support of all Irish citizens living in Britain for the campaign and even went as far to say that those 'who hang back are unworthy of the name of Irishmen and are unworthy of freedom'.⁴⁹ He was presented to Irish citizens in Britain as 'the leader of his people'.⁵⁰ De Valera, remained 'chief' of the Irish Nation even if Costello was Taoiseach. De Valera was proclaimed to be the 'personification of the Irish Race' and was the one true link with the events of 1916 - it was to De Valera that the Irish living outside Ireland owed their loyalty, not to Costello.

⁴⁴ 'Irish in Britain must place duty to Ireland first', *The Irish Times*, 13th October 1947.

⁴⁵ A. Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p.289.

⁴⁶ 'De Valera Opens his campaign against Partition Enthusiastic Welcome by Liverpool Irish', *The Manchester Guardian* 11th October 1948.

⁴⁷ *The Catholic Herald*, 15th October 1948.

⁴⁸ 'De Valera Talks of Gerrymandering', *The Observer*, 30th January 1949.

⁴⁹ The Anti-Partition of Ireland League, *Eamon De Valera in Birmingham*, 29-31 January 1949.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Hugh Delargy, Labour MP for Miles Platting, would recall his frustration with De Valera and his 1948 visit. Delargy thought that ‘the meetings were all flops’ of no true political use where the ‘tribesmen met to greet the Old Chieftain’. They were public extensions of private memories. The reason for De Valera’s visit was all too clear. He was establishing himself as the true Republican candidate for the voters in Ireland and paying no attention to organising any potential Irish vote or lobby in Great Britain despite having willing supporters such as the Friends of Ireland and the Anti-Partition League.⁵¹ These visits were an extension of a partisan campaign began by De Valera shortly after 1932 to appropriate the events of 1916-1922 to use commemorations as public displays of affirmation.⁵² However, criticism of De Valera by Delargy was also unfair. The meetings were largely gatherings of old comrades, but the Anti-Partition League (APL) had invited De Valera. They too had failed to recognise that these old communities were not being replenished with both ideas and people. Moreover, Delargy did not comprehend the changing character of Irish politics; that Irish politicians had quietly settled into the humdrum of consensual politics.

By 1949 The APL in Britain had grown to around 130 branches with an estimated membership of 10,000.⁵³ When taken as a group this number seems impressive, but when divided amongst its branches and spread throughout the UK those numbers become insignificant. Questions must also be asked about the membership. Some were inactive members, simply consumers of rhetoric, and it appears that only a small proportion were truly active. Consumption of political rhetoric does not always result in the transformation of the consumer into an activist.

Despite this, the APL was now willing to put this support to the test. It was decided that the league should at the next general election tell its members and Irish voters in Britain to oppose socialist candidates ‘if and when they consider it in the interest of the league to do so’.⁵⁴ The tactic was to put pressure on Labour candidates to support the end of partition in return for the support of Irish voters in their constituencies. This caused a dilemma for Hugh

⁵¹ B. Lynn, ‘The Irish Anti-Partition League and the Political Realities of Partition 1945-9’, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 34. No. 135 May 2005, p 329.

⁵² D. Fitzpatrick, ‘Commemoration in the Irish Free State: a chronicle of embarrassment’, in, I. McBride, I, (ed), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.184-186.

⁵³ ‘Anti-Partition League to Oppose Labour Candidates Advice to Irish Electors in Britain’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 31st October 1949.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Delargy who had previously agreed to act as the group's Chairman. Delargy had viewed the group purely as an organisation to be used as a lobby group. However, by deciding to take this distinctly electoral approach led to his resignation as in his view there was now the potential for a clear clash of interests.⁵⁵

The APL stood candidates in what were perceived to be constituencies with a large Irish electorate. In 1950 the *Liverpool Echo* carried a small biography of Mr Bernard McGinnity which it listed as the Anti-Partitionist candidate. It stated that he was a member of the central executive of the Anti-Partition League of Ireland and quoted him as stating that 'My policy is almost entirely in agreement with the Labour Party with two exceptions', these were the right to Irish self-determination and the right of parents to send their children to denominational schools and that those schools should be supported by the state.⁵⁶ Freedom of educational choice and the financing of Catholic schools had been a concern for Catholics in Britain since the proposals of the Butler Act had been published in 1944.

During the election campaign of 1951 other Anti-Partition candidates were given another opportunity to state their case. Mr Harry McHugh helped to set up Irish Anti-Partition branches in New Ferry, Birkenhead, Wallasey, Chester and West Wirral. He had previously completed five years' service with the Royal Air Force during the Second World War. As with other Anti-Partition candidates he also listed denominational education as an issue and stated that 'he had fought for democracy in Europe that was being denied by the British in Ireland'.⁵⁷

The Anti-Partitionist candidates failed in their campaigns during both elections. They were comprehensively rejected by the electorate even though they were standing in what were assumed to be traditional 'Irish' areas. In both elections, they failed to poll over 3% of the votes and failed to save any of their deposits.⁵⁸ Once again the APL had failed to recognise the fact that these areas were not being replenished with new arrivals. Voters in these areas also had other issues to consider. In Liverpool, denominational education was far more important than Irish nationalism and this can be seen in 1951 when 10,000 Catholics protested

⁵⁵ 'Anti-Partition League to Oppose Labour Candidates Advice to Irish Electors in Britain', *The Manchester Guardian*, 31st October 1949.

⁵⁶ *The Liverpool Echo*, 10th February 1950.

⁵⁷ *The Liverpool Echo*, 10th October 1951.

⁵⁸ J. Yonwin, House of Commons Research Paper 04/61, *UK Election Statistics:1918-2004*, Social & General Statistics Section House of Commons Library, House of Commons, Westminster, London, 2004, p.31.

on this issue.⁵⁹ In Liverpool what existed was a Catholic vote, not an Irish vote. Even with the candidates combining the two issues they could not gain enough votes to make any impact on the elections. The 1951 General Election was a battle between Labour who struggling to rebuild the United Kingdom and had an aging leadership cadre and a Conservative Party which had learned its lessons from its previous election defeat and that was promising an end to austerity. There was no room for single issue parties or interruptions to this battle.⁶⁰

Before, during and after the 1950 and 1951 General Elections, political fissures were emerging from within the ranks of the APL. The permanent secretary resigned over what he viewed as the increasing influence of Fianna Fáil. Despite the conservative nature of the APL, the *Irish Times* concluded it was 'not the sort of organisation to be in charge of the anti-partition campaign'.⁶¹ It went on to condemn the message that the APL was trying to get across regarding it as belligerent and confusing. In a withering examination of the APL's general election campaign it viewed the tactics used as absurd. It was the *Irish Times's* view that any movement on partition would not be achieved by groups such as the APL, but by those Irish in Britain who in their thousands had 'attained respected positions in scores of communities throughout Britain: doctors, lawyers, businessmen'.⁶² Irish politicians wanted the Irish middle-class in Britain to create a leadership framework and infrastructure; its request went unanswered. Those on the British and Irish political fringe had no attraction for the middle-class Irish in Britain. Following the failure of its general election candidates and divisions and resignations it continued with its program of campaign. In 1952, it could still muster 5000 people to a mass meeting in Trafalgar Square. The 1916 Easter proclamation was read to the crowd and there were speeches from Irish Senator P. F. Baxter and TD Sean MacBride.⁶³ Such demonstrations were not restricted to London. The APL Central Executive Council held its annual meeting in Bradford in 1952.⁶⁴ In 1953 Sean MacBride once again addressed an audience in Britain, this time in Sheffield.⁶⁵ In 1955, the APL decided not to put up any

⁵⁹ *The Liverpool Echo*, 22nd October 1951.

⁶⁰ B. Purdie, 'Where the Tories rule: Geoffrey Bing MP and Partition', in, L. Marley (ed), *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland The Cause of Ireland, the cause of Labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p.107.

⁶¹ 'London Letter: 59 Fleet Street, Wednesday Night', *The Irish Times*, 19th October 1950.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ 'Irish speakers in London', *The Irish Times*, 14th April 1952.

⁶⁴ 'Sidelights on British attitude', *The Irish Times*, 24th December 1952.

⁶⁵ 'Partition an issue for British People', *The Irish Times*, 23rd March 1953.

candidates for elections but for its members to 'oppose all candidates opposed to the unity of Ireland'.⁶⁶ However, none of this activity can hide the fact that as an organisation the APL was struggling to survive.⁶⁷ By 1958 it was being reported that the APL had 'given up altogether any hope of building a national organisation.'⁶⁸ The best attempts of the Connolly Association and the Anti-Partition League had failed to raise the saliency of Ireland in British politics or to rouse the interest of the Irish in Britain. This was comparable to the reaction of the Irish electorate in the Republic of Ireland, where radical Republicanism had been confined to the green fringes of Irish politics. The same occurred in the United Kingdom.

If no pressure was forthcoming from outside Parliament, then could any pressure be applied from within Parliament? Individual MPs become interested in politics for many reasons. They may agree with a party ideology or have family interest or background in the subject. Whatever the individual reasoning, they all retain personal interests beyond party ideology. Following the end of the Second World War, those that retained an interest in Ireland came together to form the Friends of Ireland. The Labour Friends of Ireland was established by in 1945 by Hugh Delargy.⁶⁹ As well as Delargy, the Friends of Ireland Group included the following MPs; Richard Stokes (Ipswich), Valentine McEntee (Walthamstow West), Henry McGhee (Penistone), Dr H B W Morgan (North-West Camberwell, later MP for Rochdale and lastly Warrington), Thomas Skeffington-Lodge (Bedford), Fred Londen (Birmingham Deritend), James Hudson (Ealing West) and John Haire (High Wycombe). From Northern Ireland within Stormont, Harry Diamond (Belfast Falls) offered his support.

Outside the Labour Party there were two communist MPs that were supporters of the Labour Friends of Ireland Group. Willie Gallacher was already a prominent figure by the time he became MP for West Fife in 1935.⁷⁰ In 1945 Gallacher was joined at Westminster by Philip Piratin. Prior to becoming MP for Stepney, Mile End, Piratin had made a name for himself in

⁶⁶ 'League plan for general election', *The Irish Times*, 22nd April 1955.

⁶⁷ 'There's a little bit of Ireland by the Mersey but very little sentiment among the Liverpool-Irish', *Times Pictorial*, 1st August 1953.

⁶⁸ 'London Letter: 59 Fleet Street', *The Irish Times*, 5th August 1958.

⁶⁹ Delargy was the MP for Miles Platting. He was born in Manchester, the son of Bernard Delargy from County Antrim. During the Second World War he was mentioned in dispatches. A keen supporter of the Anti-Partition League, he was part of the pre-war Irish population that combined their Irish nationalism with British non-conforming Labour traditions.

⁷⁰ Prior to this he had been imprisoned 1917, 1918, 1921 and 1925 for his political beliefs and campaigns. Gallacher was a popular figure both inside and outside parliament. When he passed away in 1965, 5000 attended his funeral as another 20,000 lined the streets to pay their respects.

campaigning for better housing and rent-strikes.⁷¹ In London he met Sean Murray, future Chairman of the Communist Party of Northern Ireland.⁷² Despite meeting Murray and supporting the Friends of Ireland, he would remain silent about Ireland and partition. His political concerns remained rooted in the East End of London and not in Irish nationalism.

The Friends of Ireland primary goal was the creation of a 32-county Irish state. Although all its members supported this goal, differences within the group ensured that it never produced anything that could be described as a policy document. It was the view of the group that this was the only solution to ending discrimination in Northern Ireland and improving the relationship between Éire and the United Kingdom. It is estimated that its maximum membership was 120 members.⁷³ In 1948, 79 Labour MPs and a single Liberal MP signed a motion against the prohibition of Nationalist demonstrations in Derry. Not only was this motion against the restriction of demonstrations in Derry, but also the convention that prohibited the discussion of matters concerning Northern Ireland at Westminster.⁷⁴

On the surface, these numbers would appear to make the group a reasonably strong force within the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), however these numbers offered little support beyond the superficial. Despite having the structure of a formal lobby group, with Dr Morgan MP as Chairman, Stokes and McEntee as joint Treasurers, and whilst many may have professed support, turning this into a genuine political force was something that never happened.⁷⁵ The Labour Government was too busy re-building the United Kingdom and finding its place in new Cold-War alliances. It was not just from within Westminster that they struggled to attract a large and constant support. At public meetings turnout was less than impressive. In Earlstown, Lancashire, Delargy attracted a crowd of just 600 to hear him speak about partition.⁷⁶ Whilst this may have been locally impressive, nationally these numbers were insignificant.

⁷¹ 'Obituary Philip Piratin', *The Times*, 11th December 11, 1995.

⁷² S. Bowler, 'Sean Murray, 1898-1961, and the Pursuit of Stalinism in One Country', *Saothar* 18, 1993, pp. 41-53; L. Walker, 'Break the Connection with Capitalism', *Unity Special 80th Anniversary CPI*, June 2013, <http://www.communistpartyofireland.ie/unity/E-Unity-special-2013-06-08.pdf> [accessed 15th April 2016]; S. Murray, *Communist Party of Ireland Outline History*, (Dublin: New Books Publications, 1975).

⁷³ B. Purdie, 'The Friends of Ireland British Labour and Irish Nationalism, 1945-49', in, Gallagher & O'Connell, *Contemporary Irish Studies*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p.81.

⁷⁴ 'Forbidden Ulster Meeting Protest by MPs', *The Manchester Guardian*, 4th March 1948.

⁷⁵ R. Rees, *Labour and the Northern Ireland Problem, 1945-1951, The Missed Opportunity* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), p.106.

⁷⁶ 'Labour M.P and Partition Meeting in Manchester', *Fermanagh Herald*, 1st December 1945.

Although support for the group from within the ranks of the Parliamentary Labour Party was intermittent, this did not stop concerns about the group's activities being raised with the PLP leadership. Attlee and the PLP Chief Whip both met with the group attempting to control its activities.⁷⁷ As the PLP attempted to assert party discipline, splits within the group were also a problem. Since his election in 1945 John Haire MP had questioned the actions of the Northern Ireland Government and its 'pernicious misrepresentation of the policy of His Majesty's Government'.⁷⁸ Haire became critical of the Nationalist approach to partition taken by the Friends of Ireland Group. It was his firm belief that only socialist governments in both the North and South would deliver Irish unity. He concluded that 'The Irish people should forget the Battle of the Boyne environment, seek such means as would break down religious bias, and recognise that they were living in a post-war atmosphere'.⁷⁹ This resulted in a fierce defence of the Friends of Ireland by Delargy who accused Haire of accepting the 'Unionist line'.⁸⁰ Despite this criticism from Delargy, the idea of socialism as a solution to partition had also previously been put forward by Friends of Ireland member Dr H. B. Morgan.⁸¹

It is quite clear that the Friends of Ireland Group contained many differing views on both the standards of democracy in Northern Ireland and the issue of partition. As Bob Purdie has shown, Terence O'Neill was incorrect to dismiss the Friends of Ireland Group as a 'lunatic fringe'.⁸² Lunatics they were not, but they were clearly on the fringe of the PLP. They could be a noisy group, capable of making their voices heard, but with little true, formal support.

The primary concern about the Friends of Ireland for the British Government was that they would create problems for both the British constitution and the Commonwealth. In 1946 the Dominions Office circulated a memorandum warning against any pronouncements about partition as this would 'lead to serious trouble', and that as the Friends of Ireland were advocating a Cabinet mission to Ireland this would 'plunge us into difficulties'.⁸³ However, the ideological differences in the group meant that they were never a serious threat to the internal discipline, the policy commitments or legislative plans of the PLP. The Friends of

⁷⁷ L. Rees, *Labour and the Northern Ireland Problem, 1945-1951, The Missed Opportunity*, p.108.

⁷⁸ *Hansard*, Northern Ireland Government (Consultations), HC Deb 6th December 1945 vol 416 cc2516-7.

⁷⁹ 'Politicians Disservice to Ireland', *The Irish Times*, 12th January 1948.

⁸⁰ 'Mr Delargy refutes M.P.'s statement on partition', *Irish Press*, 14th January 1948.

⁸¹ Purdie, 'The Friends of Ireland British Labour and Irish Nationalism, 1945-49', *Contemporary Irish Studies*.

⁸² Purdie, 'The Friends of Ireland British Labour and Irish Nationalism, 1945-49', *Contemporary Irish Studies*, p.81.

⁸³ The National Archives, Kew (hereafter 'TNA'), CAB/129/13, Cabinet Memo, *Eire and Northern Ireland, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs*, 18th Oct 1946.

Ireland contained a heady mix of nationalism, internationalism, Catholicism and socialism and these fractures were never very far from the surface.

Bing and Delargy were the most able of the group when it came to debate and speaking on the issue of partition, but this did not stop Haire from publicly disagreeing with them. For Bing, the reason for the continuing segregation in Northern Ireland came from class divides. To maintain their position of dominance and class superiority, he reasoned the Unionist-controlled Stormont Government had to seek economic assistance from Westminster. Bing was not an Irish Nationalist. It was Bing's belief that if Labour could be convinced to use its power when in government to ensure that fair election practices were to be established, these class divisions could be overcome and this in turn would resolve the issue of partition.⁸⁴ Delargy fused his anti-partition ethnic-nationalism with left-wing politics and called for the removal of partition to be completed prior to any other political considerations.

The remaining members' political ideologies are complex and, as with Delargy and Bing, provided plenty of opportunity for conflict. Haire in 1950 was calling for those voting on proposed amendments to the 1920 Government of Ireland Act not to do so because of 'emotionalism'.⁸⁵ Haire (somewhat prophetically given the events of the 1974 UWC strike) warned the group that if it continued with an essentially ethno-nationalist approach to the issue of partition, then that would result in the majority of trade unionists in Northern Ireland backing the Unionist politicians rather than offering their support to their fellow working class.⁸⁶ Haire was the most cautious of the group and the least radical. It was his belief that, while standards of democracy in Northern Ireland did need investigation and reform, it must ensure that it produced a system of fairness for all and if that reform still resulted in a majority for the proponents of Unionism, then so be it. This stance was too much for Gallacher and Bing who accused Haire of Toryism.⁸⁷

Richard Stokes adds another layer of complexity to the relationships within the Friends of Ireland. As a fervent anti-communist, he even prohibited the export of products from his own business, Ransomes and Rapier to the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ So how did Stokes reconcile his membership of a group that had the support of two communists? The *Catholic*

⁸⁴ Purdie, 'The Friends of Ireland British Labour and Irish Nationalism, 1945-49', *Contemporary Irish Studies*, p.90.

⁸⁵ *Hansard*, Government of Ireland Act 1920, HC Deb 01 June 1951 vol 488 cc557-647.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Irish Press*, 'Mr Delargy refutes M.P.'s statement on partition', 14th January 1948.

⁸⁸ *The Catholic Herald*, 15th August 1947.

Herald described Stokes as a man who ‘finds himself at home with those whose temperament cannot tolerate political machines, clichés and the conventional rules of the game’.⁸⁹

The Friends of Ireland Group not only had to contend with in-fighting, but also with criticism from Ireland. For the *Irish News*, the ideology of the Friends of Ireland, Socialism and anything that appeared to endanger the division between the role of the state and the role of the Catholic Church was far too Rousseauian a concept writing that

The ‘Friends of Ireland’ are friends of Ireland only in order that the Irish may be turned into good little socialists like themselves. They have said so quite explicitly. It is friendship with a string tied to it...that wants to make Ireland and Britain the same, oblivious to the fact that our agricultural and industrial balance runs the opposite way round to theirs: that ...the nineteenth century was, for us, a chapter cut out of a book: that finally and most important of all, we as Irishmen, base our social architecture on the Christian ethic, and have therefore no use for state-worship in any form.⁹⁰

The Friends of Ireland never obtained truly popular support within the PLP, for most it had no political saliency and they offered nothing more than superficial support. Few received or responded to any lobbying from constituents or pressure groups. The group was not able to make the issue of partition significant enough to ensure that enough PLP members would transfer support to them over the official party policy, nor was there an option for potential supporters to oscillate between the positions. Most importantly, all the members of the group, and even those from outside of it, would only pursue the issue within the accepted procedural rules at Westminster. Ireland had to compete for parliamentary time with the Welfare State, education, or the economy and would remain low on the list of concerns for most MPs.

As a political force, the Friends of Ireland from 1950 onwards begin to disappear from Westminster. Valentine McEntee retired in 1950, Dr Morgan retired from Parliament in 1951 and Fred Longden passed away in 1952. Skeffington-Lodge lost his seat in 1950, Haire lost his in 1951. Bing lost his seat in 1955. Piratin was out of Parliament by 1950 when his Mile

⁸⁹ *The Catholic Herald*, 29th June 1945; Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the *Social Contract* described civil religion as the foundation of modern society, unifying the state, via ritual and ceremony outside Church dogma.

⁹⁰ Purdie, ‘The Friends of Ireland British Labour and Irish Nationalism, 1945-49’, in, Gallagher & O’Connell, *Contemporary Irish Studies*, p.82.

End constituency was abolished. Piratin's fellow Communist, Willie Gallacher was also out of Westminster in 1950, losing his seat in the General Election to Labour. Richard Stokes died in 1957. Slowly the Friends of Ireland Group faded away, leaving only Hugh Delargy. If the Friends of Ireland were not firm political soul mates, when it came to the issue of Ireland they were willing to be *compagnons de route*, the only problem being was that they could not agree on the route to take.

(3.2) The British Response to the Republic of Ireland

Although the APL, the Connolly Association, The Friends of Ireland and De Valera's tour of British cities were attempting to increase the importance of Ireland in British politics they were making little impact. Briefly the saliency of Ireland in British politics did increase, but this was due to pressure from Ireland and not from the Irish in Britain. Labour had supported Asquith during the third home rule debate of 1912-1914 and generally supported unification, even if it was not official policy. Following the Conservative and Liberal political blood-letting of 1922 the popular assumption is that the Irish vote in Britain transferred its allegiance from the Liberals to Labour. However, this was not a simple direct transfer of an ethnic block vote. As shown by O'Day, even during the debates about Home Rule, Irish support for the Liberal Party was complex, nuanced and one that was politically mature.⁹¹ Alongside this political maturity there were virtually no official ethnic constraints on political participation and there was a lack of skill by Irish politicians in their attempts to organise the Irish in Britain. Although the importance of the Irish vote in Britain was repeatedly used as either a bargaining tool or a political threat, O'Day and Ó Tuathaigh show that it varied throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods and its power was exaggerated.⁹² This mature participation during the Home Rule debates, was not a surrendering of their nationalism. Further, after 1921, later inter-war generations found that their nationalism, influenced by Davitt, Larkin and

⁹¹ A. O'Day, 'The Political Representation of the Irish in Great Britain 1850-1940' in, G. Alderman, (ed), *Governments, Ethnic Groups and Political Representation Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940* Volume IV (Dartmouth: New York University Press, 1993).

⁹² O'Day, 'The Political Representation of the Irish in Great Britain 1850-1940' in, *Governments, Ethnic Groups and Political Representation Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe*; G. Ó Tuathaigh, 'A tangled legacy: the Irish inheritance of British Labour', in, L. Marley, (ed), *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland The Cause of Ireland, the cause of Labour*.

Connolly, was compatible with their experience of working-class Britain and the non-conforming tradition of the Labour Party.⁹³

When Labour became the second largest party in British politics and the official opposition it had to show that it could be trusted with the constitution. It had to prove it could provide political stability, economic success and social reform. Labour came under little in the way of domestic pressure during the inter-war years about its Ireland policy.⁹⁴ The party found the long grass of Westminster a comfortable place for its Irish policy. It was Dublin, not Liverpool, Manchester or London that forced Labour to turn in its eyes to Ireland and away from Europe in the years immediately after the Second World War.

The decision by Costello to create the Irish Republic in 1948 forced the British Government into action. The creation of the Irish Republic was the final stage in what had been a long departure of the Irish state from the British Commonwealth. This was a serious and complex constitutional issue for the British Government. In response in the British Government under Labour Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, passed legislation, the Ireland Act (1949), which would challenge traditional definitions of belonging and how citizenship was imagined. Prime Minister Attlee and his Government declared that the Republic of Ireland and its citizens were to be regarded as 'not foreign'.⁹⁵ They would be a transnational population with a legitimate place within British society and given the same rights as British citizens, without being declared British subjects or British citizens.

Under the Act of Union, the Irish had been included in wider British society, but this time there was a crucial difference. The creation of the Republic of Ireland had created a clear formal separation between two modern sovereign states. This inclusion of a separate state's citizenry into another state's wider population, with the same rights and privileges, whilst not being given the same style and title, challenged British traditional definitions of who can claim membership of the nation and state. In 1949 the establishment of the Republic of Ireland by the Irish Taoiseach Costello finally removed any formal link with the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. This decision removed the last residues of British presence in Éire. The resolution by Costello to repeal the External Relations Act (1936) moved any lingering (and

⁹³ Ó Nualláin, *Memoir of an Irish Economist Working Class Manchester to Irish Academia*, pp 37-90.

⁹⁴ I. Gibbons, 'Labour and Irish revolution: from investigation to deportation', in, L. Marley, (ed), *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland The Cause of Ireland, the cause of Labour*.

⁹⁵ TNA: CAB/129/32, *Ireland: Report of Working Party Memorandum by The Prime Minister*, 7th January 1949.

already largely academic) powers of the British Monarch into the hands of the Irish President. The decision to repeal the External Relations Act and declare the republic was not welcomed by the Connolly Association. The *Irish Democrat* regarded it as a ‘colossal hoax’, a ‘deliberate attempt to hoodwink the Irish’ and claimed it was a ‘bogus’ republic.⁹⁶

The creation of the Republic of Ireland came at a time when Attlee’s Government was attempting to find a constitutional arrangement for the United Kingdom as it began to disengage from the Empire. The creation of British identity and the Empire are intimately linked. If the Empire was disappearing, what did this mean for British identity? This task was made even more difficult as the British Constitution is un-codified, it does not have a single core constitutional document but a collection of statutes, court judgments, treaties, unwritten conventions and royal prerogatives. Labour and Attlee’s concern was for the integrity of the British state and the Commonwealth, not to protect the interests of Unionists in Northern Ireland. Ireland leaving the Commonwealth would need serious consideration.

The constitutional position of Northern Ireland was given very careful examination by the British Government. It was decided that it would be a very ‘laborious task to undertake a detailed revision of the statute book with a view to adding an express reference to Eire’.⁹⁷ The creation of the Republic of Ireland meant that the title of the monarch had to be amended. The head of state could no longer lay claim to be monarch ‘by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the seas King, Defender of the Faith.’⁹⁸ This would clearly have to change. This would not only influence the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, but also have consequences for the relationship with other Commonwealth countries. The titles of the monarch could open new debates on the identities of other Commonwealth countries and their own ideas as to who should be their formal head of state. Also discussed was the title of the new Irish Republic’s representative to the United Kingdom. The term ambassador implied that there was a foreign relationship between two states. As the Government had declared that the Irish state was not to be regarded as a foreign county, the title of ambassador was a problem. This could potentially

⁹⁶ ‘This Colossal Hoax’, *The Irish Democrat*, December 1948; ‘Conscription, Exiles abandoned by bogus republic’, *The Irish Democrat*, April 1949.

⁹⁷ TNA: CAB/129/32, *Ireland: Report of Working Party Memorandum by The Prime Minister*, 7th January 1949.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

cause a grievance with other Commonwealth countries and the status of their own representatives.⁹⁹

There was another problem for any Irish representative to the United Kingdom. Only representatives from foreign states were exempt from paying income tax in the United Kingdom.¹⁰⁰ Under the existing tax laws, the Irish representative was not foreign, therefore would have to pay income tax. The thought of asking the Irish Government to change the title of their representative to High Commissioner so that they had the same exemptions as Commonwealth representatives proved to be a step too far, as was the thought of HM Government's revenue officials arriving on the Irish representative's doorstep demanding that they pay their tax bill. It was decided that discretion was the better part of valour and that, whatever the title of the Irish representative, they would have the same immunities and tax exemptions as other states' representatives and staff.¹⁰¹

If the title of the monarch or the status of the Irish representative to the United Kingdom's Government was going to give rise to debate, then the title and constitutional position of the remaining six counties of Northern Ireland was also going to give serious cause for concern. There was considerable discussion over the official title of Northern Ireland. The title of Ulster was the first choice for Sir Basil Brooke, the Prime Minister for Northern Ireland, who stated that 'the government of Northern Ireland would probably ask that their title should be formally changed to Ulster'.¹⁰² It was feared that if 'Ulster' was used to describe the counties of Northern Ireland this would open up the debate about the border as many, especially in the south, used the term 'Ulster' to describe the historic nine-county province.

However, it was not the desire to retain Northern Ireland that was the deciding factor in Labour's response to the new Irish Republic. It had to show the British electorate that it was a party of responsible government that protected the constitution and the Commonwealth. If other Commonwealth leaders did not agree to the Ireland Act (1949) this would mean the potentially embarrassing situation of either withdrawing the change in title or going ahead without the full consent of the other members of the Commonwealth. The

⁹⁹ TNA: CAB/129/37, The Lord Privy Seal, *Title and Status of Commonwealth High Commissioners*, Memorandum by the Lord Privy Seal, 3rd November 1949.

¹⁰⁰ TNA: CAB/129/32, *Report of Working Party Memorandum by The Prime Minister*, 7th January 1949.

¹⁰¹ TNA: CAB/129/32, *Ireland: Report of Working Party Memorandum by The Prime Minister*, 7th January 1949.

¹⁰² TNA: CAB/129/31, C. Attlee, *Republic of Ireland Bill: Effect on Northern Ireland*, Note by the Prime Minister, 7th December 1948.

prospect of an unseemly and very public argument amongst the members of the Commonwealth family would be politically difficult for the British Government and had the potential for further separation between Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth. The problem of the Commonwealth did not escape the attention of the political cartoonists who portrayed Attlee as a milliner who was attempting to create a one-hat-for-every-occasion solution.¹⁰³

Many within the British Government working party responsible for formulating the official British response supported the use of the title 'Ulster'. However, following recommendations by the British Representative in Dublin, which were put forward by the Commonwealth Relations Office, who were worried that adopting 'Ulster' as the official title could be used as anti-British propaganda in any anti-Partition campaign, it was decided that the title 'Northern Ireland' would be used.¹⁰⁴

Despite these attempts to avoid controversy over which title should be used for Northern Ireland, it did not escape the attention of those in Westminster. John Beattie, Northern Ireland Labour Party MP for West Belfast, told Parliament that 'whether they know or not, no longer can these separatists in the North-East corner of Ulster classify themselves as Ulster.' He would 'have liked to see some form of words in this Bill that the minority must be guaranteed the rights and protection of this Parliament.'¹⁰⁵

Attlee was keen to move any discussion away from partition, informing the cabinet in 1948 that he wanted 'to get [the] Eire [sic] [question] away from old UK/Ireland atmosphere.'¹⁰⁶ At the same meeting Ernest Bevin, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, declared that the decision to leave the Commonwealth was a 'well thought out part of the [anti] partition campaign.'¹⁰⁷ Bevin was concerned that if the Republic of Ireland joined the United Nations, pressure could be brought on the United States Government by the Irish vote in America. There was little if any display of concern over any reaction from the Irish population in Britain.

¹⁰³ D. Low, *Evening Standard*, 2nd November 1948, Associated Newspapers Limited, The British Cartoon Archive, The University of Kent.

¹⁰⁴ TNA: CAB/129/32, *Ireland: Report of Working Party Memorandum by The Prime Minister*, 7th January 1949.

¹⁰⁵ *The Ireland Bill*, Clause 1 Constitutional Provisions, Hansard, HC Deb 17th May 1949, vol 465 cc345-92.

¹⁰⁶ TNA: CAB/195/6, C. Attlee, *Cabinet Notebook*, 28th October 1948.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

The Second World War and Northern Ireland's role in it had not been forgotten either. A V Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty, told the cabinet that 'the 6 [counties] [enabled] us to win [the Battle of Atlantic].'¹⁰⁸ In Alexander's view, the strategic value of Northern Ireland was 'essential'.¹⁰⁹ In 1949 Herbert Morrison, the Deputy British Prime Minister, echoed Alexander's previous comments by telling the cabinet that during the Battle of the Atlantic the United Kingdom could not have survived without the security provided by Northern Ireland and that it remained in the interests of the United Kingdom for Northern Ireland to remain a part of it.¹¹⁰ In addition, the Cold War continued to creep into cabinet discussions about policy dealing with both Éire and Northern Ireland.

Unionism in Northern Ireland had been concerned about Labour policy on partition from the moment Labour won the general election in 1945 and Brooke did not waste this opportunity to make his feelings known. As Brian Barton has shown, he did so not without a certain level of political skill.¹¹¹ Attlee made it clear to his cabinet that previous discussions over the constitutional status of Northern Ireland had been uneasy and that 'The Government of Northern Ireland are not at present satisfied with the assurance given by the Prime Minister' over the status of Northern Ireland.¹¹² Soon after their General Election victory, the new government was receiving information about the situation in both Éire and Northern Ireland, with Sir John Maffey, British Representative to Éire (note he was not styled Ambassador) writing in a memo, 'Let me make it clear that if I were a Protestant or Presbyterian resident in Northern Ireland, nothing would induce me to accept citizenship under a Dublin Government.'¹¹³ He warned that the Unionist 'ballot box is not safe over a period against the Catholic birth-rate'; that 'The British Government cannot afford to ignore the pronouncement made in November 1944 by the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, the Most Rev. Dr Griffin, that 'there is religious persecution at the present day in Northern Ireland.'¹¹⁴ The government chose to ignore Dr Griffin.

¹⁰⁸ TNA: CAB/195/6, A.V. Alexander, *Cabinet Notebook*, 28th October 1948.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ TNA: CAB/195/7, H. Morrison, *Cabinet Notebook*, 12th January 1949.

¹¹¹ B. Barton, 'Relations between Westminster and Stormont during the Attlee premiership', *Irish Political Studies*, (1992), 7: 1, pp 1 – 20.

¹¹² TNA: CAB/129/32, *Ireland: Report of Working Party Memorandum by The Prime Minister*, 7th January 1949.

¹¹³ TNA: CAB/129/2, J. Maffey, quoted in, *Relations with Eire, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs*, 7th September 1945.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Whilst religious discrimination was being ignored, Aneurin Bevan, Minister for Health, raised questions about how elections were held in Northern Ireland and the character of those in the Northern Ireland Parliament. He told the cabinet that '[Conditions] of [elections] in [Northern Ireland] casts doubt on [respective] characters of [the Northern Ireland Parliament]'.¹¹⁵ He knew this would be a troublesome issue if it were raised during debate and suggested that should it need to be debated it should only take place after any new bill had been passed. He was worried that the Ireland Act, as it stood, could lead to accusations that the Government was 'conniving at gerrymandering'.¹¹⁶ To this Attlee's response was almost dismissive. He told the cabinet, 'both sides cheat at elections'.¹¹⁷ Morrison returned to the established convention that elections in Northern Ireland were the prerogative of the Northern Ireland Parliament, telling the cabinet that it was 'not our business' and that any debate would 'burn our fingers'.¹¹⁸ It was agreed that any further discussion on the franchise in Northern Ireland would be postponed.

The decision to declare those who migrated from the new Republic of Ireland as not foreign gave them the same constitutional rights as the native population, not just the ability to vote, but to sit in Parliament, to join the Civil Service and, if selected, the ability to sit on the Privy Council. This potentially gave any Irish person in Britain the opportunity to hold some of the most powerful positions within the British Government, even though the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom were no longer linked constitutionally and were separate international states. This was not lost on Anthony Eden, Deputy Leader of the Conservative Party, who commented that this was 'not an insignificant privilege'.¹¹⁹ Also in Westminster, Sir Hugh O'Neill, Ulster Unionist MP for Antrim, took the view that the decision 'is almost more than one thought possible'.¹²⁰ The Ulster Unionist MP, for Queen's University Belfast, Professor Douglas Savory, went even further and announced the declaration of the Republic was illegal.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ TNA: CAB/195/7, A. Bevan, *Cabinet Notebook*, 12th May 1949.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ TNA: CAB/195/7, C. Attlee, *Cabinet Notebook*, 12th May 1949.

¹¹⁸ TNA: CAB/195/7, H. Morrison, *Cabinet Notebook*, 12th May 1949.

¹¹⁹ A. Eden, *The Manchester Guardian* 'Mr Attlee on the Partition of Ireland', 12th May 1949.

¹²⁰ H. O'Neill, *The Manchester Guardian* 'Mr Attlee on the Partition of Ireland', 12th May 1949.

¹²¹ 'M.P Says Republic of Ireland is Illegal Term', *The Irish Times*, 27th November 1948.

In response to these criticisms, Attlee spoke warmly of the relationship between the now separate United Kingdom and the new Republic. Speaking on behalf of the Government he stated that ‘it regrets that Éire will no longer be a member of the Commonwealth’ and that the two states had ‘ties of kinship and traditional and long-established economic, social and trade connections based on common interest’.¹²² Attlee recognised the creation of a transnational relationship and the potential problems that any rise in ethnic nationalism could create for British identity in the new post-war world. He found a place for the Irish in Britain that would allow them to become part of his vision of a new deal for the dutiful citizen after the Second World War.

Other than some of the more fervent Conservative opposition and vocal expressions from the Unionists in Northern Ireland, the prevailing feeling within Westminster was that since the inception of the 1937 Irish Constitution, the bond between the Crown and Ireland had been tenuous at best, little more than a tissue of sentences to be argued over by politicians from all sides. Despite this, the constitutional position of the North was politically difficult for the Conservatives and any attempt at consensus would have been impossible without a firm commitment to the continued Union with Northern Ireland and that was precisely what Attlee’s Bill gave them.

The 1949 Ireland Act is clear on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. It states that the Union of Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom will remain and will not change without ‘the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland.’¹²³ The decision to declare an Irish Republic left Brooke to conclude that ‘a yawning gap between north and south which is unbridgeable’ had been created.¹²⁴ Attlee’s cabinet understood that the Unionists in the North would ‘never relinquish their grip over [the] minority.’¹²⁵

Attlee was not the type of Prime Minister who held a presidential style command over his cabinet, preferring to reach consensus than to giving orders. He was aware that to avoid a major constitutional clash in Parliament he would have to gain the support of the Conservatives. He also knew that any unilateral declaration would be impracticable. He informed his cabinet that any legislative promise to Northern Ireland must be supported by

¹²² ‘Britain not to consider Eire a foreign state’, *The Irish Times*, 26th November 1948.

¹²³ *The Ireland Act 1949*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1949).

¹²⁴ B. Barton, ‘Relations between Westminster and Stormont during the Attlee premiership’, *Irish Political Studies*, (1992), 7: 1, pp 1 – 20.

¹²⁵ TNA: CAB/195/7, *Cabinet Notebook*, 12th May 1949.

both Labour and the Conservatives. It must not simply be a verbal pledge by himself but must also have the support of Parliament. He told his cabinet 'we must do this.'¹²⁶ The Act was created to protect the structure of the state. In the immediate post-war world, the British Government had to show that it was stable and rebuilding. It had to protect the Commonwealth and ensure its international position. It could not do this if it could not maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom. The Ireland Act (1949) was not created to protect a British enclave.

The Conservative Party did not regard the Irish as significantly different from the wider British population. The Conservative view was that 'the Irish are not – whether they like it or not – a different race from the ordinary inhabitants of Great Britain'.¹²⁷ This forced inclusion into a single nation is another example of the positioning of the Irish in Britain as not foreign. This did not go unnoticed by writers such as Dónal Mac Amhlaigh who described his experience of being Irish in Britain during the 1950s. He concluded that 'independence notwithstanding, the Irish were a member of the four family British nation' and that many in Britain during the 1950s viewed the Irish as British whether you liked it or not.¹²⁸ The Government also concluded that 'an Irishman looking for lodgings is, generally speaking, not likely to have any more difficulty than an Englishman, whereas the coloured man is often turned away'.¹²⁹ This appears to contradict the large amount of anecdotal evidence of the existence of signs advertising no coloureds, no Irish, no dogs. In an age before social networking and smart-phones, verifiable evidence other than the anecdotal is hard to find, but this lack of evidence does not disprove the existence of such signs. The *Guardian* reported that such signs were 'familiar to all Irishmen who have worked in England', however it offered no evidence to confirm this claim.¹³⁰ That discrimination did take place is beyond dispute as can be seen in 1956 when the Wolverhampton employment exchange advertised posts for the Midlands Electricity Board which clearly stated, 'No Irish', which resulted

¹²⁶ TNA: CAB/195/7, C. Attlee, *Cabinet Notebook*, 12th May 1949.

¹²⁷ TNA: CAB/129/77, *Colonial Immigrants, Note by The Secretary for the Home Department and Minister for Welsh Affairs*, 22nd August 1955.

¹²⁸ D. Mac Amhlaigh, 'Documenting the Fifties', *Irish Studies in Britain Dónal Mac Amhlaigh Special Edition Documenting the Fifties*, No.14 Spring/Summer 1989.

¹²⁹ TNA: CAB/129/77, *Colonial Immigrants, Note by The Secretary for the Home Department and Minister for Welsh Affairs*, 22nd August 1955.

¹³⁰ 'Rising new Irish question Problem of immigration check', *The Guardian*, 2nd November 1961.

questions in Parliament.¹³¹ British society not only retained anti-Irish sentiment, but a lingering suspicion of Catholicism. In 1957 one poll found that 17% disliked Catholics and another in 1961 showed that 13% had a very poor opinion of Catholics.¹³² In her 1958 study, Ruth Glass found that 1 in 8 of the advertisements she found also had an 'anti-coloured' element. In 1959 she found that only 1 in 6 of those advertising accommodation, were willing to accept West Indians.¹³³ Racial thinking expressed through the prism of colour had become embedded in British society.

This was not the first-time discriminatory practices were discussed by the British Government. In 1950 a Cabinet Memo raised the issue of discrimination in the workplace and housing provision. It was acknowledged that 'there is some prejudice on the part of landlords and others against accommodating coloured people'. When it came to discrimination in employment it was noted that 'prejudice is exacerbated in areas where there is substantial general unemployment or in establishments where white women are employed'.¹³⁴ Unwittingly this memo also perhaps reveals something of the motives and origins of the 'no coloureds, no Irish, no dogs' signs. Most of the content of this memorandum was concerned with single male migrants. It continued to use the old themes of separating the right sort of migrant from the wrong sort. The prevailing view in British society was that many male migrants were unmarried and often undisciplined. It may well be that landlords and landlords were taking a similar line to the Government and were using these signs to ensure that they did not attract the 'wrong sort'. Undisciplined tenants could lead to expensive property damage that could often not be paid for by the tenant. The result would be lower rents and property prices and boroughs could become viewed as undesirable places to live and work in. This was ethnic and social profiling to protect property prices and the reputations of geographical areas.

There is another possible explanation for this social profiling. In inter-war Britain and earlier, even though working-class holiday resorts such as Blackpool were keen to promote their risqué reputation, holidays were disciplined affairs. Behaviour would be monitored by

¹³¹ *Hansard*, 'Vacancies Discriminatory Stipulations' HC Deb 5th June 1956, vol 553 cc43-4w.

¹³² C. Field, 'No Popery's Ghost Does Anti-Catholicism Survive in Contemporary Britain?', *Journal of Religion in Europe* 7 (2014), pp.116-149.

¹³³ Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, p.257.

¹³⁴ TNA: CAB/129/40, Memorandum by The Secretary of State for the Colonies, *Coloured People from British Colonial Territories*, 18th May 1950.

workmates, families and the landlady. The limits of behaviour were never allowed to venture beyond the respectable. This continued at home, before the emergence of the liberal society, class respectability and discipline were expected by British society. At work and at play, working-class communities had hierarchies that monitored standards of behaviour. The stereotype of the hard-drinking, itinerant Irish worker, was seen as outside the control of local communities and would not be welcome in a respectable boarding-house.

The view that the Irish were not a different race was a prevailing one within the Conservative Party during this period. Conservative opinion was that even if legislation was to be enacted to control Commonwealth migrants, then the Irish should be excluded. It would also be politically difficult for those members of the Conservative party who were now in Government, as any new legislation would be contradictory to views already expressed in opposition.¹³⁵ Sir David Maxwell Fyfe in 1949 stated that The Ireland Act would be 'remembered amongst the generous gestures in world history'.¹³⁶ In 1949, even if they did not wholly agree with the idea that the Irish in Britain were not foreign they were willing to accept it. It also gave the Conservative Party a possible answer to questions over immigration controls as in their view the 1949 Ireland Act had in fact made the British Isles, for the purpose of immigration, a single geographical area.¹³⁷ By 1956 it had been concluded that there 'are sound and convincing practical reasons for continuing to exclude citizens of the Irish Republic from immigration control.'¹³⁸ The conclusion in 1956 was that the status of the Irish in Britain as not foreign would continue unchanged.

In 1960 for the first time since 1905, a British Government considered an act of Parliament to restrict entry to the UK.¹³⁹ It would be the first to include those that had been or were still British subjects and Citizens. This decision was immediately controversial. The Conservative Government with the Commonwealth Act created the foundation of laws and statutes that were to mark out clear differences between those who were truly 'British' and those who were not. A cabinet notebook from 1961 showed the Government that immigration was going to be a thorny problem for them to deal with and in particular where the Irish

¹³⁵ TNA: CAB/129/84, *Colonial Immigrants, Supplementary Report on The Committee of Ministers*, 14th November 1956.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ The first modern attempt to restrict immigration was the 1905 Aliens Act.

would fit into any new legislation.¹⁴⁰ Home Secretary R.A. Butler made it clear immigration was not just a problem for the Conservatives, but also for Labour and that pressure from the opposition could not be sustained as public opinion was against them.¹⁴¹ This was not lost on Labour, who were fully aware that 'In Smethwick and Middlesbrough, ordinary citizens and young people, quite possibly with Labour connections allowed their irrational feelings against individuals of different colour to prevail.'¹⁴² Fear over being out of touch with its supporters meant that Labour would concentrate on ideas of multiculturalism and not challenge or repeal later immigration controls.

In Butler's view, the position of not including the Irish within the Commonwealth Act could be defended by arguing that the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland could not be controlled and that, if pressed, he had received promises of support from both Dublin and Stormont on the matter of border control. Again, as with the discussions that took place within Attlee's Cabinet, the Commonwealth and the attitudes of its members was not ignored. Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, told the Cabinet that the new legislation had left some members of the Commonwealth 'sore' about the lack of consultation with them.¹⁴³ The British Government understood whatever the stance they took over the proposed Commonwealth Act that it would be given a stormy passage through Parliament.

The debate about the Commonwealth Act in the House of Commons was a bitter one. There was open criticism from within the Conservative Party with Nigel Fisher, Conservative MP for Surbiton, regarding one of his fellow Conservative MPs support for the Commonwealth Act as 'a little like Hitler's – let us preserve the purity of the British race.'¹⁴⁴ Chuter Ede, former Home Secretary and Labour MP for South Shields, was also not afraid to refer to the events of the Second World War.¹⁴⁵ In his view immigration could only be solved by 'becoming out and out fascists' and that any attempt to control immigration was an 'indignity' and just as Hitler had declared that 'Every Jew shall wear a yellow badge', no one should have the 'indignity of having to wear a badge' who the 'Government would like to

¹⁴⁰ TNA: CAB/195/20, *Cabinet Notes*, 16th November 1961.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² F.Boyd, 'Dispelling race prejudice, Appeal to Labour Supporters', *The Guardian*, 2nd October, 1961.

¹⁴³ TNA: CAB/195/20, *Cabinet Notes*, 16th November 1961.

¹⁴⁴ *Hansard*, 'Immigration', HC Deb 1st Aug 1961, vol 645 cc1319-31.

¹⁴⁵ *Hansard*, 'Orders of the day, clause 1 application of part 1' HC Deb 5th Dec 1961, vol 650 cc1161-275.

exclude'. Ede continued his attack on the Commonwealth Act as the debate moved on to Irish citizens. Arguments between members began over any separate arrangements for the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Ede rose and reduced the argument to the absurd suggesting to the House that 'in order I may identify the Irish, every Irishman who comes from Northern Ireland shall wear an orange badge, and every Irishman from Southern Ireland a green badge'.¹⁴⁶ Despite some fine words from those opposed to the Commonwealth Act, others made their anti-Irish prejudice all too apparent, with one MP saying that the native population would be exposed to the risk of the transmission of tuberculosis from Irish migrants.¹⁴⁷ This was an old display of anti-Irish sentiment linking the Irish in Britain with dirt and filth.

Parliament was not the only source of pressure over the inclusion of Irish citizens in any new immigration legislation. It was publicly acknowledged that Irish labour was still important to the economic performance of the United Kingdom. Much of this labour remained seasonal and attempts to monitor or regulate the flow of seasonal migrants would almost be impossible.¹⁴⁸ Dominic Behan savaged the Government, writing publicly that the act was 'giving the green light to race hatred.'¹⁴⁹ The Conservative Government could also not keep secret the level of disagreement, and divisions were soon made public. There was sufficient unrest within Conservative parliamentary ranks that R.A. Butler, Deputy Prime Minister, who was responsible for the new bill, was called to a meeting of the parliamentary party to provide 'chapter and verse' to the assembled Conservative MPs.¹⁵⁰ Even this was not enough to stop some Conservative MPs from openly defying the official party line during debate in the House of Commons. Neither did it prevent further public criticism from the press. The *Guardian* concluded that it was simply a sign to be put up at ports of entry that read 'No Irish, No Coloured', rather than at the boarding house.¹⁵¹

Despite this continuing pressure, it was clear that the Government was not going to be turned on its decision over the status of Republic of Ireland citizens and their decision to

¹⁴⁶ *Hansard*, 'Orders of the day, clause 1 application of part 1' HC Deb 5th Dec 1961, vol 650 cc1161-275.

¹⁴⁷ P.M. Garrett, 'No Irish need apply: Social Work and the History and Politics of Exclusionary Paradigms and Practicises', *British Journal of Social Work*, 32, 2002, 477-494.

¹⁴⁸ 'Tories Cry Shame fury over in and out immigration plan for Irish', *The Daily Mail*, 13th November 1961.

¹⁴⁹ D. Behan, *The Daily Mail*, 'Where would England be without the Irish?' 3rd Nov 1961.

¹⁵⁰ 'Government Retreat Likely on Immigration', *The Times*, 18th Nov 1961.

¹⁵¹ 'Raising new Irish question Problem of immigration check', *The Guardian*, 2nd November 1961.

exclude them from the proposed Commonwealth Act. Part of the reason for this may have been the decision by the Irish Government to look at imposing its own immigration controls at ports of entry into the Republic of Ireland.¹⁵² The previous status of the Irish citizens in Great Britain was not lost on Francis Boyd, who, writing in the *Guardian*, recognised the non-foreign status of the Irish in Britain and that any new immigration regulation would alter that status. He also called into question the reaction of the wider British population who in his view did not regard the Irish as 'foreign' and to change that status would bring about a 'sharp reaction.'¹⁵³ In the end the act passed through Parliament with Irish citizens exempt. Despite the bitter words, in truth there was little resistance and when the House divided it was passed with a comfortable majority of 107 and received royal assent on 2nd June 1949. The Irish in Britain were to remain 'not foreign'.

The decision to regard the Irish as not foreign was acceptable to one-nation Conservatives who viewed the Irish as part of the British family of nations. It was also acceptable to those that were clinging to Britain's imperial past even though they now lived in a post-imperial world. This post-imperial melancholia was also present in the Labour Party and its own protests over the Commonwealth Act.¹⁵⁴ Hugh Gaitskell declared that 'These colonies are our responsibility'.¹⁵⁵ This question was not limited to the United Kingdom. France was asking similar questions about French identity following the conflict in Algeria.¹⁵⁶ For many within France the position over Algeria was simple, 'Algeria is France, not a foreign country'.¹⁵⁷ However by 1962 Algerians were no longer citizens, no longer French.¹⁵⁸ In comparison with the disputes that took place within French politics over the status of Algerians, a highly nuanced mixture of realism and post-imperial melancholia existed within British politics that could not be found in French politics.

During this period, Ireland caused considerable constitutional and international difficulties for the British Government. Unlike most European states, which after the Second

¹⁵² 'Irish Entry to Stay Free', *The Times*, 6th December 1961.

¹⁵³ F. Boyd, 'Devising a break on immigration Irish may be affected', *The Guardian*, 4th December 1960.

¹⁵⁴ P. Gilroy, P, *Postcolonial melancholia*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

¹⁵⁵ V. Knight, 'Butler move over Irish shock's MP's Fury at shut door bill', *The Daily Mirror* 6th December 1961.

¹⁵⁶ T. Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization, The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*, (London: Cornell University Press, 2006), p.228.

¹⁵⁷ Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization, The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*, p.6.

¹⁵⁸ Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization, The Algerian War and the Remaking of France*, p.236.

World War were become largely mono-ethnic, Britain was becoming more diverse.¹⁵⁹ To protect the constitution, the Commonwealth and the United Kingdom's international standing, Ireland had to be removed from British politics. They did not want Ireland or the Irish to add to the post-imperial crisis of Britishness. This provided enough common ground between Labour and the Conservatives to reach a consensus that the Irish in Britain were a legitimate part of wider British society and would remain 'not foreign'. Ireland would re-emerge as a problem that would bewilder Harold Wilson as he attempted to create a modern United Kingdom in the white heat of technology.

¹⁵⁹ Wills, *Lovers and Strangers*, pp.28-29.

Chapter Four

Upsetting the Plans of 'Good Old Mr Wilson'

'I want to twist his arm good and proper'¹

In preparation for the meeting between Harold Wilson and Terence O'Neill in August 1966 for talks over the political situation in Northern Ireland, discussions were held over the timetable and itinerary for the meeting. Harold Wilson and Roy Jenkins wanted to invite O'Neill to stay at Chequers, but Marica Williams (Wilson's Political Secretary and Head of the Political Office) in a memo objected to this, arguing that 'surely it would have been sufficient just to invite him for dinner'.² In his reply to Williams, Wilson said that he wanted to 'twist his arm good and proper' and admitted that Roy Jenkins was in full agreement and that it had originally been Jenkins' idea. Terence O'Neill did not stay at Chequers; the press was politely told that both men were engulfed with work and thus could not spare the time.³ Unwittingly, Wilson's hand-written answer reveals two things. Firstly, it demonstrates the influence that Williams had over Wilson. Secondly, it shows Wilson's belief in the old Labourist 'beer and sandwiches' tactic of deal making behind closed doors and that this would work with O'Neill. Unwittingly his correspondence with O'Neill reveals that Wilson was struggling to find a political 'fixer' in Northern Ireland; he had no Jack Jones in Northern Ireland. It is no small irony that Wilson would have to rely on O'Neill to play that role. It would be a role that O'Neill would be unable to fill.

Bew and Patterson argue that Wilson had a fundamental misunderstanding of the policies of the O'Neill government.⁴ Going further, they contend that the events of 1964-1971 were the failure of modernisation. They are supported by Tom Nairn who argues that 'The new 'troubles' came less from ancient genes than from modern aspirations'.⁵ There is much

¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, (hereafter MS Bodley): MS Wilson C.487, M. Williams, *Note to Prime Minister*, 19th July 1966.

² Ibid.

³ 'London talks were frank and free', *Irish Independent*, 6th August 1966.

⁴ P. Bew & H. Patterson, *The British State and the Ulster Crisis* (London: Verso, 1985), p.11.

⁵ T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1981), p.227.

to be said for their argument, but it does not tell the whole story. The rhetoric of modernisation was popular in both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. A significant consequence of its popularity was that it blinded Wilson to the politics of difference and to the deeply-entrenched oppositional identities in Northern Ireland. Bew and Patterson also fail to engage with the Irish in Britain, but they are not alone in that; neither Boyce nor Rose examine their response.⁶ One person that did examine their reaction was Eamonn McCann who concluded that in Britain there was no 'horde of proletarian Irish' ready to rise up in defence of Civil Rights in Ireland.⁷ This chapter has two objectives. First it will expand Bew and Patterson's argument, that Wilson's belief in modernisation and the classless society blinkered his response to Northern Ireland, Secondly, it will establish that Eamonn McCann's view was correct, contrary to those such as Lord Dubs and show that even amid trauma and violence, the Diasporic politics that he was looking for did not emerge from the Irish in Britain.

(4.1) Ireland in Westminster

Prior to his first election victory in 1964, the Labour Party under Wilson was busy establishing itself as a modernising force in British politics. Any interest in Ireland was confined to the back-benches. Labour had been out of power since 1951. The years between 1951 and 1964 have been described by Morgan as the zenith of one-nation conservatism.⁸ Labour had lost the popular vote and Winston Churchill became Prime Minister until his retirement in 1955. Anthony Eden then presided over the debacle of Suez. Harold Macmillan followed Eden and was a Disraelian one-nation Conservative. No attempt was made to reverse any of the social and welfare programs started under Attlee. Northern Ireland was left to slumber on the back-benches. This was not a consensus based on ideology. For Macmillan, this willingness to maintain the welfare state came from a moral duty; it was *noblesse oblige*. Further, the Conservatives were not about to undertake an about-face when they had previously supported the decision to regard the Irish in Britain as 'not foreign'.

⁶ Bew & Patterson, *The British State and the Ulster Crisis*; D.G Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); P. Rose, *How the Troubles came to Northern Ireland*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

⁷ E. McCann, 'Stirring the U.K. Irish', *The Irish Times*, 22nd March 1971.

⁸ K. Morgan, *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.158.

However, the memory of never having it so good thanks to Harold 'Supermac' Macmillan was being buried under an increasingly large canon of literature critiquing British society, its economy and its role in the wider world.⁹ The crisis of Britishness was now going beyond issues of identity and began to encompass issues concerning economic and international prestige. The pinnacle and most famous product of this dissection was *The Stagnant Society* by Michael Shanks.¹⁰ The subtitle *A Warning* is often neglected by those quoting Shanks as someone who captured the public mood at the time of publication. It was a warning to British society not to become buried under 'the rose-petals of a vast collective nostalgia'.¹¹ Wilson was to position himself firmly as a social and economic moderniser with what is still regarded as one of his most significant speeches, his iconic call for a new Britain to be created by the white heat of technology.¹²

As the new leader of the Labour Party, Harold Wilson was determined not to be swamped by the nostalgia of past glories. He was a politician created by his own northern, non-conformist middle-class background; he never lost these middle-class traits. He believed in a classless society and had no time for prejudice in any form. His memories of family hardship were never far away from his politics. He was using modernism to fight the battles of his past. Wilson, although often remembered as a politician with a belief in nothing, firmly believed that modernisation could deliver the classless society.

At a superficial level, the purpose of Wilson's 1963 speech was simple. It was part of a larger campaign to win the next general election. Labour had lost badly in 1959 and had an image problem. It needed to portray itself as new. However, when examined in greater depth this speech and its modernist message allowed Wilson to achieve several separate goals as shown by Crines.¹³ It separated Labour from the image of stagnation that surrounded the tweed and grouse moor image of the Conservatives. The passion to create a new and modern Britain was double edged. It also played on the anxiety of voters that the United Kingdom was being left behind in a world of increasing technological progress. Wilson set before those

⁹ Morgan, *Britain Since 1945: The People's Peace*, pp.197-238; D. Childs, *Britain since 1939: Progress and Decline* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 155-157.

¹⁰ M. Shanks, *The Stagnant Society, A Warning* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1962).

¹¹ Shanks, *The Stagnant Society*, p.29.

¹² H. Wilson, *Labour's Plan for Science*, Labour Annual Conference Scarborough (London: Victoria House, 1963).

¹³ A. Scott-Crines, 'Harold Wilson's rhetoric Revisiting the Wilsonian language of renewal', *Renewal*, Vol 22 No.3/4, September 2014, pp. 128-134.

voters that worked in these new technologies the outstretched hand of Labour to show that they would invest in them and not just in its traditional industrial heartlands.

Despite the efforts of the Conservatives to retain power, the mood in Britain was shifting, British society wanted change, and modernisation was now the keyword.¹⁴ The unity and stability that British society wanted after the Second World War was no longer enough. Stability was now seen as stagnation. The cosy pre-war vision of the United Kingdom that was the vision of the generation which framed Britishness through the prism of the Second World War was being questioned by a generation that had no memory of either pre-war Britain or the war itself.

Whilst there was no mass upsurge of feeling for radical change, British society now wanted a version of stability that was modern and forward looking. This included the 128 new Labour MPs, many from the professions, with their own visions of modernity and reform.¹⁵ Harold Wilson offered voters the image of a leader that embodied this vision. He was a popularist with a common touch. However, his modernist rhetoric masked many of the problems within British society and the economy. Some of the schisms within society had already burst into violence prior to his first general election victory. However, the language he used to sell modernity was well received by both those in older industry and those employed in new technologies. This was not ideological renewal, but it was ideological bridge building.

The belief in modernism was not just limited to Westminster. In the Republic of Ireland Seán Lemass was adapting the modernisation thesis for his own needs. Even before he took office the British Government had begun to view Lemass as a modernist and progressive.¹⁶ In 1960 a note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Derick Heathcoat-Amory, provided the British Cabinet with the Treasury an analysis of the new Taoiseach and the current state of politics in the Republic of Ireland. It depicted Lemass as 'a businessman, at the head of a more business-like administration'. The Chancellor's note informed the British Government that 'there have been signs that the Dublin Government are anxious to move

¹⁴ Morgan, *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace*, pp.237-242.

¹⁵ Morgan, *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace*, p.241.

¹⁶ B. Evans, *Séan Lemass, Democratic Dictator* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2011), p.229.

away from the negative attitudes of earlier administrations and to improve gradually relations with the north'.¹⁷

This impression of Lemass was provided against the backdrop of economic negotiations between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland that were taking place. The British Government wanted to assist Lemass, but was concerned about the reaction from the Commonwealth, Northern Ireland and the British taxpayer. The Treasury was worried that the British taxpayer may perceive any economic assistance as a subsidy for producers in a foreign country. Even if the Irish in Britain were legislatively not foreign, in terms of trade, Ireland remained a foreign country. They were also nervous that the Commonwealth would look upon any economic concessions with the Republic of Ireland as much more beneficial than those given to Commonwealth members. The Northern Ireland Government made it clear that it would not accept any agreement that financially benefitted producers in the Republic of Ireland.¹⁸

Despite these pressures the Treasury concluded that there would be economic and political benefits for reaching an agreement with Lemass and his Government. They recognised the importance of the Republic of Ireland as a trading partner. They were also worried about economic conditions in the Republic of Ireland. The British Government was fearful that there would be a negative international response if the U.K. failed to provide any assistance if the Republic of Ireland experienced economic decline. Another concern was that if the U.K. did not show that they were willing to assist the Irish Government in preventing economic stagnation, any resulting increase in unemployment in the Republic of Ireland may result in an increase in recruitment to 'terrorist organisations'.¹⁹ The one item that is missing from the Treasury analysis is immigration. Its omission exposes two possibilities, that the Treasury did not view it as important or that it was beyond its brief. The Treasury noted that Lemass had publicly committed himself to improving the Irish economy by negotiating with the United Kingdom. It was concluded that should the British Government respond negatively to Lemass then his business-like approach would not prosper. The hope was that this would continue to subdue the national question.

¹⁷ The National Archives, Kew (hereafter 'TNA'): CAB/129/100, D. Heathcoat-Amory, The Chancellor of the Exchequer, *Economic Relations with the Irish Republic*, 5th February 1960.

¹⁸ TNA: CAB/129/100, D. Heathcoat-Amory, *The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Economic Relations with the Irish Republic*, 5th February 1960.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The perception that Lemass was offering something new from Irish politics was also noticed by the British press. He was described as a 'shrewd, realistic thinker, who sees politics in terms of bread and butter rather than pipe-bands and bunting'.²⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* hoped that as the older generation disappeared from Irish politics a new modern relationship between the U.K. and the Republic of Ireland could be established. In the *Economist*, he was described as a 'realist' and praised for talking 'both publicly and privately in a refreshingly candid manner'.²¹ His plans for economic growth and expansion were published in the *Financial Times*.²²

The image of Lemass as business-like continued in the British press but not without criticism. The limited economic progress made by the Lemass Government was described as 'small beer' by one British commentator.²³ The British view of the prosaic pace of economic change may have been a consequence of Lemass' belief that economic growth should not have a negative effect on Irish cultural or social cohesion. Lemass was aware that as a Dubliner he was distrusted by some from rural Ireland and by cultural guardians such as Daniel Corkery.²⁴ The pace of economic change and the demands of metropolitan Dublin had to be balanced with the view from rural Ireland. His ministerial appointments, as shown by Evans, also uncover a conservative streak revealing the links with 1916 were hard to give up.²⁵ This supports Jackson's conclusion that Lemass represented a bridge between the old and the modern.²⁶ If the Republic of Ireland was going to open itself up to the wider world and peel away some of the layers of protection that isolated it from the emerging post-war globalism it would not be at the cost of the memory of 1916.

As Labour under Wilson began discussions over the creation of a free trade area between the Republic of Ireland and the U.K. and the possibilities of joining the E.E.C. the subtlety and modernism of Lemass had made an impression on the Labour Government. The British Government viewed the 'disappearance of old leaders' in the Republic of Ireland as significant. They hoped that a prosperous Irish middle-class and Irish business leadership

²⁰ J. White, 'Ireland and the World New Leaders, new policies', *The Manchester Guardian*, 9th June 1959.

²¹ 'Realism at Home?', *The Economist*, 26th September 1959.

²² S. Lemass, 'A Plan for Expansion', *The Financial Times*, 11th April 1960.

²³ D. Holden, 'New destiny for Ireland?', *The Guardian*, 17th September 1962.

²⁴ Evans, *Séan Lemass, Democratic Dictator*, p.212.

²⁵ Evans, *Séan Lemass, Democratic Dictator*, p.213.

²⁶ A. Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: Politics and War* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p.318.

cadre would encourage the view amongst the wider Irish population that the economy should be the primary political issue in Ireland, not partition. The prize for supporting Lemass for the British Government was not just an economic agreement between the two states. The goal was a 'political relationship with the Republic on a better footing than ever in the past'.²⁷

Wilson carried out a series of political gestures towards the Republic of Ireland to make sure the relationship between the two states remained on a better footing. The decision to repatriate the body of Sir Roger Casement was one of these gestures. The only concern for the Wilson Government was that he should be buried in the Republic of Ireland, not Northern Ireland, to avoid any problems with objections from Stormont.²⁸ The return of Casement's remains was generally received as a positive move in the relationship between the two states. Even the *Daily Mail* allowed former Unionist MP, H Montgomery Hyde to contribute an article regarding the past failure to allow Casement's burial in Ireland as 'a mistake that's taken half a century to put right'.²⁹ Later in 1967, the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins would agree to return the bodies of Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan, who had killed Sir Henry Wilson in 1922, to the Republic of Ireland.³⁰ This was due to a request from the National Graves Association of Ireland. This was also done to improve relations between Dublin and Westminster, although on this occasion it was met with concern from within Stormont by Craig and O'Neill as they felt that Sir Henry Wilson was a loyal supporter of Unionism and that repatriation should not be extended to those who they regarded as assassins.³¹

The return of Casement also helped to reinforce in Ireland the image of Wilson the moderniser. The remains of Roger Casement had been a lingering source of friction between the Irish and British Governments. There had been several attempts to secure the return of his remains to Ireland, which began in 1916 and continued including a direct appeal from de Valera to Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin.³² The decision to allow the repatriation of Casement was received favourably in the Republic of Ireland, Lemass said that the gesture

²⁷ TNA: CAB/129/123, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, *Negotiations for a Free Trade Area Agreement with the Irish Republic*, 8th December 1965.

²⁸ TNA: CAB/128/39, *Cabinet Conclusions*, Meeting of the Cabinet, 10 Downing Street, London, 14th January 1968.

²⁹ H. Montgomery-Hyde, 'Casement: a mistake that's taken half a century to put right', *The Daily Mail*, 24th February 1965.

³⁰ Sir Henry Wilson was MP for North Down (Unionist) and former Chief of Imperial General Staff.

³¹ 'Irish assassins to be returned', *The Times*, 30th June 1969.

³² D. Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2005), pp.564-565; K. Grant, 'Bones of Contention: The Repatriation of the Remains of Roger Casement', *Journal of British Studies*, 41, July 2002, pp.329-353.

should be 'universally welcomed' and de Valera said 'Every Irishman throughout the country and abroad will be happy to hear that the body of Roger Casement is at last in his native land'.³³

The Casement decision fitted neatly into Wilson's modernist agenda; however, this went beyond technological, political and economic modernism. The controversy over the Black Diaries and Casement's homosexuality had been a contentious issue. On one occasion when the matter of the potential return of Casement had been raised with Churchill his homosexuality was used as a reason by the Home Secretary Sir David Maxwell Fyfe to refuse the return of his remains.³⁴ His sexuality was also causing problems for Lemass, who decided not to press the issue of obtaining possession of his diaries for fear being labelled leader of the Government that authenticated the diaries as genuine.³⁵ The sexuality of Casement held little concern for Wilson. As well as believing in technological and economic modernism, he was a social modernist and would later decriminalise homosexuality in Britain in 1967. The return of Casement was another way to stress the social modernity of Wilson's Britain.

Whilst Wilson was using his modernist message to improve relationships with the Republic of Ireland, Terence O'Neill was attempting to promote his version of the modernism thesis in Northern Ireland. Unionism in Northern Ireland had been promoting itself as an integral part of modern Britain since 1947. The Ulster Office in London had been established to 'disseminate authentic information concerning Ulster and its life' and Unionist politicians were keen that Northern Ireland played a key role in the Festival of Britain.³⁶ There was also a concerted effort to reclaim the title 'Ulster' for Northern Ireland. In 1956 Sir Basil Brooke directed that the Ulster Historical Foundation be established.³⁷ It was later renamed the Ulster-Scot Historical Foundation. In 1962 the Belfast Municipal Museum and Art Gallery was transformed from a regional, municipal museum into the Ulster Museum and became a national museum, taking its place amongst the other national British museums.³⁸ The

³³ 'Casement's remains returned to Ireland', *The Irish Times*, 24th February 1965.

³⁴ Grant, 'The Repatriation of the Remains of Roger Casement', *The Journal of British Studies*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ 'Ulster in Regent Street', *The British Journal of Nursing*, Vol.95, April 1947, The Royal College of Nursing Archive, RCN Online [accessed 26th June 2015].

³⁷ *Ulster Historical Society, Telling the story of the people of Ulster since 1956, 'Our History'*, <http://www.ancestryireland.com/about-us/>, [accessed 26th June 2015].

³⁸ A. Sawyer, 'National Museums in Northern Ireland, Conference' proceedings from *EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen*, Bologna 28-30 April 2011, P. Aronsson & G. Elgenius (eds), *EuNaMus Report No 1*, pp. 625-652.

museum was extended and the Brutalist style of the extension reflected the Northern Ireland Government's wish to show Northern Ireland as part of technologically advanced British region looking to the future.

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum opened in 1967. This was in response to similar projects in the Republic of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Government did not want the history of Ulster subsumed into a project controlled and created by Dublin.³⁹ The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum was to portray an 'authentic' image of turn of the century Ulster. It was to provide a counter-point to similar museums in the Republic of Ireland and to promote an Ulster identity separate from the rest of Ireland. This re-claiming of the title 'Ulster' was an attempt by successive Northern Ireland Governments to show Unionists and wider British civic society that Ulster had a legitimate and authentic claim to modern Britishness. When he became Prime Minister of Northern Ireland in 1963 Terence O'Neill would continue this project and would personally promote it in British towns and cities.

In 1965 he arrived in London with the rest of the Northern Ireland cabinet to host a reception for over 500 guests from broadcasting, journalism, industry and commerce to promote 'the tremendous steps forward' that were taking place in Northern Ireland.⁴⁰ This confirms Ferriter's view that Unionists and O'Neill were worried about not only the loss of political control, but control of how they were portrayed in the media.⁴¹ A further attempt to promote Northern Ireland and its economy to a wider British audience was undertaken by holding a series of 'Ulster Weeks' throughout Britain. 'Ulster Weeks' had two objectives, 'the dissemination of publicity about Northern Ireland' and 'the stimulation of the trade outlets of Northern Ireland manufacturers in Great Britain'.⁴² These were a series of twice yearly 'trade and friendship promotions' that began in 1964 and ran until 1969.⁴³ Ulster weeks were held in Nottingham, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Sheffield, Leicester and Edinburgh.⁴⁴ Speaking in Leeds O'Neill told the audience at a civic lunch that 'It is important that different

³⁹ K. Bigand, *How is Ulster's History Represented in Northern Ireland's Museums? The Cases of the Ulster Folk Museum and the Ulster Museum* E-rea [En ligne], 8.3 | 2011, mis en ligne le 30 juin 2011, consulté le juin 2015.

⁴⁰ 'N. Ireland Cabinet in London', *The Guardian*, 31st May 1965.

⁴¹ Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p.613.

⁴² *The Ulster Yearbook The Official Yearbook of Northern Ireland 1963-1965*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Belfast 1965, The Mellon Centre for Migration Studies, Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh.

⁴³ 'Ulster Week venue for Birmingham', *The Irish Times*, 17th April 1969.

⁴⁴ 'O'Neill opens Ulster Week in Leeds', *The Irish Times*, 25th April 1967.

areas of the United Kingdom should get to know and to respect each other, and I hope you will learn during this week something of the diversity of life in Northern Ireland'.⁴⁵

As with the Festival of Britain, The Ulster Week campaign dovetailed neatly with prevailing attitudes in Britain. Technological modernity was something that O'Neill was keen to promote in Northern Ireland and Ulster Week was a way to show a wider British audience, including British politicians, that Northern Ireland had a legitimate role to play in this new technologically-advanced United Kingdom.⁴⁶ The Ulster week campaign was part of O'Neill's vision for Northern Ireland that he had set out when he became Prime Minister in 1963 stating that he wanted to 'make Northern Ireland economically stronger and prosperous'.⁴⁷ O'Neill was supported by Brian Faulkner who told an audience in Leeds that 'We want you to learn that here is a community proud to be British and leading a busy productive life' and that Ulster was 'playing a full part in the economic struggle for prosperity which is vital to every citizen in Britain'.⁴⁸ There was also something of a paradox with the Ulster Week's campaigns. Despite the language of modernity, it was traditional products that were given pride of place, O'Neill's modernism would be fuelled by sausages, bacon and wrapped in linen.

This claim of modernity and re-claiming of Ulster was to be part of his long-term plan to show that modern Ulster could use British economic success to improve living standards for all in Northern Ireland including Catholics. However, despite his and Faulkner's comments about the diversity of Ulster, these claims were hollow. The classless society and modernity in Northern Ireland would be used to repel the pull of Irish nationalism and secure Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. Terence O'Neill wanted modernity, technology and economic progress; however, the newly reclaimed and modern Ulster would be loyal, Protestant and authentically British. Wilson failed to understand this and by the time he did, it was too late.

When O'Neill met Sean Lemass in 1965, it was warmly received by the British political commentators regarding it as a meeting between 'sensible and well-disposed men'.⁴⁹ The *Observer* regarded the meeting as a first step, but noted that it would take 'years to heal such

⁴⁵ 'Ulster Week venue for Birmingham', *The Irish Times*, 17th April 1969.

⁴⁶ J. Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity since 1885* (London: Pinter, 1995), p.175.

⁴⁷ J. Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2005), p.622.

⁴⁸ Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity since 1885*, pp. 176-177.

⁴⁹ 'Good News out of Ireland', *The Guardian*, 15th January 1965.

deep and viral wounds' that existed between the two states, but despite this was still confident enough to proclaim that '43 years of cold war draw to an end.'⁵⁰ This message of optimism and confidence was transmitted to British business by adverts promoting Northern Ireland in the *Financial Times*. Good schools, trout streams and sport were all used to tempt business to invest in Northern Ireland. Even the wives of executives and managers who had joined the local Women's Institute were used to promote Northern Ireland, happily declaring that 'We love living in Northern Ireland.'⁵¹ Modernity was encouraging the view in Britain that partition had been left in the past and that 'talking their way to wealth is the job of the Irish now'. Partition and reunification were viewed as a barrier to modernity and economic success; the view in the British press was 'There is no need to spoil the party by the talk of national unity. Yet.'⁵²

This belief in modernism was flawed. Lemass, Wilson and O'Neill all hoped the modernisation thesis would produce outcomes to meet their individual goals. Wilson failed to recognise that each of these goals was different. Lemass wanted to use modernity to show that Ireland was not the backward, priest-riddled country of Unionist imaginations, thus disproving arguments against reunification. For Wilson, modernism, could over the long-term, deliver Irish re-unification. It would prevent the Labour Party from becoming deeply embroiled in Ireland, something which historically it always wanted to avoid. O'Neill wanted to use modernity to reinforce Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom. This produced an atmosphere of optimism and rapprochement and resulted in a blinkered view of their individual versions of the modernisation thesis.

Wilson's belief in the classless society and modernisation left no room for nationalism or single-issue groups. However, this did not stop some attempts at increasing the political saliency of Northern Ireland within the statist response of Wilson. When Wilson won in 1964 the Labour Party in Westminster included a new cohort of MPs with a personal interest in Northern Ireland. The numbers of these MPs were further increased with his second general election victory in 1966. Amongst these new MPs were Paul Rose, Kevin McNamara, Stan Orme and Patrick Duffy. This intake contained a mixture of ideologies; they were not a

⁵⁰ P. O'Donovan, 'The Two Irelands, 43 years of cold war drawn to an end', *The Observer*, 14th March 1965.

⁵¹ 'The Women's Point of View, We love living in Northern Ireland', *The Financial Times*, 14th July 1965.

⁵² 'Two Irelands, Eireann Go Bragh', *The Economist*, 23rd January 1965.

collection of like-minded Irish Nationalists. Once in Parliament they met the last remaining member of the Friends of Ireland, Hugh Delargy.

One of these new MPs, Paul Rose became interested in Northern Ireland in 1962 due to local lobbying by the Connolly Association. This was to be one of the most significant successes for the association. Manchester had a truly active branch and in his constituency 2.05% were born in the Republic of Ireland.⁵³ Rose was born in 1935 and had no family connections with Ireland.⁵⁴ Rose remembers that he had 'been raised on stories of the hunger marches in which my father participated, and the Spanish Civil War in which my uncle had been killed.'⁵⁵ He was interested in history at school and was acutely aware of the history of liberalism and nonconformist tradition in the north of England and Wales. Rose would remain a part of this nonconformist tradition. It was whilst at university in Manchester that he became involved in politics seriously for the first time. Rose was particularly affected by the events in Suez and Hungary. Following the events in Suez, Rose led 2000 students in a protest along Oxford Road, Manchester and was later to speak with Nye Bevan in front of 9000 people at Belle Vue. He continued his political apprenticeship in Manchester as the Secretary for the local Labour Party and would march in 1959 with C.N.D, to Aldermaston. Three years later he was nominated as a Labour prospective parliamentary candidate and in 1964 he was elected as an M.P. Rose had no interest in Irish Nationalism and partition but had a deep belief in the democratic principle.

Kevin McNamara was a Catholic from Crosby. He was proud of his Irish lineage and was a supporter of Irish unification. This though was in conjunction with his traditional Labour politics. He would continually push for unification through democratic means and despite being remembered as a deeply 'green' MP, would often call for a better understanding of Unionism even though he rejected its politics.⁵⁶

Patrick Duffy also came from an Irish background. His first significant encounter with Northern Ireland was while serving with the Royal Navy. After the war, as a student, he would discover that there was no interest in Northern Ireland when he tried to raise partition

⁵³ *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Tables Constituency Tables* (London: General Register Office, 1969).

⁵⁴ P. Rose, *Backbenchers Dilemma* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1981), p.178.

⁵⁵ Rose, *Backbenchers Dilemma*, p.19.

⁵⁶ J. Tonge, *Northern Ireland Conflict and Change* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p.179; T. Paulin, 'Diary', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 26, No.19, 7th October 2004, pp.34-35.

as a political issue. When he tried again as a Labour candidate he soon discovered that the lack of interest in Northern Ireland remained.⁵⁷

Stan Orme was part of the Labour Party that had its roots in the traditions of Northern Trades Union membership. Although viewed by parts of the media as on the far-left of the party due to his support of C.N.D, and his refusal to support Barbara Castle and her white paper, 'In Place of Strife', he would remain true to his Trades Union traditions. Despite being resolutely on the left of the party, he would never become a supporter of the far-left and its radical rhetoric. Orme's interest in Northern Ireland came from his own revulsion at the discrimination against Catholics, not nationalism or Republicanism.⁵⁸

As for their party leader, the myth of Harold Wilson's Irish voters has deep roots and endures. His constituency Huyton, until it was abolished in 1983, was a safe Labour seat. However, when Wilson first took the seat it was a new constituency, a mixture of the rural and urban and he took it by a very slim margin.⁵⁹ It was not until urban regeneration began to send large numbers of working class from Liverpool into its surrounding suburbs that Wilson's majority increased.⁶⁰ Wilson's own memoirs make very little mention of his constituency and no mention of any Irish lobby.⁶¹ Repeated attempts during British General Elections by the press to locate Wilson's Irish voters failed. The reason for this failure is exposed by the 1966 Census Parliamentary Constituency Tables which reveal that the percentage in the Huyton constituency born in the Republic of Ireland was just 0.91%, in terms of Irish-born population this ranked Huyton at 322nd out of 616 constituencies listed.⁶²

In 1966, it was the *Irish Times*'s turn to try and find Wilson's Irish voters. When interviewing Thomas Walsh, who was then manager of the Liverpool Irish Centre and would become a very important and well-known figure amongst the Irish in Britain, he told them that as far as the population of Huyton was concerned, 'the bulk of them would not thank you

⁵⁷ P. Duffy, *Growing up Irish in Britain and British in Ireland and in Washington, Moscow, Rome and Sydney*, (Jeremy Mills Publishing Limited: Huddersfield, 2013), pp. 62-72.

⁵⁸ E. Pearce, 'Lord Orme of Salford', *The Guardian*, 3rd May 2005.

⁵⁹ H. Wilson, *Memoirs: The Making of a Prime Minister 1916-64* (London: George Weidenfield & Nicolson Ltd, 1986), p.110.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Wilson, *Memoirs: The Making of a Prime Minister 1916-64*; H. Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-70* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974); H. Wilson, *Final Term The Labour Government 1974-1976* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1979).

⁶² *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Tables Constituency Tables*, (London: General Register office, 1969).

for calling them Irish.'⁶³ A member of the Huyton Labour Club said that it 'was a normal working-class constituency – just like many other constituencies in Lancashire. We're all working class here.'⁶⁴ Wilson's own papers confirm these findings; correspondence concerning Northern Ireland is intermittent and sparse, and he was just as likely to get a letter from Milton Keynes as from Liverpool.⁶⁵ All this confirms Akenson and Herson views that themes and memories of exile do not form a universal Diasporic experience.⁶⁶ The comments by Walsh and the members of the Huyton Labour Club reveal that there was little sense of exile in Huyton.

Labour only took control of Liverpool for the first time in 1955 and by 1964 it had become firmly established as a Labour stronghold.⁶⁷ If the 1964 results in Liverpool had been reflected in the rest of the United Kingdom Wilson would have had a significant majority of around 150.⁶⁸ Although factionalism had not entirely disappeared from Liverpool, it was by 1964, for the majority, a thing of the past. Angie Birtill would recall, 'There were always Orange Lodge marches throughout the city and I know I had friends who had their windows smashed by the Loyalists as they marched. In fact, there were Unionist councillors on Liverpool City Council right up through the 50's and early 60s'.⁶⁹ These represented shrinking, residual pockets of sectarianism, the traces of which continue to linger. However, in Liverpool it was economics that was of primary importance. The swing to left in 1964 was because, in the words of one Conservative candidate, 'people felt it was a neglected area.'⁷⁰ The old 'blue' working-class Conservative vote stayed at home and the local party offered nothing to attract non-aligned voters. Only a few still threw their lot in with the Protestant Party.⁷¹ These feelings had substance. Behind the mask of the swinging sixties, Liverpool was in decline with regeneration altering the geography of the city. In 1964 as the regeneration

⁶³ 'Huyton Letter', *The Irish Times*, 31st March 1966.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ MS Bodley: The Harold Wilson Archive, Northern Ireland boxes for multiple letters and telegrams.

⁶⁶ D. Akenson, 'Irish Migration to North America 1800-1920', in, A. Bielenberg, (ed), *The Irish Diaspora* (London: Pearson Education, 2000), pp.111-138; J. Herson, 'Family History and Memory in Irish Immigrant Families', in, K. Burrell, & P. Panayi, *Histories and Memories, Migrants and their History in Britain* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), pp.210-233.

⁶⁷ P.J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism, A political and social history of Liverpool 1868-1939* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1981), p.348.

⁶⁸ P. Preston, 'The Orange and the Blue', *The Guardian*, 26th October 1964.

⁶⁹ A. Holohan, *Working Lives, The Irish in Britain* (Hayes: Middlesex, The Irish Post, 1995), p.60.

⁷⁰ Preston, 'The Orange and the Blue', *The Guardian*, 26th October 1964.

⁷¹ The Liverpool Protestant Party lingered until 1974 when it was finally disbanded.

of Scotland Road and the Liverpool Exchange constituency began to increase in speed it was predicted that 'A generation hence nothing will remain of the Scotland Road of Irish Nationalist MP T.P O'Connor'.⁷² By 1966 the percentage born in the Republic of Ireland living in the Liverpool Exchange constituency was 2.54%. This ranked it 117th in terms of Irish-born population.⁷³ The 1964 prediction was only partially correct. The Scotland Road of O'Connor had already disappeared and, by 1971, only the merest hint would remain. In 1974 as a constituency, Liverpool Scotland Exchange, disappeared entirely.

What emerges from the period of Wilson's first two election victories is a picture of a Labour Party that has little interest in Ireland beyond the modernist, statist response to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Except for individual MPs such as Paul Rose, Stan Orme, Kevin McNamara and a few others, Northern Ireland had no political saliency. Even in Liverpool with its historic links with Ireland there was no significant Irish lobby.

Paul Rose in his excellent memoir *Backbenchers Dilemma* writes that the biggest problem faced by those who wanted to increase the political traction of partition and Ireland was their inability to 'penetrate the blank wall of incomprehension and ignorance about Ulster'.⁷⁴ This incomprehension was due to the belief in the modernisation thesis. The commitment to the classless society blinded Labour MPs to the politics of difference in Northern Ireland. The British press and politicians hoped that Ireland had moved on from 1916. This was the mortar that supported Westminster's blank wall of incomprehension. It would not be the Irish in Britain that smashed through it, but protestors in Belfast and Derry.

(4.2) Failing to smash the blank wall of incomprehension

The Irish in Britain did not smash the wall of incomprehension and ignorance in Westminster. It was finally broken by the baton charge of the RUC in Londonderry on 5th October 1968. Prior to this, efforts in Britain were still being made to raise the political relevance of partition, civil rights and Northern Ireland. First amongst these remained the Connolly Association. Its hopes were pinned on a Labour victory that would consequently lead to a sympathetic ear for

⁷² 'Are Scotland Voters what they were', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 10th June 1964.

⁷³ *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Tables Constituency Tables* (London: General Register office, 1969).

⁷⁴ Rose, *Backbenchers Dilemma*, p.179.

their cause in Downing Street. However, as with previous attempts at mobilising the Irish population in Britain into a Nationalist fifth column, this assumption would ultimately prove to be false.

The election of Wilson as Labour leader and a potential Labour victory in 1964 was met with enthusiasm by the Connolly Association. Not content with attracting the attention of local MPs such as Paul Rose, the Manchester branch sent letters to Wilson.⁷⁵ They wanted answers to three questions. First, they wanted to know would he support Fenner Brockways's attempt to include Northern Ireland in his anti-discrimination Bill. Brockway (Labour, Eton and Slough), was attempting to present a bill to the Commons that outlawed racial and religious discrimination.⁷⁶ Secondly, they wanted him to consider an inquiry into discrimination in Northern Ireland. Thirdly, they wanted an assurance that should partition end peacefully there would be no interference from Britain.

The Connolly Association, despite their limited numbers, were determined to get their message out to as many constituencies as possible. They found that a number of Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) in Lancashire all gave 'favourable' answers when questioned about Labour Policy on Ireland by the Manchester branch.⁷⁷ Desmond Greaves encouraged the readers of the *Irish Democrat* to ensure that 'Parliament contains the highest possible proportion of active friends of Ireland'.⁷⁸ As well as this the Connolly Association sent a list of demands to The Labour Party, the Co-Operative Party, the Liberal Party, the Communist Party, the Welsh Nationalist Party and the Scottish Nationalist Party.⁷⁹ The Connolly Association was casting its net far and wide in the search for political allies.

In a further attempt to influence voters, it produced a list of MPs and their voting record on Ireland since 1960, to show which, in the view of the *Irish Democrat*, could be regarded as 'friends of Ireland'. It also published quotes from answers received by the Manchester Connolly Association as it continued to press Lancashire MPs and PPCs for their views on Ireland. Michael McGuire who was PPC for Ince and had been involved in the Anti-

⁷⁵ MS Bodley: C.487, Secretary Manchester Connolly Association, *Letter to Harold Wilson*, 10th October 1964.

⁷⁶ 'Legislation and a change of heart? The importance of the Brockway Bill', *The Irish Democrat*, May 1964.

⁷⁷ 'Candidates Reply to Irish Queries Sequel to Manchester Conference', *The Irish Democrat*, May 1964.

⁷⁸ C. Desmond Greaves, 'The General Election, 1964, A Letter to the thinking members of the Irish Community in Britain', *The Irish Democrat*, September 1964.

⁷⁹ 'This is what the Irish in Britain want', *The Irish Democrat*, September 1964.

Partition League told them 'My dearest wish is to see a new Ireland, free and undivided'.⁸⁰ Michael McGuire, was like Patrick Duffy, proud of his Irish heritage, but was also proud of his northern, Labour roots steeped in his involvement with the Trades Unions. The most interesting of the comments came from Elizabeth (Bessie) Braddock (Labour, Liverpool Exchange). Braddock was included amongst the Connolly Association's list of Friends of Ireland. This was due to her support for the release of suspects held under internment. She viewed this as a justice issue, separate from the wider problem of partition. Her answers to the Manchester Connolly Association were guarded. In her youth, she had been a member of the Communist Party, but quickly left it as she objected to its authoritarian nature. By 1960 she had moved to the right of the Labour Party and would later attack future leader Michael Foot and the emerging semi-Trotskyist elements in the party. Although objecting to discrimination in her reply to the Manchester Connolly Association she said, 'My personal view is that the less the British Parliament try to influence the course of events the more likely is that Ireland will solve her own problems.'⁸¹ This comment unwittingly reveals two things. Firstly, it shows that Braddock was taking the traditional Labour tactic of letting Ireland remain in the long grass of Westminster. Secondly, it shows the lack of pressure she was under locally. It is difficult to imagine such a comment going without reply if there was any sizeable and active Irish lobby in her constituency in Liverpool. Braddock had far more problems with those on the left of her constituency. In 1954, the Bevanite wing of the local CLP wanted her to retire or to be de-selected.⁸² In 1955, her stance in support of the UK having nuclear weapons resulted in her being attacked by local communists and an Independent Labour candidate stood against her.⁸³ She was also not popular with the Young Socialists, who booed her at their national conference in 1964.⁸⁴ Millie Toole neatly summed up the challenges faced by Braddock during this period: 'it was neither Catholic, not Protestants, nor even the Anti-Partition of Ireland people who were brewing hemlock for her, but the home-town acolytes of the wonder boy from Wales'.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ 'What Lancashire says today', *The Irish Democrat*, September 1964.

⁸¹ Ibid,

⁸² 'Mrs Braddock and her local party', *The Manchester Guardian*, 24th June 1954.

⁸³ 'New Opponent for Mrs Braddock', *The Manchester Guardian*, 2nd May 1955.

⁸⁴ 'Young Socialists in revolt', *The Guardian*, 30th March 1964.

⁸⁵ M. Toole, *Mrs Bessie Braddock M.P* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1957), p.168.

In October 1964 Fenner Brockway told the *Irish Democrat* that 'prospects of a complete reconsideration of the Irish question by a Labour Party have definitely improved'.⁸⁶ Brockway's own optimism was not returned by his constituents; he lost his seat at the election, largely due to his and Labour's stance on immigration and the Commonwealth Act. Labour's modernist message may have been popular, but it was out of step with the electorate and the working-class when it came to immigration. The debates around the Commonwealth Act revealed political problems surrounding immigration for the Labour Party that it has still failed to answer today.

Prior to the General Election, Desmond Greaves embarked on a three-week speaking tour and used it as an opportunity to gauge the feeling within the Connolly Association throughout the UK. In Liverpool, he found that 'Irish organization is at a low ebb', that 'Clann na hEireann preserves a tenuous existence' and that 'there is no single Irish political voice'. He also provides a small but telling insight and further evidence that Wilson had no significant lobby in his constituency. He describes it as a constituency of 'missing persons' and that Kirkby was 'a vast new estate without even a rudimentary social life'.⁸⁷ This lack of activity is reflected in the paucity of evidence in the Wilson papers (held at the Bodleian), adding further weight to the argument that Wilson's Irish vote was a myth.

When he arrived in Manchester he found a much more positive situation than he had encountered in Liverpool. After visiting he concluded that the Connolly Association was the dominant Irish organization in the city. He found an organization that was always 'in a position to raise the Irish question unaided'. He also regarded the G.A.A as 'steady' and found that The Gaelic League, Clann na hÉireann and the United Ireland Association all retained support. He was enthusiastic about what he found and concluded that Manchester contained 'the most advanced and politically intelligent workers of Britain the direct descendants of the chartists'. He praised the city further stating that 'in Manchester all sections of the working-class movement are sympathetic and well informed'.⁸⁸

On the other side of the Pennines in Yorkshire Greaves found a very different environment. In Huddersfield, he discovered a receiving area for Gaeltacht migrants. There

⁸⁶ S. Redmond, "Time to think again on partition 'Ireland Act was Wrong'" by Fenner Brockway', *The Irish Democrat*, October 1964.

⁸⁷ 'What the Irish in Britain are doing about the election', *The Irish Democrat*, October 1964.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

was no Connolly Association presence in Huddersfield and the Irish population was divided amongst supporters of the United Ireland Association and Clann na hÉireann. When it came to Ireland and partition 'sympathy does not extend far among the mass of ordinary people'.⁸⁹ This experience was not unlike that of Patrick Duffy. When he attempted to encourage support, he found that none was forthcoming.⁹⁰ Although not as prominent in the public eye as other Irish populations in British urban centres, Huddersfield's Irish population had an effective system of community brokerage and its population contained Irish doctors, teachers, business owners and members of the local council. Michael Foy reported on his visit to Huddersfield that the main concern for migrants living and working there was the transmission of an Irish identity to their children whilst also ensuring that they became 'good citizens of the land where they were living.'⁹¹ Huddersfield, due to previous migrants moving to the area attracted by the textile industry, had a thriving cultural scene and large numbers of Gaelic speakers, but as with other areas it later found that people had to hide their Irishness due to the violence of the IRA.⁹² It would be faith, culture and language that were important, not politics.

In Oxford Greaves found memories and lingering resentment about the 1949 Ireland Act, being told by one Limerick man that 'I have not voted since 1949. I am a worker and I cannot vote Tory. But I will not vote Labour after the Ireland Act which made the partition of my country permanent. But now if the Labour Candidate in this election pledge to move in the direction of correcting this error, then I will vote this time. Otherwise not.'⁹³ Although this reveals both a class and Nationalist opposition to the Conservative Party, it also exposes something that later surveys would confirm, that a sizable proportion of Irish voters in Britain chose not to vote.

Greaves was scathing in his report on what he found in Birmingham. He attacked the Irish population in Birmingham and told them that 'they really should be ashamed of themselves' and that 'nowhere is the Irish community so weak and ineffectual'. He noted that only a few individuals were trying to keep the Connolly Association, the United Ireland

⁸⁹ 'What the Irish in Britain are doing about the election', *The Irish Democrat*, October 1964.

⁹⁰ Duffy, *Growing up Irish in Britain and British in Ireland and in Washington, Moscow, Rome and Sydney*, p.62.

⁹¹ M. Foy, 'The Twilight Zone of Irish Emigrants', *The Irish Times*, 30th July 1964.

⁹² P. Kennedy, *Welcoming the Stranger: Irish Migrant Welfare in Britain Since 1957* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2015), pp.96-97.

⁹³ 'What the Irish in Britain are doing about the election', *The Irish Democrat*, October 1964.

Association and Clan na hÉireann alive.⁹⁴ One possible answer to this has been provided by O'Brien who argues that Irish communities in Birmingham were controlled by a Catholic and conservative hierarchy which promoted cultural identity and economic progress not political nationalism.⁹⁵ Greaves' attitude towards Birmingham fluctuated over time. In many ways, his feelings mirrored the saliency of Ireland as an issue in British politics. By 1978 Greaves took a much softer and more nostalgic view of the Irish in Birmingham, particularly the period of middle 1950s.⁹⁶

The most important city for Greaves and the Connolly Association was London. This is not surprising given that it was the primary destination for Irish migrants and contained the largest Irish population in Britain. He claimed that all candidates in West London recognized the importance of the Irish vote in their constituencies.⁹⁷ In summary of his findings Greaves called on the Irish in Britain, 'one million strong' to speak and act with a 'single mind' and that their battle-cry should be 'Out with the Tories but in with the friends of Ireland'.⁹⁸ It was a battle-cry that would be ignored.

What was missing from Greaves' speaking tour was Scotland. The reason given by Greaves was the announcement of the General Election and that his and the Connolly Association's time would be needed to concentrate on campaigning during the election. Another possible reason is that he never really got to grips with the nature of the Irish question in Scottish politics, with his view being that 'Scotland was quite a different place from England'.⁹⁹ Attempts to break through 'superficial' displays of sectarianism have been produced by Bruce and others to provide answers to questions of discrimination and sectarianism in Scotland.¹⁰⁰ However, a comprehensive history of the Irish and the issue of Ireland in Scotland awaits completion.

As the Connolly Association continued with its long-standing campaign it was now finding itself in an increasingly crowded political market place. Several new groups were

⁹⁴ 'What the Irish in Britain are doing about the election', *The Irish Democrat*, October 1964.

⁹⁵ S. O'Brien, 'Negotiations of Irish Identity in the wake of terrorism: the case of the Irish in Birmingham 1973-1974', *Irish Studies Review*, 25:3, pp. 372-394.

⁹⁶ D. Greaves, *Reminiscences of the Connolly Association* (London: An Emerald Jubilee Pamphlet, 1978), p.26.

⁹⁷ 'Irish Question raised in the London area', *The Irish Democrat*, October 1964.

⁹⁸ 'What the Irish in Britain are doing about the election', *The Irish Democrat*, October 1964.

⁹⁹ Greaves, *Reminiscences of the Connolly Association*, p.28.

¹⁰⁰ S. Bruce, 'Sectarianism in Scotland: A Contemporary Assessment and Explanation', *Scottish Government Yearbook*, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1988); *Religious Discrimination & Sectarianism in Scotland: A Brief Review of Evidence (2002-2004)*, Scottish Executive Development Department Analytical Services Division, 2005.

beginning attempts to attract the political loyalty of the Irish in Britain who were trying to convert latent political feelings into true activism. Amongst these was Clann na hÉireann which was established in 1964 to provide Republicans with an organisation to rival Sinn Féin in Britain, which was seen as largely moribund and backward looking.¹⁰¹ At this point, Sinn Féin was little more than a leafleting organisation, organising memorial protests and the odd orator at Speaker's Corner. By 1966 Clann na hÉireann was organising pickets of the Irish Embassy in London protesting about the detention of Republican prisoners in the Republic of Ireland. In its ranks were members from Birmingham, Manchester, London and Huddersfield.¹⁰²

Whilst a new generation of British radical-left had been maturing, a cohort of new Irish activists were also evolving. Amongst these was the Irish Workers Group (IWG), which was formed in London in 1966. The exact detail of the founding of the group, its membership and political ideology is a somewhat confused story.¹⁰³ The group contained many noteworthy individuals including Gerry Lawless, who had been interned in Ireland for his activities in the I.R.A; and Eamonn McCann. McCann had previously been involved in the early days of the anti-nuclear movement and had taken part in the Aldermaston march.¹⁰⁴ Also in the group was Bob Purdie who would later make a considerable and valuable contribution to historiography of the troubles in Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁵

By 1966 the IWG was becoming increasingly critical of many protests movements in Britain and regarded groups such as CND as nothing more than a 'puppet show'.¹⁰⁶ This was just one of several organisations and issues that the IWG was interested in. Amongst its international passions were Vietnam and East Germany. They were also disparaging of the IRA, regarding it as far from revolutionary. Splits in philosophy and ideology were to have a serious effect on the group as its membership found it difficult to reconcile the various strands

¹⁰¹ B. Hanley & S. Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and the Workers Party* (London: Penguin, 2010), p.49.

¹⁰² 'Picket on Irish Embassy in London', *The Irish Times*, 8th June 1966.

¹⁰³ 'Irish Left History Project: Irish Workers Group 1966-1968' in, *The Cedar Lounge Revolution*, (15th October 2009), <https://cedarlounge.wordpress.com/2009/10/15/irish-left-history-project-irish-workers-group-1966-68/>, [accessed 26th June 2005].

¹⁰⁴ B. Dooley, *Black and Green, The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland & Black America* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p.46.

¹⁰⁵ B. Purdie, 'The Friends of Ireland British Labour and Irish Nationalism, 1945-49', in, Gallagher & O'Connell, *Contemporary Irish Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp.81-94; B. Purdie, *Politics in the Streets: The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁶ 'Bobby Trap' *The Irish Militant*, Issue No.2, May 1966.

of Communism, Socialism, Marxism and revolutionary ideals with the question of Irish Nationalism and Irish identity. Despite its radical nature, it did attract some support from the mainstream British Labour movement, with Michael Dowling, the Labour Party prospective candidate for Woking, speaking at an IWG rally in Hyde Park in 1966 to protest about the Lemass Government's proposed Trade Union's legislation.¹⁰⁷ This was not just a protest Lemass's anti-trade union legislation, but also against Wilson's own economic policy. The IWG took the view that there was a growing crisis of capitalism. This Marxist reading of events in both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom is not important as an economic statement, but it did foreshadow the future splits in the British Labour Party between the old liberal non-conformist wing of the party and the increasingly confident, Trotsky influenced far-left. The IWG also had Sinn Féin in its sights. Although it supported its nationalist zeal, it attacked Sinn Féin for its failure, at that point, to commit itself to true class politics. In 1966, they noted that Sinn Féin was slowly shifting its position and flirting with Socialism. They recognised what they called the 'good intent' of Sinn Féin but this in the view of the IWG was not enough. The IWG concluded that Sinn Féin needed reform and that Marxism could provide the inspiration needed. The IWG determined that Sinn Féin needed more than 'leaders who have nothing to contribute but brave words and weak deeds'.¹⁰⁸ The IWG was promoting an upsurge in radical politics and industrial action as the only tactics that would bring true alternatives to capitalism, not the old shibboleths still valued by Sinn Féin. However, splits and bickering between factions within the IWG meant that it achieved nothing and would soon become defunct.

Whilst the British left would have some success in opposing Wilson's own attempts at trades union control and would play a role in the downfall of Edward Heath, none of these groups had any success when it came to Northern Ireland. It would be the Connolly Association and its success in gaining the interest of Paul Rose that would force the Labour Party to think about Ireland. However, despite the efforts of Rose and the Connolly Association, the wall of incomprehension and ignorance surrounding Northern Ireland was finally broken by the baton charge of the RUC in Derry on 5th October 1968. When the violence occurred, Terence O'Neill was in Leicester promoting the latest Ulster Week event. Instead

¹⁰⁷ 'Lemass must go', *The Irish Militant*, No.6, September 1966.

¹⁰⁸ P. Lynch, 'Which Way Sinn Féin', *Irish Militant*, No.6, September 1966.

of marketing Northern Ireland produce and business, he found himself surrounded by reporters demanding his response to the violence.¹⁰⁹ Clearly this was not the modern and integrally British Northern Ireland that he was attempting to promote to the British public.

Despite this now very visible violence, the initial response to events in Derry was subdued by Irish groups in Britain. However, they were not alone. The Movement for Colonial Freedom was quick to condemn the actions of the RUC. They were supported in their concern by the National Council for Civil Liberties. This was not the first time the National Council of Civil Liberties had become involved; in 1966 then had sent letters to Harold Wilson and pressed for a Royal Commission on Northern Ireland.¹¹⁰ Despite this support, the immediate response was far from anything that could be described as popular, mass street politics; only 50 people arrived to take part in a demonstration on 7th October in Trafalgar Square and the event was cancelled until a more organised response could be created.¹¹¹

Within the cabinet minutes discussing the violence in Northern Ireland, there appear to be no discussions or concerns about the reaction of the Irish in Britain, which indicates a lack of worry over any potential reaction within Britain.¹¹² This supports Sorohan's conclusion that 'the Irish in London were generally instinctively nationalist' and that 'most were never motivated to their patriotism beyond the singing of rebel songs.'¹¹³ The lounge bar patriots preferred nostalgia to activism. However, it was not just from the political left that criticism of RUC could be found. One Conservative Party member, the grandson of a former Head Constable of the RUC, regarded the RUC and the Stormont Government with horror and in a letter to the *Guardian* revealed he was 'embarrassed by the lack of Civil Rights in a British province.'¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ T. O'Neill, *The Autobiography of Terence O'Neill Prime Minister of Northern Ireland 1963-1969* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972), p.102.

¹¹⁰ MS Bodley: MS.C.488, General Secretary National Council for Civil Liberties, *Letter to Harold Wilson*, 18th May 1966; MS Bodley: MS C.488, General Secretary National Council for Civil Liberties, *Letter to Harold Wilson*, 28th June 1966.

¹¹¹ 'British Organisations call for Inquiry', *The Irish Times*, 8th October 1968.

¹¹² TNA: CAB/128/46, *Confidential Annex, 42nd Conclusions, Minute 2*, 4th September 1969; TNA: CAB/128/46, *Confidential Annex, 42nd Conclusions, Minute 3*, 11th September 1969; TNA: CAB/128/46, *Confidential Annex, 42nd Conclusions, Minute 1*, 16th September 1969; TNA: CAB/128/44, *Conclusions of Cabinet Meeting*, 7th May 1969.

¹¹³ S. Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012), p.57.

¹¹⁴ James Morris, 'Protecting Ulster's minority', *The Guardian*, 9th October 1968.

As the situation continued to unfold, there was no great increase in the numbers participating in protest events or street politics in London, even if the number of protests began to grow. The combined supporters of the Connolly Association and the Movement for Colonial Liberty could only manage to attract a mere 140 supporters at a march on January 13th 1969.¹¹⁵ Also in that year an organisation calling itself the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Oxford Campaign planned to send supporters to protest in Belfast. This group was a collection of Young Liberals, students and Trade Unionists and had previously sent a telegram to James Callaghan, the Home Secretary informing him of their intention to protest in Belfast. The Northern Ireland Home Affairs Minister at Stormont, Captain William Long, banned the group's proposed protest.¹¹⁶ In Manchester, the Manchester Martyr's commemoration parade was combined with a protest over the local council's decision to ban public buildings being used to debate the situation in Northern Ireland.¹¹⁷ In Birmingham approximately 1000 people from Birmingham, Manchester, Coventry and Wolverhampton took part in a Civil Rights protest.¹¹⁸ Despite this increase in protest activity, in the British Cabinet, the lack of concern about the Irish in Britain continued, Tony Benn's own recollections confirm this, his diaries reveal no discussions about the Irish in Britain.¹¹⁹

Later in 1969 the London Regional Executive of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) issued a call for 'every able-bodied Irishman to make himself available to go to Northern Ireland for active service in any area where required.'¹²⁰ NICRA set up recruitment centres in London, Oxford, Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow for volunteers to travel to Northern Ireland and volunteer to help with the civil rights campaign.¹²¹ This marked a change in the attitude and tactics of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights movement which had previously limited its activities to protest marches. At the time, Brendan Magill was organiser of NICRA in London and was also allegedly a member of the IRA, so this possibly explains why the call for volunteers was issued.¹²² During this period, the strategy and response of

¹¹⁵ A. Whittaker, 'Civil rights marchers at No.10', *The Irish Times*, 13th January 1969.

¹¹⁶ D. Mullane, 'Oxford group for Belfast', *The Irish Times*, 25th January 1969.

¹¹⁷ 'Irish in torchlight protest', *The Guardian*, 7th November 1969.

¹¹⁸ 'C.R Parade in Birmingham draws 1000', *The Irish Times*, 6th October 1969.

¹¹⁹ T. Benn, *The Benn Diaries Selected, Abridged and Introduced by Ruth Winstone* (London: Arrow Books, 1996), pp. 212-214.

¹²⁰ H. Kelly, 'London call for volunteers', *The Irish Times*, 15th August 1969

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² K. O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain*, Illustration 10b (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972).

NICRA in Britain was mixed and subject to rapid change. In September 1969, the London branch of NICRA announced that it intended to have candidates stand in Westminster elections on the issue of Civil Rights and that it would target constituencies that were viewed as marginal and with a significant Irish population.¹²³ Once again the Irish vote in Britain was being pursued. However, this time the idea did not last very long. It was decided against having NICRA candidates standing in marginal seats as that could possibly allow a Conservative to win any seat contested.¹²⁴ NICRA in London also considered using the British legal system as part of its campaign. They were planning to challenge the question of who controlled military force in Northern Ireland and that if the B Specials were being used in a military capacity this would put the Stormont government in breach of Section 4 of the Government of Ireland Act.¹²⁵

At this stage, there was still common ground to be found between some MPs at Westminster and some of the Civil Rights protestors. Michael Farrell, from Peoples Democracy Belfast, after speaking to 450 people at Hyde Park, stated that 'the border does not enter into the civil rights struggle'.¹²⁶ It was Farrell's view that social problems in Northern Ireland such as unemployment would not be solved by the removal of the border and that they would only be solved through socialist policies. The strategy of removing nationalism from the argument though was not pursued with any great passion or strength. The ideological differences between the multitudes of micro-semi-Trotskyist groups could not be overcome. These arguments also ignored the attraction of and loyalty to Unionism above class identity. Discussions in the British cabinet had already concluded that any Protestant backlash would not be to the left, but to the right, a conclusion which had been forgotten by the time of the UWC strike in 1974.¹²⁷

What is clear is that during this very early response to the Civil Rights campaign in Northern Ireland, there was no great mobilisation of the Irish in Britain. The numbers involved in any form of public protest are tiny in comparison with the overall numbers of Irish Citizens in Britain. The Irish in Britain were not taking to the streets. Far more attended

¹²³ D. Mullane, 'London Branch of NICRA to contest Westminster seats', *The Irish Times*, 18th September 1969.

¹²⁴ *The Irish Times*, 'C.R. not to fight London by-election', *The Irish Times*, 20th October 1969.

¹²⁵ A. Whittaker, 'London C.R.A. may seek injunction to stop military use of B Specials', *The Irish Times*, 18th December 1969.

¹²⁶ 'London march on Ulster Office', *The Irish Times*, 3rd February 1969.

¹²⁷ TNA: CAB/128/46, *Confidential Annex 42nd Conclusions Minute 2 4th September 1969*.

mass on Sunday in Cricklewood than attended any of the protests that were being organised by the CDU or the Connolly Association.¹²⁸

This lack of numbers did not go unnoticed by Eamonn McCann. In 1971 he asked, why have the Irish in Britain remained so passive?¹²⁹ McCann found his answers in several places. He focused on middle-class Irish citizens, calling them 'capitalistic pioneers', regarding it an impossible task to mobilise them on the grounds of being distinctly Irish.¹³⁰ He did think that the Irish working class were capable of being mobilised, but even here McCann found room for criticism regarding them much more likely to protest with their fellow British workers against prices, rents and job losses. Finally, McCann offered his views on the leadership of the various groups that were attempting to galvanise support from amongst the Irish in Britain. McCann, in common with Michael Farrell, believed that to gain support of the Irish in Britain, you had to go beyond the question of the border. He concluded that there was no 'horde of proletarian Irish' ready to rise in defence of Civil Rights in Ireland when Britain was providing them with something that Ireland could not, 'a decent living and acceptable life.'¹³¹ He had spotted that the character of the Irish population in Britain reflected the transformation of the character of Irish society in Ireland. Evidence to support McCann's conclusions can be seen in a protest organised by the Trade Union SOGAT (Society of Geographical and Allied Trades). They organised a half day strike and march protesting against events in Northern Ireland, but out of a potential national membership of 250,000 only 400 attended the demonstration at Hyde Park Corner.¹³² These poor numbers once again show that the optimism of Desmond Greaves and the Connolly Association during the 1964 General Election was misplaced. The Connolly Association had always been keen to encourage Trade Union members to join its organization. However, these years were a constant struggle to gain members and once again by 1972, the Connolly Association was struggling and could only muster an estimated membership of 1,000.¹³³

While the Connolly Association was finding it difficult to attract new members from within the wider British working class, it was also failing to attract the generation of younger,

¹²⁸ Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles*, p.59.

¹²⁹ E. McCann, 'Stirring the U.K. Irish', *The Irish Times*, 22nd March 1971.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² 'London Trades Unions hold protest march', *The Irish Times*, 4th July 1970.

¹³³ 'Leave Ireland, Britain urged', *The Guardian*, 7th March 1972.

politically-engaged activists. Another problem for the Connolly Association was via newspapers and television the tactics of the Civil Rights movement in the United States began to attract attention. The Connolly Association appeared to be old and out of date. Eamonn McCann had been aware of radical black activism in the United States since the middle of the 1960s. He had also been involved within the international left and took part in the anti-Vietnam movement from its earliest days and became aware of both as a young man in London.¹³⁴ It is during his time in London that he met Stokely Carmichael.¹³⁵

During this period, McCann was a member of the Irish Worker's Group (IWG).¹³⁶ Here he was involved in the publication of the IWG newspaper the *Irish Militant*. He recalled that "[There] were very edgy discussions [in the civil rights movement] about the fact that we all knew that Irish-Americans were deeply racist, or an awful lot of them were, and there was something problematical about this emotional and ideological link between black American civil rights and civil rights here [in Northern Ireland]'.¹³⁷ McCann was not alone in his suspicion of Irish-Americans. Another important organiser in the Irish Civil Rights movement, Michael Farrell, was even more dubious: 'Those of us who were sort of politically conscious were violently anti-American, [had] no desire to go to America, didn't like Irish-Americans because we saw them as racist bigots.'¹³⁸ In 1970 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association attempted to create more formal links with the American Civil Rights movement, writing to Dr Ralph Abernathy asking for his support.¹³⁹ No tangible support was forthcoming and a year later they would try again.

In 1971 two major protests were planned in Britain, one in London and the other in Birmingham. The organisers turned to the Civil Rights movement in America for support. The London march was to contain a wide range of lobbyists, pressure groups and Trades

¹³⁴ B. Dooley, *Black and Green, The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland & Black America* (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p.46.

¹³⁵ Ibid; Carmichael would become an important figure in the American Civil Rights movement and a key figure within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Black Power movement and Black Panthers.

¹³⁶ B. Purdie, 'Was the civil rights movement a Republican/communist conspiracy?', *Irish Political Studies*, 1988, 3:1, 33-41.

¹³⁷ Dooley, *Black and Green, The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland & Black America*, p.42.

¹³⁸ Dooley, *Black and Green, The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland & Black America*, p.78; This foreshadowed the problems that would occur later when Bernadette Devlin encountered her own problems with conservative Irish America, see 'Fidel Castro in a miniskirt: Bernadette Devlin's first US tour', *History Ireland*, Issue 4, July/Aug 2009.

¹³⁹ Dooley, *Black and Green, The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland & Black America*, p.65; Dr Ralph Abernathy had succeeded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference after the death of Dr King.

Unions. Also in attendance was one of the last remaining member of the Friends of Ireland group, Geoffrey Bing. Amongst the groups attending were Clann Na hÉireann, the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster, the United Ireland Association, Sinn Féin and the National Association of Railway Workers.¹⁴⁰ The organisers in London made several attempts to get representatives from the American Civil Rights movement including Dr Ralph Abernathy to join them as a speaker on their platform. Only after multiple attempts to obtain a response from Dr Abernathy that they finally received a reply. Dr Abernathy refused to attend; he did not want to get involved in what he viewed as 'a religious squabble'.¹⁴¹ That Abernathy viewed Northern Ireland through the lens of religion should not be regarded as exceptional. The general reaction from most political groups in the United States at the start of the Troubles was confused and lacked understanding.

However, while London approached the dominant and mainstream Civil Rights organisations, the Birmingham organisers took a different direction and approached more radical elements within the wider Civil Rights movement in America. The organisers in Birmingham asked Bettina Aptheker to attend and speak at their march. She was already in Britain attempting to raise funds and support for Angela Davis. Unlike, Dr Abernathy, Bettina Aptheker was happy to attend and speak at the Birmingham rally. Aptheker had well known and established links with communism and those involved in radical politics. She had also previously spoken on television about the Northern Ireland Civil Rights movement.

Other groups supporting the Birmingham Rally were local Trades Unions, including the shop stewards at the Austin Motor Works. Amongst the non-Irish organisations supporting and participating in the Midlands rally was the India Association of Great Britain. The *Irish Post*, in an editorial, summed its attitude towards this mixed response from the American Civil Rights movement: 'So the U.S Civil Rights movement will be adequately represented at the Birmingham Rally. While in London they un-doubtedly wouldn't touch the U.S Civil Rights movement with a 40ft pole.' The editorial gives the impression that the lack of support from Dr Abernathy left a very bitter legacy with the organisers of the London march and that 'there was very little in the way of kinship with the civil-rights movement in

¹⁴⁰ J. Downey, '5,000 March in London C.R. Rally', *The Irish Times*, 5th July 1971.

¹⁴¹ 'London – Birmingham Rally to Civil Rights protests', *The Irish Post*, 10th July 1971.

America'.¹⁴² Abernathy was not the only one to refuse to attend, Cardinal Heenan, Richard Crossman MP and Bob Mellish MP all refused to support the protest.¹⁴³

It had been hoped that 50,000 would attend the march. One of the key targets was that section of the Irish in Britain that had previously offered anything other than latent support. Connor Finnegan, treasurer of NICRA London regarded, one of their primary aims at the march to involve most of the 'non-political, uncommitted Irish people in Britain'. In his view, these were 'the kind of people who parade on the March 17th and then do nothing for the rest of the year.'¹⁴⁴ When the march finally took place, 5,000, not the hoped for 50,000, took part in the protest and listened to speeches in Trafalgar Square.¹⁴⁵ The attempt to change the mass of Irish voters from latent supporters or political consumers into a mass of political activists failed once again.

The mass street protest was not the only tactic. As established in the previous chapter, the Irish Club in Eaton Square had kept its distance from becoming involved in the situation in Northern Ireland. Following the establishment of internment in Northern Ireland, 60 members of the Anti-Interment League occupied the club bar, included in their numbers were members of Sinn Féin. The protesters challenged the members of the club for not doing enough to promote 'Irish interests' and that they were more worried about their business interests than Ireland.¹⁴⁶

The peak of mass public participation during this period came after the deaths of 14 people shot in Derry by the Parachute Regiment on 30th January 1972. The *Irish Democrat* produced a special supplement to report on the events. It declared that 'in common with all right-thinking people in these islands expresses horror and indignation at the barbarous massacre'.¹⁴⁷ In Manchester, where the Connolly Association remained relatively buoyant, it found support from representatives of multiple trades unions including the NUR, AEUW, the Boiler Makers Union and the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.¹⁴⁸ The key point that

¹⁴² 'London – Birmingham Rally to Civil Rights protests', *The Irish Post*, 10th July 1971.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ 'March with 50,000 aim is planned', *The Irish Times*, 20th February 1971.

¹⁴⁵ J. Downey, 'Miss Devlin addresses 5,000 at C.R. rally', *The Irish Times*, 12th July 1971.

¹⁴⁶ M. Cummins, 'Protestors sit in on Irish Club in London', *The Irish Times*, 11th October 1971.

¹⁴⁷ Connolly Association Statement, *The Irish Democrat*, February 1972.

¹⁴⁸ 'Manchester Trades Unionists Wire Heath', *The Irish Democrat*, February 1972.

needs to be made about this show of support is that these were actions by individuals in a personal capacity and that they did not necessarily speak for their wider membership.

In London, 6000 marchers carried 13 coffins in the centre of the city.¹⁴⁹ However, as the march progressed through London it descended into violence as motorists and a bus driver frustrated with delays attempted to force their way through the protest.¹⁵⁰ Representatives from both Official Sinn Féin and Republican Sinn Féin were present. In York 500 students including members of the Irish Solidarity Campaign, protested. Students from De La Salle College in Manchester held two days of mourning for those killed in Derry.¹⁵¹ Protests were also held in Newcastle and Lancaster.¹⁵² Plaid Cymru called for no Welsh troops to be sent to Northern Ireland as it did not want Welsh troops being used against the unemployed in Northern Ireland. There was an acute unemployment problem in South Wales. It was the view of Plaid Cymru that the unemployed in Wales and Northern Ireland were common victims of the same Government.¹⁵³

One further consequence of Bloody Sunday was that correspondence sent directly to Harold Wilson reached its peak. He received multiple telegrams expressing a range of emotions in reaction to the deaths in Derry. Alderman John Moore from Liverpool pleaded with him, 'in the name of justice and in the names of the victims of Derry please prevail on the government to end these massacres'.¹⁵⁴ The Irish Society in Milton Keynes asked him to approve an international public enquiry and the immediate withdrawal of the paratroops.¹⁵⁵ One telegram told him to 'stop supporting Tory Ulster policy and start rocking [the] Tory yacht'.¹⁵⁶ The Derrymen's Association of Birmingham expressed their horror and they too demanded a public enquiry.¹⁵⁷ The telegrams also provide further evidence to show the economic gravity of London and the South-East. He received far more telegrams (12), from

¹⁴⁹ P. Wilby, '91 injured in the battle of Whitehall', *The Observer*, 6th February 1972.

¹⁵⁰ T. Rocca, 'Angry Irish fight police in Piccadilly protest', *The Daily Mail*, 3rd February 1972.

¹⁵¹ *Manchester Evening News*, 2nd February 1972, Manchester Central Library, Manchester.

¹⁵² 'More York students arrested after demo', *The Guardian*, 2nd February 1972.

¹⁵³ 'Welsh plea to Heath', *The Guardian*, 7th February 1972.

¹⁵⁴ MS Bodley: MS Wilson 499, Alderman John Moore, *Telegram to Harold Wilson*, 30th January 1972.

¹⁵⁵ MS Bodley: MS Wilson 499, Irish Society Milton Keynes, *Telegram to Harold Wilson*, 7th Feb 1972.

¹⁵⁶ MS Bodley: MS Wilson 499, Mr Vincent O'Connor, *Telegram to Harold Wilson*, 31st January.

¹⁵⁷ MS Bodley: MS Wilson 499, Derrymen's Association Birmingham, *Telegram to Harold Wilson*, 31st January 1972.

those areas than any other. The Ancient Order of Hibernians in Lanarkshire sent a letter to Wilson asking him to 'strive for a political settlement which will be fair and just to all'.¹⁵⁸

Those protesting about the events in Derry were not the only ones sending correspondence to Wilson. Some used it as an opportunity to attack the Civil Rights Campaign. One letter urged him to change the constitutional status of the Irish in Britain.¹⁵⁹ Another letter accused the Catholic Hierarchy as 'the effective rulers of Ireland' and that no solution could be found whilst it was in control.¹⁶⁰ The Liverpool branch of the British Constitution Defence Committee also sent a letter to Wilson. They condemned the Catholic Hierarchy and told Wilson that any attempt at a settlement with the Republic of Ireland would be futile unless it was recognised that the six counties of Northern Ireland were an inviolate and integral part of the United Kingdom.¹⁶¹ However, the surge in the numbers and activity was only temporary. The transformation from latent support to active support did not last. The *Irish Post* would later estimate by 1973 a core element of about 100 people could be guaranteed to turn up at events.¹⁶²

Extending their campaign against the violence in Northern Ireland the Peace People, took their campaign to London.¹⁶³ In 1976 they organised a rally in Trafalgar Square. They were joined by Joan Baez and the widow of the British Ambassador to Dublin, who had been murdered by the PIRA in July. The rally was attended by 15,000 people, far greater numbers than any protest organised in support of Civil Rights. This was the largest public demonstration concerning Northern Ireland in Britain since 1972. These numbers also reveal that their political neutrality was far more popular outside Northern Ireland, particularly in Norway and West Germany. As observed by *The Nation*, they were a success 'everywhere but Ireland'.¹⁶⁴

What was to be one of the most prominent groups to emerge during this period was the Troops Out Movement, the idea for which originally came from Bob Purdie. Born in

¹⁵⁸ MS Bodley: MS Wilson 499, O. Cullen, The Ancient Order of Hibernians, Lanarkshire, *Letter to Harold Wilson*, 1st February 1972.

¹⁵⁹ MS Bodley: MS Wilson 499, A.H. Aston, *Letter to Harold Wilson*, 7th February 1972.

¹⁶⁰ MS Bodley: MS Wilson 499, J. Berridge, *Letter to Harold Wilson*, 3rd March 1972.

¹⁶¹ MS Bodley: MS Wilson 499, British Constitution Defence Committee, *Letter to Harold Wilson*, 20th February 1972.

¹⁶² Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles*, p.62.

¹⁶³ The Peace People (Community of Peace People) were created in 1976 by Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan, both would win the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize.

¹⁶⁴ A. Boyd, 'The 'Success of the Peace People'', *The Nation*, 16th April 1977.

Edinburgh he had joined the International Marxist Group in the 1960s. He was also involved in the Anti-Interment League. As the League was in decline Purdie needed a new outlet for his drive and enthusiasm. However, divisions within the International Marxist Group meant that the IMG never took up Purdie's idea. Purdie himself would later change his position and decided to look for a more sophisticated answer. However, divisions between its Irish membership and the rest of the IMG meant that Purdie was excluded when Irish members of the IMG decided to pursue his idea.¹⁶⁵ Neither Paul Dixon nor Aly Renwick mention Purdie in their explorations of the origins of TOM, but as Renwick states, a truly comprehensive history of TOM is still to be written.¹⁶⁶ Troops Out began its protests in 1973, but it was 1974 when it really began to grow and gain wider public attention. When it was formed six Labour MPs officially offered their support: Stan Thorne (Preston South); William Wilson (Coventry South-East); Jeff Rooker (Birmingham Perry Bar); Maureen Colquhoun (Northampton North); John Lee (Birmingham Handsworth) and Joan Maynard (Sheffield Brightside).¹⁶⁷ All these MPs, except for Rooker, were part of the far-left in the Labour Party.

In October TOM could muster a crowd of 3,000 to a rally and protest in London that it organised with the British Peace Committee.¹⁶⁸ In 1975 Troops Out joined other groups including Peoples Democracy, the Irish Political Hostages Campaign, the International Marxist Group and Workers Fight to form the 'Anti-Jenkins Repressive Laws Campaign' and to organise a joint campaign against the Prevention of Terrorism Act.¹⁶⁹ By 1975 further Labour MPs were willing to allow their names to be added to the Troops Out Movement's campaign: Sydney Bridewell (Ealing Southall), Jo Richardson (Barking), Dennis Canavan (Stirlingshire West), Andrew Bennet (Stockport North) and Marcus Lipton (Lambeth Central).¹⁷⁰ However, as with other groups, TOM soon found out that there was no great mass of Irish citizens in Britain wanting to flood its membership and join its campaigns and street

¹⁶⁵ B. Purdie, *I remember inventing the Troops Out Movement*, *Internationalist Marxist History Project*, 1st November 2015, <https://irishRepublicanMarxistHistoryProject.wordpress.com/2015/11/01/i-remember-inventing-the-troops-out-movement-by-bob-purdie/>, [accessed 3rd April 2015].

¹⁶⁶ P. Dixon, 'A real stirring in the nation: military families, British public opinion and withdrawal from Northern Ireland', A. Renwick, 'Something in the air: the rise of the Troops Out Movement, in, G. Dawson, S. Hopkins and J. Dover, *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2017).

¹⁶⁷ 'Six MPs want troops out', *The Guardian*, 22nd October 1974.

¹⁶⁸ '9 arrested during troops out rally', *The Irish Times*, 28th October 1974.

¹⁶⁹ 'London group will fight new laws', *The Irish Times*, 9th January 1975.

¹⁷⁰ R. Holohan, '2,000 join troops-out march in London', *The Irish Times*, 7th April 1975.

protests. Mary Pearson, one of the founder members of TOM, would later recall that 'we have never been a mass organisation; even in the heydays of the seventies and eighties we never had more than a thousand members'.¹⁷¹ This lack of numbers did not prevent them from becoming a noisy voice in Britain. However, their utopian calls for immediate British withdrawal, far-left politics and Republican rhetoric were another example that this was an impossible combination to sell to the mainstream British Labour movement and the Irish in Britain.

The assorted Civil Rights, Nationalist, Republican and other left-leaning protesters were not the only ones taking to the streets or attempting to attract supporters. In 1971 the Orange Order in Scotland attempted to call volunteers to its banners, to travel and fight for the Unionist cause in Northern Ireland. The call went unheeded and no one volunteered.¹⁷² The same year Monday Club members called for the banning of all Republican meetings in Britain.¹⁷³ The following year in April 1972 approximately 3000 loyalists took their campaign to London to support Craig and the Ulster Vanguard Movement.¹⁷⁴ In July 1972, 3000 Orangemen in Liverpool called for the British Government to pursue 'a vigorous policy of dealing with the enemies of the United Kingdom and of Ulster in particular.'¹⁷⁵ In Runcorn, one young Protestant woman, originally from Derry, was attacked in her home and had her hair cropped, by who she described as two men with 'Liverpool-Irish' accents. She had previously been speaking to friends condemning the actions of the IRA and thought that someone may have overheard the conversation.¹⁷⁶ The Irish were now also increasingly being caricatured in the press as primitive, little more than Neanderthals in style that harked back to most extreme examples of Victorian social Darwinism.¹⁷⁷ These lingering prejudices revealed attitudes that were in many ways, more disturbing than those displayed by the groups and individuals that were attempting to criminalise the political aims of the conflict. The continuing use of stereotypical images of the Irish in British newspaper cartoons has not

¹⁷¹ F. Lane, 'Troops Out Movement – 30 years campaigning for British withdrawal', *anphoblacht*, 9th September 2004, <http://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/12230>, [accessed 27th June 2015].

¹⁷² S. Bruce, S. Glendinning, A. Paterson & I. Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p.124.

¹⁷³ *The Irish Post*, 20th March 1971.

¹⁷⁴ R. Chesshyre, 'Ulster Protestants mass in London', *The Observer*, 30th April 1972.

¹⁷⁵ *The Irish Post*, 15th July 1972.

¹⁷⁶ 'Thugs crop an Irish wife in peaceful England', *The Daily Mirror*, 13th January 1973.

¹⁷⁷ L. Curtis, *Nothing but the same old story, the roots of anti-Irish racism* (London Against Racism: Belfast, Sasta, 1982), p.82.

disappeared. Whilst elements of the British media were at the acute end of the portrayal of the Irish in Britain, they were not the only ones treating Northern Ireland with suspicion.

The words and actions of politicians from all sides in Northern Ireland had been treated with mistrust since the end of the Second World War. The violence now exaggerated those suspicions. Politicians groups from all points on the Northern Ireland political compass were regarded with suspicion. At the Labour Party Conference in 1969, Unionist politicians were compared to oppressive regimes throughout the world. One speaker, Mr Charles Allman (Wallasey Trades Council and Labour Party), regarded the events in Northern Ireland as 'akin to things we hear of going on in Czechoslovakia' and that the Northern Ireland Government were 'more powerful with their acts than the South African Government are on apartheid.'¹⁷⁸ Another speaker, Mr E. Bell (Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers) told conference to 'not forget that Stormont has shut its eyes since 1947.'¹⁷⁹ Although Northern Ireland was extensively debated, conference voted to support the findings of the Cameron Report on the events of the previous year. The debate and vote demonstrated little in the way of original thinking. Those who hoped the Labour Party would provide an answer would be disappointed as conference proved to be little more than a talking shop. What all the speakers failed to recognise was that their class-based internationalism was still cloaked in the language of British politics, and this was very different to the politics to be found on the other side of the North Channel.

At the 1970 Labour Party conference, the debate continued. The comparisons with South Africa were made again, this time by Gerald Kaufman, MP for Manchester Ardwick: 'Yesterday, this conference debated South Africa, a police state where a coloured majority is persecuted by the minority. Today, we are debating Northern Ireland, a police state where a Catholic minority is persecuted by a majority.'¹⁸⁰ Once again Trades Unions offered their support; Mr Dennis O'Flynn (Amalgamated Engineering Union) framed the Civil Rights argument in terms of equality and attempting to move any argument away from sectarianism he told conference: 'we want equality of opportunity in employment and housing. We have

¹⁷⁸ *Report of the Sixty-Eighth Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, Brighton, 1969 (London: The Labour Party, 1969), p.169.

¹⁷⁹ *Report of the Sixty-Eighth Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, pp.176-177.

¹⁸⁰ *Report on the Sixty-Ninth Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, Blackpool, 1970 (London: The Labour Party, 1970), p.263.

not got a religious problem; we have got a social problem.'¹⁸¹ There are also hints that some of the delegates were already viewing the situation as a long-term one that was not going to be solved quickly. One delegate asked why action had not been taken earlier. He told conference that 'if the Irish problem could have been solved by a stroke of a pen, it would have been solved in 1964.'¹⁸²

The Conservatives by 1971 were already viewing Northern Ireland through the prism of security and criminalisation. At the Conservative Conference Mr David Davenport-Hadley, member of the National Union Executive Committee, told Conservative members that 'public order must be maintained'.¹⁸³ The violence in Northern Ireland was now also bringing into question the status of Irish citizens in Britain once again. One delegate from Taunton, Mr Christopher Jones, told conference that in his view, 'the Irish have always been foreigners; never British and we should treat them as such. No citizen of the Republic should be eligible to vote in any election in the UK.'¹⁸⁴ This call was reinforced at the following year's conference when Mr Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton) told conference that 'We must administer the oath of allegiance and we must tell all those feel they cannot support our Queen and Constitution, then you should go and live without British tax payers subsidies, South of the Border, down Dublin way.'¹⁸⁵ Tradition, law and order, loyalty to the Queen and primacy of Westminster were becoming even more firmly entrenched within the Conservative Party. A very narrow, increasingly English, Anglican and Tory-Shire view of Britishness was now gripping the Conservatives.

As the Conservatives and wider British society was shifting to the right, bombs exploded in Birmingham and Guildford. The Birmingham bomb killed 21 people and injured 182.¹⁸⁶ The Guildford bombs killed five people and injured 65.¹⁸⁷ These two events did much to reverse the support from parts of wider British society that had previously backed the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland. In Birmingham, automotive workers at British Leyland

¹⁸¹ *Report on the Sixty-Ninth Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, p.264.

¹⁸² *Report on the Sixty-Ninth Annual Conference of the Labour Party*, p.262.

¹⁸³ *Verbatim Report, National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, Eighty-Ninth Annual Conference, Brighton 13th-16th October 1971* (London: Conservative Central Office, 1971), p.72.

¹⁸⁴ *Verbatim Report, National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, Eighty-Ninth Annual Conference, Brighton 13th-16th October 1971*, p.73.

¹⁸⁵ *Verbatim Report, 90th Conservative Conference, Blackpool, 1972*, (London: National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, Conservative Central Office, 1972), p.42.

¹⁸⁶ P. Taylor, *Provos The IRA and Sinn Féin* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), pp. 173-176.

¹⁸⁷ Taylor, *Provos The IRA and Sinn Féin*, 1998, pp. 173-176.

and Austin stopped work in protest over the bombings, over 2000 demonstrated outside the factories. In Tyseley at the Rover factory, one of the workers had been killed in the Birmingham bombing, 1500 workers walked out in protest. In Aldridge, 1000 other workers held an anti-IRA march through the town centre. Some workers demanded that any employee with Republican sympathies had their contracts terminated.¹⁸⁸ Staff at Birmingham fruit and vegetable market refused to handle Irish produce. These actions could have been a serious issue for the Irish Government. Unemployment was rising in the Republic of Ireland and Irish citizens were continuing to look for work in Britain. If workers faced a backlash so great that they had to return home or stopped migrating, this could have produced very serious political and economic problems for the Irish Government.¹⁸⁹ In Britain demands were made for the reinstatement of the death penalty.¹⁹⁰ When Home Secretary Roy Jenkins visited the scene in Birmingham he was heckled and more calls were made by bystanders for the death penalty to be re-introduced.¹⁹¹ The return of the death penalty would have been a serious reversal of the social liberalism and reforms of the previous Wilson governments and is a forgotten element in the creation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Despite Labour fending off calls for the reinstatement of the death penalty, the Birmingham bombs made it very difficult to be Irish in Birmingham for a very long time.

Even amongst those that had long-time supporters of Republicanism, such as Bob Purdie, attitudes were changing. He regarded the bombs as a 'hammer blow' and had already decided that the IRA could not win. He had concluded that violence in Britain would alienate the British working class. Purdie still supported the political battle against imperialism, but for him the IRA had now crossed a line and he would not follow them.¹⁹² The increasing violence therefore was driving away those that had previously supported the Civil Rights movement. Because of the Guildford and Birmingham bombings much of the British Trade Union membership's support for the Civil Rights movement was reversed and many Trades Union members now viewed Irish workers in Britain with suspicion.

¹⁸⁸ 'Walk-outs hit car factories after clashes between workers: marchers sing anti-IRA slogans', *The Irish Times*, 23rd November 1974.

¹⁸⁹ 'Bracing for a backlash', *The Economist*, 12th October 1974.

¹⁹⁰ P. Jordan, 'Outraged carworkers go on strike', *The Guardian*, 23rd November 1974.

¹⁹¹ 'Walk-outs hit car factories after clashes between workers: marchers sing anti-IRA slogans', *The Irish Times*, 23rd November 1974.

¹⁹² B.Purdie, 'I remember the Birmingham bombings', 15th April 2013, *The Cedar Lounge Revolution*, [accessed 9th August, 2016].

The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) 1974, was a hasty response to the Birmingham and Guildford bombings. This was due to very public pressure, particularly in Birmingham, wanting a quick response from the British Government. Clare Short remembers the atmosphere in Birmingham being very anti-Irish. When she questioned the ethnic profiling at the heart of the PTA, those that created it told her, 'You know very well that is not what it is about. We have to appease them. They are after capital punishment. They have to be given something'.¹⁹³ Hillyard concluded that 'the PTA is a discriminatory piece of law in that it is directed primarily at one section of the travelling public' and that 'the Irish community as a whole is a suspect community'.¹⁹⁴ It is clear that the PTA contributed to anti-Irish racism in Britain and at its centre is ethnic profiling. Although draconian and popularly used as a reason for the lack of visible support for Irish Nationalism and Republicanism, this backing was sparse even before the PTA was created. Once again, despite the increased saliency of Northern Ireland in British politics, no mass subaltern resistance identity emerged from the Irish population in Britain.

The reversal of support by mainstream British Trades Unions was not the only problem for those in Britain who wanted to create a cross-class solution to the problems in Northern Ireland. The Ulster Workers Council Strike was another. From the very beginning the Ulster Workers Council (UWC) had their legitimacy called into question. In both the House of Lords and the House of Commons, Labour members made it clear that in their view the UWC was neither a Trades Union or had any democratic standing or mandate.¹⁹⁵ Wilson rejected any comparison between the British Trades Union movement and the UWC. He concluded that it was the creation of paramilitary organisations and had nothing in common with the wider Trades Union movement.¹⁹⁶

The wider British Trades Union movement found that there was very little camaraderie from within the UWC. They were resolutely rebuffed by the Loyalist and Unionist membership of Northern Ireland's Trades Unions. Len Murray, the General

¹⁹³ J. Doody, 'Creating suspect communities: Exploring the use of exclusion orders in Northern Ireland', *Behavioural Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 4:1, 77-98, 2012.

¹⁹⁴ P. Hillyard, *Suspect Community: Peoples Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1993), p.13.

¹⁹⁵ *Hansard*, Northern Ireland State of Emergency, HL Deb 20 May 1974 vol 351 cc1262-6; *Hansard*, Northern Ireland, HC Deb 20 May 1974 vol 874 cc32-41.

¹⁹⁶ Wilson, *Final Term, The Labour Government 1974-1976*, p.72.

Secretary of the TUC, organised a back to work campaign: it was a complete and humiliating failure. It came as a shock that Unionism trumped class loyalty. Whilst there had been support from the Conservatives to defeat the UWC it did not stop some engaging in political point scoring. Monday Club member Julian Amery attempted to attack the Government's position. He accused the Government of failing to stand up to one pressure group, the UWC, when it had previously supported others that had attempted to attack the power of Westminster, namely the National Union of Mineworkers.¹⁹⁷

Wilson and his Cabinet concluded that the UWC and the strike was 'an attempt by extremists to establish an unacceptable form of neo-Fascist government'.¹⁹⁸ By the 24th May, the British Government concluded that they were facing a serious constitutional challenge. The Cabinet had rejected the initial claims of the UWC and repeated its view that the UWC was attacking the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. The Government confirmed its position that there would be no chance of withdrawing from Northern Ireland. The UWC strike was regarded as so serious that it was decided that the Conservatives should be fully informed to ensure a bi-partisan approach remained intact. The cabinet was worried that this policy could lead to further conflict in Northern Ireland and that the conflict may well have spread to Britain as there was 'large numbers of Irish, from both communities living here.'¹⁹⁹ This is a reversal of the optimism of 1966 when the anniversary of the Easter Rising was met within minimal concern. Despite being aware of the need to keep the Conservatives apprised, this did not stop Conservative fears about the constitutional position of Northern Ireland emerging.²⁰⁰ State integrity was their chief concern, not the desires of Unionists in Northern Ireland.

As shown by Edwards, the relationship between the NILP and the Labour Party had been deteriorating.²⁰¹ The NILP opposed the strike, and conflicting opinions resulted in a public argument between members of the NILP and the Labour Party concerning how Labour handled the strike.²⁰² The Labour Party had not learned any lessons from its previous attempts

¹⁹⁷ *Hansard*, Northern Ireland, HC Deb 20 May 1974 vol 874 cc32-41.

¹⁹⁸ TNA: CAB/129/177/6 J. Hunt, *Northern Ireland, Note by the Secretary of the Cabinet*, 24th May 1974.

¹⁹⁹ TNA: CAB/128/54/18, *Cabinet Conclusions*, 24th May 1974.

²⁰⁰ N. Beloff, 'Tories fear that Wilson is heading for pull-out', *The Observer* 2nd June 1974.

²⁰¹ A. Edwards, *History of the Northern Ireland Labour Party: Democratic Socialism and Sectarianism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp.202-205.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

at finding a solution to Northern Ireland. The Labour Party under Wilson, which seemed to promise so much, was under pressure from the post-1968 British left and the emerging 'new right'. Since returning to power in 1974 they had floundered on several issues, including Northern Ireland. Wilson only added to this with his infamous 'spongers' speech. Years of frustration came pouring out of Wilson, exposing his own bitter memories of his father's struggles and unemployment declaring that the UWC were, 'denying the fundamental right of every man and woman the right to work'.²⁰³ However, the class struggles of the British Labour movement, except for the membership of the NILP, were of no concern for the majority of the UWC. The content of Wilson's speech did nothing to alleviate Conservative fears. There were also signs of discontent within his own party as MPs such as Tam Dalyell carried out surveys in their own constituencies to show growing support for the withdrawal of troops.²⁰⁴ Dalyell, MP for West Lothian claimed that up to half the Parliamentary Labour Party was in favour of troop withdrawal.²⁰⁵ Future leader of the PLP, Neil Kinnock, said that 'their fight is to freeze history, to maintain the pathetic inch of superiority they have over Catholic workers.'²⁰⁶ Kinnock's comments were part of the British left that viewed Unionism and Loyalism as old-fashioned, anti-modern and politically illegitimate. Comments such as Kinnock's showed he clearly failed to understand the importance of history and tradition in Unionist identity. It is a mistake he would make time and time again as will be shown in later chapters.

Wilson would later come to admit that his words could be constructed as 'provocative and bitter.'²⁰⁷ However for him the strike was a direct challenge to the sovereignty of Westminster. Wilson regarded the UWC strike as a defeat for all parliamentary parties, the first successful attack on the authority of Parliament for centuries.²⁰⁸ The sovereignty of Parliament was being challenged. Any option other than direct rule would have opened-up discussions on the constitutional arrangements not just for Northern Ireland, but for Scotland and Wales as well. The integrity of the state itself was under threat. The situation faced by

²⁰³ H. Wilson, *Text of broadcast made by Harold Wilson (Spongers Speech)*, 25th May 1974, CAIN Webservices, Ulster University.

²⁰⁴ N. Beloff, 'Tories fear that Wilson is heading for pull-out', *The Observer* 2nd June 1974.

²⁰⁵ M. Hatfield, 'Mounting Pressure to withdraw troops', *The Times* 31st May 1974.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Wilson, *Final Term, The Labour Government 1974-1976*, p.72.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Wilson was a difficult one. He was under considerable pressure and could not rely on the support of his cabinet. Rees was never truly supportive of Sunningdale, so Wilson could not count on him. The strike was one of the few times that they were genuinely worried about the reaction of the Irish in Britain. Any response would have been a gamble on his part. Wilson also had another problem, outside the Trades Unions and his cabinet, he had no fixers to call on, and there was no equivalent of Jack Jones in Northern Ireland. The uncomfortable truth for the British labour movement was that the UWC 'Strike' was possibly the most successful strike in British and Irish history. The UWC strike was the final rejection by Unionism of the modernist project that Wilson had started with his first Government in 1964. This was now in tatters.

Throughout these traumas the Irish in Britain remained largely Labour supporters however, what has been ignored has been the portion that voted Conservative. In 1970, there were Irish voices within the Conservative Party that were becoming more and more vocal and showing that the Irish in Britain were making political decisions outside the frame of partition and Northern Ireland. They were looking for answers beyond civil rights, nationalism and Republicanism. One of these voices belonged to Michael Canning who called for the Irish in Britain to vote for economic reasons. He focused on the prevailing economic problems in the United Kingdom. In his view, it was the Conservatives who were 'most conducive to the continued success of my business.'²⁰⁹ Canning not only is inferring that his fellow small business owners should support the Conservatives but also that Conservative economic policies would benefit all. Canning was also aware of the historic connotations and claimed that 'We are not Tories in the historical Irish sense.'²¹⁰ This was a pragmatic stance on partition, making it a secondary consideration behind other issues such as the economy. Canning argued that for the Irish in Britain the reality was that when it came to policy on Northern Ireland, there was little difference between Labour and the Conservatives, so it would be better to vote for issues where there was a clear policy difference, such as the economy or social issues.

²⁰⁹ *The Irish Post*, 6th June 1970.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

A formal Irish group within the Conservative Party was established in October 1970.²¹¹ The principle instigator in its creation was Paul Dwyer, who became its chairman. The creation of the Irish Conservative Association was welcomed in an editorial by *The Irish Post*, which, although supporting the 32-county project, attempted to take a neutral stance when it came to British political parties, endorsing none. The first meeting of the association took place in 1971, and approximately 20 people attended, mainly local councillors and other Conservative Party members and was supported by Conservative Central Office.²¹²

The primary aims of the Irish Conservative Association were focused on social and welfare policy. The association set out to give help for migrants who needed assistance in finding employment and housing.²¹³ There was also a commitment to have legislation which they viewed as detrimental to family life amended.²¹⁴ This commitment to family life was explained by Dwyer who stated that members of the group were not happy about 'some aspects of the permissive society and some of the things that are being accepted – certain aspects of the divorce law and abortion law certain aspects of the welfare state, help is not being given where it is needed.'²¹⁵ It is not clear for which audience these comments are being made. The comments by Dwyer contain echoes of the 1937 constitution and at the time in Ireland abortion and contraception were high on the political agenda, with Mary Robinson attempting to liberalise contraception in Ireland in face of fierce opposition from the Catholic Church. If we put this debate into a wider British context, abortion was still a controversial issue in British politics with 60,000 attending an anti-abortion march in 1974.²¹⁶ The Catholic laity were not missing from the 1970 general election campaign. The Catholic Parents Association in Palmers Green sent a questionnaire to the prospective parliamentary candidates for their constituency and concluded that, 'we found that the replies given by the Conservative members were more in keeping with the Catholic way of life than any of the other parties.'²¹⁷ However this comment should be treated with caution. Most of the Catholic

²¹¹ Jeremy McIlwaine, *Email to author*, The Conservative Party Archive, The Bodleian Library, Oxford, 19th Nov 2013.

²¹² 'First Meeting of Irish Tory Group Today', *The Irish Times*, 14th January 1971.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *The Irish Post*, 23rd January 1971.

²¹⁵ 'First meeting of Irish Tory Group', *The Irish Times*, 14th January 1971.

²¹⁶ '60,000 in abortion protest', *The Irish Times*, 29th April 1974.

²¹⁷ *The Irish Post*, 1st August 1970.

voters in the UK supported the Labour Party, largely due to class divisions, although it has fluctuated over time, the only time it significantly shifted to the Conservatives was in 1979.²¹⁸

Dwyer offered little to those who wanted a concrete commitment on the association's stance on the issue of partition, claiming that 'Everybody sounds off about Partition. Anything I could say wouldn't be of terrific value.'²¹⁹ It was clear that for the Irish Conservative Association partition was low on their list of political priorities; for Irish Conservatives such as Dwyer there was little political capital in partition.

Partition did though cause problems for the Irish Conservative Association. Its failure to promote any cohesive policy or statement was noted by many individuals. One of these, a former Conservative councillor, made his feelings clear on the matter writing that 'I am an Irish Conservative from County Waterford and have been against Partition since I could think politically.' He continued that 'I have been a member of the United Ireland League and was a member of the old Anti-Partition League from its earliest days.' He concluded that 'I am a former Conservative Councillor. But that never – in any way – altered my feelings about the unification of Ireland' and that 'I think it a pity that – as a body – the Irish Conservative Association feels it outside its province to express itself on Partition.'²²⁰ Comments such as these highlight the political negotiation that any migrant must undertake when investing political capital in their new home. It would appear, for some at least, that despite a clear emotional investment in a united Ireland, they were still willing to actively support the Conservative Party. Nationalism and Republicanism could be separated from other political issues. It also shows that the Irish in Britain were forming project identities on both the political left and right.²²¹ Unsurprisingly the Irish Conservative Association was condemned by those who viewed it as nothing less than surrender to Unionism. Nora Lucey, Secretary of the London branch of the United Ireland Association, was unequivocal in her condemnation of the stance taken by the Irish Conservative Association accusing them of cynicism, wanting the 'Irish vote and nothing else.'²²² Others were quick to point out that Irish voters should

²¹⁸ B. Clements, *Religion and Public Opinion in Britain Continuity and Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.50.

²¹⁹ 'First meeting of Irish Tory Group', *The Irish Times*, 14th January 1971.

²²⁰ *The Irish Post*, 3rd July 1971.

²²¹ Castell argues project identities are formed within civil society, communal projects wanting change using accepted social conventions and methods.

²²² G. Collins, Letters Page, *The Irish Post*, 17th July 1971.

remember that supporting or joining the Conservatives would make them supporters of the same party as Craig, Brooke, Taylor and West.²²³

Although the Irish Conservative Association and its activities took place outside of Westminster, within Westminster itself it was not just Labour MPs that could claim Irish lineage, or who were showing an active interest into the affairs of Northern Ireland. Sally Oppenheim was from Dublin and was MP for Gloucester from 1970-1987.²²⁴ In the 1970 general election, she unseated John Diamond, who became the only Cabinet Minister to lose his seat at that election. Oppenheim became the only female minister in Margaret Thatcher's first cabinet when she became Minister for Consumer Affairs.²²⁵ Oppenheim claimed that 'there are thousands of Irish in Gloucester and I have every reason to believe that virtually all of them voted for me.'²²⁶ The 1966 census reveals that 1.54% of her constituency were born in the Republic of Ireland.²²⁷ She did not need these votes to either win the seat or retain it. Oppenheim rarely acted outside her brief and she voted against the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland in 1971.²²⁸

Some viewed the Irish in the Conservative party as heralds and messengers, arguing that 'a missionary goes out to live amongst heathens to try and enlighten them' and that those Irishmen who belong to the Conservative Party might be regarded as 'our missionaries to the Tory Party.'²²⁹ It seems that the author wanted them to follow the advice of Aquinas and to 'lead men to virtue, not suddenly, but gradually.'²³⁰

However, as one voice was calling for attempts for Conservatives to be coaxed along their own road to redemption, another was calling for the links with Ulster Unionism to be completely severed. One individual, finding his repeated attempts to raise issues such as gerrymandering with the Conservative Party were 'either ignored or treated with horror' and that within Unionism 'William of Orange not only rides on the gable ends of their houses but

²²³ C. McKillop, Letters Page, *The Irish Post*, 19th June 1971.

²²⁴ 'Irish not will not be affected by the Bill', *The Irish Post* 6th February 1971.

²²⁵ Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics, Queens University Belfast, http://www.qub.ac.uk/cawp/UK%20bios/UK_bios_70s.htm#oppenheim [accessed 27th June 2015].

²²⁶ 'Sally Oppenheim', *The Irish Post* 13th February 1971.

²²⁷ *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Tables Constituency Tables* (London: General Register office, 1969).

²²⁸ D. MacAmhlaigh, 'Sounding Off', *The Irish Times* 8th Dec 1971.

²²⁹ D.W. O'Riordan, Letters Page, *The Irish Post* 15th January 1972.

²³⁰ Thomistic Philosophy Page, *A Thomistic Case for Tolerance*, <http://www.aquinasonline.com/Topics/tolerance.html>.

in their hearts and minds as well', decided that it was now time for the 'Conservative Party to take a long hard look at their Unionist colleagues and cut them loose to their own devices.'²³¹ Further objections were raised by the Young Conservatives. They lobbied the Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, and asked that the Reverend Ian Paisley should not be allowed to sit on the Government benches. They condemned Paisley saying that 'his discriminatory views have done immense damage to the work of the Stormont Government' and that the 'moderate and liberal' Chichester-Clarke should be 'given a chance to work.'²³² During this period the word Loyalism was starting to appear and to become entangled with Unionism; British politicians and British society would find it difficult to separate them and still do. This would not be the last time calls would be made for a clear separation from Unionism from within the Tory Party. The fractures in the 'Unionist bloc' therefore were not just in Northern Ireland but in their support from Britain as well. If Unionism was expecting a mass Edwardian-style response to its campaign, it was not going to get it. Once again, differences between Unionism in Northern Ireland and being a Unionist in Britain were being exposed.

Whilst some opposed Paisley, he too had his supporters outside Parliament. Brian Fenton would speak regularly on behalf of the British Constitution Defence Committee. Fenton was not from Northern Ireland, but from Stafford. He professed that he was not anti-Irish, but this was utterly false as he also claimed that Britain's housing shortage was due to Irish 'excessive welfare needs' and that emigration was due to 'the low Irish IQ'.²³³ He combined older anti-Irish prejudice and wider immigration concerns to blame migrants for the failings of the British economy. The Liverpool Protestant Party was also a member of the British Constitution Defence Committee. Its slogan was 'Socialism leads to Communism, Ecumenism, to Popery. We reject both.'²³⁴ This shows it was not just Catholicism that wanted its laity to reject socialism and communism. The Monday Club were also quick to make their own views known calling for a ban on Irish Republican meetings in Britain and to deport or to prosecute participants.²³⁵ Elements of the British right would hold on to their twin prejudices; the Irish and Catholicism.

²³¹ G.M. Collins, Letters Page, *The Irish Post* 9th February 1974.

²³² *The Financial Times*, 'Young Tories Oppose Paisley', *The Financial Times*, 22nd June 1970.

²³³ 'Brian Fenton', *The Irish Post* 18th September 1971.

²³⁴ Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism, A political and social history of Liverpool 1868-1939*, p.350.

²³⁵ J. Jackson, 'Monday Club Ulster Committee', *The Irish Post*, 20th March 1971.

Whilst Sally Oppenheim may have laid claim to having the support of her Irish constituents, there was at least one Conservative MP that had a genuine Irish lobby in his constituency and took an active interest in events in Northern Ireland, Derek Coombs. He became Conservative MP for Yardley in 1970, serving a single term of four years.²³⁶ His victory in the 1970 general election was a close-run thing. He was returned with a majority of just 120. The constituency population contained 2.61% who were born in the Republic of Ireland.²³⁷ Long before Jeremy Corbyn and Ken Livingstone began their own flirtations with Sinn Féin, in 1971 Coombs and six other Conservative MPs attempted to organise a tour of Northern Ireland which would have also included a visit to Dublin. This would not have been of any controversy, but there was one part of the tour that caused immense disputation; the group intended to meet with the IRA. Coombs would later regret that nothing came of the talks.²³⁸ This so outraged one member of the Conservative Party, he threatened to propose a motion before the House of Commons accusing the members of the group of 'consorting with the Queen's enemies.'²³⁹ Amongst the critics of this attempt to meet with the IRA was William Whitelaw, who, one year later, would be holding his own meeting with the Provisionals. When this emerged, Coombs offered his full support to Whitelaw.²⁴⁰

This was not to be the end of Coombs' involvement in the affairs of Northern Ireland. In 1974, as a result of lobbying on behalf of the Price sisters, Coombs and another Conservative MP, Dr Thomas Stuttford, visited the sisters while they were in Brixton prison on hunger strike.²⁴¹ They were force fed in the same room as in which Terence MacSwiney had died.²⁴² Coombs and Stuttford seemed to have a genuine concern for the wellbeing of the Price sisters and concluded that while force feeding was repulsive, it did not, in their view, go beyond accepted medical techniques and was not being used as a form of torture.²⁴³ This is contrary to what would later become the wider accepted view that force-feeding was unethical and

²³⁶ Coombs, Derek Michael', *Who's Who 2014*, A & C Black, an imprint of [Bloomsbury Publishing plc](#), 2014; online edn, Oxford University Press, Dec 2013; online edn, Dec 2013.

²³⁷ *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Tables Constituency Tables* (London: General Register office, 1969).

²³⁸ D. Coombs, 'A modest separation', *Prospect Magazine*, 20th May 1996.

²³⁹ C. Brady, 'Governments had details of MPs banned tour', *The Irish Times* 13th November 1971.

²⁴⁰ 'The IRA in Ulster', *The Times*, 5th August 1972.

²⁴¹ D. McKie, 'Force feeding not torture', *The Guardian* 1st February 1974.

²⁴² I. Miller, *A History for Force Feeding Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics 1909-1974* (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p.196

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

described as an experience worse than rape.²⁴⁴ One of the consequences of this was that Margaret Thatcher would later refuse to use force feeding during the 1981 Hunger Strikes saying that she regarded it as a 'degrading and dangerous practice.'²⁴⁵ As part of the campaign in support of the Price sisters Irish doctors were called upon to resign from the British Medical Association if force feeding was not stopped.²⁴⁶ Coombs regarded the Price sisters as 'highly intelligent girls' and supported calls for their transfer to Armagh.²⁴⁷ This was in contrast to the British media which portrayed them as violent termagants. There was little in the way of support from feminists within the pages of *Spare Rib*, with one reader accused them of 'soiling the memory' of suffragette activism.²⁴⁸

Coombs visit was not without controversy with supporters of the sisters disagreeing with a good deal of what was reported by Coombs and Stuttford, condemning it as propaganda. The *Daily Mail* was quick to use the visit to counter claims of torture and while Coombs seemed genuinely concerned for the health of the sisters he too did not miss an opportunity to use it to condemn the activities of the IRA.²⁴⁹

Throughout the time that the Irish Conservative Association was trying to become established it was doing so against an increasing level of violence in Northern Ireland, which included the shootings of civilians in Ballymurphy, Derry and the bombings in Belfast on Bloody Friday. The violence of this period and the action of the Heath Government ensured that any attempt by the Irish Conservative Association to gain further support would fail. Internment and Bloody Sunday resulted in a significant change of policy from the *Irish Post*, moving away from its stated aims of political impartiality. Its editorial declared that 'The Derry holocaust will live in memory. No eventual solution – not even the unification of Ireland will erase it.'²⁵⁰ The image of the bachelor Prime Minister enjoying himself on his yacht did not go down well with the *Irish Post*, which attacked the Conservatives and Heath writing that 'The memory of Mr. Heath yachting while Belfast burned will die slowly among the Irish in Britain'.²⁵¹ Internment, Bloody Sunday and the continued failure of Heath and the

²⁴⁴ Miller, *A History for Force Feeding Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics 1909-1974*, p.200.

²⁴⁵ M. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, (London, Harper Collins, 1993), p.392.

²⁴⁶ 'Support Prices – plea the doctors', *The Irish Post*, 26th January 1974.

²⁴⁷ M. Cowley, 'M.P.s say sisters should be sent north, but deny torture claims', *The Irish Times*, 2nd February 1974.

²⁴⁸ Miller, *A History for Force Feeding Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics 1909-1974*, p.205.

²⁴⁹ B. Park, 'Truth about the Price sisters', *Daily Mail*, 1st February 1974.

²⁵⁰ Editorial, *The Irish Post*, 5th February 1972.

²⁵¹ *The Irish Post*, 28th August 1971.

Conservatives to make any progress on Northern Ireland ensured that the any Irish member of the Conservative Party would be, in the words of Michael Canning 'a member of a minority twice over'.²⁵² The actions of the British Army in Derry not only resulted in the death of innocent civilians, it killed the Irish Conservative Association before it could make any meaningful contribution.

As the Irish Conservative Association was struggling to survive and the assorted single-issue groups were failing to make impact on the statist approach of British politicians, once again it was decided that, yet another attempt would be made to harness the alleged voting power of the Irish in Britain and the General Election of 1974 was viewed as an opportunity to do just that. In September Harold Wilson called a meeting of his cabinet and somewhat solemnly announced that the Queen had assented to the dissolution of Parliament and that there would be a general election in October. Tony Benn summed up the feeling around the table, writing in his dairies that 'there wasn't much excitement'.²⁵³ This lack of excitement was reflected by the public who were faced with two elections within the matter of a few months. Even Harold Wilson noted the lack of public interest and that the campaign was 'quiet and uneventful'.²⁵⁴ This was reinforced by the low turnout which was down on the previous election. In February the turnout was 78.8%, in October it declined to 72.8%. In the end, Wilson won his final election as Labour Leader with a tiny majority of just three seats.²⁵⁵ This was also a year which in popular memory the British government limped from one crisis to another. Wilson had promised a referendum on European membership, the three-day week finally ended in March, inflation was increasing and would eventually hit a peak of 25% in 1975.²⁵⁶ In Northern Ireland Unionist protests about the Sunningdale agreement resulted in violence and a general strike and by the end of the year the total number of deaths since 1969 exceeded one thousand. Nightly images of industrial unrest and violence helped to ensure modernism was replaced by the decline thesis, and the optimism following the end of the

²⁵² 'Why the Conservatives?', *The Irish Post*, 6th June 1970.

²⁵³ T. Benn, *The Benn Diaries Selected, Abridged and Introduced by Ruth Winstone*, p.300.

²⁵⁴ Wilson, *Final Term The Labour Government 1974-1976*, p.83.

²⁵⁵ This would be the last Labour election victory until 1997.

²⁵⁶ The Bank of England, *UK Inflation 1790-2005*,

<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/inflation/timeline/chart.aspx> [accessed 27th June 2015].

Second World War appeared to be a fading and distant memory. The historiography of British decline remains a political and academic battleground.²⁵⁷

Despite this narrative of decline and voter apathy, when examining the October election of 1974 one of the most immediate and striking items to notice is the number of minor parties that had candidates standing for election. There were 59 parties fielding 412 candidates. The National Front fielded 90 candidates; the SNP, in their best election performance prior to devolution, fielded 71 candidates and Plaid Cymru had 36 candidates. In a crowded field, you could find Communists, Irish Republicans, Unionists and various shades of Marxists and Socialists. This included Green Politics, which was making its first significant entry to British civic life. Amongst this plethora of parties, The Irish Civil Rights Association decided to field candidates in constituencies in Great Britain. It is important to note, that this organization was formed in Dublin in December 1972 and was a separate organization to the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association.²⁵⁸ At its launch 500 attended the inaugural meeting. Although separate from NICRA, its members were present at the launch, as were prominent members from Sinn Féin and there was also a very strong IRA presence from both North and South.²⁵⁹

When announcing its decision to field candidates, ICRA's stated aim was to get the Irish in Great Britain to use its electoral strength as a single voting bloc. This old tactic had failed previously and there was no consideration given to previous failures. One of its primary purposes was to take Irish votes away from the Labour Party. At its press conference announcing its policies ICRA recognized that depriving Labour MPs of votes may result in Tory gains, in defence of this they argued that consensus had failed and that neither party had done anything constructive to resolve the Irish situation.²⁶⁰ The three main campaign policies were the release of all internees and political prisoners, a commitment from Great Britain to the idea of a united Ireland and finally a phased withdrawal of all British troops.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ The theme of decline emerges in the UK public eye following Suez (1956). This became national self-examination surrounding post-imperial identity and power, economic decline and social cohesion. These concerns reach their peak in 1970-1979. This has since been challenged by historians such as Beckett who argues that the economics and politics of the 1970s was vividly complex. See – Beckett, *When the Lights went out*, pp.16; Childs, *Britain since 1939 Progress & Decline*, pp.184-223; Morgan, *Britain since 1945*, p.198-238.

²⁵⁸ J. Cusack, 'Half a century of abuse covered up', *The Irish Independent*, 21st April 2013.

²⁵⁹ 'New Civil Rights Group to Champion Downtrodden Man', *The Irish Times*, 18th December 1972.

²⁶⁰ M. Cowley, 'Irish prepare to sway U.K. election', *The Irish Times* 12th September 1974.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

They decided to field candidates in Brent East, Hampstead, Manchester Moss Side, Paddington and Birmingham Sparkbrook. The London Borough of Brent had a population that contained 7.91% born in the Republic of Ireland.²⁶² Brent East was a borough constituency that came into existence after the February general election in 1974. It was a safe Labour seat and was one of the most ethnically diverse constituencies in the United Kingdom. It would remain a Labour stronghold until the Liberal Democrats won the seat in 2005. Another reason for contesting Brent East was that the incumbent MP, Reg Freeson, was the minister for housing. Housing was a serious issue for all migrant communities and it was hoped that other minority groups would support the Irish candidate.²⁶³

Hampstead was a borough constituency that came into existence in 1974. It was part of the London Borough of Camden and 6.53% of the borough were born in the Republic of Ireland.²⁶⁴ It was a Conservative seat and whilst not the strongest of such seats, there was never any real danger of them losing it. Manchester Moss Side was a much older and established constituency. Historically, despite whatever modern image we may have of Moss Side, this was for the most part a Conservative seat. Labour did take it in 1945 only to lose it in the next general election and it was to remain a Conservative seat until 1974. Paddington (City of Westminster) was another new constituency. This was a very marginal seat with little between the two major parties. Birmingham Sparkbrook was an old constituency, and an established receiving area for Irish migrants. It was first won by Labour in 1945 and, except for the 1959 General Election, remained a Labour seat until it ceased to exist as a constituency in 1992.

These constituencies were chosen as they were perceived to be areas with a significant Irish population that could pressure the sitting MPs into making Northern Ireland a political priority. Apart from this old assumption, that providing an 'Irish' area with a candidate to galvanize Irish voters in Britain, there was a much more emotional reason for choosing to have candidates in these London constituencies; the hunger strike was once again being used by Republican prisoners to promote their cause.

²⁶² *Historical Census Tables* (Census Information Scheme), The London Datastore, Greater London Authority, London [accessed May 2017].

²⁶³ M. Cowley, 'Irish prepare to sway U.K. election', *The Irish Times* 12th September 1974.

²⁶⁴ *Historical Census Tables* (Census Information Scheme), The London Datastore, Greater London Authority, London [accessed May 2017].

A young Irishman living in London, Michael Gaughan, had joined the Official IRA and became a member of its London ASU. He was arrested for being part of a plan to raise funds for the organization by robbing a bank in North London. It was whilst he was a prisoner in Parkhurst he went on hunger strike to support the Price sisters. Doctors were becoming increasingly concerned that they were being asked to perform as actors for the state and not agents for patient care. The reports of his force feeding by prison staff revealed a truly disturbing picture of the methods used. He died after 64 days on hunger strike. Controversy remains over his death, with campaigns continuing, arguing that his force-feeding was a contributory factor.²⁶⁵ There were claims that 7,000 followed his funeral cortege through London as he was escorted with a piper and a guard of honour dressed in the ubiquitous uniform of the time of black beret and dark glasses.²⁶⁶ The Irish Civil Rights Association and the Irish Political Hostages Committee called for a Public Enquiry into force-feeding.²⁶⁷ The death of Gaughan resulted in a change of policy by Roy Jenkins, force-feeding would be a clinical decision not a legal one.²⁶⁸ As Miller has concluded, this recognition of prisoners authority over their own health and well-being would have consequences for later hunger strikers and their families.²⁶⁹

These were not the only protests taking place in London. In March, a protest had been held at Hyde Park in support of the Price sisters. Later in September there were violent clashes at Hyde Park as the National Front, supported by Unionist elements from Northern Ireland, marched behind a banner with the words 'smash the IRA' emblazoned on it. They were attempting to hold a counter demonstration against a demonstration organized by the International Marxist Group. The protest included varied collections of far-left groups.²⁷⁰ The previous June at Red Lion Square a young second-generation Irish student Kevin Gately had been killed when the two groups clashed.²⁷¹

²⁶⁵ Miller, *A History for Force Feeding Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics 1909-1974*, pp. 215-216

²⁶⁶ R. O'Donnell, R, *Special Category, The IRA in English Prisons, Vol.1: 1968-1978* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012), p.220; *The Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, South Carolina, 9th June 1974, p.4.

²⁶⁷ Miller, *A History for Force Feeding Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics 1909-1974*, p.217.

²⁶⁸ Miller, *A History for Force Feeding Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics 1909-1974*, p.218.

²⁶⁹ Miller, *A History for Force Feeding Hunger Strikes, Prisons and Medical Ethics 1909-1974*, pp.219-228.

²⁷⁰ *The Windsor Star*, Ontario, Canada, 9th September 1974.

²⁷¹ Modern Records Centre, University Library, University of Warwick, *Red Lion Square Demonstration*, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/studying/modules/docs/visualsociology/redlionsquare>, [accessed 27th June 2015]; BBC News, On this Day 1950-2005, 1974: *Man dies in race rally clashes*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/15/newsid_2512000/2512725.stm, [accessed 27th June 2015].

ICRA chairman Jim Curran would stand as candidate in Brent East. The candidate for Paddington was Stephan Allman, who was described in the press as a company director and former Labour Party member. The candidate for Hampstead would be Mrs Maureen Maguire, who was secretary of the Irish Political Hostages Committee and a Labour Party member working in local government in London.²⁷² Maureen Maguire had no concerns about standing in opposition to the party that she was a member of. Due to an error when completing the application on the electoral roll to stand in Luton East, an element of farce entered the election. The candidate entered his occupation in the section reserved for political alignment, so on the ballot paper instead of Irish Civil Rights Association, the words Property Developer appeared and so the Property Developer Party took part in the General Election, even though it did not actually exist.²⁷³

It is noticeable that there were no candidates in Liverpool or Scotland. Liverpool was about to embark on its own political battles concerning the economy and Militant. In Scotland, as in the rest of the UK, the Irish had retained their own identity, but the troubles failed to provide a spark to increase sectarian tensions to anything remotely close to the problems experienced in Northern Ireland.²⁷⁴ Between 1971 and 1983, Glasgow would lose 96,769 jobs.²⁷⁵ Despite regeneration campaigns in both Glasgow and Edinburgh, the problems of drug addiction and HIV in the huge housing estates in both cities would gain national attention. These economic and social problems, in combination with decisions made by Labour, who needed to survive as a government, and the Conservatives, who needed to modernise in Scotland, would provide the foundations for the growth of the Scottish National Party and devalue the idea of Britishness in Scotland. Scotland began to look for political

²⁷² S. Irving, 'The Irish in Manchester and the Civil Rights Movement in the North of Ireland, 1963-1974', *Manchester's Radical History*, <https://radicalmanchester.wordpress.com/2009/10/21/the-irish-in-manchester-and-the-civil-rights-movement-in-the-north-of-ireland-1963-1974/>, accessed [27th June 2015].

²⁷³ *The Windsor Star*, Ontario, Canada, 7th October 1974.

²⁷⁴ J. Mitchell, 'Scotland: Cultural Base and Economic Catalysts', in J. Howell, *Britain since 1945* (Maldon: Blackwell, 2003), p.118.

²⁷⁵ M. Boyle & G. Hughes, 'The politics of the Representation of 'the real': Discourses from the Left on Glasgow's Role as European City of Culture', *Area*, Vol.23, No.3, 1991, pp. 217-228.

alternatives to Westminster, The Labour Party and the Conservatives.²⁷⁶ Britishness began to become increasingly unattractive for many in Scotland.

The campaign was firmly brought back to reality when the election results were announced. In Brent-East their candidate polled just 1.1% of the vote. In Hampstead a meagre 0.36%, in Manchester Moss Side 0.74%, the Paddington candidate received 0.37%, Luton East returned 0.76%. The best result was in Birmingham Sparkbrook where the candidate gained 1.83%. In Brent-East they received fewer votes than the National Front candidate; this result was replicated in almost every constituency.

In a somewhat prophetic editorial the *Irish Times* summed up the failure of ICRA. Unlike those that attempted to organise the Irish vote in Britain it returned to previous failures. It expressed concern that the ICRA campaign would expose how weak the Irish vote was in Britain and that any ICRA failure would mean that any future campaign by an Irish group would be left with very little political leverage. The editorial also correctly noted that Irish voters, as with their British counterparts, had other issues to consider. Education, the cost of living, wages, housing and the environment were all important considerations.²⁷⁷ It quite correctly stated that the majority of the Irish in Britain viewed themselves as part of a wider working-class community and as such had always voted Labour, but importantly it also noted that some parts of the Irish middle and professional classes in Britain were voting Conservative.²⁷⁸ It condemned ICRA as opportunistic and suggested that the Irish in Britain would be better off working from within existing political parties, social organizations and trade unions.²⁷⁹ The majority of the Irish in Britain agreed with this conclusion and remained firmly in the political mainstream.

The mainstream press was not the only source of criticism that ICRA had to face. There was also censure from Sinn Féin at Gardiner Place. Since it had split, Sinn Féin (Gardiner Place) had retained its belief in Marxist doctrine and viewed any attempt to separate the Irish vote in Britain from a wider class struggle as harmful to the cause of a united Ireland. It

²⁷⁶ J. Mitchell, 'Scotland: Cultural Base and Economic Catalysts', in J. Howell, *Britain since 1945* (Maldon: Blackwell, 2003); Boyle & Hughes, The politics of the Representation of 'the real': Discourses from the Left on Glasgow's Role as European City of Culture, *Area*, Vol.23, No.3, 1991, pp. 217-228; A. Marwick, *A History of the Modern British Isles Circumstances, Evens and Outcomes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp.312-314; K. Morgan, *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.367-371.

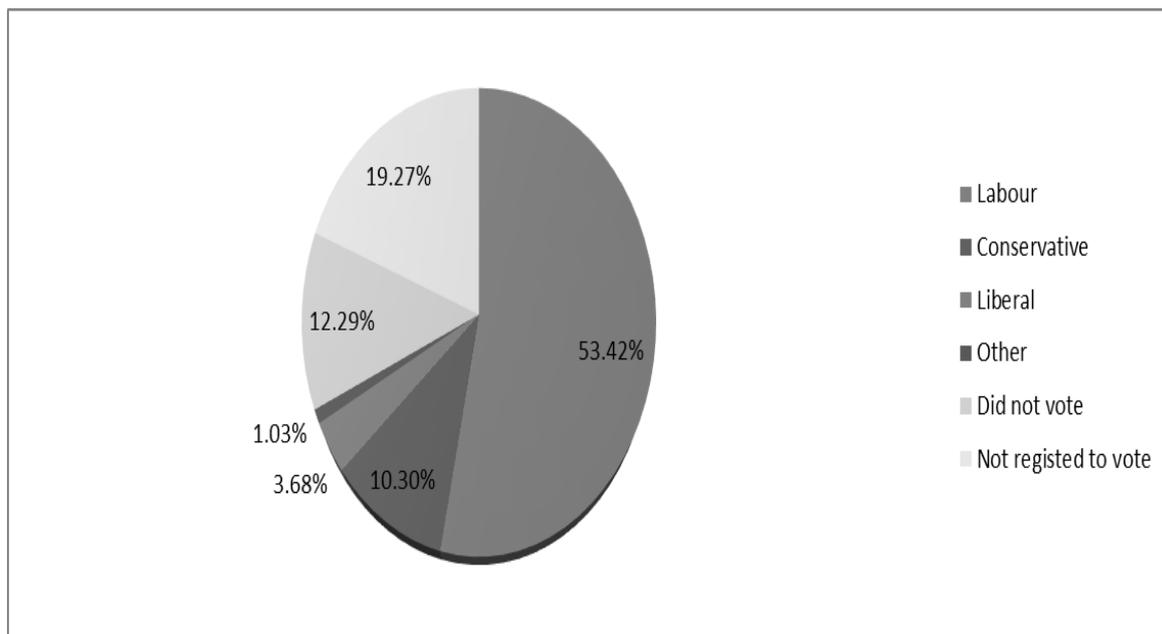
²⁷⁷ 'The Irish Vote', *The Irish Times*, 7th September 1974.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

declared that any separation of Irish workers from their British comrades would be self-defeating. The rhetoric used by Gardiner Place clearly contained echoes of Connolly's call that the cause of Labour was the cause of Ireland. They too recognized that successive British governments had done little to advance the cause of a unified Ireland and, to change this, Irish workers in Britain should join forces with their fellow workers in the British Labour Party and trade union movement.²⁸⁰ This criticism did not stop with the *Irish Times* and Gardiner Place, ICRA's close links with the provisional movement and their efforts to take votes away from the Labour movement were also met with protest by the Connolly Association, Irish Trade Unions, NICRA and Clann Na hÉireann.²⁸¹ The Connolly Association had come to the conclusion that 'there is no longer a single constituency that could be won' and that 'there is a real danger that actual or potential friends of Ireland may lose their seats'.²⁸²

Irish Post Survey July 1970



In conclusion, the ICRA election campaign was a complete failure. This is a result that could have been easily predicted. In 1970, the *Irish Post* had carried out a survey of its readership. In a sample size of 4751 53.42% voted Labour, 10.30% voted Conservative, 3.68%

²⁸⁰ J. Downey, 'Don't desert Labour call to Irish in Britain', *The Irish Times* 5th September 1974.

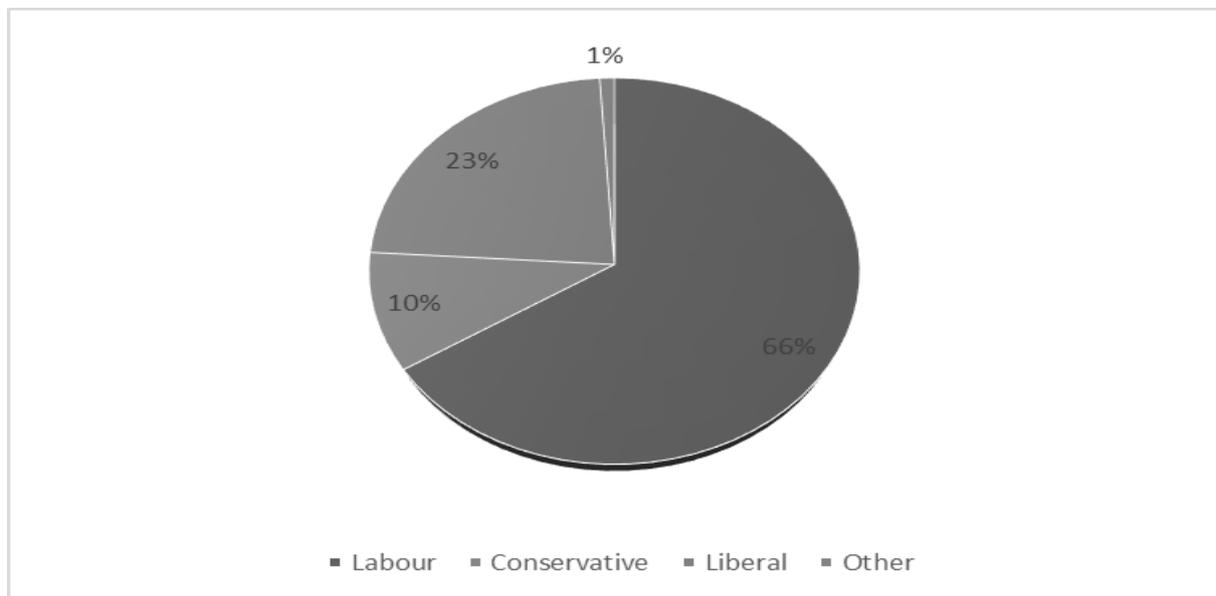
²⁸¹ R. Holohan, 'Why the Irish Question is low of election issues', *The Irish Times* 4th October 1974.

²⁸² 'I.C.R.A Candidates', *The Irish Democrat*, October 1974.

Liberal and 1.03% voted 'others'. Perhaps the most important figure to emerge was that 31.57% of those Irish voters surveyed did not take part in the election, either not registering to vote or not voting.²⁸³ Those not participating was 3.57% above the UK average.²⁸⁴

Although these figures only provide an indication of the voting intentions of the readership of the *Irish Post*, as a publication its importance must not be understated. The *Irish Post* operated almost as a local provincial newspaper for the Irish in Britain. It provided a mix of news from Ireland and news about facilities, clubs and community brokerage in Britain. In February 1974, it carried out another survey.

The *Irish Post* General Election Survey February 1974



This time 66% voted Labour, the Conservatives remained at 10%, the Liberal vote increase to 23% and the vote for 'others' remained at 1%.²⁸⁵ Sadly, this time, the *Irish Post* did not indicate its sample size or the numbers of those that did not take part. In this election, it is the vote for 'others' and the increase in the vote for the Liberal Party that provide the most interesting figures. The increase in the Liberal was following the general trend within the wider British voting public, showing dissatisfaction with the Conservatives and Labour.

²⁸³ 'Survey of Irish Voters', *The Irish Post*, 11th July 1974.

²⁸⁴ L. Audickas, O. Hawkins & R. Cracknell, *UK Election Statistics 1918-2017*, Briefing Paper, House of Commons Library, House of Commons, Westminster, 2017, p..25.

²⁸⁵ Survey of Irish Voters, *The Irish Post*, 23rd February 1974.

Although the Liberal Party increased its number of MPs from 6 to 14, the first-past-the-post system prevented further gains. The figure of 1% showed that the numbers supporting minor parties was unchanged and no gains had been made since the failure of the APL candidates in 1950 and 1951.

Once again single-issue candidates had no more impact than in any other previous election campaign since 1945. The campaign failed to attract Irish voters away from the Labour Party and in doing so made no significant impact on the election or its result. They received very little coverage in the British press and by using column inches as a very rough measure of importance, Enoch Powell's decision to stand in 1974 as an Ulster Unionist candidate for South Down (a seat he would win and hold until 1987), was given far greater significance. The decision by the IRA to carry out a campaign on the British mainland ensured that political violence would be met with condemnation from all points of the British political compass. It was also condemned by many from within the Irish population in Britain, with one contributor to the letters page of the *Irish Post* writing, 'for me at least the legend of the IRA died in Birmingham amidst the broken bodies of the innocent'.²⁸⁶ They were not alone, noted Irish photographer, Paddy Fahey recalled his own reaction: 'I'm a nationalist, a republican to the heart, but I don't agree with the bombing, to take anyone's life. I draw the line at that. I gave up press photography after the bombings in Birmingham'.²⁸⁷ Irish Nationalism and Republicanism in Britain was split, with no unified leadership. The ICRA campaign was part of a much wider left-wing group of organizations that would occasionally share the same stage, venue or goal without ever truly becoming a viable option. In the end ICRA simply became another party amongst 59 that made no significant impact on the 1974 October general election. Even though Northern Ireland had forced its way into the British and Irish political spotlight due to violence and suffering, the Irish in Britain remained embedded in mainstream British politics. Following the 1974 General Election the Labour Party would limp on, first under Wilson and then Callaghan. The Conservatives in their search for answers would turn to one of the most important and divisive figures in British political history, Margaret Thatcher. This would be a period that would be framed by the battle of the 'we' of Thatcherism 'v' the 'others' of the enemy within.

²⁸⁶ P. Burke, Letters Page, *The Irish Post*, 30th November 1974.

²⁸⁷ P. Fahey, *The Irish in London Photographs and Memories* (Centerprise: London, 1991), p.42.

Chapter Five

Moral Government verses the 'other'

*The map that's colour-coded Ulster/Eire's
flashed on again as almost every night.
Behind a tiny coffin with two bearers
men in masks with arms show off their might¹*

(5.1) No Thatcherite view on Northern Ireland

Richard Vinen argued that 'There was no particular Thatcherite view on Northern Ireland'.² On the surface this seems an unsound conclusion given her pronouncements regarding the Conservative's support for the continuation of the Union and her remarks concerning the Britishness of Northern Ireland and Finchley. However, as Colin Coulter has shown, the relationship between Northern Ireland, the Conservatives and Ulster Unionists is one that is marked by mutual distrust and conflicting interests and objectives.³ This chapter will show that Vinen and Coulter are correct in their conclusions. It will disclose a Conservative Party that viewed the IRA and Republicanism as part of the enemy within which had to be defeated to ensure the return of moral democracy to the United Kingdom, not to ensure the retention of Northern Ireland. Neither Republicanism nor Unionism would be allowed to de-rail the Thatcherite project. Further, it will show that despite the best efforts of some within the Conservative Party, those that wished to promote cultural ties with Northern Ireland would be controlled by the pragmatists within the party. Any solution to the problems in Northern Ireland would be within the wider Conservative project, the creation of a moral democracy that allowed the individual to flourish, even at the cost of leaving many behind. This vision of a moral democracy was set out by Margaret Thatcher in her 1975 speech to the Conservative Conference. In this speech she set out what was to be achieved. Classic libertarian economics would allow the individual to flourish. There would be a recovery of national prestige. Most

¹ T.Harrison, 'V', *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), pp.235-249.

² R. Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster), p.215.

³ C. Coulter, 'Not quite as British as Finchley: the failed attempt to bring British Conservatism to Northern Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, Vol.23, No. 4, 407-423.

importantly law and order would ensure that individuals would not only flourish, but that it was essential to make the government and parliament sovereign once again. Any future Conservative government would not negotiate from a position of duress or give in to extra-parliamentary pressure. This determination to uphold the law and the sovereignty of parliament would have dire consequences in Northern Ireland and in rest of the United Kingdom.⁴

(5.2) Moral government 'v' the enemy within

The danger of examining any subject in isolation is that only part of the picture is revealed. To fully understand Conservative Party under Margaret Thatcher and their attitude towards Northern Ireland, it is necessary also examine events in wider British society. These, at face value, may have nothing to do with Northern Ireland. Tony Harrison in his poem 'V' captures the bitter, oppositional nature of politics that engulfed Britain following the final failure of Wilson's statist modernism and one-nation Conservatism under Heath. Northern Ireland 'flashed' on to British television screens and was quickly submerged amongst stories of football hooliganism and 'police v pickets'. For the majority of the British public Northern Ireland represented 'old violence and old disunity'.⁵ Despite the suffering and calamities, Northern Ireland was not the only show in town. He illustrates the cultural 'we' of Thatcherism and its vision of moral democracy 'v' the politically and culturally different; the subversive enemy within. Harrison was not the only critique of the oppositional nature of Thatcherism. In his maiden speech to the House of Lords, Harold MacMillan, condemned the death of the one-nation Tory, telling his audience that 'it breaks my heart to see what is happening in our country today. A terrible strike is being carried on by the best men in the world. They beat the Kaiser's army. They never gave in. The strike is pointless and endless. We cannot afford action of this kind'.⁶ In their rush to create the Britain of their imaginations, the Conservatives were adding to the crisis of Britishness that had been festering since 1945.

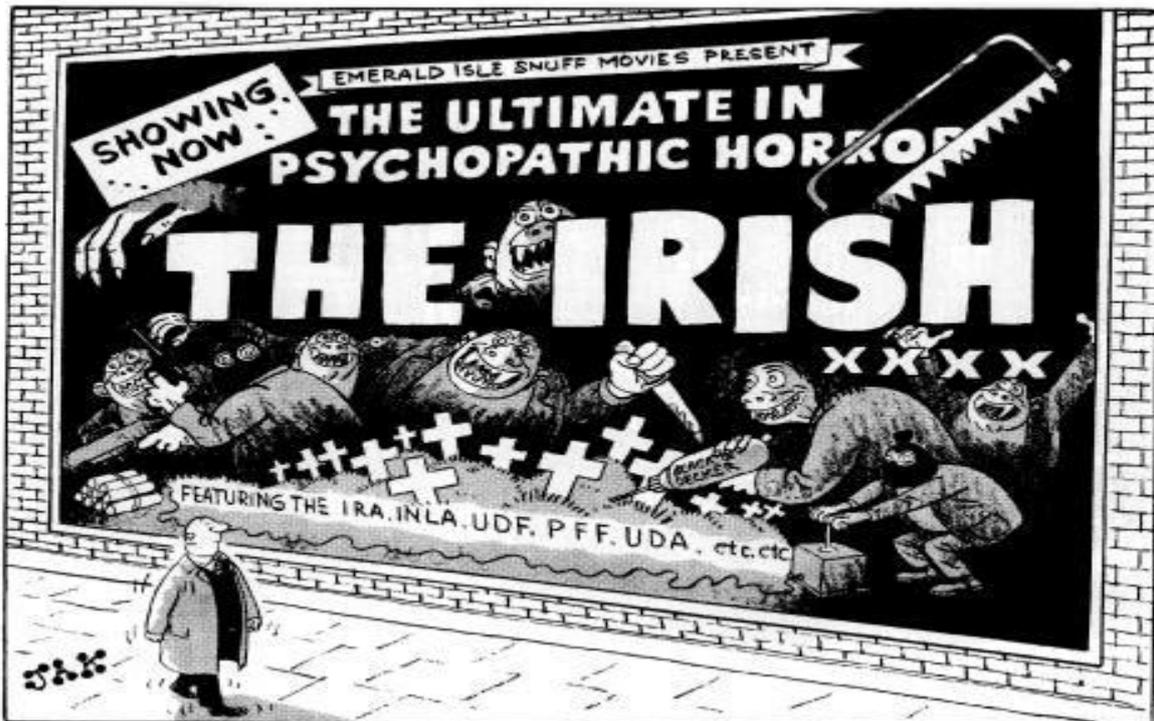
⁴ Margaret Thatcher Foundation (hereafter MTF), Speeches Interviews & Other Statements, *Speech to Conservative Party Conference*, 10th October 1975.

⁵ Harrison, 'V', *Selected Poems*, pp.235-249.

⁶ The Earl of Stockton, 'Address in Reply to Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech', *Hansard*, HL Deb 13th November 1984, vol 457 cc21-306.

Whilst Harrison and MacMillan represent artistic and elite political expressions of the Thatcherite 'we' against the enemy within, the media continued to paint a vivid picture of the Irish 'other'. There was no more controversial expression of this than the infamous cartoon by Raymond Jackson (Jak) which appeared in the *Evening Standard* in 1982.

The Irish, *Evening Standard*, 29th October 1982⁷



Although this cartoon is repeatedly used (quite correctly) as an example of continuing anti-Irish sentiment, racism and as a portrayal of a suspect community, closer inspection reveals much more about societal concerns in Britain. The first video cassette recorders had appeared in the UK in the 1970s and a moral panic had gripped sections of UK society concerning the un-regulated distribution of horror films and pornography, which were dubbed video nasties. It is not a coincidence that one of the characters is armed with a drill, *The Driller Killer* was one of the most infamous of the video nasties and was subsequently banned. The nightly appearance of the problems in Northern Ireland on British television screens was depicted as the result of a degenerate orgy of violence that had to be defeated

⁷ R. Jackson, 'The Irish', *The Evening Standard*, 29th October 1982, The British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent.

with other threats identified by the Thatcherite 'we' and the party of moral democracy. This may have been the moral democracy of their imaginations, but as Hobsbawm argued, Thatcher's Britain for those who did not agree with this, would be 'profoundly and viscerally nationalist and distrustful of the outside world'.⁸ For Thatcher, the outside world was anywhere beyond the confines of Finchley.

This battle of oppositional identity was the result of the statist modernism of Wilson failing to deliver the classless society. This failure left behind a vacuum. Those who attempted to fill this void are still remembered as some of the most controversial political figures of the latter half of the 20th Century. Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives were elected as the party of change. 'We can't go on like this' could have been the slogan for those on the right of the Conservative Party and the British electorate.⁹ However, Ireland would once again burst into British politics when other political issues were viewed as far more important.

<p>Q1 What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?</p> <p>Q2 What other issues do you think are particularly important in Britain today?</p>	<p>Ipsos Mori Feb 1979</p>
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Topic	Q1 Most important %	Q2 Combined %
Trades Union/strikes/industrial disputes	51	73
Prices/cost of living/inflation	30	66
Unemployment	10	31
Law & Order	3	14
National Health Service	2	15
Common Market	2	9
Housing/Rent/Rates	1	9
Immigration/race relations	1	10
Nationalisation/public ownership	1	5
Northern Ireland	1	5
Pensions	1	5
Schools/education	1	9
Rhodesia	0	1

⁸ E. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1999), p.412.

⁹ A Beckett, *When the Lights went out, What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p.148.

In a poll carried out by Ipsos Mori in February 1979, only 1% of those surveyed regarded Northern Ireland as the most important electoral issue; strikes, trades unions and industrial disputes were given the highest importance.¹⁰ The concerns over the nation's morals, inflation, economic performance, and trades unions created a belief that the UK was a state in decline. Even though a generous amount of this was based on myth, Thatcherism was sold as a method to reverse industrial and moral decline. Much of this involved taking back control from local and intermediate organisations in Britain. If Wilson's statist response failed, then Thatcherism was about the individual. Under Thatcher the strong, centralised state had one purpose; to provide the structure and space for individual success. It was the protection of the state and the ability to deliver stable, responsible and moral government that was at the centre of British politics. The defeat of the IRA became part of a battle to show that the Conservative Party were reversing the decline thesis, not to ensure the retention of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. The consequence of this was that Northern Ireland primarily became a security issue. It also emphasised Northern Ireland as a place apart. The Conservatives under Thatcher would battle to resist devolution for Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland was the only part of the United Kingdom where the Conservatives reluctantly considered devolution as an option.

Despite the reluctance to consider different options and directions for Northern Ireland, there continued a robust commitment to the Union from the Conservatives. Margaret Thatcher herself said that 'Any Conservative should be in his bones a Unionist'.¹¹ At first glance this would seem to offer Unionists in Northern Ireland the reassurance that they had a friend in Downing Street. A deeper reading of Thatcherism shows that, despite her claims, the Union for British politicians would continue to remain something different from Unionism in Northern Ireland. Margaret Thatcher's Unionism was bullish, English, Anglican, socially conservative and firmly welded to ideas of economic liberalism. This response would not provide Unionists in Northern Ireland with the images or levels of support that they had received from Edwardian Britain which remained a cherished part of their identity and history.

¹⁰ *British Public Opinion February 1979*, Ipsos Mori.

¹¹ M. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p.385.

What was not addressed by Thatcherism was what to do with those left behind? They would turn to the politics of difference and community empowerment. This would provide common ground between those on the left of British politics and the changing politics of Republicanism. However, this would be an opposition that was riddled by divisions marked by vitriol and public arguments. The British electorate viewed the left as incapable of providing responsible, stable government. This collection of far-left groups and individuals became the 'Awkward Squad' of British politics. This was especially true at local level where Labour councillors increasingly attempted to dominate local authorities with their own personal ideologies and were perceived as more interested in Trotsky or Marx rather than balancing the books.¹² It was at a local level that the 'Awkward Squad' did the most harm to the Labour vote, damaging the trust of voters who wanted above all else to ensure that their own aspirations and stability were protected.

For Conservatives, Northern Ireland needed a solution that would resolve British issues, not Irish issues. They wanted a stable, prosperous, homogenous, moral democracy. There could be no place for Diasporic politics or petite nationalisms. Northern Ireland and partition would become part of multiple battles between the 'we' of Thatcherism 'v' those that opposed it.

(5.3) The Thatcherite 'We' and Northern Ireland in Westminster

As previously shown, Northern Ireland had little political saliency for British politicians or the electorate. The Irish in Britain had shown little interest in the Diasporic politics that assorted micro-groups wanted to encourage. However, Northern Ireland was about to intrude into British politics once again and it would be via immigration and the need to define 'Britishness'. The uncomfortable business of British identity needed to be considered once again. This would also mean examining the constitutional status of the Irish in Britain. The crisis of Britishness had not gone away.

Even before becoming Conservative leader and her first General Election victory, Margaret Thatcher was part of a Conservative party that was searching for a way to create

¹²A. Marwick, *A History of the Modern British Isles 1914-1919: Circumstances, Events and Outcomes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.266.

British identity as they imagined it and to confirm its legitimacy via parliamentary legislation. This would once again be a difficult task as British identity is a complex mix of *Jus Soli* (by birth within the nation-states borders) and *Jus Sanguinis* (by parental descent). Further layers of complexity are added to these broad definitions as British legislation divides each into a series of conditions, sub-divisions and qualifying criteria.¹³

In 1977 the Labour Government had already taken steps to address the issues of British identity and published a Green Paper.¹⁴ It was explicit in stating that the United Kingdom was no longer an imperial power and that as such a new definition and legislation was needed to define British citizenship. This was potentially closing more doors to former colonial populations. Labour had continually struggled to deal with immigration and once again failed to understand many of the feelings about the subject that existed within the wider British working class. The Conservative Party had grasped how important issues of national cohesion and immigration were to the wider electorate. They wanted to stress that they wanted 'the same Britain as you' and that 'we must not shirk the immigration issue, which is the acid test of whether a political party is in tune with ordinary people'.¹⁵ This was not entirely lost on Labour and it was reported to Mrs Thatcher that when it came to immigration Labour was trying to 'steal Mrs. Thatcher's clothes'.¹⁶ In 1979 The Conservatives published their own White Paper. Although Thatcher professed no support for extremists such as the National Front, she also rejected much of the grandiose rhetoric that came from senior Conservative and Labour politicians. When it came to immigration, Thatcher was, in many ways, much closer to the feelings of the British working class than Labour were. When it came to immigration she felt that British politicians had failed to 'articulate the sentiments of ordinary people'.¹⁷ Unwittingly her views on immigration did much to ensure the defeat of the National Front as a potential political force. The expected political breakthrough by the National Front in 1979 did not occur.

Any attempts to define Britishness through legislation could not ignore Northern Ireland and the constitutional status of the Irish in Britain. This was unavoidable as pressure

¹³ *British Nationality Act 1981*, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/61/contents>, [accessed 14th May 2016].

¹⁴ Green Paper, *British Nationality Laws, Discussion of Possible Changes*, (London: HMSO, 1977).

¹⁵ MTF: MSS 2/1/2/21A, N. Lawson, *Lawson Paper on Strategy (Pattern Paper on Stepping Stones)*, 15th January 1978.

¹⁶ MTF: PREM 16/1688, *Note of Callaghan meeting with Labour whips*, 8th March 1978.

¹⁷ H. Randall, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain, The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.209.

from Conservative MPs, some close to Mrs Thatcher, would make sure of that. Even before her first election victory, Margaret Thatcher was in regular contact with Prime Minister Wilson and so was her closest advisor at this time, Airey Neave.¹⁸ Neave, like Thatcher, firmly believed in the absolute sovereignty of Parliament. He was also a resolute believer in law and order, national security and the Union. Neave's own view of the Union was also much closer to that of cultural Unionists in Northern Ireland. He was potentially an important ally for them. This made him popular with both the Thatcherites and mainstream Conservatives. He would be one of the stalwarts of the creation of the party of moral democracy.

Neave staunchly believed that terrorism should be viewed as crime, that the actions of terrorists were an attack on parliamentary process and democracy. He refused to recognise that Sinn Féin had a political ideology and could not separate their political rhetoric from the acts of Republican paramilitaries. His belief in the Union could not be changed and while he was prepared to offer local authorities control in Northern Ireland, for him devolution in any form was not open for consideration.¹⁹ Neave was also aware of the value of propaganda in the efforts to combat paramilitary activity. He wanted to convince the wider British public that paramilitary violence had no political aims and was mindless. The dignity of the state had to be protected. Neave had been schooled by the dinner and private club network that not only provided the recruiting ground for British intelligence, but also contained but much of the financial support for the Conservatives. This group shared a common goal, the defeat of subversive elements that threatened the Queen, the Country and its traditions.²⁰ This made Neave not only popular with Thatcher, but his background made him a potentially dangerous opponent. Lord Lexden is correct in his conclusion that the death of Neave would have consequences for both Unionism in Ulster and wider Conservative policy in its attempts to ensure enthusiasm for the Union outside England.²¹

The Conservatives were not the only part of civic society wanting to show that they were the protectors of moral democracy and the dignity of the state. From 1975, as

¹⁸ *Notes of Meeting with Prime Minister*, 10th September 1975, The Pat Finucane Centre, Armagh, Derry & Dublin.

¹⁹ B. Harrison, 'Neave, Airey Middleton Sheffield (1916–1979)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31488>, accessed 16 Sept 2014].

²⁰ P. Routledge, *Public Servant Secret Agent, The Elusive Life and Violent Death of Airey Neave* (London: Fourth Estate, 2002).

²¹ Lord Lexden, '35 years ago today, Airey Neave was murdered – and the course of British politics changed', *Conservative Home*, 30th March 2014.

Thatcherism took hold of the Conservatives, the British police were becoming increasingly politicised, and figures such as Sir James Anderton, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, were regular commentators on society. The 'Bobby Lobby', particularly statements by Chief Constables, played an important role in Margaret Thatcher's 1979 election victory.²² The police in Britain were using lessons learned from Northern Ireland during the 1980 British Steel strike and in 1981 during the inner-city riots. The most infamous use of hard power would be on display at Orgreave in 1984, with the *Daily Express* and the *Sun* depicting the mounted police as performing the modern version of the charge of the Scots Greys at Waterloo or the Light Brigade at Balaclava.²³ In 1986 Margaret Thatcher directly intervened when Anderton made one of his most controversial public statements and saved his career.²⁴ Newly released documents show that British politicians were aware that evidence was being 'enhanced' by the police to use against the Birmingham Six, but showed little interest in pursuing any accusations of illegality.²⁵ This was not policing by consent, it was the Praetorian Thatcherite 'we' versus the mob. Margaret Thatcher's and the Conservatives' response to both Northern Ireland and political conflict in the remainder of the United Kingdom exposed the parochial nature of Thatcher's view of the United Kingdom. Her assertion that 'Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom as much as my constituency' exposed her own limited thinking on identity. This statement revealed how little the world outside Finchley and the Tory Shires was understood by Thatcher and her advisors. It was not a matter of Northern Ireland being as British as Finchley, the question they should have been asking was how British was Finchley? However, for them, it soon became clear that Northern Ireland may have been as British as Finchley, but its politics were not. From 1974 onwards, the Conservatives increasingly lost the ability to view Britishness through Irish, Scottish and Welsh eyes.

²² R. Reiner, *Who put the politics into the police?*, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 18th March, 2010, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/who-put-politics-into-the-police/>, [accessed 31st August 2015]

²³ *The Daily Express*, 'Charge of the Coke Brigade', 30th May 1984; *The Sun*, 'Charge', 30th May 1984; The Battle of Orgreave was one of the most controversial incidents during the 1984-85 miners strike. The lack of public inquiry remains controversial.

²⁴ 'Margaret Thatcher saves career of police chief who made AIDS remarks', *The Daily Telegraph*, 4th January, 2012; Chief Constable James Anderton became known as 'Gods Copper'. He was fervently opposed to left-wing politics and viewed policing as moral enforcement.

²⁵ Hutton & Carty, 'British police put jam on the cake to jail Birmingham Six', *The Sunday Times*, 29th December 2017.

The influence of Neave could be found in other aspects of Thatcherism and challenged the previous consensus politics that had been developed and accepted by Labour and the Conservatives. He was not afraid to use tactics that the Conservatives had previously used to defeat Labour governments. Neave played on constitutional fears and in 1978 once again portrayed the Labour Party as a threat to the stability of the Union, declaring that a Labour victory at the next general election would mean 'the end of the United Kingdom.'²⁶ Concerned over the prospect of a hung Parliament he made a direct appeal to Unionists in Northern Ireland. His invocation to Northern Unionists was twofold. He wanted to show them that the Conservative Party shared their sense of Britishness and that their own Christian values and morality closely matched that of the Conservative Party. To make his deal attractive he offered a firm commitment to the Union. Any attempt at a solution that crept towards federalism would be rejected, there could be no political settlement in Northern Ireland until law and order was restored.²⁷ The true consequence of the death of Neave was that Unionists lost an individual who was close to their own sympathies and would not consider devolution in any form. Despite the best efforts of those who came after Neave, Unionists in Northern Ireland and the Conservative Party would never be, in cultural terms, as close again.²⁸ Even the current agreement between Theresa May, the Conservatives and the DUP, offers little more than platitudes for consumption by DUP voters rather than true cultural bonds. It is a continuation of the battle between the pragmatic wing of the Conservative Party and the pygmy imperialists that became increasingly emboldened and pestilential for John Major.

Following the death of Neave, Margaret Thatcher made it clear that she shared his views, telling the BBC that 'Those who believe in the things Airey fought for must see that our views are the ones which continue to live on in this country'.²⁹ The message could not have been clearer the moral democracy would not be forced to the negotiating table or give in to the subversives, in Northern Ireland, or elsewhere in the UK.

²⁶ A. McHardy, 'Neave warns Ulster against Labour victory', *The Guardian*, 8th April 1978.

²⁷ D. Brown, 'Thatcher Pledge on power to Unionists', *The Guardian*, 20th June 1978.

²⁸ Neave was killed in a car bomb planted by the INLA in 1979. He was viewed by Republicans as a very serious threat and someone with the potential defeat the armed struggle. His death remains controversial due to the sophistication of the device used, which some believe beyond the capability of the INLA.

²⁹ MTF: BBC Sound Archive OUP Transcript, M. Thatcher, 'Remarks on the murder of Airey Neave ('some devils got him')', 30th March 1979.

After the interruptions caused by the death of Neave and the General Election campaign, the new Conservative Government returned to its plan to legislate for who could legitimately claim to be British citizens. The Conservatives were taking a very possessive view towards British identity. In their view, the decline thesis not only threatened social and national cohesion but was a danger to the moral and ethical obligations between citizen and the state. Despite their increasingly narrow definition of Britishness in 1980 William Whitelaw, the Home Secretary, reported to Margaret Thatcher that in his view the status of Irish citizens in Britain should remain unchanged. Whitelaw concluded that the proposed new Nationality Bill would be a 'major' issue and 'in part controversial'. One of the reasons behind this controversy is that, as shown by Parekh, identity means that we are 'this thing or this kind of thing rather than some other, and distinguish it from others'.³⁰ At the simplest level this is how membership of the nation-state is decided. However, this essentialisation ignores plural identities. Margaret Thatcher herself underlined the passage that concluded that the status of Irish citizens in the United Kingdom should remain unaltered, unwittingly revealing that she was aware that this would be controversial for some members of her party.³¹ These concerns were quickly made public by members of the Conservative Party. A group of Conservative MPs met with William Whitelaw and informed him that they wanted him to make it known to the Prime Minister that in their view any change in British nationality legislation should remove the right of Irish citizens to vote in British elections.³² One member of this group, Edward Gardner, QC, made it public that he thought that it was 'no longer tenable' for Irish citizens to have the right to vote in the United Kingdom.³³ Ivor Stanbrook, Conservative MP for Orpington, was concerned that the continuation of Irish citizens having the right to vote would have a weakening effect the wider population's sense of British identity.³⁴

What Stanbrook and other Conservatives failed to recognise was that it was not multiple or hybrid identities that was weakening the attraction of Britishness. A shrinking economy and a constricted definition of Britishness, dominated by an Anglo-Centric

³⁰ B. Parekh, *A New Politics of Identity, Political Principles for and Interdependent World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008) p.8.

³¹ MTF: PREM19/486 f77, W. Whitelaw, *Note to Prime Minister on the Nationality Bill*, 26th June 1980.

³² MTF: PREM19/486 f77 W. Whitelaw, *Minute to Margaret Thatcher*, 24th February 1981.

³³ *The Irish Times*, 17th March 1980.

³⁴ 'Whitelaw attacked for retaining rights of Irish to vote in UK', *The Guardian*, 31st July 1980.

concentration of power in London were much more important factors in the rejection of Britishness as imagined by the Conservatives under Thatcher. Consequently, increasingly loud voices within Wales and Scotland questioned the value of remaining within the Union. This all confirms the conclusion by Aughey that Thatcher's Conservatives did not understand the United Kingdom and that her populism was distinctly English.³⁵ The Britishness of Finchley did not apply to Scotland and Wales. In England, the economic decline of areas such as Coventry, which had previously been an attractive destination for Irish migrants, revealed just how far south the economic power of the British state had moved. This economic decay would later enter the cultural consciousness of the UK through the song writing of Jerry Dammers in 1981 with the Specials and his vivid depiction of the inner-city 'Ghost Town'. Such 'Ghost Towns' were far more important to the wider British electorate than Northern Ireland.

The arguments about voting rights in British elections continued to rumble on into 1982. Ian Gow, at that time Parliamentary Private Secretary to Margaret Thatcher, sent a detailed minute to the Prime Minister outlining his view of the situation.³⁶ He reported that Douglas Hurd had met with the Irish Ambassador and the issue of reciprocal voting rights for British citizens in the Republic of Ireland was being discussed in Dublin. This was an effort to counter the pressure being applied to remove voting rights of Irish citizens in Britain. Gow informed the Prime Minister that there were 35 resolutions on the Conservative Party Conference agenda calling for the removal of voting rights for Irish citizens in Britain. He listed several reasons why, in his view, 'logic, common sense and party advantage would make this change in law desirable', informing the Prime Minister that he believed that most of the Irish in Britain did not vote Conservative.³⁷ Gow's assumption was correct, but as with previous generations, he was overstating the importance of the Irish vote. He also used the minute to remind the Prime Minister that she had previously been opposed to reciprocal voting rights as in her view it 'would not be a quid pro quo for the millions who reside here.'³⁸ Despite these comments, Gow's efforts had little effect on the Prime Minister and

³⁵ A. Aughey, *Politics of Englishness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 74-77.

³⁶ MTF: THCR 2/6/2/117 Part 3 f59, I. Gow, *Minute to the Prime Minister*, 27th July 1982.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Conservative Party leadership. They publicly declared that they had no plans to remove Irish voting rights in Britain.

The pressure for the removal of voting rights never attracted wide support, and by 1983 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office, Lord Elton would rise and inform the House of Lords that after consideration the British Government had no intention of removing voting rights for Irish citizens in Britain. He stated that this was done for several reasons. He argued that it would have been very difficult under the constitution to remove so many people from the voting register. He also argued that removing the right to vote would have had a serious effect on the relationship between Dublin and Westminster. Finally, he told those who wanted to remove the right to vote as a response to the violence in Northern Ireland that he believed 'that most Irish citizens in this country are well integrated and law-abiding and agreeable fellow citizens of this realm.'³⁹ Agreeable they may have been, but citizens they were not. They would continue to be 'not foreign'.

The constitutional status of the Irish in Britain raised little concern for wider British society. It allowed the Government to avoid further uncomfortable questions about the constitution and integrity of the state. However, events in prisons in Northern Ireland which had been festering under the previous Government would overtake questions of nationality. The Hunger Strikes would test the resolve of the Conservatives to remain the defenders of moral democracy.

The criminalisation of paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland and the rest of Great Britain did not begin with Margaret Thatcher's own much publicised view that all violence was a crime. In 1971 the Conservative Party Conference regarded paramilitary campaigns as 'murder and destruction'.⁴⁰ Margaret Thatcher's opinion was that there was 'only criminal murder, criminal bombing and criminal violence.'⁴¹ This was an echo of Airey Neave who had previously attacked paramilitary activity as nothing more than criminality in 1977.⁴² Law and order were central themes of Conservative party thinking since 1969 when the Conservative

³⁹ Lord Elton, House of Lords Debate 'Irish Citizens Votes in United Kingdom', *Hansard*, 7th March 1983, vol 440 cc4-6.

⁴⁰ F. Craig, *Conservative & Labour Party Conference Decisions 1945-1981* (Chichester: Parliamentary Research Services, 1982), p.96.

⁴¹ MTF: Speaking Text, M. Thatcher, *Speech in Belfast*, 5th March 1981.

⁴² B. Harrison, 'Neave, Airey Middleton Sheffield (1916-1979)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

Party Conference passed a resolution stating that 'the return to law and order and the implementation of the reforms must be a first priority'.⁴³ The belief of the members of the Conservative Party that they were the defenders of moral democracy had deep roots. This would be a government that was not only willing to use hard power, but also willing not to look too closely at its consequences or how that power was used. This unwillingness to question the actions of the police would continue as campaigns for investigations into the events of Orgreave, Hillsborough and in Gibraltar would be resisted.

The Hunger Strikes have been extensively examined, but what has largely been left out of that examination is the reaction to the Hunger Strikes in Britain.⁴⁴ The prospect of protests in support of the Hunger Strikers in Britain was discussed by the British Cabinet on 23rd October 1980 were aware that some demonstrations had already been planned.⁴⁵ The Conservative Government was also conscious of the feelings of some back-benchers who wanted to take a hard line with the Hunger Strikers. At a meeting of the Northern Ireland Committee, Humphrey Atkins reported to the Prime Minister that nine Conservative MPs objected to the idea of allowing prisoners to wear civilian clothes.⁴⁶ The Cabinet was also concerned that, even though not publicly admitted, the real motive behind the Hunger Strikes was the unification of Ireland and the withdrawal of British troops. There was concern that if this did happen then there would be serious trouble in the west of Scotland.⁴⁷ This was not the only time that Scotland was raised as an issue in Cabinet. After the death of Raymond McCreech (the third prisoner to join the Hunger Strike) the Cabinet was concerned over increasing public support for the withdrawal of troops. They were also worried that the Scottish Republican Army was increasing its activity and was now 'disposed to emulate and perhaps co-operate with the PIRA's campaign of violence'.⁴⁸ However, these fears were unfounded, and no such campaign emerged.

⁴³ Craig, *Conservative & Labour Party Conference Decisions 1945-1981*, p.96.

⁴⁴ R. O'Rawe, *Blanketmen: An Untold Story of the H-Block Hunger Strike* (Dublin: Stillorgan, 2005); D. Beresford, *Ten Men Dead The Story of the 1981 Hunger Strike* (London: Harper Collins, 1987); T. Hennessey, *Hunger Strike Margaret Thatcher's Battle with the IRA 1980-81* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2013).

⁴⁵ The National Archive (hereafter 'TNA'): CAB/128/68/13, *Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street*, 23rd October 1980.

⁴⁶ MTF: THCR 2/6/116 pt2 (21), Gow Minute to Margaret Thatcher, *Northern Ireland Committee*, 30th October 1980.

⁴⁷ TNA: CAB/128/72, *Most Confidential Record to Cabinet Conclusions*, 2nd July 1981.

⁴⁸ TNA: CAB/128/70/20, *Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet*, 21st May 1981.

Margaret Thatcher was also receiving correspondence directly from outside of the Conservative Party. The Connolly Association sent her a letter asking her to reconsider the Government's position as she was about to 'bring this country into even greater international disrepute'.⁴⁹ Jock Stallard (Labour MP for St Pancras North) in his position as Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party Northern Ireland Group also sent correspondence to the Prime Minister. He confirmed that the group had already firmly established its own stance, that political status should be rejected but wanted a 'humane and responsive' approach to the Hunger Strikers.⁵⁰ Thatcher replied to Stallard informing him that she was 'grateful for your group's re-affirmation of its opposition to political status.'⁵¹ It was quite clear from the tone and content in the Prime Minister's reply that under no circumstances was the Government willing to make any changes to prison regimes whilst 'under duress'.⁵² For both parties, it was important to show that responsible governments did not make decisions under duress. That was not, in their view, stable government and responsible, moral democracy.

Margaret Thatcher was also influenced by previous Hunger Strikers, in particular the force feeding of the Price sisters.⁵³ This controversial practice was covered widely in the press. There were international consequences as the World Medical Association Ethics Committee condemned force feeding as unethical. Margaret Thatcher and her Government decided not to challenge this.⁵⁴

As tensions were building within Westminster, the Prime Minister was also coming under pressure from various religious denominations. She held discussions with and sent letters to Pope John Paul II.⁵⁵ However by December of 1980 the Government had accepted that it could not expect an explicit statement of support from the Pontiff.⁵⁶ Closer to home the Archbishop of Canterbury was also becoming involved in the public discussions over how to solve the situation. Runcie made several very public statements during the Hunger Strikes. He supported the British Government's position over political status, stating that 'I do not

⁴⁹ Peoples History Museum (hereafter PHM): MF/18, *Letter to Mrs Thatcher from the Connolly Association*, 16th April 1981.

⁵⁰ MTF: PREM/19/505 f193, J. Stallard, *Letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 17th June 1981.

⁵¹ MTF: THCR 3/2/65f6, Thatcher, M, *Letter to Jock Stallard MP*, 19th July 1981.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.392.

⁵⁴ I. Miller, *The Irish Times*, 'Why H-Block hunger strikers were not fed', *The Irish Times*, 5th July 2016.

⁵⁵ MTF: THCR 3/2/43/(3), M. Thatcher, *Letter to Pope John Paul II*, 29th November 1980.

⁵⁶ MTF: PREM 19/282 f38, UKE Holy See to FCO, *The Protesting Maze Prisoners*, [UK Ambassador discussion with Vatican diplomat Silvestrini on Maze Prison hunger strike], 10th December 1980.

think there is any give and I do not think there should be any give on that ground' and he also made it clear that in his view the Hunger Strikers were committing suicide.⁵⁷ One day later in Belfast he told his audience that 'I pray with you that the moral sense of Irish men and women may never become obscured and blunted by the lie of violence'.⁵⁸ Despite condemning the actions and motives of the Hunger Strikers, this did not prevent Runcie showing sympathy for the families of those on Hunger Strike which made him a target for Ian Paisley who incorrectly accused him of praying for the 'dead hunger-striker'.⁵⁹ Runcie ignored Paisley and wanted to see new initiatives that could possibly resolve the situation without altering the British Government's position on political status.⁶⁰

The Archbishop of Canterbury was also approached to act as an intermediary during the Hunger Strikes. He was contacted by Canon John Baker from Westminster Abbey to act as a 'postman' for proposals that claimed to come from the 'leadership of the IRA'.⁶¹ The letter proposed a system of independently monitored reforms that would allow the prisoners to end the Hunger Strike and for the British Government to say that it had agreed to a solution without duress. The Prime Minister replied to the Archbishop thanking him for his efforts and told him that 'It has indicated clearly the areas in which we see scope for such improvement, but we, as you say, insisted that we cannot go ahead under duress'.⁶² The Prime Minister recognised that the British Government was not trusted by the prisoners, but rejected the idea of an independent monitoring committee for prison reforms. She took the view that there was 'simply no need for another independent body' and that she would not be drawn into a negotiation with the IRA as to who was or was not an acceptable member of any such body. Finally, she concluded that as there was no agreed package of reforms in place, there would be nothing to monitor anyway. She thanked the Archbishop for his efforts but concluded that to end the Hunger Strikes 'the first step must now be with the prisoners'.⁶³

Throughout this period the Catholic Church remained an important community broker and became the subject of intense examination during the Hunger Strikes. The

⁵⁷ T. Jones, 'Runcie condemns the hunger-strikers', *The Times*, 4th June 1981.

⁵⁸ T. Jones, 'Runcie condemns the hooded men', *The Times*, 3rd June 1981.

⁵⁹ J. Wales, 'Gently, Runcie tries his own crusade for peace in Ireland', *The Times*, 7th June 1981.

⁶⁰ C. Longley, 'H-block compromise offered by Catholics', *The Times*, 4th June 1981.

⁶¹ MTF: PREM 19/506 f62, Archbishop of Canterbury, *letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 19th August 1981.

⁶² MTF: PREM 19/506 f10, M. Thatcher, *Letter to Archbishop of Canterbury*, 27th August 1981.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

violence of the IRA, the respective church's teaching on suicide and the role of the British government were all controversial topics for both Anglicans and Catholics. Within the Catholic Church there was passionate debate and controversy over the Catechism, and theological arguments became part of a very public debate between both the clergy and the laity about suicide and sacrifice.⁶⁴ In 1980 Cardinal Basil Hume, the Archbishop of Westminster, informed Catholics in Britain of his opinions via a pastoral letter. In his view, the Hunger Strikes were an act of violence and that 'violence breeds violence'.⁶⁵ By describing the act of embarking on a Hunger Strike as an act violence, it would be clear to all who heard the letter at mass that the Hunger Strikes, in the view of the Archbishop, was against the teaching of the church and the Catechism. The Cardinal was not only delegitimising the Hunger Strikes, but the whole IRA campaign.

An intense and public debate began to take place over the Catholic Church and its official position towards the Hunger Strikes. As Sands continued his Hunger Strike and was near death, the religious correspondent in *The Times* attempted to analyse the position of the Catholic Church. Longley pointed out to his readers that theologies dealing with Hunger Strikes were far more complex than they had been previously. Historically Hunger Strikes had been automatically condemned as a mortal sin. Longley told his readers that for some theologians the act could be morally justifiable if death was not the fundamental purpose of the hunger strike and that the purpose of the hunger strike was to bring attention to an injustice.⁶⁶

There were clear differences in opinion over the morality of the Hunger Strikers. Some members of the Catholic Church in Northern Ireland openly disagreed with Cardinal Hume's view that the hunger strike was an act of violence. At least one priest expressed the view that all the deaths and violence in Northern Ireland were the responsibility of the British government and that the hunger strikes were a protest and not an act of violence.⁶⁷ The debate even made it across the channel to France where hunger strikes were threatened over the possible expulsion of second-generation Algerians. French Cardinals condemned the Hunger Strikes, however Algerian bishops regarded the Hunger Strikes in France as morally

⁶⁴ *The Holy See*, 'Catechism of the Catholic Church', http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a5.htm, [accessed 27th July 2015].

⁶⁵ *The Times*, 17th November 1980.

⁶⁶ C. Longley, 'Suicide: the Catholic dilemma', *The Times*, 1st May 1981.

⁶⁷ P. Murtagh, 'Priest disputes Cardinal Hume's view of hunger-strike', *The Irish Times*, 2 May 1981.

justifiable and their 'solidarity with the cause being defended, namely that of justice and fraternity.'⁶⁸ The religious correspondent of *Le Monde* pointed out that the latest teaching from the Catholic Church on Hunger Strikes and suicide regarded it justifiable if the cause was exceptional, that it had a reasonable chance of success and was truly altruistic and free from selfish motives. The *Le Monde* correspondent's opinion was that it was far from clear if those involved in the hunger strike had meet those criteria.⁶⁹

The debate raged on, revealing that there was a clear split within Catholicism over how to respond to the Hunger Strikes. One reader of the *Tablet* attacked the response from North America as 'typical of Irish-American ignorance of the reality of a fanatical nationalist guerrilla movement' and that those who contribute to NorAid 'murder in Northern Ireland as effectively as the men who pull the trigger.'⁷⁰ One Catholic Priest from Wales questioned if the violence of the IRA was justifiable under Catholic teaching. He argued that such violence could not achieve its aims and that the potential result of the hunger strike was not proportionate to methods used so the IRA could not describe their actions as a just war.⁷¹ He also concluded that the violence was having an adverse effect on the levels of support for Northern Irish Catholics from their British counterparts. There is some evidence to support his view. One Catholic from Kent questioned the views of some who had 'canonised' Sands, and if those on Hunger Strike were indeed practising Christians. He concluded that he was 'travelling in strange company'.⁷² One English Catholic went even further saying that 'I was stupid enough to believe that only a tiny minority of the Irish supported terrorism' and that they could 'never trust any Irish member of our congregation again', showing that civic society and its issues and prejudices do not stop at the church gate.⁷³ Others regarded Sands' death as 'no saintly sacrifice.'⁷⁴ Another individual from Birmingham wrote to Cardinal Hume directly challenging his interpretation of the Church's position on suicide. Hume replied that it had been 'much discussed over the years. Both bishops and theologians are

⁶⁸ C. Longley, 'Suicide: the Catholic dilemma', *The Times*, 1st May 1981.

⁶⁹ A. Woodrow, 'Hunger strike morality', *The Times*, 6th June 1981.

⁷⁰ P. O'Connor, 'The Irish hunger strikers', *The Tablet*, 11th July 1981.

⁷¹ Rev B Fisher 'The Irish hunger Strikers', *The Tablet*, 13 June 1981.

⁷² *The Irish Post*, 23rd June 1981.

⁷³ Sorohan, *Irish London during the Troubles*, pp 90-91.

⁷⁴ *The Irish Post*, 30th May 1981.

divided on the subject.⁷⁵ So were the Catholics and Irish living in Britain. As shown by Maria Power, the Catholic Church struggled to find a balance between being a political actor and a source of moral guidance and in doing so failed to address the issues of justice at the centre of the prisoners' protests.⁷⁶

Although under increasing pressure from both within and outside Parliament, very little pressure was placed on the Prime Minister from the domestic press. They continued to concentrate on criminalising all activity in Northern Ireland. When, in 1981, it was announced that Bobby Sands was to go on Hunger Strike, *The Daily Mirror* relegated its coverage to page two and a meagre single paragraph.⁷⁷ Broadly the media was supportive of the British Government stance. However, this contained many different opinions. At the most visceral was John Junor in the *Daily Express*. He regarded the Prime Minister's response to the Hunger Strikers and to Cardinal Tomas O'Fiaich, Primate of all Ireland, as 'a marvellous two-fingered salute to the IRA and their chaplain-in-chief Cardinal O'Fiaich'.⁷⁸ He was joined in this view by Michael Toner who, in the same edition, attacked the Cardinal and the Catholic Church for what he viewed as its 'moral ambivalence' and that 'the Catholic Church is an enemy of those who take life – whether by murder, euthanasia, abortion or suicide. Except, apparently, in the case of terrorists who kill themselves in the pursuit of terrorist aims'.⁷⁹ *The Daily Express* also criminalised Sands in a cartoon by Cummings who placed him side by side with Ronald Biggs.⁸⁰ At the opposite ends of the political spectrum the *Daily Mirror* concluded that 'the Government has been right to refuse to treat Mr Sands as a prisoner of war' and called for a withdrawal British troops.⁸¹ Newspapers were also quick to attack the reaction in the United States. George Gardiner Conservative MP for Reigate writing in the *Daily Express*, told its readership that if the Government gave in to American pressure then 'political legitimacy could be claimed by every Red Brigade kidnapper and Fascist bomber in Italy, every successor to the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany and every assassin hired by Colonel Kadhafi to kill

⁷⁵ *The Irish Post*, 30th May 1981.

⁷⁶ M. Power, 'Suicide or self-sacrifice: Catholics debate the hunger strikes', *The Irish Times*, 6th July 2016.

⁷⁷ 'Provo chief in death fast', *The Daily Mirror*, 2nd March 1981.

⁷⁸ J. Junor 'Current Events', *The Sunday Express*, 31st May 1981.

⁷⁹ M. Toner, 'The Cardinal who is like a recruiting sergeant for the IRA', *The Sunday Express*, 31st May 1981.

⁸⁰ Cummings Cartoon, *The Daily Express*, 3rd May 1981.

⁸¹ Mirror Comment, *The Daily Mirror*, 27th April 1981.

in cities throughout the world.⁸² The IRA had joined the club of international bogeymen. The Conservative press were squarely behind her view that there would be no concessions made under political duress.

Throughout the period of the Hunger Strikes, there was never enough domestic political stress placed on the British Government to ensure it would change its position. The pressure from within Westminster was so weak it had, publicly at least, no impact on policy. The Government never wavered in its view that political status should not be granted. The lack of Government discussion over the reaction of Irish citizens and groups in Britain shows there was little concern over domestic protests other than infrequent references to Scotland.

As well as ignoring the reaction of the Irish in Britain, what has also been overlooked by previous examinations of the reaction to the Hunger Strikes in Britain is the domestic situation during that period. The first years of the new Conservative Government were very violent years. It must not be underestimated how important violence was as a political issue during this period. No British political party could afford to be considered soft on crime and Northern Ireland was not the only flashpoint. Having established itself as the protector of moral democracy, the Conservative Party could not afford to back down. Newspaper coverage of the Hunger Strikes although constant was often relegated to the inside pages or was only the second or third story on the front page. The Hunger Strikes had to compete for headlines with inner-city riots, cruise missile protests at Greenham Common and the trial of the Yorkshire Ripper. Unlike in Northern Ireland, they were not always the headline. The public mood was not one that was willing to support any party that appeared to be ready to surrender parliamentary sovereignty to violence. The use of hard power was popular with the Conservative rank and file. For Conservatives, successes such as the Iranian Embassy siege and the Falklands, in their view, returned some of the United Kingdom's lost prestige. The empire was striking back. The Falklands would have a lasting legacy as a short, sharp, limited military engagement increasingly became seen as a legitimate political tool, rather than diplomacy. They were determined to ensure that this prestige was not undermined by the enemy within. These were symbols that the decline thesis was being reversed. Having become the moral defenders of democracy and produced some popular images of an end to

⁸² G. Gardiner, 'A world charter for terrorists: Is that what these do-gooders want?', *The Daily Express*, 25th April 1981.

the decline of the United Kingdom, the Conservatives could not afford to be defeated by those in the H-Blocks.

This prestige and party loyalty would be reinforced when the IRA strived for revenge. Three years after the end of the Hunger Strikes the IRA would attempt to gain retribution for the deaths of the men in H-Blocks. In the Grand Hotel Brighton, at 2.54 am, 12th October 1984, in room 629 a bomb exploded that killed five people and injured 30 others.⁸³ However the IRA's primary target, Margaret Thatcher, escaped unscathed. The consequences, political and military strategies for the attack have been debated since the event.⁸⁴ For the IRA it was important to show their supporters that they could strike at the British Government and that they could overcome the most sophisticated security measures. If they were looking for a propaganda victory that would create enough political pressure to force a change of policy, then the Brighton bomb failed and had the very opposite effect.

Margaret Thatcher quickly received support from both wider British society and political parties. Neil Kinnock sent a letter to the Prime Minister congratulating her response to the bomb, writing that her response was 'the way that we must respond to such vile acts in this democracy. There can be no concession to the murdering madness of those who commit crimes like this bombing'.⁸⁵ The Prime Minister also received letters of support from MPs including those on the left of the party such as Renee Short MP for Wolverhampton North East.⁸⁶ Local Conservative Party Councils also sent messages of support.⁸⁷ David Owen, leader of the Social Democratic Party, was much more restrained in his response simply offering his sympathy to all those involved.⁸⁸

Outside of politics support was received from the Chairman of the BBC Stuart Young, who told the Prime Minister that he had thanked God that she had been spared and that 'our nation needs you.'⁸⁹ The Anglican and Catholic Churches also sent letters of support. In Liverpool, the Rt Rev David Sheppard sent her his sympathy and a copy of a service organised

⁸³ G. McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England The Bombing Campaign 1973-1997* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), p.127.

⁸⁴ G. McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA in England The Bombing Campaign 1973-1997*; Taylor, *Brits the War against the IRA*, pp.265-267; Bowyer-Bell, *The Secret Army The IRA Third Edition*, pp.551-555.

⁸⁵ MTF: THCR 1/f/23 f99, N. Kinnock, *Letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 15th October 1984.

⁸⁶ MTF: THCR 1/f/23 f9, Short, *Letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 16th October 1984.

⁸⁷ MTF: THCR 2/4/1/30/f61, A. Hill, *Letter from West Midlands Conservative Council*, 20th October 1984; MTF: THCR 2/4/1/27/f115, M. Alison, PPS, *Letter to Simon Murphy Bromsgrove Conservative Association*, 10th December 1984.

⁸⁸ MTF: THCR 1/f/23 f110, D. Owen, *Letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 12th October 1984.

⁸⁹ MTF: THCR 1/f/23 f108, S. Young, Chairman of the BBC, *Letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 15th October 1984.

at the International Garden Festival where he told a crowd of 8000 'The Merseyside church leaders would like to send a message to the Prime Minister from this great ecumenical service with our sympathy, best wishes and the promise of our prayers'.⁹⁰ Statements such as this reveal something of the split that was occurring in Liverpool between church hierarchy, local clergy and the laity. In a city undergoing its own political and economic battles, the church leadership of all denominations would support the moderates in the city, whilst individual clergy would often follow their own path. However, this is yet another indicator that Irish Nationalism and Republicanism held little sway in one of the urban centres of resistance to Thatcherism. Lambeth Palace also paid tribute to the Prime Minister's 'steady defence of our democratic way'.⁹¹ Archbishop David Warlock sent a message to the Prime Minister: 'In the name of the Roman Catholics of England and Wales may I, in the absence of Cardinal Hume, offer you personally our sincere sympathy over this outrageous act of violence and the assurance of our prayers for the victims and the bereaved'.⁹²

Once again, as with the Hunger Strikes, the mainstream, press was supportive of the Prime Minister. Paul Callan writing in the *Daily Mirror* told his readers, 'whatever your feelings about Margaret Thatcher, the Tory Party and its record of government you could not stop your anger boiling up at the bombing' and that inside the conference 'the adrenalin of loyalty was flowing'.⁹³ This, if anything, was, for Conservatives, the true consequence of the attack. The bomb had also once again seen public calls for the death penalty to be reinstated.⁹⁴ Observing the Prime Minister's response after the bomb, Amit Roy in the *Daily Mail* regarded it as 'a momentous day in the life of the nation'.⁹⁵ In one editorial The *Guardian* regarded the attack as something which, if politicians bowed to violence, would 'have pushed the motors of democracy still further away from the people'.⁹⁶

The response from the Conservatives was well received by the British public. An opinion poll carried out by the *Observer* showed that the Conservatives had gained a seven-point lead over Labour. The poll also showed that British public opinion was in favour of the

⁹⁰ MTF: THCR 3/2/149/f63, Rt Rev D. Sheppard, *Letter to the Prime Minister*, 15th October 1984.

⁹¹ MTF: THCR 1/2/23 f66, Archbishop of Canterbury, *Letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 15th October 1984.

⁹² MTF: THCR 1/1/23 f64, Archbishop D. Warlock, *Letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 12th October 1984.

⁹³ P. Callan, 'So Shocked, so composed', *The Daily Mirror*, 13th October 1984.

⁹⁴ Hampson & Desborough, 'Hang the Bombers says Mrs Thatcher', *The Daily Mirror*, 16th October 1984.

⁹⁵ A. Roy, 'In the midst of death, the fight goes on to keep democracy alive', *The Daily Mail*, 13th October 1984.

⁹⁶ 'Holding hard to business as usual', *The Guardian*, 13th October 1984.

Government taking tougher action against the IRA with 58% being 'more likely' to support a hard line against the IRA. However, despite this improvement in Conservative approval, the poll also contained a mixed message over Northern Ireland. There was no significant difference in terms of numbers over the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, 39% said Northern Ireland should remain part of the UK and 40% said no. The issue of talks with Sinn Féin were equally divided with 45% saying that the Government should talk to Sinn Féin and 45% said no. However, when asked if any solution to the situation in Northern Ireland should include the IRA, numbers were reduced by 8% with only 42% agreeing that any solution should include the IRA compared with 50% five months earlier.⁹⁷ The wider British public to continue to display their indifference to the retention of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom.

The Connolly Association and the *Irish Democrat* once again condemned the use of violence, declaring the bomb to be an 'outrage' and that 'nobody would wish to defend it'. The *Irish Democrat* used the bomb to show that the PTA was unable to prevent terrorism and was failing as a security tool. Despite condemning the violence, the *Irish Democrat* did warn Thatcher that those who were willing to use 'the sword ran the risk of perishing by it'.⁹⁸

Outside of mainstream politics one of the most vocal voices attacking the Government was that of Mick Hume. At the time of the bomb Hume was an organiser with the Irish Freedom Movement and a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party. Hume published his and the Revolutionary Communist Party response in November 1984. He concluded that the leadership of the mainstream British political parties and the TUC were out of step with the rank and file membership. Hume was incorrect with his conclusion. He was viewing working-class support through the lens of the Miners' strike. This was the same mistake made by Arthur Scargill who never expanded his political outlook and ideology beyond his parochial Yorkshire powerbase. However, the ultimate proof that Hume was incorrect in his conclusions was when he called for British workers to 'withdraw their consent from the rule of their capitalist masters' and follow the example of Irish Republicans, he was ignored.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Observer/Harris Poll, 'Tories 7 points up on Labour after bomb blast', *The Observer*, 21st October 1984.

⁹⁸ Editorial, *The Irish Democrat*, No. 489, November 1994.

⁹⁹ M. Hume, *After the Brighton Bomb*, The Revolutionary Communist Party, (London: Janius Publications, 1984); M. Hume, 'Brighton bomb memories', *Spiked*, 13th October 2009, <http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/7534#.V0yHC0xrjIU>, [accessed 30th May 2016].

If the IRA was looking for a reaction and to gain wider support for Republicanism then the Brighton bomb failed not only to kill Margret Thatcher and her Cabinet, it failed utterly to gain any political leverage. What it did do was to unite all points of the mainstream British political compass against them, not only the political elite, but those involved in grass-roots politics as well, and only added to the view that Republicanism was not a legitimate political position. It had removed much of the 'intolerance and plain nastiness' that existed between the Conservatives and Labour, during one of the bitterest periods and disputes, the miners' strike. The bomb allowed Labour and the Conservatives to 'make common cause against a common enemy of democracy'.¹⁰⁰

(5.4) The Friends of Union

The Brighton bomb once again made it difficult, if not almost impossible, for supporters of unification from across the political compass to penetrate British government policy making. The Government was not concerned over any reaction from within Great Britain or that the various disparate political groups could form a uniform lobby. However, one group did make cohesive and sophisticated attempts to influence Conservative Policy and this group was not Republican or Nationalist. This group came from within Conservative Party circles who were increasingly concerned about a separate foreign state having political influence in a region of the United Kingdom. They came together to defend their vision of the Union, with the ideas of Ian Gow and Neave providing the foundations of their defence of the Union and became the Friends of the Union.

As established in the previous debates about the constitutional status of both Northern Ireland and the Irish in Britain, there had been division and dissent within the Conservative Party. Much of this dissent circulated around Ian Gow and Sir John Biggs-Davison.¹⁰¹ Ian Gow, MP for Eastbourne, was close to Airey Neave and shared much of Neave's opinions on Northern Ireland. His own political views were also very close to that of the Prime Minister.

¹⁰⁰ 'British politics and the Brighton effect', *The Economist*, 20th October 1984.

¹⁰¹ Sir John Biggs-Davison was MP for Epping Forest. He was born in Boscombe and raised as a devout Catholic. Further back in his family tree his grandfather came from an Ulster Presbyterian family and he would retain their passionate Unionism. His Catholicism never prevented him from defending Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland would remain the great political passion of his life, P. Cosgrave, 'Davison, Sir John Alec Biggs (1918–1988)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

He was immensely loyal to the Margaret Thatcher and although he never held office that directly concerned Northern Ireland, this did not stop him from ensuring that his own support for the Unionists in Northern Ireland was heard.¹⁰²

When Margaret Thatcher wanted rid of the notorious 'wet' James Prior from her Cabinet he was sent to the perennial naughty step of Cabinet politics, Northern Ireland. Not only did this move allow Margaret Thatcher to further 'dry out' her cabinet, it also reveals that Northern Ireland remained a minor Cabinet post. It was a place for troublesome ministers to be kept busy. When Prior was asked how much advice he received from the Prime Minister about his new post his answer was none.¹⁰³

In contrast, Ian Gow was very much a 'dry' and was resolute in his opposition to James Prior during his period as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He was not afraid to invoke the spirit of Airey Neave. He used Neave as his own version of Hamlet's ghost, warning the Prime Minister that Neave, like Hamlet's father, should not be forgotten. He informed the Prime Minister that in his view Prior's plans were going in 'precisely the opposite direction to the one which Airey would have followed'.¹⁰⁴ Even after the Cabinet chose to back Prior, Gow continued to protest. He informed the Prime Minister that a number of Conservative MPs, including John Biggs-Davison and Ivor Stanbrook, objected and told the Prime Minister that 'the dye is now cast, but you understand, and thank you for understanding, how difficult my position is, I cannot forget Airey'.¹⁰⁵ He even used Neave to support his own stance against power-sharing and support for majoritarian democracy telling the Prime Minister that 'Airey knew that there could never be a return to Stormont' and that 'the protection of liberties and rights of the minority does not mean power sharing'. He concluded that 'to combine Republicans and Unionists in the same power sharing Executive is absurd'.¹⁰⁶ Gow was persistent in his efforts to undermine Prior, protesting that 'I think that the present combination of Prior and Gowrie is doing great damage to Ulster'.¹⁰⁷ Others were also willing to attack Prior's plans, Ivor Stanbrook regarded devolution as 'abhorrent'.

¹⁰² M. Garnett, 'Gow, Ian Reginald Edward (1937–1990)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

¹⁰³ P. Taylor, *Provos the IRA and Sinn Féin* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), p.251.

¹⁰⁴ MTF: THCR 2/6/2/117 Part 3 f160, I. Gow, *Minute to Margaret Thatcher*, 23rd March 1982.

¹⁰⁵ MTF: THCR 2/6/2/117 Part 3 f142, I. Gow, *Note to Margaret Thatcher*, 2nd April 1982.

¹⁰⁶ MTF: THCR 2/6/117 Part 3 f224, I. Gow, *Minute to Margaret Thatcher*, 15th February 1982.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Richard Body, MP for Holland with Boston and a member of the Monday Club, made his views clear that the Conservatives should 'listen to those Ulster Unionists who used to be friends, and whose friendship might be needed again in the future'.¹⁰⁸

John Biggs-Davison was also not afraid to make his own feelings about James Prior and Government policy on Northern Ireland known. He told Ian Gow that he was 'deeply dismayed' about Prior's proposals. Gow informed the Prime Minister that the Conservative Northern Ireland Committee 'deeply respected' Biggs-Davison.¹⁰⁹ John Biggs-Davison, in common with Gow, was not afraid to press his own objections to devolution. He sent a letter to the Prime Minister informing her that the plans for Northern Ireland had created fear amongst Unionists that the Government was ready to 'hold the door open to eventual merger or confederation with the Republic'.¹¹⁰ He was also critical of James Prior and sent letters to the Prime Minister, Prior and the Earl of Gowrie (Grey Gowrie was Minister of State for Northern Ireland). He attacked their rejection of integration as a policy for Northern Ireland and support for devolution.¹¹¹

When the details of the proposed Anglo-Irish Agreement emerged in 1985 John Biggs-Davison continued his support for Unionists and the defence of the Union. He was joined publicly by Julian Amery, Conservative MP for Brighton Pavilion and once again, Ivor Stanbrook. They objected to 'intervention by a foreign country' in the affairs the United Kingdom, and in a letter to *The Times* they advocated a 'reunion of the British or, if it be preferred, Anglo-Celtic isles. These, rather than the island of Ireland, form a natural, geopolitical, cultural and economic union'.¹¹² Ian Gow felt so strongly about the Anglo-Irish Agreement that he resigned. For Gow the involvement of a foreign power in the administration of a separate sovereign state was a step too far, despite this he informed the Prime Minister that he would remain 'a staunch supporter of the Government, and you personally as Prime Minister'.¹¹³ Both Gow and Biggs-Davison were amongst the 20

¹⁰⁸ MTF: THCR 2/6/2117 Part 3 f15, Conservative Backbench Northern Ireland Committee, *Conservative Research Department record of conversation*, 1st April 1982.

¹⁰⁹ MTF: TCHR 2/6/117 part 3 f225, I. Gow, *Minute to Margaret Thatcher*, 29th January 1982.

¹¹⁰ MTF: PREM 19/499 f131, J. Biggs-Davison, *Letter to Margaret Thatcher*, 19th May 1981.

¹¹¹ J. Biggs-Davison, *note to Gowrie (rejection of integration)*, 24th December 1981, The Margaret Thatcher Foundation, PREM 19/814 f39.

¹¹² J. Amery, 'Quid pro quo in an Irish setting', *The Times*, 12th November 1985.

¹¹³ MTF: Speeches, Interviews & Other Statements, M. Thatcher, *Letter to Ian Gow MP*, 15th November 1985.

Conservatives that voted against the Government and the Anglo-Irish Agreement.¹¹⁴ The resignation of Gow did not bring to an end his lobbying on behalf of Unionists and his promotion of his views on Northern Ireland and the Union.

In 1986 Gow, in collaboration with Sir John Biggs-Davison, James Molyneaux and T.E. Utley formed the Conservative Friends of the Union. The group was fervently opposed to devolution as it was viewed as a threat to the continuation and totality of the state. Officially they did not object to Roman Catholicism. One member, T.E. Utley, who was a High Church Anglican, was frequently critical of Ian Paisley and his brand of Protestantism. This though did not stop attacks on the Catholic Church from within the Friends of the Union, with at least one member regarding Irish Catholicism as a 'tribal identity' that would never be surrendered.¹¹⁵

The group wanted Northern Ireland to have a strong form of local government, in line with the rest of the United Kingdom. They would promote their message via public meetings, lectures and publishing political pamphlets.¹¹⁶ John Biggs-Davison attempted to show that Ulster had a separate identity, apart from the rest of Ireland that stretched back to ancient Ireland and was not just something imagined during the Home Rule crisis of the 19th Century. He continued to push for the whole of the island of Ireland to be reintegrated in a new confederation of the British Isles.¹¹⁷

They also attracted speakers from outside their ranks, notably Conor Cruise O'Brien. He told the Friends of the Union that 'I believe, as you do, that the Unionists of Northern Ireland, the majority of people there, have a right to remain in the Union. I believe the principle of partition was correct' and that 'the Anglo-Irish Agreement was a very serious mistake'.¹¹⁸ Cruise O'Brien had long been a controversial figure due in part to his work, *States of Ireland*.¹¹⁹ His willingness to support the Friends of the Union can be accredited to a number of reasons. He opposed the violent Republicanism of the IRA and viewed it as anti-democratic. This he extended to those on the radical left in Britain. The mix of violence,

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, 'Ulster deal agreed as Unionists quit', 28th November 1985.

¹¹⁵ M. Squires, *Why Democratic Socialists Should Support the Union* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1987).

¹¹⁶ Barberis, McHugh & Tyldesley, *Encyclopaedia of British and Irish Political Parties, Groups and Movements of the Twentieth Century* (London: A Continuum Imprint, 2000), p.57.

¹¹⁷ J. Biggs-Davison, *Ulster Catholics and the Union* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1987).

¹¹⁸ C.C. O'Brien, *Address to the Friends of the Union* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1988).

¹¹⁹ C.C. O'Brien, *States of Ireland* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015).

empowerment politics and Republicanism as defined by Sinn Féin and the IRA in the view of O'Brien made them profoundly undemocratic. Extending his logic O'Brien concluded that although he was from a Nationalist background, Unionism had to be defended from those using undemocratic methods to force them into a united Ireland.¹²⁰ Despite his own background in anti-imperialist movements, the imperial melancholy of the Friends of the Union did not provide enough force of argument to overcome his own views on Irish Nationalism. However, O'Brien's analysis of nationalism was not without its critics. Gellner, for example, attacked him for failing to recognise the modern and ideological foundations of nationalism and his reliance on the literary and aesthetic.¹²¹ Tom Paulin regarded O'Brien as a self-regarding purveyor of ever-changing arguments to defend the status quo, a colourless modern-day Creon.¹²²

The group remained resolute in their defence of the Union. Alistair Cooke (later Lord Lexden) paid tribute to T.E. Utey and John Biggs-Davison in his contributions to the Friends of the Union concluding that 'they taught me how fatal it would be if the Conservative Party ever abandoned Unionism which is part of its very essence'. For Cooke Ulster formed 'part of the nation to which I too belong'.¹²³ This comment from Cooke shares the same feelings behind those of Thatcher's own comments on Finchley. However, Cooke takes his argument further using a combination of the two routes to nationhood described by Hutchinson as the political and cultural.¹²⁴ Although projecting parliamentary democracy as superior to petit nationalism, his own nationalism also included a healthy and warming helping of cultural conservatism that existed outside the supremacy of Parliament. It was his belief that 'Ulster should always remain part of my country'. Any attempts to weaken the Union, for Cooke, would not only be a threat to the survival of the nation as he imagined it, but to the survival of conservatism and the Conservative Party.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ M. McNally & M. Conroy 'Cruise O'Brien's Conservative Anti-Nationalism Retrieving the Post-war European Connection; *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 7 no.3, July 2008, 308-330.

¹²¹ T. Garvin, 'Imaginary Cassandra? Conroy Cruise O'Brien as a Public Intellectual in Ireland', *Irish University Review*, Vol. 37, No.2, 2007, pp. 430-440.

¹²² T. Paulin, *Ireland and the English Crisis* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1987), pp.23-38: Creon appears in Greek Drama and Myth in *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*, he can be both victim and antagonist.

¹²³ A. Cooke, *Ulster: The Origins of the Problem* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1988).

¹²⁴ J. Hutchinson, 'Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration', in Hutchinson & Smith, *Nationalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) p.122.

¹²⁵ A. Cooke, *Ulster: The Origins of the Problem* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1988).

Despite his membership of the Friends of Union and his staunch defence of Conservatism, Cooke recognised that Ulster Unionism had a problem; the rest of the United Kingdom. He concluded that Northern Unionism is part of 'a nation which is reluctant to recognise them' and that 'grave exception is taken in Britain to the manner in which Unionists defend their case'.¹²⁶ Cooke was not the only Conservative that commented on the perception of Unionism and Loyalism. Another was Ferdinand Mount. He was responsible for authorising that section of the 1983 Conservative manifesto that dealt with Northern Ireland. He came to view Northern Unionism as 'irredeemably foreign, far more alien, say than Mr Lenny Henry or Mr Clive Lloyd'.¹²⁷ Apart from the racism of Mount's comment, he was mistaken in regarding Lenny Henry as foreign, he was born in Dudley. The actions of Unionists in Northern Ireland were looked upon with suspicion by both left and right in British politics. The paradox was that whilst the Irish in Britain remained 'not foreign' then then the Unionist and Loyalist ultras were. The best efforts of the Friends of the Union and Conservatives such as Ian Gow could not change this. Even during the most violent of IRA attacks, Unionism failed to escape the view that they were wreckers, intransigents and the cause of 'frustration at Westminster'.¹²⁸ William Langley in the *Daily Mail* made it clear to British readers what some in Northern Ireland thought of the future DUP leader, Peter Robinson. One source told Langley that Robinson was 'the nastiest and most malevolent political bigot I have ever clapped eyes on'.¹²⁹ Although it has been argued by Parkinson that much of the British perception of Unionism has been created by the media, this argument ignores that what has been reported was created by Unionists and Loyalists themselves.¹³⁰ Despite efforts by those such as Parkinson, Unionists, through their own actions has failed to dispel their reputation as deal wreckers. This impression had deep foundations and they never found a way to undermine it. They attempted to appeal directly to the Queen and presented a petition with 404,035 signatures to circumvent the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Tom King in 1987. This was dismissed as a clumsy piece of political theatre which King easily swatted aside in Westminster.¹³¹ Yet again, the efforts of Northern Unionists to

¹²⁶ Cooke, *Ulster: The Origins of the Problem*.

¹²⁷ Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s*, pp.215-216.

¹²⁸ 'John Bulls Political Slum', *The Sunday Times*, 3rd July 1966.

¹²⁹ W. Langley, 'The man who makes Paisley look moderate', *The Daily Mail*, 5th March 1986.

¹³⁰ A. Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism and the British media* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998).

¹³¹ 'Unionist referendum petition for Queen', *The Guardian*, 13th February 1987.

defend their place within the United Kingdom left their fellow British unimpressed as revealed by polls carried out by Mori.¹³²

Do you think Britain Should	1984	1987
Withdraw Troops Immediately?	22%	22%
Withdraw Troops with a pre-set period?	31%	39%
Keep Troops as long as violence continues?	38%	34%
Don't Know	9%	5%

What should Northern Ireland Future Be?	1987
Remain part of UK?	29%
Become Independent?	29%
Union with Republic?	27%
Don't Know	15%

There was even worse news for Unionists, especially DUP supporters when the British public was asked to consider which politicians had been either a positive or negative influence, a force for good or evil. Their answer was unequivocal, the person with the greatest negative impact on Northern Ireland was Ian Paisley.¹³³

A force for evil?	
Ian Paisley	70%
Gerry Adams	55%
Margaret Thatcher	24%
Enoch Powell	18%

The Friends of the Union did not limit their political platform to the retention of Northern Ireland within the Union. In their view, socialism and radical politics, wherever they were to be found, were a threat to the Union and had to be defeated. Sinn Féin was portrayed as a revolutionary socialist movement that had more in common with South American revolutionaries than the non-confirming Labourist traditions of the British Labour Party. They attempted to rouse older Catholic fears over Marxism, claiming that a unified Irish Republic would become a secular state, with the role of Catholicism strictly restricted to

¹³² 'Pull our troops out of Ulster say 61%', *The Daily Express*, 10th February 1987.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

the spiritual. They wanted to establish that Irish Republicans were forging links with international revolutionaries and radical groups in Britain to undermine wider British political stability. Sinn Féin and Irish Republicanism, in the view of the Friends of the Union, were now part of the enemy within that included the miners and local authorities under control of Labour such as Liverpool, and before it was abolished, the GLC.¹³⁴ The use of international politics and ideology as ways to combat local political concerns was a tactic often used by Thatcherism, and the Friends of the Union were not afraid to use the same to promote their own political goals.

Three years after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ian Gow was still campaigning against the agreement and used the Friends of the Union as a platform to continue his fight against it. His belief in the sovereignty of Westminster and its right to govern its sovereign territory without having to refer to another separate sovereign state remained undiminished. He continued to pursue his view that regional councils should be established in Northern Ireland and that devolution, not just for Northern Ireland, but for Scotland and Wales would be a risk to the continuation of the Union. To support this, he drafted an alternative Anglo-Irish Agreement that met his own views and would supersede the 1985 Agreement. In Gow's words the governance of Northern Ireland was 'a matter for the United Kingdom and Government alone'.¹³⁵

The Friends of the Union and the Unionist cause within the Conservative Party now had to deal with two events that would have serious consequences for both. The first of these occurred on 30th July 1990 when the IRA planted a bomb in Ian Gow's car and he was killed in the subsequent explosion.¹³⁶ Although the Friends of the Union had now lost one of its most important members, the violence had, once again, as with the Brighton Bomb, only managed to unite all the mainstream British political parties in their condemnation of violence. The second event was the divisions over Europe in the Conservative Party which later in the year forced the resignation of the Prime Minister.

However, before the consequences of these two events took effect, the Labour Party had its own problems to contend with. The Labour Party was vitriolic and divided. This

¹³⁴ MTF: M. Thatcher, *Speech to the 1922 Committee (the enemy within)*, 19th July 1984; I. Greig, *The Green and the Red, The influence of the ultra-left on the situation in Northern Ireland* (The Friends of the Union: London, Friends of the Union, 1988).

¹³⁵ I. Gow, *Hope for Peace A New Anglo-Irish Agreement* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1988).

¹³⁶ Taylor & Authers, 'Tory MP Dies in Car Bombing at His Home', *The Times*, 31st July 1990.

included differences over Northern Ireland policy and which became part of the wider battle to create New-Labour and to show the British electorate that the Labour Party were once again capable of creating a viable government.

Chapter Six

The Labour Party, Northern Ireland and the Awkward Squad

The Call for socialists to break with the bipartisan approach to Labourist orthodoxy and confront the issues posed by Irish democracy will remain crucial for Left strategy.¹

The above comment from Martin Collins neatly sums up the rift that occurred within the Labour Party concerning Northern Ireland policy. This had been simmering since 1968 and became increasingly bitter after 1974. The period between Wilson's final term as Prime Minister and the 1979 General Election came at the end of a period of political exhaustion. Joe Haines (Wilson's Press Secretary), felt that Northern Ireland had exhausted Heath and left him in no shape to continue as Prime Minister.² However, Heath was not the only one de-energised. Although Harold Wilson was only 60 when he resigned in 1976, he was already frustrated, tired and in ill-health. Haines himself also unwittingly reveals his own lethargy with politics and Northern Ireland in the tone of his own writing. The Labour Party was tired and spent, it had failed to deliver the classless society. It could offer nothing new and it was directionless. This, in combination with the 1979 election defeat, resulted in a period of angry and vitriolic clashes within the Labour Party. Northern Ireland would be one of several issues that would divide the Parliamentary Labour Party and the wider membership. This division would cause a fissure between orthodox Labourist members and the radical left that had been burgeoning since 1956.

This chapter will examine the conflict between those who wanted to support utopian calls for immediate British withdrawal and those that argued that this would not solve the problems in Northern Ireland and that a more complex solution was needed. The radical left in Britain wanted to assert alternatives to Bipartisanship. However, it will be shown that the micro-groups never contained a leadership capable of uniting the various factions. These factions would spend more time arguing about political ideology than working on a solution that would be politically acceptable. This in-fighting would make them an easy target for the Conservatives and the British media that would label them 'the Awkward Squad'.

¹ M. Collins, *Ireland after Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), p.172.

² J. Haines, *The Politics of Power* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977), p.113.

Going further, it will also examine the popularisation of Diaspora and how once again, politicians and commentators forgot the lessons of the past and continued to search for the Irish vote.

(6.1) Alternatives and Division – Challenging Bipartisan Orthodoxy

The vitriolic factionalism in the Labour Party would have consequences for Northern Ireland as Labour divided between those who supported the Troops Out Movement and immediate British withdrawal, and those who viewed this as an impossible utopian solution. These divisions, which had been festering since 1968, became angry and public. It was the events of the UWC strike and the Birmingham and Guildford bombings that resulted in a fissure between those that wanted immediate withdrawal and those that rejected this policy as flawed logic. It is during this period that Tony Benn began to take a much more vocal and public interest in Northern Ireland. Benn had been in Government when troops were deployed, but in common with Wilson, his diaries contain little on Northern Ireland and in fact Benn is largely silent about Northern Ireland until 1969 but makes few further contributions until the 1980s. In the 1970s Benn had been approached by Clann Na hÉireann and showed no interest in them and they came to regard Benn as a politician who viewed Ireland 'as a populist issue and wants in on the act.'³ That Benn had now found his voice on Northern Ireland was noticed within the press, with Dolan writing in the *Irish Post* that 'Benn is new to speaking on Ireland'.⁴ The radical left in Britain and the collection of micro-groups had the common goal of British withdrawal, but events in Northern Ireland would expose ideological rifts between these groups. Following rapidly after the 1979 General Election, the first of these events would be the Hunger Strikes.

Whilst the Conservatives managed to control its dissenters such as Ian Gow, the 1981 Hunger Strikes would expose divisions between the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), Constituency Labour Parties, the Unions and the radical left. Writing in the *Militant* newspaper in 1980 Tony Saunois, who was the Labour Party Young Socialist representative on the Labour NEC, set out his views on the situation. He viewed the circumstances in

³ B. Hanley & S. Millar, *The Lost Revolution: The Story of the Official IRA and The Workers Party* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp.391-392.

⁴ *The Irish Post*, 23rd May 1981.

Northern Ireland as problems that could be resolved through the removal of class divisions. Saunois condemned the violence of the IRA. He concluded that their claims to being part of an anti-imperialist campaign harmed their image as it gave the state the opportunity to increase its powers and to gain wide public support for doing so. Saunois argued that those involved in violence 'were driven, in the absence of any clear alternative, into the various paramilitary groups, mistakenly believing that they were defending their community.'⁵ Sectarianism, Saunois continued, would make it impossible for all paramilitary prisoners in Northern Ireland to be given political status. Those who in his view had undertaken explicitly sectarian attacks 'could never be classified as political prisoners and be defended by the Labour movement.'⁶ Saunois told *Militant's* readership that it was up to the Labour movement to 'fight for decent conditions for all prisoners, irrespective of the crimes or alleged crimes'.⁷

The Hunger Strikes exacerbated already existing divisions. Some Labour MPs aligned themselves with extra-parliamentary groups. One of these groups was the Ad-Hoc Hunger Strike Committee. The chairperson of the group was Ernie Roberts MP and supporters included Provisional Sinn Féin London, Gordon McLennan, who was the General Secretary of the Communist Party, and Avtar Jouhl, the President of the Indian Workers Association. Trotskyist groups and others such as the International Marxist Group and the Socialist Workers Party all supported the hunger strikers, opposing the strictly humanitarian position taken by *Militant*. Despite groups such as these, it was only in April 1981 that pressure began to force a significant response from the Labour Party leadership. It was then becoming all too clear that the Hunger Strikers were not going to give in and that the Conservative Government was not going to make any concessions that would allow a deal which would prevent the death of Sands. *Militant* had been reticent about the decision to send British Troops to Northern Ireland and had shown little interest in Northern Ireland until the Hunger Strikes. It continued to take a circumspect approach to events in Armagh and the H-Blocks.

As the Hunger Strikes continued, Ernie Roberts MP received letters smuggled out of Armagh jail in support of the hunger strikers in the H-blocs. They wanted Roberts to lobby for direct talks between the Government and the prisoners. They rejected calls for

⁵ T. Saunois, 'End repression in Northern Ireland', *Militant*, 26th September 1980.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

independent mediation, telling Roberts that there was 'no room for intermediate bodies' and that the 'full responsibility for the hunger-strike lies solely with the British Government'. They made it clear to Roberts that, in their view, the actions of Labour and the Conservatives were simply a 'blunt refusal to acknowledge the special prisoners they have created'.⁸ Whilst the prisoners in Armagh were attempting to raise the profile of the hunger strikers with MPs, those women in Armagh engaged in their own dirty protest and hunger strike found little support from feminists in Britain.⁹

In April, the Hemel Hempstead Constituency Labour Party (CLP) sent a telegram to Foot attacking Don Concannon, MP for Mansfield and Labour Spokesman on Northern Ireland. Hemel-Hempstead is in the local government borough of Dacorum. In 1981 1.42% of the borough's population were born in Ireland.¹⁰ They wanted Foot to ensure that efforts to expel Sands from Parliament would be resisted and that the electorate of Fermanagh and Tyrone had the right to elect their representative of their choice. They argued that if Sands was expelled or unseated this would disenfranchise the electorate in Fermanagh and Tyrone.¹¹ They were not alone, the Kings-Langley and Chipperfield CLP (also located in Dacorum) sent a telegram in support of the Hemel Hempstead CLP and the Clacks East Stirling CLP also lobbied Foot via telegrams.¹² Clackmannan had a tiny first-born Irish population, a meagre 0.26%.¹³ Further evidence of pressure on Foot from individual constituencies came from candidates standing in local elections. Steve Bundred was a candidate for Labour in GLC elections, standing in Islington North. Islington's first-born Irish population represented 6.62% of its total population.¹⁴ In 1981 it had the third largest first-generation Irish population in the UK. He reported to Foot that during the count there was a large number of spoilt ballots as voters marked ballot papers with either Bobby Sands or H-Block.¹⁵ The marking or spoiling of ballot papers was not restricted to London, with reports of ballot papers being used to

⁸ The Working-Class Movement Library Salford (hereafter 'WCM'): Subj/Ireland/0003: BS/0, *Letter from women Republican prisoners in Armagh Jail*, 15th July 1981.

⁹ M. Power, 'Second Class Republicans? Sinn Féin, feminism and the women's hunger strike', *The Irish Times*, 18th December 2015.

¹⁰ 1981 UK Census, UK Data Services Census Support.

¹¹ The Peoples History Museum (hereafter 'PHM'): MF/L8, Hemel Hempstead Constituency Labour Party, *Telegram to Michael Foot*, 11th April 1981.

¹² PHM: MF/L8, Kings Langley & Chipperfield CLP, *Telegram to Michael Foot*, 11th April 1981; PHM: MF/L8, Clacks East Stirling, *Telegram to Michael Foot*, 11th April 1981, MF/L8.

¹³ 1981 UK Census, UK Data Services Census Support.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *The Irish Post*, May 23rd, 1981.

express support for Sands in elections in Ormskirk, Lancashire.¹⁶ The first-generation Irish population of West-Lancashire made up 0.64% of its total population.¹⁷ Ken Livingstone, who was now an increasingly loud voice on the left, also offered his support to the Hunger Strikers. He sponsored a 48hr fast in support of the Hunger Strikers and a protest was to be held on the day of the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer.¹⁸

Further evidence for splits within the Labour Party can be found within the minutes of the meetings of Parliamentary Labour Party. In April Jock Stallard, MP for St Pancras North put a question to Foot at a meeting of the PLP demanding to know 'what the Party was doing on this issue?'¹⁹ Stallard continued 'there was much concern over the problem' and that 'the Labour Party could not be seen to be doing nothing'.²⁰ Foot told Stallard that 'representation had been made to him' and that he had 'taken them seriously and was not ignoring Northern Ireland'.²¹

The Shadow Cabinet decided to send Don Concannon to visit Sands and put forward the position of the PLP. This was to be one of the most controversial decisions of the shadow cabinet in their response to the Hunger Strikers. Concannon was not a popular figure with those on the left of the Party. Privately he was in favour of re-unification.²² However as an ex-soldier he was utterly opposed to the IRA. In an interview in 1998 he admitted that he was committed to political discussion, but that discussion should not take place from a position of duress. This was his reason for not responding to anyone who attempted to pressurise those making political decisions by the use of Hunger Strikes or violence.²³ Concannon informed Sands and the other hunger strikers that there was 'no possibility' of the PLP supporting the Hunger Strikers.²⁴ Following this the Don't let Irish Prisoners Die Campaign sent a letter to Michael Foot informing him that his and the PLP's support for bipartisanship has provoked

¹⁶ *The Irish Post*, May 23rd, 1981.

¹⁷ *1981 UK Census*, UK Data Services Census Support.

¹⁸ R.Holliday, 'It's a day of black flags and black balloons for the Livingstone protest', *The Daily Mail*, 29th July, 1981.

¹⁹ PHM: *Minutes of the Parliamentary Labour Party*, 30th April 1981.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² M. O'Donnell, 'The impact of the 1981 H Block hunger strikes on the Labour Party', *Irish Political Studies*, 14:1 64-83, 1999, p.70.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ D. Concannon, Television Interview, ITN, 1st May 1981, *ITN Source*, <http://www.itnsource.com/en/>, [Accessed 26 January 2015].

'strong criticism' from MPs.²⁵ It was their view that the visit by Concannon had 'provoked widespread condemnation and has alienated many Irish people living in Britain, who are threatening to withdraw their vote from Labour'.²⁶ One letter to the *Irish Post* confirmed this, condemning Foot, accusing him of having 'cut the link between the Labour Party and the Irish vote'.²⁷

At the PLP meeting on Thursday 7th May, two days after the death of Sands, Stallard congratulated Foot on the speed of the action he had taken over the Hunger Strikes although 'he did not agree with the form it had taken'.²⁸ Foot told the meeting that 'his action in sending Don Concannon had been the right thing to do' and that 'there had to be an attempt on behalf of the Party, to dissuade the hunger strikers and to listen to what they had to say. In fairness to all concerned, the hunger strikers had to be told there was no chance of the British Government giving them political status'.²⁹ In May the Labour Committee on Ireland picketed the Labour Party headquarters when the National Executive Committee was holding a meeting. Don Concannon and Michael Foot were the targets of their protest. Although those on the picket could claim support of some members of the NEC, such as Eric Heffer MP, the numbers in attendance were small with only 50 attending the protest.³⁰

When the Labour Party Home Policy committee met once again the divisions within the Labour Party became public. Calls were made for the party to condemn the Government's policy on the Hunger Strikers and that this should be done as the electorate's decision to vote for Sands was itself a clear rejection of Government policy. Foot was openly criticised by some of those attending the meeting. Tony Benn was the chair of the Labour Party Home Policy committee and had begun to use this forum to try and pressure the Labour Party to formulate policy committed to Irish unification.³¹ The Tribune Group also called for Foot not to back any change in electoral law to prevent candidates such as Sands being elected in the future.³² Sir Patrick Duffy in his memoirs recalls both his own feelings and the atmosphere within the

²⁵ PHM: MF/L18, Don't let Irish Prisoners Die Ad Hoc Committee, *Letter to Michael Foot*, 21st May 1981.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *The Irish Post*, 23rd May 1981.

²⁸ PHM: *Minutes of the Parliamentary Labour Party*, Thursday, 7th May 1981.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ J. Dempsey, 'London picket on Labour', *The Irish Times*, 28th May 1981.

³¹ M. O'Donnell, 'The Impact of the 1981 hunger strikes on the British Labour Party', *Irish Political Studies*, 41:1, 1999, pp 64-83.

³² J. Langdon, 'Labour split over Ulster revealed', *The Guardian*, 12th May 1981.

PLP at the time of Sands' death. He had to control his own anger in the Commons at the reactions to both the Conservatives and Labour leadership to the debates on the death of Sands.³³ He was shocked by the lack of humanitarianism shown towards those in the H-Blocks from all sides of the House and the lack of respect shown by those in power over the minority that clearly disagreed with their views and policy. The violence was not only dehumanising the conflict in Northern Ireland, but in Westminster as well.

As the divisions continued, David Winnick, MP for Walsall North, called for a wide-ranging debate over Northern Ireland both within the PLP and Parliament. James Wellbeloved, MP for Erith and Crayford, who would later defect to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) opposed this, worried about internal divisions in the PLP that could 'make for further troubles in the Province'.³⁴ When the PLP moved on to discussions over the Representation of the People Act which the Government wanted enacted so that subsequent Hunger Strikers could not follow Sands' example and become an MP, yet more division surfaced. Winnick felt that the Bill should be opposed. James Dunn, MP for Liverpool Kirkdale, said that he would vote with the Government.³⁵ Dunn was another MP that would later defect to the SDP and left politics when his constituency was abolished. Kevin McNamara challenged Foot telling him that 'he had heard rumours of secret agreements between the Government and opposition and asked, 'what truth, if any was in these rumours?''³⁶ Foot told McNamara that there was 'no truth in these tales'. However, Roy Hattersley spoke up and on the verge of contradicting Foot told McNamara that 'there had been discussions between Government and opposition, but it was untrue that any agreement had been reached'.³⁷ Foot had indeed met with the Prime Minister. He had previously met John Hume and because of this called for the meeting with the Prime Minister. At that meeting it was agreed that 'there could be no political status for hunger strikers'.³⁸ Hattersley in his reply to McNamara was repeating what had been agreed, that whilst the meeting should

³³ P. Duffy, *Growing up Irish in Britain and British in Ireland and in Washington, Moscow, Rome and Sydney*, (Huddersfield, Jeremy Mills Publishing Limited, 2013), pp 229-307.

³⁴ PHM: *Minutes of the Parliamentary Labour Party*, 14th May 1981.

³⁵ PHM: *Minutes of the Parliamentary Labour Party*, 11th June 1981.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ The Margaret Thatcher Foundation (hereafter 'MTF'): PREM 19/504 f86, *Northern Ireland No.10 record of conversation (MT-Foot-Hattersley-Concannon-Atkins-Gow-Alexander)*, 14th May 1981.

not be denied, the contents of the meeting should be private.³⁹ Stallard and Winnick called for a three-line whip when the vote came to ensure maximum opposition to the bill.⁴⁰ Jim Wellbeloved opposed this and called for a free vote, informing the meeting that 'whatever the Parliamentary Committee did on the matter there would be a split in the PLP' and that 'the Party was not united on this issue'.⁴¹ Labour MPs were allowed a free vote and the bill was passed after its third reading.⁴²

Making public appearances was also becoming hazardous for Labour politicians. At an event to mark the anniversary of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, Foot was heckled. The Awkward Squad was never very far away. Also speaking was Joan Maynard, MP for Sheffield Brightside, who had the rather unflattering nickname of Stalin's Granny. She openly supported Tony Benn and attacked Foot by calling for an end to Bipartisanship with the Conservatives. He was jeered by a small number of protestors carrying H-Block placards but the crowd soon turned on them as Foot attacked the IRA as terrorists who were intimidating their fellow trade union members.⁴³ Don Concannon did not escape public displays of dissent when those on the far left demonstrated against him in his Mansfield Constituency.⁴⁴ Even Tony Benn could not escape when in December 1980 he was publicly taunted for refusing to support calls for political status for the prisoners and remained silent on the subject despite protestors unveiling a banner in support of the Hunger Strikers in front of the plinth he was speaking from.⁴⁵

The debates and argument continued into the 1981 Labour Party Conference. From 1974 until 1979 Northern Ireland had not been discussed by the party at conference. There had been plenty of activity within CLPs, but none of this had enough power to force its way to the conference plinth until 1981. At conference, 53 resolutions were put forward. Many of these were now calling for an end to bipartisanship. There were resolutions calling the

³⁹ MTF: PREM 19/504 f86, *Northern Ireland No.10 record of conversation (MT-Foot-Hattersley-Concannon-Atkins-Gow-Alexander)*, 14th May 1981.

⁴⁰ PHM: *Minutes of the Parliamentary Labour Party*, Thursday 11th June 1981.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² I. Owen, 'Bill on terrorists approved', *The Financial Times*, 26th June 1981.

⁴³ Stuart Malcolm, 'How Foot put down a H-Block revolt', *The Guardian*, 1st June 1981.

⁴⁴ *The Bobby Sands Trust*, 'On this day', <http://www.bobbysandstrust.com/index.php?s=Michael+Foot&x=0&y=0>, [accessed 23rd July 2015].

⁴⁵ R. Clough, 'The Irish Hunger Strike: were you with Benn or the H Block men?', *The Revolutionary Communist Group*, http://revolutionarycommunist.org/?option=com_content&view=article&id=2210:the-irish-hunger-strike-were-you-with-benn-or-the-h-block-men&catid=120&Itemid=98, [accessed 23rd July 2015].

recognition of political status for the Hunger Strikers and others called for Labour to establish a non-sectarian party and trade union in Northern Ireland and to combine this with immediate plans for the withdrawal of troops and the unification of Ireland.⁴⁶ These calls ignored the previous attempts at gaining party support for Labour candidates in Northern Ireland or that it had a 'sister' party in the shape of the SDLP. Those presenting resolutions had, once again, failed to recognise or had forgotten that British class politics continually floundered when it attempted to cross the North-Channel. Despite these calls and protests Don Concannon told conference that 'we must repudiate all acts of terrorism and political blackmail'.⁴⁷ To those calling for reunification and an end to the 'Unionist veto' he went on to tell conference that 'what has not been mentioned is that the real border is in the minds of a million Protestants; it is in the hearts, minds, fears and prejudices of a million Protestants. We have to go and get that out of them'.⁴⁸ The result of the debates was that conference passed the Labour NEC conference statement and the remaining composite motions were either defeated or remitted.⁴⁹ Although this should not be treated as surprising, as in May, despite the assorted protests and lobbying aimed at Foot and Concannon, *The Labour Weekly* was reporting that on the issue of granting political status there was 'solid opposition' from within the Party.⁵⁰ Despite some noisy and visible protests, the Labour rank and file agreed with the party leadership. There could be no granting of political status from a position of duress or whilst violence continued.

The Hunger Strikes revealed to some Labour MPs, that 'there was much more room for to manoeuvre'.⁵¹ Foot had to admit that 'a fresh outline on policy was needed'.⁵² Jock Stallard regarded the Hunger Strikes as 'a very complicated situation with no parallel in British politics'.⁵³ It is not the end of consensus that was the most important consequence of the hunger strikes. What this very complicated situation did was to create the foundations recognising Republicanism as a legitimate political identity and Sinn Féin as a legitimate political party. Danny Morrison realised that Sinn Féin's electoral success meant for at least a

⁴⁶ D. McKittrick, 'British Labour branches seek NI withdrawal', *The Irish Times*, 31st Aug 1981.

⁴⁷ PHM: *Report on the Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1981*, pp 105-106.

⁴⁸ PHM: *Report on the Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1981*, p.106.

⁴⁹ PHM: *Report on the Annual Conference of the Labour Party 1981*, pp. 298-299.

⁵⁰ PHM: *The Labour Weekly*, 8th May 1981.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² PHM: *The Labour Weekly*, 29th May 1981.

⁵³ PHM: *Parliamentary Labour Party Meeting Minutes*, 7th May 1981.

few within the Labour Party that Sinn Féin had a legitimate political voice.⁵⁴ Evidence to support Morrison's conclusion can be found in the comments of MPs such as Martin Flannery (Sheffield Hillsborough). In 1983, he declared that 'We want to see every legitimate political grouping in Northern Ireland; that is, those people who stand in elections and that means Sinn Féin' and that 'We have to talk to everybody'.⁵⁵ Talking to everybody meant talking to Sinn Féin, but before the majority of the PLP was ready to talk to Sinn Féin, those on the left outside the confines of Westminster continued to do precisely that.

(6.2) The Awkward Squad, street politics and violence

Talks between mainstream political parties and groups representing all political viewpoints in Northern Ireland, including those involved in violent activity had taken place since the earliest days of the conflict. Violence had made these meetings controversial. Other diminutive groups from Britain had also been sending fact-finding missions to Northern Ireland. These were often small assemblages made up of individuals who had managed to secure funding at a local level to finance their trips. These small-scale visits to Northern Ireland were almost a continuous feature of the British left. In 1979, The Newcastle-on-Tyne Trades Council continued this trend and visited Derry. What made this one significant is that they expanded their trip to include meetings with Unionists. Most of those groups from the left of British politics simply went no further than talking to those with a similar left-leaning political ideology and made little attempt to talk to or to understand Unionism. Going beyond this they met with Glenn Barr. Barr had been involved with the UDA from its earliest days and was one of the most significant figures of the UWC strike. Despite this background, Barr in many ways would often follow his own path. At the time of the visit, Barr was campaigning for an independent Northern Ireland, this included contributing to *Beyond the Religious Divide*, searching for a solution beyond British and Irish sovereignty.⁵⁶ During discussion on the future of Northern Ireland under any Thatcher Government, Barr told them, 'We are in a very dangerous situation now with Margaret Thatcher. We are very frightened of her attitude

⁵⁴ K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p.75.

⁵⁵ PHM: *Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour party 1983*, p255.

⁵⁶ P. Shirlow, *The End of Ulster Loyalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p.97.

toward Northern Ireland' and that 'she will be arrogant towards us'.⁵⁷ Glenn Barr recognised that Margaret Thatcher was something new in British politics and that they would not be dealing with an old-school tie, church and state Tory. He understood that it was not just Republicanism that would have problems with Margaret Thatcher and that difficult times lay ahead for Unionists as well.

Whilst those involved with parliamentary politics were struggling to respond to the situation in Northern Ireland, the British Trades Union movement was also attempting to formulate their response. They still wanted to find a way to use traditional, class-based, non-conformist Labourism as a response to the situation in Northern Ireland. The Hunger Strikes were the most serious challenge to the British Trades Union movement's views on Northern Ireland since 1974. As part of its campaign the Revolutionary Communist Tendency (RCT) called for ordinary Trades Union members to pressurise local leadership and Trades Councils. This forced the TUC to take disciplinary action against some. In 1980, the Tameside Trades Council had been disaffiliated by the TUC after it had attempted to organise a conference under the heading of 'Bring the War to Britain'.⁵⁸ One of its organisers, Mike Freeman, said that 'we support the IRA's bombing campaign in Britain, but we are not a military organisation. Ours is a peaceful campaign. We are a Marxist propaganda group.'⁵⁹ It is difficult to understand how it could be both a peaceful campaign and at the same time support the bombing campaign. Freeman's clumsy wording once again exposed the difficulty the left in Britain had in reconciling what some viewed as a struggle for liberation with traditional class-focused British politics.

In 1981, the RCT stepped up its Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign and held a conference in Coventry at Lanchester Polytechnic. The slogan of the conference was to be 'TUC hands off Ireland'.⁶⁰ Sponsors included Tameside, Todmorden, Hackney and Salford Trades Councils. Other supporters included The East London branch of the NUT, the magazine branch of the NUJ, the Labour MP Ernie Roberts and 20 Trades Union figures.⁶¹ The proposed conference was discussed at the highest level of the TUC. The view of the TUC was that the conference 'went far beyond what was acceptable in terms of trade union and TUC

⁵⁷ WCM: Newcastle-on-Tyne Trades Council, *Five Days in Derry*, 2/8th May 1979.

⁵⁸ Judd & Bishop, 'TUC warns H-block rebels', *The Observer*, 22nd February 1981.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

policy' and recommend that any Trades Council associating itself with the conference should be removed from the recognised list of Trades Councils.⁶² Despite efforts such as these, others within the Trades Union movement openly supported those who wanted to ensure Irish unification. Joseph Williams from the National Union of Mineworkers continued the attacks on the bi-partisanship between Labour and the Conservatives as the divisions within the left refused to go away.⁶³

The Lanchester conference was a direct challenge to the Labour Party and TUC leadership. The organisers used revolutionary rhetoric in opposition to the mainstream Trades Union movement. They called for the working class to overthrow the British capitalist class and concluded that this would allow the withdrawal of British troops and for the unification of Ireland. In the view of the organisers, the British Trades Union movement wanted 'social stability on Britain's terms.'⁶⁴ This conclusion regarding the wider position of Trade Unions in British Society was correct. The British Trades Union movement since the General Strike had been concerned with getting the best possible deal for their members in terms of wages and conditions rather than the revolutionary overthrow of the state, and its leadership was in no rush to change this. The TUC was committed to its Equality and Better Life for all campaign and did not directly challenge Britain's role in Northern Ireland. The British Trades Union movement would reject radical rhetoric and would remain labourist. They operated in the back-rooms of Labour meetings, pulling strings, arm-twisting and both the PLP and the Unions looked towards their fixers to ensure deals could be made. They were not street politicians or revolutionaries. The Lanchester organisers took a different view to this and told delegates that they should support the Hunger Strikers, as a victory for them would be a major blow against the British State and would weaken the ruling classes and that support for the Hunger Strikers should be 'not just out of humanitarianism.'⁶⁵

Within individual Trades Unions there were also battles between traditional Labourist factions and far-left elements over union policy when it came to the hunger strikes. In London, the NUT had to control sections of its membership in Lambeth who were attempting to call unofficial strikes. They were demanding that Lambeth teachers support the Hunger

⁶² 'TUC Hands Off Ireland', *Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign*, Revolutionary Communist Pamphlets No 8, Junius Publications Ltd, Watford, 1981.

⁶³ *The Irish Democrat*, No.448 June 1981.

⁶⁴ 'TUC Hands Off Ireland', *Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign*.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*.

Strikes and that the Troops Out Movement should become affiliated. The NUT's reaction was the strict enforcement of union rules and threats of disciplinary action and expulsions to ensure the executive remained in control of the union.⁶⁶ Further splits within the Trades Unions movement could be found within other teaching unions. The Kilburn Polytechnic Branch of the Union of Teachers in Further and Higher Education found itself in conflict with the union leadership at its annual conference. It had agreed to a local resolution to support those on Hunger Strike and now wanted this to be taken up at conference. The attempt to get their resolution voted on at conference was refused by the president of the union. These were not the only defeats suffered by union delegates. Delegates at the NUPE and ASTMS conferences had attempted to propose resolutions supporting the hunger strikers only to have their efforts defeated by union leadership.⁶⁷ It was clear that despite the efforts of some within the trade union movement, there was never enough support to challenge the leadership and to gain official support for the Hunger Strikers.

Whilst the TUC was attempting to ensure that its membership followed policy the National Union of Students was also facing challenges that were created by the Hunger Strikes. As in the case with the wider trades union movement, the issue of the IRA and violence was at the centre of the argument. At the NUS conference in 1980 an impromptu collection in support of the Hunger Strikers brought dissent and conflict to the conference floor. Disputes broke out amongst the delegates as the NUS leadership called for the collection to be halted. One member of the NUS executive told the conference that 'It's undeniable that the H Block and Armagh campaigns are identified as campaigns led by the IRA' and that 'we cannot allow our union to be associated with these campaigns.'⁶⁸ As with the TUC and the wider Labour movement there was a battle for control of the NUS between competing factions. When the leadership stated that 'it was opposed to all terrorism' there were noisy demonstrations made again by those on the far left who opposed this statement.⁶⁹ The outgoing president confirmed the position of the NUS executive and clearly had a majority in his favour when he told conference that 'I and the majority of the student

⁶⁶ W. Berliner, 'Union will crack down on 'problem' Left-wingers', *The Guardian*, 24th April 1981.

⁶⁷ *The Irish Post*, 13th June 1981.

⁶⁸ W. Berliner, 'Uproar at NUS conference over H-Block Money', *The Guardian*, 18th April 1980.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

movement have nothing but contempt for those who give space to the Provisional IRA in our movement.'⁷⁰

At a later conference in December 1980, the situation that the NUS leadership was facing was summed up by the new President, David Aaronovitch. He told conference that the NUS wanted to help students in Northern Ireland, 'but how can we do that if we say, as some want us to do, that shooting, bombing and torture are outrages if carried out by one side, but political acts if carried out by another?'⁷¹ Aaronovitch also revealed to delegates that members of the NUS executive had received death threats. Later in 1981 Aaronovitch on behalf of the NUS sent an open letter to the British Government stating that 'the NUS interest goes beyond that of a concerned observer. We have 20,000 members in Northern Ireland, whose lives are directly affected by the general political climate of the region.'⁷² Aaronovitch argued that to defuse the situation prison conditions should be improved for all prisoners in Northern Ireland. If rehabilitation and normalisation of prisoners was a genuine aim of the British Government, then all legal provisions that applied in the rest of the United Kingdom should apply to prisoners in Northern Ireland. As with the TUC, it was made clear by the NUS leadership there could not be any question of supporting those directly involved in violence.

The Awkward Squad did not just limit their attacks to the established Trades Unions and their members and leadership. It was far from united and was not above in-fighting and factionalism. Some of this was made public by *Spartacist* magazine. It regarded any attempts at gaining concessions from the British Government as nothing more than 'Petty-bourgeois Republicanism' and that arguments in support of humanitarian prison reform were 'toothless'.⁷³ *Spartacist* also criticised and condemned Peoples Democracy, Workers Power and accused the Socialist Workers Party of 'hypocrisy'.⁷⁴ The answers for the Spartacists was clear, working-class Catholics had to be 'broken from the dead-end of Republicanism' and Protestant workers had to stand side by side with Catholic workers under the banner of 'class war'.⁷⁵ However, in common with Militant, the Spartacists also failed to understand the

⁷⁰ W. Berliner, 'Uproar at NUS conference over H-Block Money', *The Guardian*, 18th April 1980.

⁷¹ W. Berliner, 'NUS president warns against 'taking sides' on Ulster politics', *The Guardian*, 6th December 1980.

⁷² PHM: MF/L18, D. Aaronovitch, *National Union of Students, Open Letter to the British Government*, 2nd Feb 1981.

⁷³ 'Free Irish hunger strikers! Imperialist butchers out now!', *Spartacist Britain*, No 30, March 1981.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

nature of oppositional identity in Northern Ireland. In common with all those pocket-sized radical groups on the left, they could not find a way to unite communities in Northern Ireland that were separated by mistrust, prejudice and conflict.

As the divisions within the British left continued, those that took their politics on to British streets found that once again, the response to these protests would be muted and limited. At one march organised by the Ad-Hoc Hunger Strike Committee the police estimated that 2,000 took part, while the organisers estimated that 5,000 attended.⁷⁶ In Clydeside the decision was made to ban marches in support of the hunger strikers because previous marches had resulted in sectarian clashes.⁷⁷ During the first London Marathon a very small number of protestors held up banners and attempted to disrupt the race.⁷⁸ Another small group took part in 24hr fasts in London, some on the steps of Westminster Cathedral.⁷⁹ In Liverpool a small march in support of Sands was organised and was to be addressed by members of Sinn Féin. The numbers involved were approximately one-hundred. Reports claimed that those involved were not Irish citizens but from the 'English left' and 'revolutionary communist'.⁸⁰ The idea that some of those involved may have been second-generation Irish had yet to permeate popular use or the media. In response an equally small Loyalist counter-demonstration attacked the Sand's Supporters.⁸¹ Both the local newspapers in Liverpool, the *Echo* and the *Daily Post* were supportive of the official government stance. They openly condemned Sands and the IRA. One editorial in the *Echo* declared that 'Mrs Thatcher and her colleagues had no choice other to stand firm' and that 'we should keep reminding Americans and the Europeans that the IRA talk of human rights is hypocrisy'.⁸² The *Daily Post* told its readers that 'no government of moral integrity can allow itself to submit, whatever the consequences'.⁸³ This very local response by the newspapers in Liverpool reflected much of the mood of the national press. It also showed that despite Liverpool's historic links with Ireland, Irish politics did not result in anything resembling popular support. This is reflected in the size of its first-generation Irish population, in 1981 this

⁷⁶ A. Singer, 'London Demo for hunger strikers', *The Guardian*, 8th Dec 1980.

⁷⁷ P. Hetherington, 'Marches ban to avert clash at H-Block rally', *The Guardian* 2nd April 1981.

⁷⁸ 'H-Block protest at London marathon', *The Irish Times*, 30rd March 1981.

⁷⁹ 'Token H-Block fasts in London', *The Irish Times*, 20th April 1981.

⁸⁰ 'Ructions flare in Liverpool', *The Irish Democrat*, No.448, June 1981.

⁸¹ *The Liverpool Daily Post*, 4th May 1981.

⁸² *The Liverpool Echo*, 5th May 1981.

⁸³ *The Daily Post*, 6th May 1981.

represented just 1.16% of the entire population.⁸⁴ Liverpool's role in the British response to the Troubles had previously been low key in comparison to that of Birmingham, London and Manchester and this trend continued with the Hunger Strikes. Irish politics in Liverpool was only being kept alive by a few dedicated individuals. Reports were made of UVF and UDA involvement in Orange Order parades in the city.⁸⁵ Another Liverpool resident stated that 'When I attended the first meeting of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association in the early Seventies (before any outrages) in this city, the hall was packed. Within a year the small band of workers had to fold up under a weight of Liverpool-Irish apathy'.⁸⁶ This 'apathy' can be attributed to a shrinking first-generation population and a wider populous that had other political, social and economic priorities.

Whilst politics in Liverpool throughout this period concentrated on its own economic decline and Northern Ireland was relegated to a small, residual issue, London continued to be the centre of protest. Here the Awkward Squad were at their strongest, and parts of the British left was exploring the political beliefs of Sinn Féin and finding connections with its own political views. Much of this would be driven by the GLC and Ken Livingstone. Livingstone was elected as leader of the Greater London Council 1981.⁸⁷ He would emerge as a very vocal opponent of Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party. His views on Northern Ireland would be met with criticism from both within and outside the Labour Party. Livingstone regarded the British position on Northern Ireland as 'colonial and imperialist' and 'incredibly deep rooted'.⁸⁸ Livingstone regarded himself as naive when he first became aware of the issues in Northern Ireland and in 1969 viewed the use of troops as a victory against 'loyalists, who were clearly a bankrupt and corrupt bunch of politicians'.⁸⁹ However, Livingstone had not lost all his naivety by simply reducing Loyalism to a monolithic bloc. Authors such as Coulter and Edwards have comprehensively shown that both Loyalism and

⁸⁴ 1981 Census, UK Data Service, Census Data Support.

⁸⁵ 'A Blind eye to Loyalist violence', *The Irish Post*, 31st October 1987.

⁸⁶ 'Identity Crisis in Liverpool', *The Irish Post*, 5th December 1987.

⁸⁷ 'Livingstone, Kenneth Robert, (Ken)', *Who's Who 2014*, A & C Black, an imprint of [Bloomsbury Publishing plc](http://www.bloomsburypublishing.com) 2014; online edn, Oxford University Press, 2013; online edn, Dec 2013. [http://www.ukwhoswho.com.ezproxy.liv.ac.uk/view/article/oupww/whoswho/U24718, accessed 11 Nov 2014].

⁸⁸ M. Collins, *Ireland after Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), p.13.

⁸⁹ Collins, *Ireland after Britain*, p.13.

Unionism are multi-faceted identities and political ideologies.⁹⁰ Equally his argument framing British involvement in Northern Ireland was flawed and is an uncritical assessment of traditional Nationalist and Republican thinking. It ignores the changing nature of Irish Nationalism and Republicanism as shown by Jennifer Todd.⁹¹ Further, it also omitted the importance of Dublin and the Irish dimension to the problems of Northern Ireland. Livingstone's commentary on Northern Ireland revealed his own ahistorical perceptions of the situation. He was attempting to make Irish history fit his own political beliefs. Although never overtly adopting Marxism, his own liberationist politics simply do not fit neatly into Irish historiography. While he and others tried to find a straight line linking Wolfe Tone with modern Republicanism, careful reading of Irish history continues show these links remain stubbornly sinuous and circuitous. Edna Longley rebuked Livingstone for confusing 'ancient ways with contemporary actualities'.⁹²

Livingstone started to approach Sinn Féin and began to communicate with them on a regular basis and invited them to talks in London, this proved to be immensely controversial. His own and the GLC's politics of empowering communities was popular within Sinn Féin. Livingstone himself recalled that he was 'struck by the similarity in the position of what you might call the new radical left in the Labour Party and the radical left in Sinn Féin.'⁹³ Despite claims by some on the left that Sinn Féin was creating petty-bourgeois arguments, Bean shows that the Republican Socialism of Sinn Féin contained anti-imperialist ideology that would provide areas of common ground with the anti-imperialism of Livingstone and the Labour left.⁹⁴

Following his decision to invite Gerry Adams to London, Livingstone had to cope with the barrage of criticism that was directed towards him. Foot sent a letter to Livingstone to confirm the position of the PLP and he told Livingstone 'The Labour Party is absolutely opposed to the barbarous methods of the Provos and other terrorist groups in Northern

⁹⁰ C. Coulter, 'The Character of Unionism', *Irish Political Studies*, 9:1, 1-24, 1994; A. Edwards, *Abandoning Armed Resistance? The Ulster Volunteer Force as a Case Study for Terrorism in Northern Ireland*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 32:2, pp. 146-66, 2009.

⁹¹ J. Todd, Northern Irish Political Culture, *Irish Political Studies*, 5:1, pp. 31-44, 1990.

⁹² E. Longley, *The Living Stream Literature & Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1994), p.71.

⁹³ Collins, *Ireland after Britain*, p.17.

⁹⁴ WCM: *The British Left and the Irish War* (London: Workers Power, 1984); K. Bean, *The New Politics of Sinn Féin* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), p.74.

Ireland.⁹⁵ The letter continued, informing him that violence had ‘nothing whatsoever to do with political controversies.’⁹⁶ This appears to be a misreading of the prevailing attitudes within the leadership of Sinn Féin by Foot. In 1981 Danny Morrison had announced what would popularly become known as the Armalite and Ballot-box strategy.⁹⁷ Foot appears to be either ignoring or failing to recognise that Sinn Féin, since the death of Sands, had established a legitimate political mandate and had become increasingly focused on community activism. Although remaining true to their traditional abstentionism in both the Dáil and Westminster, much of the language they were now using publicly became more along the lines of a parliamentary opposition party, even if they did not take their seats, something which many, including Foot, were either failing to understand or ignoring. Whilst it remained politically important for both Labour and the Conservatives not to be seen to be making concessions from duress applied by the IRA or Sinn Féin, they were doing little to encourage Sinn Féin and its move towards constitutional politics.

The decision not to order Livingstone to rescind his invitation to Gerry Adams resulted in a heated exchange of letters between Roy Jenkins and Michael Foot. Jenkins wrote to Foot to tell him that he found it ‘unacceptable’ that Livingstone should invite Sinn Féin to London for talks. In his letter to Foot, Jenkins also appears to fail to grasp the importance of the Armalite and Ballot-Box strategy. He tells Foot that Sinn Féin members and its supporters were ‘unambivalent in their support of the armed struggle’ and that the Sinn Féin delegation were ‘spokesmen for terrorists’.⁹⁸ Whilst Sinn Féin did remain unambivalent about violence, Jenkins ignored their growing community organising and political mandate. They were no longer mere message carriers and had become genuine community brokers. He sent his letter to Foot the day after the Ballykelly bomb and unwittingly revealed something of his own emotions in the tone of the letter.⁹⁹ He urged Foot to order the visit to be called off and tells him that any such visit would be an ‘outrage’.¹⁰⁰ The tone of Foot’s reply is terse. He was clearly annoyed that Jenkins had made the contents of his letter public. He made sure that Jenkins was left without any doubt as to his feelings towards him. He accused Jenkins of using

⁹⁵ PHM: MF/L18, M. Foot, *Letter to Ken Livingstone*, 6th Dec 1981.

⁹⁶ PHM: MF/L18, M. Foot, *Letter to Ken Livingstone*, 6th Dec 1981.

⁹⁷ P. Taylor, *Provos The IRA and Sinn Féin* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), p.282.

⁹⁸ PHM: MF/L23/L5, R. Jenkins, *Letter to Michael Foot*, 7th Dec 1982.

⁹⁹ The Ballykelly bomb exploded on 6th December 1982, killing 17 people.

¹⁰⁰ PHM: MF/L23/L5, R. Jenkins, *Letter to Michael Foot*, 7th Dec 1982.

the proposed Sinn Féin visit as a 'wretched attempt to exploit the appalling massacre at Ballykelly and in the form in which you sent it to me, I do not think it deserves another reply.'¹⁰¹ The tone of this exchange reveals the bitter relationship between Jenkins and Foot following the creation of SDP. Northern Ireland adding further fuel to the flames of that division.

Despite the controversy and bitterness of the arguments over Ken Livingstone's willingness to talk to Gerry Adams and Sinn Féin, when Adams visited London in 1983, the visit failed to make the front pages and was relegated by other news stories to the inside pages.¹⁰² Tony Benn attended one of the meetings arranged with Adams. Amongst the dialogue recorded by Benn in his diary, within the discussions over socialism and troop withdrawal there were discussions over questions of identity. Adams told those attending that 'Loyalists have no tradition of resistance' and that when it came to Loyalist identity 'the identity crisis is their problem'.¹⁰³ Adams failed to recognise that any identity crisis within Loyalism and Unionism was also a problem for Republicans and Nationalists as well. This dismissal of the importance of Unionist resistance identity and the failure to explore the identity of all sides was a mistake that those on the British far-left had made since the earliest days of the troubles and one which was constantly repeated.

While Livingstone and Adams found that they both had political ideologies in common such as community organising and identity, Adams also revealed how little he knew about the left in British politics, stating that 'The first time I met Ken Livingstone, I must confess I didn't know an awful lot about what was happening in British Labour politics.'¹⁰⁴ Livingstone was attempting to position Sinn Féin in the public eye as part of the new left and part of his and the GLC's own vision of community empowerment. He was not afraid to use much older anti-imperialist rhetoric. This dovetailed with Republicanism's own imagining of its anti-imperialist struggle against the British Government. Livingstone was promoting Sinn Féin as part the wider socialist family that had broken away from the 'simple nationalist

¹⁰¹ PHM: MF/L23/L5, R. Jenkins, *Letter to Michael Foot*, 7th Dec 1982.

¹⁰² 'Ken's IRA visitors', *The Daily Mirror*, 23rd July 1983; 'Irish MP snubbed by Labour', *The Daily Mirror*, 27th July 1983; John Burns, 'Murderer! But Gerry Adams and heavies brush aside protests', *The Daily Express*, 27th July 1983; Nick Davies, 'Calm Adams skirts terrorism law in London talks with MPs', *The Guardian*, 27th July 1983.

¹⁰³ T. Benn, (ed), R. Winstone, *The End of an Era, Diaries 1980-90*, (London: Hutchinson, 1992), pp.309-310.

¹⁰⁴ Collins, *Ireland after Britain*, p.2.

mould'.¹⁰⁵ This was the opposite of the approach taken by Sinn Féin in the United States, where traditional nationalism remained strong, and any links to socialism or revolutionary politics were not popular with conservative Irish America. Other Republicans were also looking to break the Nationalist mould. Whilst prisoners were smuggling 'comms' to Michael Foot and Ernie Roberts about the hunger strikes and prison conditions, others were sending out 'comms' that went beyond this.¹⁰⁶ Prisoners were looking to expand their political knowledge and for help in their political education turned to assistance from sources in Britain.

Jim Arnison was a journalist for the *Daily Worker* and *Morning Star* from Salford. The left-wing press such as the *Morning Star* were exceptions within the British media. They attempted to humanise the conflict and the prisoners, something which the majority of the British media never did. He was also involved with the Connolly Association and was married into a Republican family from Ardoyne. He had been close to one family member that was shot dead by the British Army in 1972. By 1973 he was in regular contact with families of the Republican prisoners in Long Kesh and had taken a Republican delegation to meet with Kevin McNamara MP at Westminster. He had also met Republican prisoner John Quigley while visiting prisoners in the H-Blocks and remained in regular contact with him. In 1983 Sean Murray sent a 'comm' to Arnison asking for his advice and assistance on his and other prisoners' exploration of Marxism, Lenin and revolutionary politics.¹⁰⁷ Another prisoner Kevin Sheehan also sent 'comms' to Arnison, this time asking if Arnison could help them by sending political and economic information to help them improve their own political education. Sheehan clearly viewed Republicanism as part of a wider international struggle and asked Arnison if he could provide international contacts to help them understand 'comrades engaged in similar struggles around the world'.¹⁰⁸ Arnison corresponded with the prisoners not just about the situation in Northern Ireland but also the miners' strike and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Arnison became a valued supporter of the prisoners and was due to visit Gerrard Kelly (future Sinn Féin MLA and junior minister), before he

¹⁰⁵ K. Livingstone, 'How Sinn Féin can break the nationalist mould', *The Guardian*, 7th March 1983.

¹⁰⁶ PHM: MF-L23/25, A. McIntyre, *Letter to Michael Foot*, 14th April 1981; WCM: Subj/Ireland/0001: BS/0, Armagh Republican Prisoners, *Letter to Ernie Roberts MP*, 15th July 1981.

¹⁰⁷ WCM: The Jim Arnison Collection, S. Murray, *Letter to Jim Arnison*, (undated).

¹⁰⁸ WCM: The Jim Arnison Collection, K. Sheehan, *Letter to Jim Arnison*, 1st May 1983.

escaped in 1983.¹⁰⁹ The exchange between the prisoners and Arnison reveal that Republican prisoners were keen to improve their political education and understanding of wider political issues and ideologies.

It was not only political relationships with Sinn Féin that proved to be controversial with many. Livingstone and the GLC had been offering financial support to single interest groups in London and that included the Irish. For Margaret Thatcher, this was another example of the GLC and Livingstone acting independently of, and against, the writ of Parliament. Livingstone was chairperson of the GLC ethnic minorities committee from 1981 to 1986.¹¹⁰ As soon as Labour and Livingstone gained control of the GLC they were attacked by David Mellor, Conservative MP for Putney, as planning to allow 'weirdos and Lefties' to 'pollute' London with a 'cultural revolution'.¹¹¹ A Conservative Peer, Lord Bellwin, criticised the GLC for giving grants to 'all sorts of questionable organisations'.¹¹² The Conservative Party even went as far as to claim that the GLC under Livingstone had become an uncontrolled and profligate organisation, giving away money and posts to his and the lefts political supporters whilst undermining the police. In the view of one Conservative spokesperson, George Tremlett, those in control of the GLC were seeking to create a 'mini-Marxist state' and that the GLC had been turned into a 'source of sedition within the state'.¹¹³ The label of 'Red Ken' had become firmly established and in 1982 the Northern Ireland Office even used this title to refer to Livingstone in a briefing document sent to Margaret Thatcher.¹¹⁴ By 1985 those on the right and their supporters had managed to cement Livingstone's and the GLC's image as profligate and willing to spend rate payers money without thought on what became known as 'Red Ken Follies'.¹¹⁵ For Conservatives, Ken Livingstone was now the Generalissimo of the Awkward Squad.

These images of profligacy extended to the grants that the GLC gave to Irish organisations in London. In 1983 headlines screamed that there was 'fury' as 'Red Ken backs

¹⁰⁹ WCM: The Jim Arnison Collection, J. Arnison, *Biographical Essay*, (undated).

¹¹⁰ G. Harrison, *The Scattering A History of the London Irish Centre 1954-2004*, (London: The London Irish Centre, 2004), p.156.

¹¹¹ 'GLC will give cash to weirdos', *The Guardian*, 14th July 1981.

¹¹² 'Peer attacks GLC Lesbian grants', *The Guardian*, 23rd April 1982.

¹¹³ 'County Hall is source of sedition', *The Daily Mail*, 16th December 1981.

¹¹⁴ MTF: PREM19/168 f228, *NIO Press Office Note*, 6th December 1982.

¹¹⁵ Coolican & Davies, 'Red Ken Follies', *The Daily Express*, 14th March 1985.

£300,000 for Irish'.¹¹⁶ Even more controversial was Livingstone's support for the Troops Out Movement. A grant proposal of £53,000 for the Troops Out Movement was to be discussed by the GLC, but this again brought Livingstone into disrepute with the Labour leadership, and Foot had the item removed from the meeting agenda. Foot made it clear to Livingstone that the PLP did not support the Troops Out Movement.¹¹⁷

If Livingstone could count on little support from within the Labour Party, the Trades Unions once again showed that he could not rely on support from them either. The TUC was attempting to formulate a way whereby the whole membership could campaign to save the GLC and five other metropolitan counties. Eric Hammond, who was on the right of the Trades Union movement and future leader of the Electricians Union, attacked the London Labour Movement and Livingstone. He told the TUC conference that 'There may be enough terrorist groupies, lesbians and other queer people in inner London Labour to support Mr Livingstone's antics' but that he and his union would not.¹¹⁸ These comments were not well received by many at conference and the TUC General Secretary, Len Murray, had a difficult time controlling the passions of delegates. Hammond was willing to support the campaign to save the GLC. He was, though, concerned that grants and patronage were being used by factions within the London Labour movement to ensure they retained power, and that the publicity surrounding these grants would harm the wider labour movement. Hammond also accused Livingstone of giving grants to causes such as the Irish cultural centre in Brent because he had parliamentary ambitions in Brent.

The decision to provide grants to the Irish centre in Brent continued to rumble on into 1985 which by this time had received almost £1 million from the GLC and Brent Council. Once again accusations were made that these grants were given purely to secure the Irish vote in Brent for Livingstone who was the Labour PPC for the constituency.¹¹⁹ In 1981, Brent had the largest first-generation Irish population in the UK, with 7.25%.¹²⁰ Between 1983 and 1985 Irish groups in London were estimated to have received £3,000,000 in funding from the GLC.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ S. Boseley, 'Fury as Red Ken backs £300,000 for Irish', *The Daily Mail*, 7th February 1983.

¹¹⁷ Doran & Young, 'Foot halts grant', *The Daily Mail*, 23rd February 1983.

¹¹⁸ 'Uproar follows attack on Thumbs down for GLC's abuse of grants cruise and trident', *The Guardian*, 9th September 1983.

¹¹⁹ C. O'Clery, 'Livingstone accused on Irish cultural grant', *The Irish Times*, 18th December 1985.

¹²⁰ 1981 Census, CASWEB, UK Census Data Support Purpose.

¹²¹ S. Sorohan, *Irish London During the Troubles* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012), p.141.

Much of this had been allocated to the Brent Irish Centre. In 1986 it was estimated that it had received £2.4 million in grants and that a further £1 million was needed to complete it.¹²² His record on spending would be used by his political opponents throughout his career.

However, the image of a profligate attitude towards the issuing of grants can be called into question. The London Irish Centre in Camden had repeatedly applied for grants from the GLC but had their applications turned down. There is some dispute over the reasons why these applications were refused that appear to centre on the misunderstanding over the ownership of the London Irish Centre and that the GLC appeared to believe that the Catholic Church owned the centre. Criticism must not only be laid at the door of the GLC. When money was forthcoming for the London Irish Centre those responsible for the administration and management of the centre failed to claim it.¹²³

Despite the splits and controversy that surrounded the far-left and the Awkward Squad, Sinn Féin was gaining political credibility within sections of the wider British political left, however, violence once more made any normal political discussion almost impossible. In 1983, the IRA exploded a car bomb at Harrods, killing Christmas shoppers.¹²⁴ Kevin Toolis writing in *Fortnight* magazine summed up his view of the consequences of the attack. He regarded the progress made by those talking to Sinn Féin as positive, but that the bomb had once again, 'left the pro-Republican lobby and Irish organisations in Britain politically floundering' and that until the bombing '1983 had been a good year for the pro-Republican left'.¹²⁵ Toolis concluded that violence was making it difficult for those on the British left who wanted an open and frank discussion about Northern Ireland based on constitutional politics. He regarded those groups outside the political mainstream as 'a host of groups, revolutionary factions and just plain loonies'.¹²⁶ The following year the Brighton Bomb, as previously shown, made it once again almost impossible for mainstream politicians to engage publicly with Republicanism. Toolis concluded that 'no one in their right mind can touch the Provos for a long time and as one pundit put it they are fucking radioactive now'.¹²⁷ This radioactive

¹²² G. Andrews, 'GLC cash 'wasted' on Irish Centre', *The Guardian*, 4th March 1986.

¹²³ G. Harrison, *The Scattering A History of the London Irish Centre 1954-2004* (Camden: The London Irish Centre, 2004), pp 155-157.

¹²⁴ 'Car bomb slaughter at Harrods', *The Observer*, 18th December 1983.

¹²⁵ K. Toolis, 'The British Left after Brighton', *Fortnight, An Independent Review of Northern Ireland*, No 201, February 1984.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

toxicity was added to older prejudice when one tour organiser from Ireland found that he could not gain accommodation for his clients in Blackpool. He found that they did not want to risk losing other conference trade, so they simply branded all the Irish as drunken suspect community.¹²⁸

Throughout this time, the Labour Party was struggling to keep up with the Armalite and Ballot Box strategy. Roy Hattersley, a regular public commentator on Northern Ireland and Ireland, once again published his views. He regarded the IRA as having a 'complex and subtle existence'. Hattersley summed up the difficulties that the mainstream British political establishment had in dealing with Sinn Féin, writing:

it contests local elections and sometimes wins; and when it gets elected in parish or borough councils it shows a real interest in sewerage, paving stones and house repairs. Nobody is quite sure if it is right to allow the friends and supporters of murderers to represent themselves on television as assiduous and selfless public servants.

'Nobody is quite sure' summed up the prevailing mood in the Labour Party. He was clearly having a difficult time reconciling Adams the politician with the Adams that legitimized violence to obtain political dividends. Whilst he admitted that Adams 'makes me want to vomit', he concluded that the decision to censor Adams and other groups in Northern Ireland was unjustified.¹²⁹ It was not Armalites and ballot boxes that confused the Labour Party, but the idea that by day you could be a public servant, but at night attack the structures that you were now a part of.

The shootings of three IRA members in Gibraltar by the SAS in 1988 also highlighted how violence made it very difficult to engage with Sinn Féin politically and brought into question the British Government's response to violence. The cycle of violence that followed the deaths in Gibraltar once again resulted in divisions within the British political left. Eric Heffer denounced the shootings in Parliament and was supported by approximately sixty other Labour MPs.¹³⁰ The Labour MP for St Helens South, who supported Heffer said that 'This incident has the smell of shoot first, explain later'.¹³¹ Heffer received multiple letters

¹²⁸ 'Blackpool Hotels say no Irish', *The Irish Post*, 5th December 1987.

¹²⁹ R. Hattersley, 'The Most Distressful Country', *The Listener*, 9th October 1980.

¹³⁰ M. Cassell, 'Sixty MPs Denounce IRA Killings', *The Financial Times*, 11th March 1988.

¹³¹ R. Oakley, 'MPs accuse SAS of terrorist act', *The Times*, 11th March 1988.

over his stance on the Gibraltar shootings. Many of the letters carried a similar content, authors expressing themselves as people who did not support the IRA and its campaign of violence but were also worried that the British Government was acting illegitimately and ignoring the rule of law. There was a worry amongst the correspondents to Heffer that the shootings were the latest evidence that the police and security services were politicised. Many writing to Heffer were concerned that there had been a lack of interest shown in investigating the legality of the use of force that had begun with the Iranian Embassy siege, and continued with failure to convict those involved in the shootings of Cherry Groce and Stephen Waldorf.¹³² Others such as Peter Gathercole, Fellow of Darwin College Cambridge, informed Heffer he was 'appalled' that the Labour front bench was not questioning the state's use of force.¹³³ One member of the Methodist Church in Scotland told Heffer that 'I am amazed at the number of good people including my own colleagues who think it is ok for soldiers or even police to act like this' and that 'it is not even a step from the death squad – it is the death squad'.¹³⁴

Whilst the above letters were typical of many received by Heffer he also received letters attacking his stance and questioning of the shootings. He was accused of encouraging the IRA, or if not was 'just plain stupid'. He was called a 'disgrace to his country' and that those who were shot in Gibraltar 'got what they deserved'. One particularly indignant writer referred to Heffer's comments in Parliament as an 'outburst' from 'a papist lump of blubber'. The writer was incorrect to accuse Heffer of being a papist; Heffer was a High Church Anglican. This was not the only personal attack. Both Eric Heffer and Dennis Skinner received threats of violence and that they could 'do with a bomb through your letter boxes to close your loud mouths once and for all' and to 'beware all hooded louts in the vicinity of your home and car'.¹³⁵ As well as threats of violence, several Labour members sent letters informing Heffer that he had brought shame on the Labour Party and that it had lost their

¹³² PHM: ESH/10/91, J. Stevens, Mill Hill London, *Letter to Eric Heffer*, 9th March 1988; PHM: ESH/10/91, *Sop by Heseltine – Letter to Eric Heffer* 17th March 1988.

¹³³ PHM: ESH/10/91, P. Gathercole, *Note to Eric Heffer*; The SAS stormed the Iran Embassy in 1980 to release 26 hostages, this for the first time brought the SAS into the public eye and increased Margaret Thatcher's political standing. Cherry Groce was shot by police raiding her home searching for her son. The shooting resulted in serious rioting and the Metropolitan Police only admitted its fault and failings in 2014. Stephen Waldorf was shot five times by the Metropolitan Police in a case of mistaken identity. Although the offences involved were prosecuted they were cleared of all charges.

¹³⁴ PHM: ESH/10/91, Rev Andrew MacKenzie, *Letter to Eric Heffer*, 14th March 1988.

¹³⁵ PHM: ESH/10/91, *Letter to Eric Heffer*, 14th March 1988.

votes forever. One member even went as far to return their Labour Party membership card to Heffer and informed him that 'voting for you would be like making a habitual criminal Chief Constable'.¹³⁶

Amongst the many letters that Heffer received during this period one deserves closer examination. This letter informed Heffer: 'at the age of 17 I came to work, as did many others of my community. I was a member of the Catholic community in Belfast and I retain Republican aspirations.' He continued 'I consider that I have a right to those aspirations and that sense of identity'. The letter informed Heffer that the author felt that he and his family were 'fortunate and able to contribute to this society through their employment' and that they had a 'day to day commitment to the society that of which we are a part'. That commitment included 'the identity which we carry with us, the language, accent, music and politics of the society from which circumstances have taken us.'¹³⁷ This description of his life fits closely to Castell's definition of a project identity, willing to form a contract with the state, whilst retaining their own identity and using constitutional methods to work towards political change.¹³⁸ He recognised that some in 'England' had always had difficulty in accepting his political identity, however he told Heffer that the shootings and violence had now 'given a horrific new dimension' to the suspicion his political views and identity already faced. As with others he was worried that 'power has been handed to the unaccountable' and that by handing over this power it had surrendered 'over its power to question'. He was concerned that his own 'tradition, cultural or political aspirations may be viewed as dangerous'. He concluded that 'Terrorism only needs to go one step beyond the accepted social norms to make this impact.'¹³⁹ The fear that the author wrote of would soon come true. In an argument in a suburb of Birmingham one woman with alleged Republican sympathies was stabbed to death by a former soldier.¹⁴⁰ This was met with little sympathy from the press which in its headlines blamed her for 'provoking' her attacker. Even victims of violence were not excluded from being regarded as members of a suspect community.

Throughout this period, the revolutionary rhetoric of Republicanism and the toxic mixing of local community empowerment, identity politics, Trotskyist and revolutionary

¹³⁶ PHM: ESH/10/91, *Multiple Letters to Eric Heffer*, 7th – 14th March 1988.

¹³⁷ PHM: ESH/10/91, B. Rooney, *Letter to Eric Heffer*, 11th March 1983.

¹³⁸ M. Castells, *Power of Identity: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p.8.

¹³⁹ PHM: ESH/10/91, B. Rooney, *Letter to Eric Heffer*, 11th March 1983.

¹⁴⁰ 'IRA supporter provoked her death by jibes at troops', *The Guardian*, 21st December 1988.

fringe groups, and local government all attempted to create opposition to Thatcherism. Violence also ensured that anyone associating with those with close links to violence would be politically toxic and persona non-grata. This was impossible to sell to the mainstream British left, which remained essentially labourist, wanting to achieve the best possible outcome for those it represented, not the revolutionary overthrow of the state. Divisions, factionalism, vitriol and the Awkward Squad, in the perception of the British electorate, made Labour the very opposite of the moral democracy of the Conservatives and unable to provide responsible, stable government.

(6.3) More than Muckshifters and Terrorists – Cherishing the Diaspora

As the Thatcherite 'we' continued to fight all those that opposed it, the question of 'Irishness' and identity was increasingly being explored both in private and publicly. This was a period during which identity politics began to challenge traditional class allegiances. An increasingly confident Irish population in Britain begin to escape the clutches of stereotypes and suspicion. It would also allow groups to escape and distance themselves from Thatcherite politics and Britishness as imagined by the Conservatives. It is during this period that the Irish 'Diaspora' became cherished in the imaginations of both Irish politicians and within the Irish population in Britain. Along with this came the increased popularity of the term Diaspora itself, it had become fashionable although few made any effort to understand it.¹⁴¹ The idea of cherishing the Diaspora was attacked as an attempt to sanitise migration taking the view that by 'any social and economic criteria these communities still fare badly'.¹⁴² A battle began between those who argued that it should be a source of pride to see globally successful Irish figures in the media or business. Others, opposed to this argued that migration was still a shameful experience.

Those that fared badly still needed to turn to the extensive community brokerage that existed in Britain. While older support mechanisms could still be found by services provided by Irish Clubs, Societies and the Catholic Church, new options were becoming available as identity politics began to take hold. Much of this was driven from London and this new

¹⁴¹ M. Robinson, Address by Uachtarán na hÉireann, *Mary Robinson to joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas*, Houses of the Oireachtas Tithe an Oireachtas, 2nd February 1995.

¹⁴² M. Holland, 'Diaspora a new name for the old shame of emigration', *The Irish Times*, 31st October 1996.

community brokerage was centred on identity politics, moving away from older county associations or the Catholic Church.

At the centre of identity politics is the conclusion that identity is at the core of the political interests for the individual or group and that where they come from and who they are is of primary political importance.¹⁴³ In short, who they are and where they are from matters. Those with a belief in internationalism and universalism may choose to regard the importance of identity as irrelevant. In opposition to this view are those from marginalised groups who view their identity as at the very centre of their political views. Although identity politics is often regarded as a development, it is possible to argue that identity has a much longer history of political importance. Black and MacRaild argue that many early histories focused on national identity and politics and that, within early historical writing, history, identity and politics were closely linked.¹⁴⁴ In Tory narratives, progress, democracy, respect for property, law and order, the monarchy and the Anglican Church are the markers of authentic British identity.¹⁴⁵ Whilst Whig narratives such as this still remained important to many in the Conservative Party as they began their latest legislative attempt to define Britishness, many within Britain were struggling to find their place within these grand narratives. Others found this to be a projection of the hard power of the state. This rejection of the attempt to create a homogenous British identity based on Thatcherite ideals by the Conservatives did not start with the election of Margaret Thatcher. The rejection of old Labourist politics had reached maturity with the anti-establishment protests of 1968. Elements within the radical left regarded the classless society as a failed project and looked for new political expressions and found them in the politics of difference. The politics of identity allowed feelings of pride to emerge from groups that felt excluded or who were shown a lack of dignity by the politics of Thatcherism. Governmental and bureaucratic definitions of identity for some allowed little negotiation and it becomes important to ask who speaks for the authentic self. This claiming of the authentic can then lead to ruptures within the group that they seek to represent and can be regarded as a threat by those who create official Governmental representations of identity.

¹⁴³ C. D'Cruz, *Identity Politics in Deconstruction: Calculating with the Incalculable* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2008), p.11.

¹⁴⁴ J. Black & D. MacRaild, *Studying History* (Second Edition: Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp.7-8.

¹⁴⁵ Black & MacRaild, *Studying History*, p.44.

The rise of identity politics and conscience-raising is often framed as a struggle for power, a monolithic attempt to create a resistance identity fighting against discrimination or as empowerment. However, this approach often ignores the fact that this is repeatedly done by small groups ascribing identity, rather than trying to understand it. It also fails to recognise that identity politics offers an escape. It allows individuals to disassociate themselves from groups making political decisions that they reject. Going further, it places individuals in separate imaginary spaces, history and communities, further increasing individual distance from the consequences of political decisions. Others on the left objected to identity politics as a conservative movement that stressed difference and were a rejection of universalist enlightenment ideals. What resulted was an often-contradictory collection of ideas attempting to find a marriage between universal ideas of equality with older ideas of the primordial nation attempting to raise the political consciences of the group. This conscience raising was not limited to political actors; interest in what was to develop into Irish Studies was also increasing.

There had been tentative attempts to explore Irish history, politics and identity but now this exploration now began in earnest. Irish Studies had been growing in Britain since the late 1960s. In Northern Ireland Queen's University Belfast established its Institute of Irish Studies in 1965.¹⁴⁶ The inner London Education Authority was in 1980 reporting a 'resurgence of interest' in Irish Studies in Britain.¹⁴⁷ One of the consequences of the hunger strikes and the violence of the early 1980s was the establishment of Anglo-Irish Encounters, which was a non-governmental body to examine the 'economic, social, cultural and other matters of common concern'.¹⁴⁸ By 1985 Irish Studies and explorations of Irish identity became increasingly national in their scope and regular conferences were taking place. The British Association for Irish Studies was established by the Anglo-Irish Encounter group at St Peter's College, Oxford. Amongst those in attendance was Dr Marianne Elliott, later co-author of the Opsahl Report and future holder of the Blair Chair at the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool;

¹⁴⁶ Institute of Irish Studies, Queens University Belfast, 'History of the Institute', <http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/IrishStudiesGateway/AboutUs/HistoryoftheInstitute/>, [accessed 4th August 1985]; *The Irish Times*, 'Institute for Queen's University', 16th March 1965.

¹⁴⁷ C. Murphy, 'Irish Study in London', *The Irish Times*, 30th July 1980.

¹⁴⁸ Anglo-Irish Encounter, Conference on Irish Studies in Britain, *Summary report of proceedings*, St Peters College, Oxford 20-22 September 1985 (Hertford: Stephen Austin and Sons Ltd, 1985); E. O'Kane, *Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland since 1980, The totality of relationships* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.36.

Brendan Mac Lua the founder of the *Irish Post*; Dr Roy Foster who was then at Birkbeck College, Gemma Hussey TD who was Irish Minister for Education and Sir Keith Joseph who was British Secretary of State for Education and Science. The conference discussed various academic disciplines including literature, economics, politics, and history. The conference also created a draft constitution for the British Association of Irish Studies.¹⁴⁹ This was not the only conference to take place. National conferences looking at Irish Dimensions in British education took place at SOAR Valley College in 1985 and 1986.¹⁵⁰ At the 1985 conference Mary Hickman was a notable speaker and the conference reports provided those interested with an extensive list of resources for the study of Irish culture, history and politics. In 1988, the Institute of Irish Studies was established at the University of Liverpool.¹⁵¹ This was soon followed when in 1989 St Mary's College Twickenham announced it would formally offer a degree in Irish Studies in 1990.¹⁵² What was noticeably missing from these meetings though was any exploration of Unionism or Loyalism. This is somewhat surprising given that authors such as Patrick Buckland had produced investigations into both in the 1970s and new explorations were being produced by Steve Bruce and Jennifer Todd.¹⁵³

As well as these national explorations of Irishness, local initiatives were also taking place. The Irish in Britain Representation Group in Haringey carried out its own survey into the promotion of Irish culture within the school curriculum. The survey concluded that the Irish in Britain remained an invisible community.¹⁵⁴ The report was critical of the role of the Catholic Church claiming that 'Catholic schools have concentrated on the production of 'good British citizens' and were 'sacrificing an Irish identity'.¹⁵⁵ This sacrificing of identity is supported by Hickman who maintains that the strategy of the Catholic Church was one of

¹⁴⁹ Anglo-Irish Ecounter, Conference on Irish Studies in Britain, *Summary report of proceedings*, St Peters College, Oxford 20-22 September 1985 (Hertford: Stephen Austin and Sons Ltd, 1985).

¹⁵⁰ *Irish Dimensions in British Education*, Report on 2nd National Conference, 16th February 1985, SOAR Valley College, Irish Studies Workshop, Leicester; *Irish Dimensions in British Education Report on 3rd National Conference*, 8th February 1986, SOAR Valley College, Irish Studies Workshop, Leicester, 1986.

¹⁵¹ 'Irish Institute for Liverpool University', *The Irish Times*, 25th February 1988; *Institute of Irish Studies*, University of Liverpool, 'about the institute', <https://www.liv.ac.uk/irish-studies/about/>, [accessed 4th August 2015].

¹⁵² M. Foley, 'Second UK course in Irish Studies', *The Irish Times*, 6th October 1989; St Mary's University, Twickenham, Centre for Irish Studies overview, <http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/irish-studies/>, [accessed 4th August 2015].

¹⁵³ *Bibliography of British and Irish History*, [accessed 17th May 2016]; *Google Books Ngram* [accessed 17th May 2016].

¹⁵⁴ IBRG Haringey, *Survey into the promotion of Irish Culture within the Haringey School Curriculum*. IBRG Haringey, Haringey, 1985, p.2.

¹⁵⁵ *Survey into the promotion of Irish Culture within the Haringey School Curriculum*, IBRG Haringey, Haringey, 1985, p.4.

incorporation and denationalisation and the priority was to reinforce religious identity at the cost of national identity.¹⁵⁶ Hickman argues that the British Government was also pursuing a policy of incorporation. This claim is correct as Thatcherism wanted loyalty to parliament and the constitution, not to ethno-nationalism.

Incorporation also increased feelings of exclusion from politics. The IBRG report also attacked pluralism, concluding that it 'does not challenge the location of power in the dominant British culture'.¹⁵⁷ The report clearly reflected the political views of the Haringey Branch of the IBRG as the report went on to say that it is 'only through the promotion of a balanced, anti-imperialist version of historical events that we can expect children to achieve an informed opinion on the current political situation'.¹⁵⁸ The report's authors were mixing elements of both resistance and project identities and wanted to move beyond identity recognition. The problem with this conclusion is that an 'anti-imperialist version of historical events' is clearly promoting a one-sided vision of the British Empire and is therefore not balanced. It also ignored the previous position of Ireland within the United Kingdom which was far more complex than a classic colonial relationship. However, it would be wrong to lay all the blame at the doors of the accusers for this lack of balance. There is very little academic or public space for a balanced discussion about Imperial History before British cultural guardians' spring to the defence of the British Empire. These are not just protecting the image of the British Empire but attempting to keep under lock and key difficult constitutional questions. There are clear flaws though in the survey as not all the schools in Haringey took part. However, those that did take part also provide a clue as to why Irish history, politics and culture were not more prominent in the curriculum as they were, for some schools, simply 'too sensitive'.¹⁵⁹ Going beyond usable history was far too uncomfortable and controversial for some teachers. The other problem with the approach taken by the IBRG in Haringey was that they failed to recognise the difficulties in removing negative, oppositional identities as exposed by Gopin and Lederach.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ M. Hickman, 'Differences, Boundaries, Community: The Irish in Britain', *Advances in Art, Urban Futures*, Vol.2, 2002.

¹⁵⁷ *Survey into the promotion of Irish Culture within the Haringey School Curriculum*, p.5.

¹⁵⁸ *Survey into the promotion of Irish Culture within the Haringey School Curriculum*, p.20.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ J. P. Lederach, *The Journey Towards Reconciliation* (Scotdale: Herald Press: 1999), pp.47-49; M. Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon, The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 148-149.

This worry over sensitivity was well placed. In 1986 Haringey hosted a visit by Sinn Féin councillors including Alex Maskey. That some clearly regarded Sinn Féin as a toxic brand soon became evident. Conservative Party councillors began shouting and chanting attempting to drown out Maskey who resorted to using a megaphone so that he could be heard above the din.¹⁶¹ Outside of the Council Chambers of the GLC and Haringey others were rejecting the identity politics of Livingstone and the GLC. Some of the Irish population in Haringey objected to being classified as minority. The Parents Rights Group rejected any attempts to imagine them as an ethnic group and responded by saying 'Bernie Grant has labelled us an ethnic minority in Haringey. We are being stuck with a label. We are individuals not a group. We don't see ourselves as a minority in Haringey'.¹⁶² The Irish in Britain Representation Group in Haringey also published a ten-point plan to assist the Irish population of Haringey. None of its contents was particularly radical or revolutionary, including a call for equal opportunities, anti-racism measures and Irish studies classes. This though did not stop continuing controversy between older liberalism and its supporters who argued that liberalism is 'difference blind' and those that argued that liberalism is in fact blind to difference.¹⁶³

The controversy over Sinn Féin visits to London councils continued as further visits to London were arranged. In 1986, at one meeting a Liberal councillor produced a starting pistol and fired it into the air when once again Alex Maskey was due to speak. Punches were thrown, and fights broke out as the other councillors attempted to subdue Councillor Ryan who had fired the pistol. He explained his motivation by saying that 'I did this because I know the local Irish community are opposed to the IRA'.¹⁶⁴ In Camden Town hall when Sinn Féin representative Pat Traenor attempted to speak, the Conservative members of the council left the chamber and outside the Young Conservatives protested over the presence of Sinn Féin.¹⁶⁵ Sinn Féin also took their political message to the streets and addressed an estimated crowd of 2,000 attending an Irish Freedom Movement rally. Violence broke out as they were

¹⁶¹ *Irish Voice Haringey IBRG Community Magazine*, Christmas 1986 issue, Hornsea, Hornsea Library 1986, p.2.

¹⁶² *Irish Voice Haringey IBRG Community Magazine*, Christmas 1986 issue, p.4.

¹⁶³ L. Nicholson, 'Identity and the politics of Recognition, to be or not to be: Charles Taylor and the politics of recognition', *Constellations*, Volume 3, Number 1, 1996; C. Taylor, *The Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁶⁴ M. Evans, 'Town Hall Politics 1986', *The Daily Mail*, 23rd October 1986.

¹⁶⁵ 'Tories walk out as Left greet Sinn Féin men', *The Daily Mail*, 23rd October 1986.

met by a small counter-demonstration by the National Front and approximately 30 people were arrested.¹⁶⁶ Street politics was not just the preserve of Sinn Féin and other Nationalist and Republican groups. The previous year 2,000 Unionists had protested to mark the second anniversary of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.¹⁶⁷

The controversy over any involvement by Sinn Féin or political groups supporting any of the issues surrounding events in Northern Ireland had consequences for Irish cultural events in the UK. Some of these were demonised by the right-wing press in Britain. One event that took place shortly after the Harrods' bomb was called a 'Festival for killers'.¹⁶⁸ Another festival was labelled a 'lesson in bigotry' and brought the organisers into conflict with Lady Olga Maitland's Families for Defence group which regarded the event as a 'framework for a very racist, anti-British affair'.¹⁶⁹ Maitland was one of those who set themselves up as defenders against the enemies within, which in Maitland's view included Irish Republicanism, the NUM, CND and feminists. The next year the attacks on Irish events in London continued and it was reported that an IRA mob had rioted during a festival in Roundwood Park, London.¹⁷⁰ Within some sections of the British press, the Irish in Britain were still a suspect, monolithic community.

Despite attempts at demonising events such as the one at Roundwood Park, which was a festival to promote Irish culture and sport, other sections of the media were noticing and reporting on disparate features of contemporary life of Irish migrants in Britain. The violence of the early 1980s affected all levels of contemporary Irish society in Britain. Following the Hyde Park bombing even those that were members of their local Conservative Club, such as Timothy Godfrey, who was the General Manager of Allied Irish Banks, were forced to change their habits. At times, it was necessary to conceal their identity to avoid those who were looking at them for any signs of suspicious behaviour, despite their middleclass respectability.¹⁷¹

Although violence continued, Irish culture was becoming more visible once again in the Britain. In Birmingham St Patrick's Day had not been celebrated since 1974 because of the

¹⁶⁶ E. Shanahan, 'SF talks pledge at London rally', *The Irish Times*, 8th August 1988.

¹⁶⁷ J. Downey, '2,000 Unionists in London protest march', *The Irish Times*, 13th November 1987.

¹⁶⁸ 'Festival for killers fury', *The Daily Mail*, 9th January 1984.

¹⁶⁹ S. Bates, 'A lesson in bigotry', *The Daily Mail*, 6th February 1988.

¹⁷⁰ P. Rose, 'Police Pelted as IRA mob riots at London festival', *The Daily Mail*, 3rd July 1989.

¹⁷¹ J. Cunningham, 'Silent Exiles in search of a voice', *The Guardian*, 18th August 1982.

Birmingham and Guildford Bombs. By 1996 after lobbying and campaigning by Irish residents in Birmingham, it was decided that the time was right for the celebration to be staged once again in Birmingham. However, what was emerging throughout Britain during the second half of the 1990s was a St Patrick's Day that had been imagined in the minds of Irish-America and was transmitted across the Atlantic to Britain and Ireland. This was only one part of the reintroduction of Irishness into British society. Further additions to this now acceptable image of Irishness in Britain were the global success of Riverdance, the farce of Father Ted and music which ranged from the manufactured pop of Boyzone to the post-punk London hybridity of the Pogues.

What was missing though from this new acceptable (if somewhat false) image of Ireland was Northern Ireland. Although Northern Ireland had produced cultural figures of national and international importance such as John Hewitt, Seamus Heaney and Brian Friel and had also made its mark on popular music with Van Morrison and the Undertones, it rarely made it beyond the arts pages of the *Guardian* or the occasional appearance on Top of the Pops. On television and in film, Northern Ireland was still portrayed as the home of the IRA in drama such as *Harry's Game* and *The Long Good Friday*. Only occasionally would other expressions of Northern Ireland, such as those created by Stewart Parker and Frank McGuinness, appear on the London stage and British television screens.¹⁷² This image began to change with the resurgence of interest in RMS Titanic, first with the discovery of the wreck in 1985 by Dr Robert Ballard and then the 1997 film, but, as with depictions of St Patrick's Day, questions of authenticity remain.

This was a transformative period for the Irish population in Britain. If the paramilitary bogeyman had not yet entirely been banished by the hand of history, the suspect community was being replaced with a new image of Irishness. This was due to a combination of the emerging peace process in Northern Ireland and new cultural images of Irishness. These images of Irishness, although culturally inauthentic, have also contributed to the myth of the Irish community in Britain and that this 'cherished' Diaspora is a monolith ready to be mobilised around a shared and universal goal.

¹⁷² C. Wallace, 'A Sceptic in a Credulous World: Re-evaluating the work of Stewart Parker on the Twentieth Anniversary of his death', *Iliha do Destro, A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies*, Florianópolis, no.58, Jan/June 2010, pp.157-178; Michael Billington, 'Spokesong', *The Guardian*, 16th September 1976; F. McGuinness, *Observe the Sons of Ulster marching towards the Somme* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

(6.4) Failing to learn – Still chasing the Irish Vote

One of the mistakes made by those attempting to mobilise the Irish vote, particularly those wanting to use the Irish in Britain as a political 5th column, was that they constantly forgot that it was not a community in exile. They are not excluded from civic society waiting to be liberated. They have migrated from Irish civic society into British civic society. They have moved from one democratic state to another. Their intrinsic Irishness was not a barrier to participation in British politics. Some were incorporated into British society, others assimilated. Many occasionally thought about Ireland, others retained a strong cultural identity. There was no shared or universal experience of emigration. This was a problem for those on the left pursuing arguments of anti-imperialism, oppression and exceptionalism. They were attempting to mobilise a population that in the Republic of Ireland remained committed to their own version of democracy and responsible government, and for the most part rejected the rhetoric of revolution. Those arriving from the Republic of Ireland were not a population from the ‘oppressed’ or ‘occupied’ north. This adds further problems for the radical left as it exposes the partitionist nature of the conflict. Those British and Irish micro-groups attempting to mobilise the Irish in Britain (and the British working-class), were attempting to impose and ascribe their own idea of Irishness and Ireland. This imposition was rejected by the Irish in Britain and refused to be drawn into the political fringes of British politics.

The 1979 general election increased interest in the Irish vote in Britain and at the centre of this was the *Irish Post*. The *Irish Post* had attempted to locate the Irish vote in Britain since 1970 and this would continue during the 1979 election campaign. The Donlan column put forward its view on the situation facing Irish voters in Britain in 1979, writing ‘If there were no Anglo-Irish conflict, no recall of history, no social antipathy, then our interests as an expatriate community would, at this time, require an overwhelmingly pro-Tory vote’. However, the column continued and although clearly worried that any Conservative administration would be far worse for Irish citizens in Britain and for the situation in Northern Ireland, Donlan told his readers, despite his worries, that ‘I can’t think of a damn reason for saying vote Labour’.¹⁷³ Unwittingly this frustration in both the Conservatives and the Labour

¹⁷³ F. Donlan, *The Irish Post*, 31st March 1979.

Party reveals in 1979 how little concern was shown for the Irish vote by both. There had no concerted effort to chase the Irish vote since prior to 1922 and threats such as this would not change British politician's attitude towards the Irish voter in Britain.

The letters pages of the *Irish Post* continued to provide a forum for Irish citizens in Britain to discuss the election and British politics. The paper had reported that some of the Irish population continued to show support for the Conservatives and had been elected to senior positions within local Conservative Party Associations.¹⁷⁴ These appointments were immediately attacked by Irish Labour supporters saying that those involved with the Conservative Party were 'kidding themselves if they think there is any place in the Conservative Party for the Irish.'¹⁷⁵ There was clear frustration with both main political British political parties within the pages of the *Irish Post*. Shortly before the election Donlan continued with his commentary 'To hell with the main parties. If you don't live in Scotland or Wales, try and find somebody worthy of your support. If such a species can't be had, then forget about it. You won't be alone in that. One in four of the indigenous population isn't going to vote either'.¹⁷⁶ One letter writer urged readers to forget about the situation in Northern Ireland: 'Throughout the seventies we have had them both - Labour and Tory. On the north they are indistinguishable. On bread and butter and the short-term living and working conditions in this country there is a discernible difference. One party is better than the other and I'm voting for what I reckon to be the better one.'¹⁷⁷ This *Irish Post* reader was one of many that were now openly questioning those who expected an unquestioning call to the banners of both the primeval nation and to class and party loyalty. Others wondered why Catholics would support the Labour Party asking the readers of the *Irish Post* 'how many Christian Irish people can support a Labour Party whose official policy advocates abortion? When Labour had control of Birmingham a few years ago Communism was put on the syllabus as a religion'.¹⁷⁸ For some, religion and morality remained important considerations in political choices.

In 1979, the Irish Civil Rights Association was campaigning for Irish citizens in Britain to abstain. However, Tommy Walsh from the Irish in Britain Representation Group cast doubt

¹⁷⁴ *The Irish Post*, 31st March 1979.

¹⁷⁵ E. Seymour, 'Labour & Co-op candidate Bristol City Council Candidate', *The Irish Post*, 14th April 1983.

¹⁷⁶ F. Donlan, *The Irish Post*, 14th April 1979.

¹⁷⁷ *The Irish Post*, 21st April 1979.

¹⁷⁸ D. O'Riordan, *The Irish Post*, 6th March 1979.

on how effective this campaign would be, concluding that 'the Irish vote for the same reasons as their neighbours, on housing, prices, education and so on.' He was correct in this conclusion. Walsh was critical of the Irish in Britain saying that when it came to Northern Ireland they were not pressing candidates on the issue.¹⁷⁹ Although large numbers of the Irish in Britain were clearly not pressurising the major British parties on Northern Ireland, they were not short of those telling them how to exert that pressure.

The *Irish Democrat* threw its weight behind the Labour Party during the 1979 election. However once again, the Connolly Association was struggling to survive and by its own admission it could not afford to do any more than support Jock Stallard in North St Pancras and Frank Dobson in Holborn and St Pancras.¹⁸⁰ The Connolly Association, following the loss of the election by the Labour Party, concluded that it was 'a débâcle in which all that is missing is Ramsay MacDonald'.¹⁸¹ With hindsight, the comparison with MacDonald seems unfair as there were bigger election disasters to come for Labour. Despite this the *Irish Democrat* told its readers that their best hope remained the Labour Party.¹⁸² However it is clear that some of the Irish in Britain ignored this plea to support the Labour Party. The *Irish Post* declared that 'Labour had lost the Irish vote'.¹⁸³

To be more accurate Labour had lost the *Irish Post* readership. Of those replying to a survey carried out by the *Irish Post* 22% voted Labour, 19.5% voted Conservative, The Liberal Party obtained 11% and others 4%. Most telling of all was that 31.5% indicated that they had no intention of voting, the majority of which were Labour supporters.¹⁸⁴ Whilst some Irish citizens in Britain had lost faith in Sunny Jim, others would not vote all. In comparison 34% of the wider British electorate chose not to vote.¹⁸⁵ The Irish voter remained similar to their British counterparts. It remains tempting to dismiss the *Irish Post* as being unrepresentative, but it remained an important voice and source of news for the Irish in Britain. Although it would continue to promote itself as the voice of the Irish community in Britain, unwittingly it

¹⁷⁹ M. Foley, Irish voters asked to abstain on the north', *The Irish Times*, 3rd May 1979.

¹⁸⁰ *The Irish Democrat*, No.419 May 1979.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

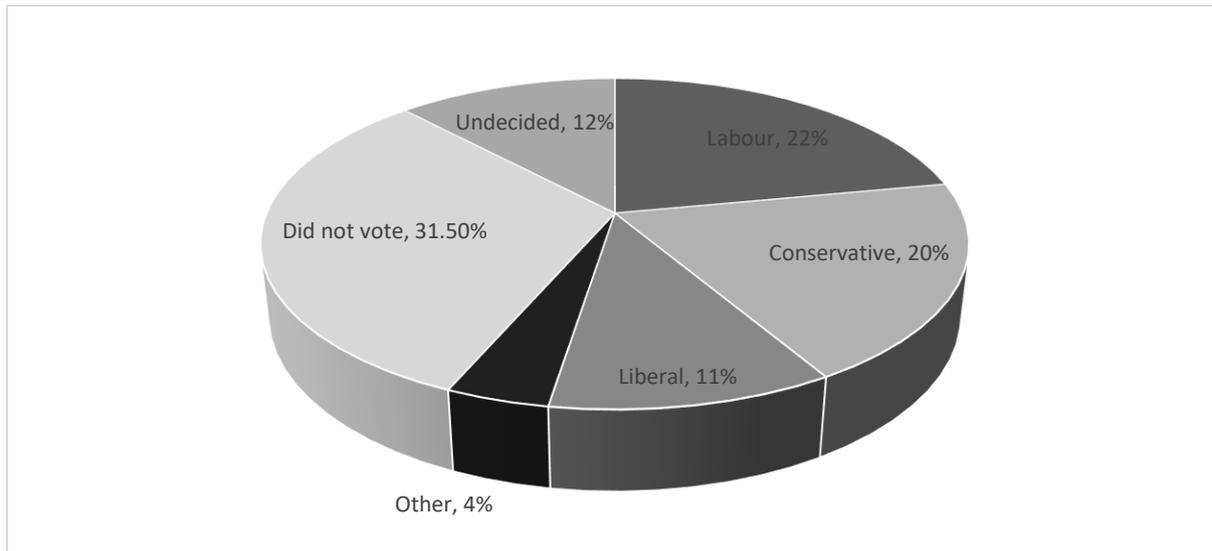
¹⁸³ 'Labour loose the Irish vote', *The Irish Post*, 5th May 1979

¹⁸⁴ *The Irish Post* 5th May 1979.

¹⁸⁵ Audickas, Hawkins & Cracknell, *UK Election Statistics 1918-2017*, p. 25.

would also within its pages provide evidence for a heterogenous, not a homogenous, population.

Irish Post Survey 1979



In 1983, the Irish media once again attempted to find out where the Irish vote was and who they were voting for. The *Irish Times* decided to ask the members of the Irish Centre in Camden Square about the general election, the issues that mattered to them and who they would be voting for. They quickly established that there was no monolithic bloc supporting the Labour Party at the Irish centre. One member informed them that ‘the Conservatives have a better history in relation to family values and we associate them particularly with Margaret Thatcher’.¹⁸⁶ This was not the only reason why members were voting Conservative. At least one individual was not impressed with the far-left in London stating that ‘Islington has a Labour council and you should see the place, houses not finished, roads in an awful state and now they have voted to build a hostel for homosexuals, and we’re paying out of our rates.’ Another member was asked about the hunger strikes and made their feelings on the matter clear: ‘I couldn’t care less about the hunger strikers. If they want to die, let them die.’ Other members told the reporter that ‘The idea that Labour is more sympathetic to Ireland is a mistaken one.’ They continued and explained that other matters were important, particularly Labour policy on defence and nuclear weapons saying that ‘I don’t think *we* should be

¹⁸⁶ M. Cummins, ‘Irish voters changing allegiances’, *The Irish Times*, 31st May 1983.

completely disarmed'.¹⁸⁷ Not only were they disagreeing with Labour policy but placing themselves within British civic society. One club member was a Labour Party supporter, had been out canvassing, had spoken to approximately 400 voters and had been informed that Labour supporters were 'fed up with what's been happening in the Labour Party. The hard left has taken over at local level and there's a lot of resentment'.¹⁸⁸ Some of the Irish in London resented the identity politics of the semi-Trotskyist left. Others were determined to vote for Labour because of their socialist policies.¹⁸⁹ The factionalism, infighting over ideology and the direction of the Labour Party extended into its Irish members and supporters. The members of the Irish Centre at Camden show clearly that the Irish in Britain were far removed the traditional image of a Labour supporting monolithic block. Livingstone and Benn were not universally popular. However, neither were the older established sources of community brokerage. Many Irish clubs and societies were not seen as welcoming, especially by the young, with one letter to the *Irish Post* declaring that, 'To most youths, the average Irish Society is about as accessible as the local Freemasons lodge and its activities equally obscure'.¹⁹⁰ Finding a space to explore your identity was not only a generational problem. Unionists moving from Northern Ireland to England found a native population that not only failed to recognise them as British and fellow citizens but simply labelled them Irish.¹⁹¹

The sentiments of those in the Irish Centre at Camden were also present in the pages of the *Irish Post*, one writer setting out his view that supporting Labour and Ken Livingstone would only lead to more violence and that 'every vote cast for Ken Livingstone nudges Ireland toward that hell'.¹⁹² Others warned that socialism was 'the cancerous legacy of Marx' and that it was a 'godless and loveless philosophy'.¹⁹³ The clash between conservative Catholicism and Labour policy continued with another letter to the *Irish Post* proclaiming that 'Labour's stance on abortion is unacceptable to me'.¹⁹⁴ The 1979 General Election would represent the zenith of Catholic support for the Conservatives and the only time the numbers of Catholics voting

¹⁸⁷ Italics are author's emphasis.

¹⁸⁸ M. Cummins, 'Irish voters changing allegiances', *The Irish Times*, 31st May 1983.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ J. Broody, *The Irish Post*, 17th January 1981.

¹⁹¹ J. Devlin-Trew, *Leaving the North Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland 1921-2011* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp.110-122.

¹⁹² *The Irish Post*, 26th March 1983.

¹⁹³ *The Irish Post*, 2nd April 1983.

¹⁹⁴ *The Irish Post*, 14th May 1983.

Conservative exceeded the numbers voting Labour.¹⁹⁵ One correspondent was worried over the transfer of socialism to the Republic of Ireland and declared that 'we don't want the poison of British socialism in Ireland'.¹⁹⁶ This comment also reveals that the questions of the nature of post-independence Ireland had not been left behind. The Donlan column concluded that the Irish vote in Britain was not a monolithic bloc and estimated that 'at least 20% of the Irish vote has always been Tory supporters', although offering no evidence to support this.¹⁹⁷

In 1983, the *Irish Democrat* was informing its readers that 'a vote for Thatcher is a vote for partition'.¹⁹⁸ This did not mean that the Labour Party was free from criticism. It confirmed what others had already been saying that, the Labour Party, largely due to the actions of Roy Mason and Don Concannon, had lost some of its Irish supporters.¹⁹⁹ Despite this the *Irish Democrat* continued to throw its weight behind the Labour Party. Within its pages, it continued its mix of Trades Unionism, class-based politics and a lingering nostalgia for Irish Nationalist literature and rebel songs. It did not hold with the old Republican tactic of abstention. It told its readers that it would be wrong not to vote at all and that despite their faults, the Labour Party was still a far better option when it came to partition than the Conservatives. It told its readers that Ireland still had many supporters in the Labour Party and that the Conservative Party contained none.

In 1986, once again a single-issue candidate would step forward attempting to focus the British electorate's attention on Northern Ireland. This time the battleground would be the Fulham by-election. The candidate wanting to capture the public's attention was Mr Boyd-Black, a lecturer from Queen's University, under the title of 'Democratic Rights for Northern Ireland'.²⁰⁰ This campaign was a controversial and times verged on the farcical. At first glance, the campaign attempted to focus on the fact that none of the mainstream British political parties nominated candidates for election in Northern Ireland. The consequence of this, argued Boyd-Black, was that citizens of the United Kingdom were being excluded from mainstream British politics and that the predominant British parties were acting un-

¹⁹⁵ B. Clements, *Religion and Public Opinion in Britain Continuity and Change* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), pp. 50-51.

¹⁹⁶ *The Irish Post*, 4th June 1983.

¹⁹⁷ *The Irish Post*, 28th May 1983.

¹⁹⁸ *The Irish Democrat*, No 472, June 1983.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ D. Hearst & M. Linton, 'Unionists bring Ulster campaign to Fulham', *The Guardian*, 18th March 1986.

democratically. The true picture behind this is far more complex. Boyd-Black had previously campaigned for Labour to organise in Northern Ireland and for full integration into British politics.²⁰¹ This campaign was backed by notable Unionists including Robert McCartney and John Taylor, the Official Unionist MP for Strangford.²⁰² His decision to accept backing from Unionists and to stand against the Labour candidate in Fulham resulted in criticism from those on the British left. Many failed to recognise that Unionists could be on the political left, that a form of civic-Unionism existed outside the cacophony of parading, flags and political obstruction. He was a member of the Fabian Society which accused him of 'embarrassing' the society.²⁰³ His campaign was also criticised from the Labour Committee on Ireland. They accused him of being an advisor to the Ulster Workers Council in 1974 and later Chair of the Loyalist Central Co-ordinating Committee. He was also accused of attempting to turn the Labour Party into the Labour and Unionist Party for his own project of full integration.²⁰⁴ This accusation ignored the fact that in its own way the British Labour Party had always retained its Fabian vision of the Union. Boyd-Black rejected the accusations of membership of Unionist organisations.²⁰⁵ His political ideology was difficult for the British media to grasp, at one point he was described as 'one of Enoch Powell's nice young Marxists'.²⁰⁶ The confusion about Boyd-Black and Marxism was not helped by his own reaction when asked if he was, or had ever been, a member the British and Irish Communist Organisation, which he denied only to be contradicted by his election agent Hugh Roberts who said that he had been a member of the BICO.²⁰⁷ When campaigning in Fulham, Boyd Black found little interest in Northern Ireland and that 'it is surprising how little nationalist or troops-out sentiment that you come across. Ireland is simply not an issue any more'.²⁰⁸ The population of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham contained 6.63% that were born in the Republic of Ireland and they ignored Boyd-Black and his campaign.²⁰⁹ This was confirmed when the result of the by-

²⁰¹ 'Pamphlet proposes NI integration', *The Irish Times*, 18th September 1984.

²⁰² A. Clifford, *The Fulham Manifesto*, The Campaign For Democratic Rights for Northern Ireland (London: CDRNI, 1986); D. Hearst & M. Linton, 'Unionists bring Ulster campaign to Fulham', *The Guardian*, 18th March 1986.

²⁰³ 'Not so free', *The Times*, 2nd April 1986.

²⁰⁴ R. Chessum, Labour Committee on Ireland, 'Black marks', *The Guardian*, 5th April 1986.

²⁰⁵ Boyd Black, 'Irish Rights', *The Guardian*, 3rd April 1986.

²⁰⁶ A. Hamilton, 'Keeping Fulham's jobless informed about the North', *The Irish Times*, 5th April 1986.

²⁰⁷ 'Orange Red', *The Times*, 24th March 1986.

²⁰⁸ A. Hamilton, 'Keeping Fulham's jobless informed about the North', *The Irish Times*, 5th April 1986.

²⁰⁹ *Historical Census Tables* (Census Information Scheme), The London Datastore, Greater London Authority, London [accessed May 2017].

election was announced. Boyd-Black finished 7th, with 98 votes, behind The Connoisseur Wine Party, The Monster Raving Looney Party and the England Demands Repatriation Party.²¹⁰

While Boyd-Black and his links with Unionism resulted in a comical campaign in Fulham, Unionists were looking for further opportunities to promote their cause. The Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985) had not been well received by elements in Scotland. The Orange Order, outraged at the agreement, decided to respond by creating a new political party. In common with previous attempts by Nationalists, Republicans and the Civil Rights movement the idea was to have candidates stand in English constituencies.²¹¹ The Ulster Unionist Party also threatened to have candidates stand in ten constituencies.²¹² However, as shown by Bruce and Devine, despite colourful public displays, the reality behind this idea revealed a very different picture.²¹³ The political influence and reach of the Orange Order was severely restricted in comparison with Northern Ireland. However, these threats and promises came to nothing. This exposed was how weak support was in Scotland and England for the Unionist-Ultras. It was soon realised that under the first-past-the post system they stood no chance. They did no better when the Scottish Unionist Party stood candidates in the 1999 Scottish Parliamentary elections, getting less than 1% of second preference votes.²¹⁴ Despite the temporary excitement surrounding Fulham and superficial words and displays in Scotland, once again, Northern Ireland and partition was shown to be of little importance to the wider British electorate and no Irish fifth column emerged to raise the political saliency of Northern Ireland.

At the 1986 Labour Party Conference, the Campaign for Labour Representation in Northern Ireland spoke to the assembled membership. During his address, Stuart Bell provided a rare insight into how those from Northern Ireland voted once they had moved to the British mainland. He recalled canvassing in 1976, in what was thought to be a Labour area and found himself talking to a couple from Northern Ireland who told him,

²¹⁰ *By-election results 1984-1987*, Factsheet M10, House of Commons Information Services, House of Commons, Westminster, 2003, p.16.

²¹¹ S. Bruce, A. Glendinning, I. Paterson & M. Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 113; R.Kerr, 'Scots to form unionist party', *The Observer*, 15th June 1986.

²¹² D. McKie, Unionists may fight 10 Tory mainland seats, *The Guardian*, 15th March 1986.

²¹³ Bruce, Glendinning, Paterson & Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland*; T. Devine, *Scotland's shame?: Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2000).

²¹⁴ Bruce, Glendinning, Paterson & Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland*, p. 113.

they were voting Conservative: and when I asked them why, they said because they were from Northern Ireland. They believed in the Union. They believed in the Conservative and Unionist Party, and therefore they were voting for the Union, through the Conservative Party, even though they were Labour people, Labour voters by nature, living on a housing estate which was choc-a-bloc with Labour voters.²¹⁵

For that couple their Unionism trumped class solidarity. When it came to understanding Unionism, many on the British left remained slow learners.

The Irish in Britain Representation Group published a manifesto for the 1987 British General Election and urged the Irish in Britain to vote for candidates that wanted to see British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. As well as wanting an immediate British withdrawal from Northern Ireland the manifesto, also wanted the repeal of the PTA, the release of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four, the ending of strip searching, the banning of plastic bullets, the implementation of the MacBride Principles and recognition for the Irish community in Britain as an ethnic community. It recognised that there were supporters of many of these aims within the Labour Party. However, it also admitted that from within the Irish community in Britain it had found little support in its attempt to obtain official recognition of the Irish community as an ethnic minority.²¹⁶ Sections of the Irish community continued to express their concerns over the rise of identity politics and the direction of the Labour Party when Paul Boateng was campaigning as a Labour Party candidate in Kilburn. His supporters were told by one Irish voter that there was 'apprehension that Mr Boateng would only represent the black community'. The man was placated when the local Labour Party Press Officer showed him that Boateng had been in contact with Brent Irish NALGO (National and Local Government Association).²¹⁷

In 1987 voices from Ireland urged the Irish in Britain to support the Conservative Party. The *Irish Times* declared that a Conservative victory in the British General Election would be the best outcome for Ireland. It concluded that Neil Kinnock and Labour was 'making up most of his script as he went along' and had an approach that 'lacked clear cut

²¹⁵ S. Bell, *Stuart Bell's Northern Ireland Policy, Text of address in Blackpool, 1986* (Belfast & London, Campaign for Labour Representation, Campaign for Labour Representation in Belfast, 1986).

²¹⁶ J. Downey, 'Recognition of Irish minority sought', *The Irish Times*, 4th June 1987.

²¹⁷ M. Linton, 'Black, hopeful but not stereotypes: Britain could have its first black MP for 58 years on June 11', *The Guardian*, 2nd June 1987.

objectives and targets'. The *Irish Times* hoped that with a sufficiently large Conservative majority, any future Thatcher Government would be too busy with wider British politics that she would largely ignore Northern Ireland and that Ireland and Northern Ireland would 'evolve' within the framework provided by the Hillsborough Agreement.²¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, this was met with opposition from some Irish citizens in Britain. One person rejected the call to vote Conservative and in reply told the *Irish Times* that they 'cannot line up behind the idolaters on June 11th and put my cross beside the name of Margaret Thatcher'. The author though recognised that 'many of my successful compatriots here will be voting Conservative'. This was correct as the letters pages in the *Irish Post*, contained regular correspondence from those supporting the Conservatives, one writing, 'I find no conflict between being a Tory and being Irish. I say well done Maggie and keep up the good work' another felt that the 'solution to Ireland's problems would be a good dose of Thatcherism'.²¹⁹ These letters provide further evidence that Diasporic politics had failed to grip the Irish in Britain.

The *Irish Democrat* continued to campaign for the Irish in Britain to vote Labour. However, it now recognised that it had to create a political argument that was more than a plea of patriotism and continued calls for the removal of the border. Included within its pages was an acceptance that Britain now contained sizeable numbers of second generation Irish. They concluded that the majority of these, whilst being proud of their Irish heritage, had no intention of moving to the Republic of Ireland. They had careers and homes in Britain, and Labour needed to create political argument that would attract their vote. Whilst not completely turning away from the issue of partition, they expanded the argument linking the British Government's refusal to withdraw from Northern Ireland within the Cold War. They condemned Thatcherism as an attack on the cohesion of the working class weakening the Trades Unions. These, in the view of the Connolly Association, had to remain strong if partition was to be reversed and Ireland unified. Once again, the *Irish Democrat* also criticised the Labour Party and its record on Ireland and the lack of unified organisation by the Irish in Britain, but despite all this urged its supporters to vote Labour, even if for no other reason, it was an opportunity to get some new faces in Westminster that might be supportive of the campaign for British withdrawal and the unification of Ireland.²²⁰ Joan Maynard, who had

²¹⁸ 'Ireland's Interest', *The Irish Times*, 2nd June 1987.

²¹⁹ 'An Irish Tory and Proud of it', *The Irish Post*, 24th October 1987.

²²⁰ *The Irish Democrat*, No.518, April 1987.

been removed as Chair of the Labour Party executive on Northern Ireland, summed up the situation:

Seen from Westminster, the Northern Ireland issue is just a sideshow to the great broad concerns of trades unions, unemployment and nuclear power. But it is also a sideshow that can create harmful divisions in a party already fraught with splits. And one thing is certain. Neil Kinnock is not going to sacrifice his slim chances of becoming Prime Minister for the cause of Ireland.²²¹

Although it would be simple to accept that this statement as a bitter attack on Kinnock and her removal as Chair, Maynard was, as remembered by Chris Mullins, always honest with her opinions.²²² Maynard conclusion was correct, as far as Kinnock was concerned, Ireland was not the cause of Labour.

Despite this period containing some of the most significant events during the modern troubles, no mass Irish block vote emerged and yet again no mass subaltern resistance identity emerged. Irish citizens in Britain, although remaining largely Labour supporters, were also willing to transfer their vote depending upon individual political views and individual circumstances. They were making rational, political choices that placed the primeval nation as a secondary political issue. In Ireland they voted for the predominant parties and they did the same in Britain. The Irish in Britain were constantly called to display their loyalty to this primeval Ireland by those who still made nationalism their political priority. However, the mix of identity politics, the radical British left, Republicanism and violence was simply too volatile to sell to the mainstream British left and to Irish citizens in Britain. Despite the Thatcherite battle against the 'other', the majority of the British left remained Labourist and most of the Irish in Britain would join them they wanted reform, not revolution. They came from a civic democracy in Ireland and chose to play their part in British civic democracy, not in radical or revolutionary politics. They rejected those micro-groups that wanted to ascribe their identity to meet their political goals. The Irish in Britain used their identity as a cultural escape route from Thatcherite Britain, but they would not use those on the political fringes to do it.

²²¹ J. Maynard, *Fortnight*, No.216, March 1985.

²²² C. Mullins, *Joan Maynard's memorial meeting 1988*, <http://www.chrismullinexmp.com/speeches/joan-maynards-memorial>, [accessed September 2017].

Following the departure of Margaret Thatcher, Neil Kinnock would find a new opponent facing him across the dispatch box, John Major. Although Major would not stray too far from Thatcherite policies, his attitude towards Northern Ireland would be significantly different to his predecessors. He would not let the old signposts of conflict dictate his policy towards Northern Ireland and in combination with efforts being made in Dublin, Belfast and Derry he would dedicate more time to Northern Ireland than any previous Prime Minister since 1945.

Chapter Seven

Removing Old Signposts and Creating New Ideas.

For me violence in the counties of Northern Ireland is as intolerable as similar violence would be in any of the British counties. I believe that an exceptional effort needs to be made to end terrorism and move towards peace in Northern Ireland. There can be no time limit to that effort, it must go on for however long it may take.¹

History did not end in 1989.² What actually occurred were changes in ideological thought and direction. This produced the idea that new strategies and new vocabulary could encourage new outcomes. Those involved in attempts to find a solution to the violence in Northern Ireland created their own new ideas and vocabulary to change the nature of the political debate concerning Northern Ireland. The focus shifted from the old historical signposts pointing to the past but to the possibility of creating a new future. This began in 1985 when John Hume recognised the importance of article 1C of the Anglo-Irish-Agreement and seized the opportunity to use this to move forward.³ The history of the past had begun to transform into the history of the future. This transformation would ultimately lead to the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement.

Against this background the Conservative Party divided as John Major became the new party leader. Major represented the Conservative middle-ground. He found himself caught in an increasingly bitter civil-war between modernisers such as Kenneth Clarke and ultra-right-wing Conservatives such as John Redwood. Unwittingly these battles would leave the party looking old fashioned, out of touch and stuck in the past.⁴ The grip on the Conservative Party by Margaret Thatcher unintentionally controlled those elements of the party that cherished Britain's former imperial grandeur. The election of John Major made these elements with the Conservative Party much harder to control. These Lilliputian imperialists remained deeply suspicious of anything foreign. They were resistant to John Major's policy towards Europe and attempted to interfere with, and possibly derail the

¹ J. Major, *Speech to the Institute of Directors*, Culloden Hotel, Hollywood, County Down, 30th March 1994.

² F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).

³ J. Hume, *The Irish Times*, 13th April 1994; Article 1C of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement stated that if a majority of the population of Northern Ireland expressed a preference for a united Ireland the British Government would support it and introduce legislation to ensure unification.

⁴ T. Bale, *The Conservative Party: From Thatcher to Cameron* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p.5.

Northern Ireland peace process. Old prejudices, criminalisation and thoughts of victory were still important to some Conservatives. However, the mood within the wider Conservative Party, Westminster, and British society towards the peace process ensured they had no success in their attempts to hinder it. However, their attitudes towards the European Union would have long-lasting consequences for the Conservative Party and the United Kingdom. These consequences for the Irish in Britain are still waiting to be uncovered as the Eurosceptics appear willing to risk peace in Northern Ireland so that they can meet their own ideological goals.

The Labour Party was also searching for a new vocabulary and new ideas. The idea of 'newness' became a central plank of the transformation of the Labour Party as it attempted to control the debilitating factionalism in the party. It became more important for the Labour Party to control the 'Awkward Squad' than to chase any Irish vote. Those on the political fringes were isolated even further. Quietly, first with John Smith and then with Tony Blair, the party leadership decided to support John Major and the peace process. Both Major and Blair began to remove many of the old signposts of conflict leaving the radical-left in Britain disorientated and without a response.

This chapter will show that unlike his predecessors, John Major dedicated considerable time to transforming the British response to the conflict. Further, it will show that Tony Blair approached Ireland as a political problem that could be fused into his vision of mature politics. Finally, it will show that radical left was late to recognise that the peace process had a genuine chance of success and that the Irish in Britain continued to support mainstream political efforts and rejected those on the fringes of British politics.

(7.1) The Road to Mature Politics

Although Tony Blair would later claim that he wished to move the politics of Ireland away from old ideas and into a new discussion based on 'mature politics', John Major was already moving in that direction.⁵ He was not content to wait for Ireland to intrude into his premiership. Although he retained a personal commitment to the image of the Conservatives

⁵ T. Blair, *A Journey* (London: Arrow Books, 2011), p.159.

as the party of moral democracy, within his version was the determination to separate violence and politics in Northern Ireland permanently. By his own admission he recognised that he knew little about both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.⁶ This should not be regarded as a surprise. This was a very honest admission that despite the intrusion of Ireland into British politics, British politicians found it convenient to forget about Northern Ireland. Major would recall that he could not remember the exact origin of his interest in Northern Ireland, he thought,

It was silly that we weren't making progress on Ireland and people just seemed to assume that the status quo was right. It was very easy for politicians to make speeches saying that the IRA are trouble and we oppose them, but people were still getting killed. Britain was involved in peace making in all sorts of places around the world, and the thought kept running through my mind that if the killing was happening in Surrey it wouldn't be acceptable.⁷

Major was slowly beginning to recognise that a more holistic approach to Northern Ireland was needed. Lord Gowrie had developed similar feelings because he felt that 'Britain is a very old and stable democracy and it is rather disgraceful that Britain can't get this [Northern Ireland] sorted out'.⁸ Although Gowrie's statement was comparable in sentiment to Major's, there were also hints of an enduring expression of superiority over those involved in the conflict. Gowrie was born in Dublin and was a former Conservative 'wet'.⁹ His comments reveal that his Anglo-Irish ascendancy background and patrician sensibilities had not entirely disappeared and that feelings of superiority could still be found in Conservative circles.

Major decided that Northern Ireland was to be a primary political concern of his premiership. Whilst previous Prime Ministers had attempted to find a solution, none had made Northern Ireland a true priority. Northern Ireland was taken off British politics' naughty step. Major was going to attack the political problems in Northern Ireland and one of the drivers of suspicion in the rest of Britain head on, and that was violence. His view was that 'Northern Ireland should have been given a higher profile and that it was not acceptable to have any part of the UK engulfed in that sort of bloodshed and treated almost as though it

⁶ A. Seldon & L. Baston (eds), *Major: A Political Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), p.134.

⁷ Seldon & Baston, *Major: A Political Life*, p.263.

⁸ G. Bell, 'British Questions', in Dawson, Dover & Hopkins, *The Northern Ireland Troubles in Britain, Impacts, Engagements, Legacies and Memories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p.76.

⁹ 'Gowrie, 2nd Earl of, (Alexander Patrick Greysteil Hore-Ruthven) (Born 26th Nov 1939)', *Who's Who & Who was Who* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) [accessed 1st March 2018].

was a matter of course'.¹⁰ This focus on the removal of violence separated Major from those elements in the Conservative Party that remained frozen in 1922 and still regarded political violence in Northern Ireland as the norm. Although never straying too far from the Britishness of Thatcherite imaginations he did not regard it as a 'place apart'. Despite its different cultures, politics and traditions, when it came to peace and stability, it deserved the same attention and political commitment as any other region. If Major is popularly portrayed and remembered as the grey man of British politics, he is certainly due credit at least for his determination to do something about the violence in Northern Ireland and to move Northern Ireland from the periphery of British politics to its very centre. He made the effort not to just solve the problems of Northern Ireland, but to understand them. Maurice Hayes concluded that:

John Major too has been unfairly treated by Irish commentators. He invested more time and political capital in the Northern Ireland question than most of his predecessors but was hampered by the parliamentary arithmetic. It was not so much that Ulster Unionists held the balance of power, but that the Tory party was hopelessly split and that the people who were against him on Ireland were also against him on Europe and on the economy.¹¹

In comparison to Wilson, Heath and Thatcher this is undoubtedly correct.

At the start of his premiership he was faced by Mrs Thatcher's old adversary Neil Kinnock. Whilst Major was attempting to transform the debate about Ireland in British politics, Neil Kinnock struggled to move on. Although remembered as the Labour Leader who began to end the factionalism that made Labour impossible to sell to the British electorate, he was at his most comfortable when speaking about those causes that were politically important to him and Ireland was not one of them. Kinnock never managed to broaden his own politics or his political appeal. He paid little attention to Ireland and his thinking on Northern Ireland continued to lag far behind. He had an established record for using strong and emotive language to describe the IRA and Republicanism. Throughout his leadership he offered nothing that could be considered a genuine and useful contribution the

¹⁰ Seldon & Baston, *Major: A Political Life*, p.134.

¹¹ M. Hayes, 'Neither Orange March nor Irish Jig', in M. Elliott (ed), *The Long Road to Peace in Northern Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), p.104; Dr Maurice Hayes is an author and former member of Seanad Éireann.

problems in Northern Ireland. For example, in 1987, he told a Parliamentary Labour Party meeting that the party would not 'negotiate with armed gangsters.'¹² Kinnock would often let emotive language get the better of him and it did nothing to improve his image with voters.

Kinnock also had to deal with the continuing factionalism within the Labour Party on Northern Ireland policy. There remained divisions between the 'Troops Out' faction which included Clare Short, Ken Livingstone and Jeremy Corbyn who in the words of the Leader of the Opposition supported the 'fantastical propositions such as the immediate withdrawal of British troops' and those who wanted a much more nuanced solution.¹³ Such consideration was rare from Kinnock. Concerns over being perceived as dithering over the issue of violence even spilled over into discussions over the Birmingham Six. Frank Dobson, Gerald Kaufman and Roy Hattersley all expressed their belief that the Birmingham Six were innocent. All were worried over any attempt to publicly criticise the judicial system. The concern was that the public would perceive that any future Labour Government would be willing to ignore the judiciary and override the rule of law. If they wanted to be seen as a potential party of government, they could not become embroiled in a constitutional argument about the separation of the government and judiciary. Old fears of being perceived as a party incapable of responsible government intruded in Labour Party thinking about Northern Ireland. There was considerable praise for Chris Mullin and his efforts to prove the incarcerated men's innocence.¹⁴ The Birmingham Six and Guildford Four were important to the Irish in Britain not just because of partition but also because of concerns over legality, justice and the previous Conservative unwillingness to question the state's use of hard power. The unconstitutional use of hard power by the state against its citizens was now increasingly being questioned by wider British society. Deaths such as Joy Gardner and the imprisonment of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four became part of wider campaigns to make the state's use of hard power accountable.¹⁵

Under the leadership of Neil Kinnock Northern Ireland and violence remained a bipartisan political football within Westminster. Despite a slowly increasing commitment to the burgeoning peace process both the Conservatives and Labour were not afraid to use

¹² The Peoples History Museum (hereafter 'PHM'), *Proceedings of the Party Meeting*, 18th November 1987.

¹³ PHM: *Proceedings of the Party Meeting*, 18th November 1987.

¹⁴ PHM: *Minutes of a Parliamentary Committee Meeting*, 3rd February 1988.

¹⁵ R. Erfani-Ghettani, 'The defamation of Joy Gardner: press police and Black deaths in custody', *Race & Class*, Institute of Race Relations, Vol. 56(3), pp. 102-112.

violence in their attempts at political points scoring. When attacked by Major in the House of Commons as being 'soft on terrorists', Kinnock told the PLP that 'The Labour Party would not concede to these murderers'.¹⁶ When it came to Northern Ireland, Kinnock never managed to disentangle criminalisation and politics. In many ways Kinnock remained fixed within older Labourist rejections of reactionary nationalism. The violence and politics of Northern Ireland simply did not fit comfortably within his own political framework. He was far more at ease dealing with South Africa than Northern Ireland.

Major was faced with a Conservative Party that not only opposed him over Europe, but he also found that old elements within the Conservatives had not given up their fight to integrate Northern Ireland into British politics. The Cultural Unionists in the Friends of the Union were still frozen in time; for them it remained 1922. They continued to use lectures and leaflets to promote their own message. After the death of Ian Gow, they established The Ian Gow Memorial Lectures. The first of these was delivered by Charles Moore who was then the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. Moore reinforced the view that the nation's identity 'comes from faith in a shared institution, faith in a form of politics, tested for centuries, embodied in the monarch, but functioning chiefly through the House of Commons'.¹⁷ This approach to identity building was at the centre of Thatcherism, but once again failed to recognise that the economic and political centralisation under the previous government had for increasing numbers in Scotland, Wales and the English regions resulted in a belief that they were isolated from Westminster. This belief in parliamentary civic nationalism only succeeds when it works for the whole nation-state. The continuing failure to ensure economic success was distributed throughout the UK and not just in the Greater South-East consequently ensured that Britishness continued to become less attractive. The Friends of the Union never attempted look at the Union with anything other than English eyes.

However, yet again the efforts of the Conservative Friends of the Union were not enough to prevent Unionism from being regarded with suspicion within the Conservative Party. Voices in the Conservative Party expressed doubts about how Unionism in Northern Ireland was responding to the most recent attempts to find a political solution to the situation in Northern Ireland. Even staunch defenders of the Union were critical. Alistair Cooke

¹⁶ PHM: *Minutes of the Parliamentary Committee Meeting* 19th February 1992.

¹⁷ C. Moore, *First Ian Gow Memorial Lecture, 19th June 1991* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1991), p.3.

summed up British public opinion that Unionist 'imperviousness to calls for change on the part of the Unionist majority greatly annoys that vast body of political opinion in Britain and elsewhere which holds that flexibility is the supreme political virtue'.¹⁸ He concluded that Unionists 'have to accept that constitutional nationalists must be able to play their full part in the public life of the province'.¹⁹ His message to Unionists was that they 'will have to come to terms once and for all with the Irish dimension so that the Nationalists can have a reasonable outlet for their separate feelings of identity'.²⁰ However, this recognition that nationalists in Northern Ireland had a legitimate political identity did not mean that Cooke had shifted position. He also made it quite clear that Nationalist identity would be recognised, but the constitutional position of Northern Ireland would remain unchanged and that Irish Nationalism would have to operate in a Northern Ireland that was indivisible from the rest of the United Kingdom. Enoch Powell also made his views clear as Peter Brooke and Patrick Mayhew continued with attempts to push forward the peace process. Powell told the Friends of the Union that Brooke and Mayhew were 'building house of cards' and that 'they were paving the way for linking Ulster to the Irish Republic'. He did not stop there. He played on the Conservative's old fears of state security and that they were caving into violence and that 'Our Government remains persistently set upon a course that obliges it to defy the electorate of a part of the United Kingdom and identifies it with the objectives of a terrorist organisation'.²¹ Being associated or seen in the company of Sinn Féin while violence continued was a tool regularly used to paint mainstream politicians, particularly those of the left, as unfit to be trusted with government, something that continues today.

Others who spoke at Friends of the Union gatherings and contributed to publications also continued to use violence as a driver of suspicion. They warned those who attempted to investigate or examine the events in Northern Ireland not to be blinded by 'a smokescreen of extremist Republican propaganda'.²² They regarded accusations of security services having a shoot-to-kill policy as another example of Republican propaganda perpetuated by elements

¹⁸ A. Cooke, *Ulster, The Unionist Options* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1990).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ E. Powell, *Third Ian Gow Memorial Lecture*, 10th June 1993, The Friends of The Union (London: Friends of the Union, 1993).

²² Special Correspondent, *The Grim Milestone and Aspects of the IRA Terror Campaign* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1993).

within the British media being selective in their use of sources by relying on Republican sources and ignoring the findings of official reports. For those on the right, the use of hard power remained legitimate and should not be questioned when used to defeat the enemies of the state. In further attempts to discredit Sinn Féin and those that supported them, they accused Sinn Féin of being members of a collection of international extremists' intent on creating political and economic instability.

The Friends of the Union continued with their attempts to reinforce the persistent suspicion that could be found within the ranks of Conservatism when it came to dealing with Sinn Féin. They also attempted to dispel the suspicion of those that viewed the Union as something that had become deeply Anglo-centric. They wanted to reverse this suspicion of Thatcherism and attempted to reinforce the bonds of Union. The Conservative Political Centre produced a report on how the Union could be strengthened and was published by the Friends of the Union. Michael Howard, who was then the Secretary of State for the Home Department, gave his support to the report. He used his foreword to the report to attack Labour, claiming that they could not be trusted on constitutional matters and that their ideas and policies 'would be costly, divisive and could lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom'.²³ The old trope of attacking the Labour Party as constitutionally unsound was being peddled by their opponents once again. Howard maintained the traditional Conservative appeal to a nationality based on loyalty to Parliament and the constitution and not to the *volkish* nation. The authors attacked Scottish and Welsh Nationalism as nothing more than an attempt to exploit economic issues and 'transient fears' to exploit the portrayal of an English hegemony that in the author's view did not exist.²⁴ The defence was that the Union and the existing constitutional settlement was the best expression of nationality as a constitutional people and as something higher than mere base nationalism.

The Friends of the Union was now joined by the Bow Group as it also began to express its concerns over the emerging peace process and the debate about any potential deal involving devolution. Charles Villers, writing for the Bow Group, threw his weight behind the idea of closer integration of Northern Ireland into the United Kingdom, something which

²³ A. Cooke, *Strengthening the United Kingdom: A Conservative Political Centre Report* (London: The Friends of the Union, 1995).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

members of the Friends of the Union had consistently campaigned for.²⁵ He called for all British political parties to ensure that they had candidates in Northern Ireland, something which had long been a running argument within the Labour Party. He concluded that by voting for the DUP or UUP, that Unionists would have very little real political power in the UK. He argued that if Unionists could vote for Conservative candidates, should members be elected that they then would have the opportunity to take up ministerial roles and have real influence over policy. In terms of pure politics Villers's logic was sound as it is very difficult to influence policy outside of Government. The weakness of his argument is that it ignored the Ethnic-Tribune-like role played by MPs in Northern Ireland. This was also a deliberate attempt at excluding Republicans as he knew most would not consider voting for a 'British' party. Villers also wanted to use further integration so that the state could once again increase its use of hard power to force a 'much more rigorous response to the IRA'.²⁶ In the Bow Group and the Friends of the Union, the ghosts of Neave and Gow were still whispering in the ears of the Conservatives and decided that there had to be one last throw of the dice, to thwart Major over Northern Ireland and Maastricht.

Whilst The Friends of the Union remained fixed in the past, John Major continued to push the peace process forward. This was to be done by publishing the two 'Framework' documents, *A New Framework For Agreement* and *A Framework For Accountable Government in Northern Ireland*.²⁷ However, before they were launched both were leaked. John Major regarded this leak as such a serious threat to the peace process that he called a meeting of Conservative MPs the night before they were published and arranged for a statement to be made on television. He told MPs that in his view there were 'black works going on at the crossroads of peace'.²⁸ Unionists were outraged at the contents of the leaked documents. This was the desired effect that those behind the leak wanted to achieve. It was organised by a group of individuals who were staunch Unionists and had close links with the Friends of the Union. Amongst those named as involved with the leak were David Burnside who was an influential PR executive, former communications executive with British Airways and who, as

²⁵ C. Villers, *Reunited Kingdom* (London: Bow Group Publications Ltd, 1990).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *The Framework Documents – A New Framework for Agreement* 22nd February 1995; *The Framework Documents – A Framework for Accountable Government in Northern Ireland* 22nd February 1995.

²⁸ E. O'Kane, *Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland since 1980 The Totality of relationships* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.129.

a young man was involved with Ulster Vanguard. He had close ties with Matthew D'Ancona who was the journalist responsible for publishing the leak. The two men had collaborated with Charles Moore, who was the editor at *The Sunday Telegraph*, on publications for The Friends of Union. When an investigation to leak took place D'Ancona attempted to place the blame on unnamed sources from Dublin, but fingers continued to point to sources from within the Conservative Party and those with links to Friends of the Union, with David Burnside and Lord Cranborne both being alleged sources of the leak. It is not clear if this was a genuine attempt to wreck the peace process or to ensure that Unionism was not left out in the cold as it was in 1985, but it clearly backfired and did nothing to refute the image of Northern Unionists as intransigent wreckers; instead this image was reinforced. Matthew Parris in the *Times* described the reaction to the leak in the House of Commons, reporting that never has 'the impatience of the House of Commons with Unionist suspicions been more palpably demonstrated, or the Unionist parties' isolation been clearer'. Labour MP John Home told the House that 'All our constituents are getting very weary of the ancient refrain of Ulster says no'. If the Friends of the Union were looking for broader support, the conclusion of the whole affair revealed yet again that Northern Unionism and the Friends of the Union could not expect any mass Edwardian-style support for their attempts to defend their vision of the Union and Northern Ireland's place within it.²⁹ The road to mature politics was set, and they would not be allowed to place a roadblock across it. The leak achieved little other than to add to the image of Unionists as deal wreckers. These pocket-sized imperialists, not only opposed the peace process, but also attacked Major over Europe.

Neil Kinnock and old Labour were slow to recognise this change and laggardly decided that should Labour win the next General Election he would continue with the talks established by Peter Brooke, and those talks would follow the same basis. Kinnock told an audience at the Irish Embassy that whilst a long-term commitment to Irish unity would remain, Labour would not act as a facilitator towards unity.³⁰ This was Kinnock's most positive contribution to the situation in Northern Ireland during his entire leadership. Those Labour leaders that came after Kinnock had the ability to make adjustments to their political

²⁹ Leonard & Boggan, 'Right Wing Group at centre of leak furore', *The Irish Times*, 4th February 1995; R. Williams, 'Journalist steered towards unionism', *The Irish Times*, 4th February 1995; F. Millar, 'Unionist plot may have just blown up in their faces', *The Irish Times*, 4th February 1995.

³⁰ F. Millar, 'Irish unity not high on Kinnock agenda', *The Irish Times*, 28th February 1992.

character, a skill that Kinnock never really mastered. This allowed them move Labour policy forward. First John Smith decided to support John Major and then his successor Tony Blair realised that Northern Ireland could be made to fit with his own political outlook.

Tony Blair quickly made the decision to be broadly supportive of John Major and his continued efforts with the peace process.³¹ Blair, like Major, had no political or ideological baggage when it came to partition and Northern Ireland. Alistair Campbell concluded that Blair regarded the peace process as a purely political challenge and had become 'fascinated by the politics of it'.³² Kevin Bean argues that Northern Ireland and 'the politics of it' became something of a testing ground the New Labour Project.³³ There is much to be said for this argument. If Blair could find a way to ensure the success of the peace process he could show British voters his own vision for New Labour was working. He was also keen to provide further evidence to show British voters that Old Labour had been consigned to history. One casualty of this was Kevin McNamara. Blair decided to remove him as Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary.³⁴ There were two primary reasons for this. The first is that Blair wanted another moderniser in his Shadow Cabinet and Mo Mowlam fitted the image of New Labour better than McNamara. Secondly, despite McNamara constantly calling for a better understanding of Unionism and his work on equal opportunities and fair employment legislation, he was perceived as someone who remained as someone too close to Irish Nationalism who would not be accepted by Unionists.³⁵

Another method of modernising New Labour was the removal and avoidance of the Awkward Squad. Blair did this in several ways. One way was to make sure that major policy announcements were done in an environment that he controlled. His announcement on the Today Programme of a policy of neutrality towards reunification avoided a public confrontation with its opponents and a lengthy and potentially problematic discussion with the Labour Party policy making bureaucracy.³⁶ These tactics allowed Blair to avoid becoming

³¹ A. Campbell and R. Stott, (eds), *The Blair Years: extracts from the Alastair Campbell Diaries* (London: Hutchinson, 2007), p.44.

³² Campbell and Stott, (eds), *The Blair Years: extracts from the Alastair Campbell Diaries*, pp 82-83.

³³ K. Bean, 'Leaving the sound bites at home? Tony Blair, New Labour and Northern Ireland' in, L. Marley, *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland: The Cause of Ireland, the cause of Labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), pp.233-248.

³⁴ P. Wintour, 'Labour signals shift in policy on Ireland', *The Guardian*, 14th September 1994; *Irish Democrat*, October/November 1994.

³⁵ F. Millar, 'McNamara replaced as Labour shadow on NI', *The Guardian*, 21st October 1994.

³⁶ Blair, *A Journey*, p.159.

embroiled in public arguments with the 'Awkward Squad'. He was not the only one to do this. Frank Dobson and Glenda Jackson both failed to attend events organised by the Camden Irish Forum. The failure to attend was met with criticism from the Labour Party Irish Society. The *Irish Times* concluded that given the likelihood of the 'Awkward Squad' to turn up at any public event involving Irish politics, it was far better for candidates to avoid any potential public conflict that would expose divisions over Labour's Northern Ireland policy, it was The *Irish Times* concluded, 'far safer to be selective' in the events that Labour candidates attended.³⁷ In Blair's drive towards transforming the Labour Party from the party of decline, failure and factionalism to an election-winning machine, the votes gained by avoiding the Awkward Squad were far more important than any Irish vote in Britain.

Despite this success in avoiding the Awkward Squad outside Parliament, there were still those on the far-left of the party that remained opposed to Blair's New Labour crusade. Sinn Féin remained tinged with violence and although it was now clear that they were more than leafleters for the PIRA, violence ensured that they remained politically toxic. This became apparent when Sinn Féin was again invited to London and this time to the House of Commons. As with previous visits, this would be immensely controversial. At the centre of this controversy was Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn had been a political activist since an early age and a trade union representative. He continued to mix street politics with Labour Party politics after he was elected as MP for Islington since 1983. He had been involved in supporting the Troops Out Movement and his actions following the Brighton bomb and Gibraltar shootings had embroiled him in controversy. To the wider electorate the image of Corbyn and Livingstone standing next to Gerry Adams showed that the far-left could not be trusted with Government. Inviting Sinn Féin to Westminster was not viewed as responsible government. Ireland in some ways became symbolic of the identity politics of the GLC and the anti-imperialist rhetoric of metropolitan Labour Politics. This also contained themes comparable to Lord Dubs' quest to find an Irish political Diaspora. Both were seeking to find a historical Diaspora that did not exist.

Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn were valued by Sinn Féin as contacts within the Labour Party. They could be used to gauge opinion within the party to measure how the PLP may respond to any moves by Sinn Féin during the peace process. Following the cease fire in 1994

³⁷ F. Millar, 'Labour fails to get Irish act with Glenda Jackson: London Letter', *The Irish Times*, 5th March 1992.

Sinn Féin once again approached Benn for his assistance in reviewing the political situation. Following this meeting Benn sent a letter to John Major asking for the exclusion order on Gerry Adams to be lifted so that he could invite him to the Labour Party conference. The consequence of this was a clash with Tony Blair who was now the leader of the Labour Party who regarded the letter from Benn as 'ill-judged' and 'ill-timed'.³⁸ When Jeremy Corbyn invited Gerry Adams to the House of Commons in September 1996, in the words of Tony Benn, 'all hell broke loose'.³⁹ There was confusion over the nature of the visit by Adams. As an MP, he had the right to use the House of Commons facilities, but as he was also going to promote his autobiography it was deemed that this breached the rules on using the House of Commons to promote a commercial venture.⁴⁰ The visit by Adams coincided with the seizure of a large amount of IRA explosives and, once again, violence, or rather the threat of it, turned Sinn Féin into a toxic brand. It also exposed the continuing division in the Labour Party between the New Labour of Blair and the remnants of the far-left. Both Benn and Livingstone supported Corbyn, those opposing the invitation included Clive Soley and Mo Mowlam. A very public argument followed with threats to both Benn and Corbyn that the Labour Whip would be withdrawn. Corbyn argued that 'dialogue with all parties remains essential'. In reply Mo Mowlam said that Adams should be 'concentrating his efforts on encouraging the IRA to restore its ceasefire, rather than promoting his book'.⁴¹ At the centre of this argument remained the issue of violence and duress. As with the Hunger Strikes, no British political party wanted to be seen to be making decisions because of pressure from violence. Corbyn was correct to place emphasis on dialogue, however he failed to understand that bringing all sides to the negotiating table is a delicate process. People and groups must be given the time to agree to talk when they are politically comfortable and feel free from coercion. This episode also showed the battle between the post-1968 semi-Trotskyist-left and New Labour was not quite dead, but Blair was now able to assert the power of the PLP behind his project. This

³⁸ T. Benn & R. Winstone, (ed), *Free at Last! Diaries 1991-2001* (London: Arrow Books, 2003), pp 265-266.

³⁹ Benn & Winstone, (ed), *Free at Last! Diaries 1991-2001*, pp. 383-384.

⁴⁰ Benn & Winstone, (ed), *Free at Last! Diaries 1991-2001*, pp. 383-384; F. Millar, 'Adams cancels Commons visit as Labour criticises Corbyn', *The Irish Times*, 26th September 1996.

⁴¹ F. Millar, 'Adams cancels Commons visit as Labour criticises Corbyn', *The Irish Times*, 26th September 1996.

was regarded by Benn as 'a warning of what the years ahead were going to be like'.⁴² This was New Labour putting micro-groups the far left and their supporters within the PLP firmly in their place and its new place would be the back-benches.

However, this period also resulted in a change of political tactics from Sinn Féin. Previously they had concentrated on street politics, pressure groups or local councils where they had allies. Those radical-left wing politicians and micro-groups outside Westminster had become increasingly marginalised. This was not only due to the actions of the Labour Party under Blair, the Irish in Britain had continually rejected them, and the radical-left in Britain were now at their lowest ebb. Sinn Féin now regarded New Labour as a government in waiting and it made political sense to concentrate their efforts in Westminster and not outside it. This was also an unwitting recognition that there was no Irish political Diaspora in Britain.

While Blair's achievements in Northern Ireland should not be underestimated, much of this was built on the work previously undertaken by Hume, Major and Reynolds as confirmed by Bean who concluded that 'Blair was not writing upon an empty page'.⁴³ What had been started by John Hume, John Major and Albert Reynolds, in combination with civil society in Northern Ireland, could be adapted and packaged and placed into Blair's project for reasons that had little to do with Northern Ireland. It was another ingredient to the history of the future that was at the centre of the Blair project. Blair's message both inside and outside of Northern Ireland was not about the end of history, but a history of the future. In truth though, this was Blair showing his true understanding of the 'politics of it'; he managed to sell the idea of transformation. If he was successful in Northern Ireland, Blair would be able to sell the idea of New Labour to the rest of the United Kingdom.

(7.2) The Radical Left outmanoeuvred.

Those on the far-left were slow to recognise that their old politics and rhetoric of anti-imperialism had been out-manoeuvred. Ken Livingstone, in his *Programme for the Nineties*,

⁴² Benn & Winstone, (ed), *Free at Last! Diaries 1991-2001*, pp. 383-388; F. Millar, 'Adams cancels Commons visit as Labour criticises Corbyn', *The Irish Times*, 26th September 1996; M. White, 'MP facing discipline over Adams', *The Guardian*, 26th September 1996.

⁴³ K. Bean, 'Leaving the sound bites at home', in, L.Marley, *The British Labour Party and Twentieth-Century Ireland, The Cause of Ireland, The Cause of Labour*, 2016, p.237.

offered nothing new.⁴⁴ The view that the British Government could become a neutral facilitator removed a central tenet of the anti-imperialist argument and for many it simply could not be believed. In his C. Desmond Greaves lecture in Glasgow in 1989, Emmett Stagg TD (Kildare North) told the audience that 'Britain is not neutral on the constitutional question of Northern Ireland' and that 'I also believe that there is a mischievous sleight-of-hand at work here'.⁴⁵ Ignoring the early progress that was being made in the fledgling peace process he told his audience, 'the Labour Party's position on the North is the most progressive'.⁴⁶ The *Irish Democrat* told its readership that any declarations of British neutrality were 'phoney'.⁴⁷

It was not just the political leadership in Dublin and Westminster that came under attack, Sinn Féin, which was slowly moving towards constitutional politics, was also criticised. It was attacked by one London-based group because it was 'being increasingly drawn into the corrupt world of establishment politics' and that 'votes had come to mean more than principles'.⁴⁸ Sinn Féin, although it could not yet admit it to its grass roots, knew that it was getting close to the time when they would have to admit that violence could no longer be supported as a method to gain political leverage. They recognised what those involved in street politics had failed to grasp, if they did not join the peace process, they would be left behind.

The old flag wavers for reunification were suffering from policy lag and failed to grasp that Major and Reynolds were removing old ideologies from the argument and moving it towards what Blair would rename mature politics.⁴⁹ The *Irish Democrat* informed its readership that the 'Brooke Stormont plan won't bring peace' and that any removal of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution would 'fundamentally undermine the national question'.⁵⁰ It further condemned Brooke's plans as nothing more than political 'shenanigans'.⁵¹ In Sheffield the Connolly Association organised a 'No return to Stormont' campaign.⁵² For those such as the Connolly Association, articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution had to be maintained, they

⁴⁴ K. Livingstone, *Livingstone's Labour A Programme for the Nineties* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

⁴⁵ The Working Class Movement Library (hereafter 'WCM'), E. Stagg, TD, *C. Desmond Greaves Lecture*, Glasgow, 27th September 1989, The Bill Moore Archives, The Working Class History Library, Salford.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *The Irish Democrat*, No.550, December 1989.

⁴⁸ WCM: Attack International, *The Spirit of Freedom, The War in Ireland* (London: Attack International, 1989).

⁴⁹ T. Blair, *A Journey*, p.159.

⁵⁰ *The Irish Democrat*, No 564, August 1990.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

did not want to give them up or surrender them as part of any deal. In 1992, in London, at the Camden Irish Centre, a new campaign entitled Declaration for Peace in Ireland was sponsored by a mix of former Anti-Partition League members, Irish business owners, the secretary of the Labour Party Irish society and the former chair of the Irish Chaplaincy.⁵³ The group, influenced by the Connolly Association's stance on articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution, wanted to ensure that those articles would remain in place.

The political disorientation of the British left resulted in varying degrees of criticism of Sinn Féin; the Socialist Workers Party, Subversion, the Revolutionary Communist Party and even elements within Troops Out all attacked Sinn Féin.⁵⁴ It was the view of some on the British far-left that Sinn Féin had surrendered its socialist and revolutionary credibility. Troops Out, despite some criticism, for the most part decided to continue to support Sinn Féin and decided to support 'Time to Go' and its calls for immediate British withdrawal and organised demonstrations in Aberystwyth, Sheffield, Leeds, Haringey, Redditch and Brighton.

Despite this criticism Sinn Féin had not entirely entered the world of conventional party politics and was not yet publicly ready to make the step to commit itself to non-violence. Violence ensured that, publicly at least, Sinn Féin remained a toxic brand. The PIRA bomb that exploded in Warrington in 1993 was the most controversial act carried out by the Provisionals' since the bomb at Enniskillen on Remembrance Sunday in 1987. Even before the bomb that killed Jonathan Ball and Tim Parry, Doug Hoyle, MP for Warrington North, told the PLP that feelings were 'running high' following the earlier attack on the gasworks in the town.⁵⁵ Despite the local Irish Club being attacked and isolated examples of shops refusing to serve customers, Warrington was praised for the quiet dignity that was shown after the attack.⁵⁶

The IRA had failed to learn that violence united the mainstream British political parties, it did not divide them. It also resulted in revulsion from the Irish in Britain. One letter to the *Irish Times* directly attacked the IRA's campaign stating that 'The Irish in Britain are sick of the IRA, sick of daily disruption to our lives by security alerts and bomb hoaxes and sick

⁵³ *The Irish Democrat*, May 1992.

⁵⁴ Subversion, *Ireland nationalism and imperialism the myths exploded* (Subversion: Manchester, 1992); C. Bambrey, *Ireland: Why the Troops must get out* (SWP: London, 1992).

⁵⁵ PHM: *Minutes of Parliamentary Committee Meeting*, 3rd March 1993.

⁵⁶ E. Pilkington, 'Outward calm masks a town's tears and anger', *The Irish Times*, 23rd March 1993.

and tired of having to defend ourselves every time the murderers strike'.⁵⁷ Susan McHugh transferred her campaign for peace from the Republic of Ireland to London and approximately 2,500 people attended a rally to hear her call for the violence to end. The Troops Out Movement tried to disrupt the meeting with demands for immediate British Withdrawal.⁵⁸ The response to TOM, who had attempted to usurp the rally, was given by one of the organisers who said 'We reflect the views of the Irish people. These others are a small cancer that is driving a wedge between two countries that have more in common than any other in the world'.⁵⁹ Further signs of division amongst the Irish population in London could also be found. When interviewed one Irish pensioner's group revealed their different experience of living in London and their political views. Some condemned the IRA, another felt that the IRA were fighting for their rights, a third regarded the group as having no place in politics. Others were also reflecting on themes of identity and not the politics of partition. They challenged older stereotypes commenting 'There are women's groups, housing groups, gay and lesbian groups, youth groups'. The complexity of being Irish in London was summed up by one student, 'It's like foreigner with a small f'. They all commented that the native British population was slow to recognise the diversity within the Irish population and that all had been made to feel culpable for the actions of the IRA.⁶⁰ The Irish population in Britain continued to experience discrimination and prejudice; one college lecturer won £30,000 in damages when a college labelled him 'an Irish prat'.⁶¹ Whole cities were tarred with the accusation, Hugo Young in the *Guardian* described Belfast as 'a city of terrorists'.⁶² Whilst the Irish population were struggling to overcome their status as a suspect community, the wider British population were also growing increasingly frustrated with Unionists in Northern Ireland. A Gallup poll commissioned for the *Daily Telegraph* showed that 92% of the British population backed the peace building efforts. The same poll showed that 66% believed that Unionist opposition to the peace proposals was unjustified. Unionists in Northern Ireland

⁵⁷ C. Byrne, 'Letters to the Editor', *The Irish Times*, 25th March 1993.

⁵⁸ 'Voice of Peace: Susan McHugh, the Irish housewife', *The Times*, 5th April 1993.

⁵⁹ S. Weale, 'Troops Out demonstrators muscle in on London peace rally', *The Guardian*, 5th April 1993.

⁶⁰ C. Messud, 'The almost foreign Londoners', *The Guardian*, 17th March 1993.

⁶¹ D. Pallister, 'Irish jibes cost college £30,000', *The Guardian*, 23rd September 1995.

⁶² H. Young, 'A soldier sacrificed in the moral haze of Northern Ireland: Commentary', *The Guardian*, 24th January 1995.

could not throw off their reputation as intransigent deal wreckers.⁶³ The Britishness of the Unionists ultras in Northern Ireland had a significant problem, the rest of the British.

In 1996, the British population were presented with conflicting images of Irishness. The Docklands bomb (9th February) once again increased the levels of suspicion of the Irish population in the UK. Threats and abuse were received via telephone calls to the Irish Centre in Camden. Many of the London Irish found themselves having to keep their heads down once again. Despite this the Irish in Britain continued to express their disgust at the actions of the IRA. One former resident of County Clare who was living in London, told the media 'They have achieved nothing for us for 25 years with bombs and bullets. They should give peace a chance'. Another said they were 'dumbfounded'. Andrew Small from the London Irish Centre spoke of people's feelings of 'frustration, terrible sadness and a sense of anger at the impasse'.⁶⁴ Support for any return to violence would not be forthcoming from the Irish in Britain, even though the violence of the IRA ensured, in the eyes of many, the Irish in Britain remained a suspect population. In contrast to this, Mary Robinson was promoted as what Ireland was and could be, a 'global superstar'.⁶⁵ The mission of the new style of Irish Presidency was to sell Ireland to the world. President Robinson wanted Ireland to become less concerned about territoriality and more interested in the imagined nation; she was selling the idea of Ireland, not the essentialised vision of a few.

Whilst Robinson was making an appeal for self-reflection, senior Catholic figures were also issuing calls for contemplation. As previously established, the role of the church and the theology of sacrifice and suicide during the 1981 Hunger Strikes was controversial, and both Anglican and Catholic churches were to find themselves in another difficult theo-ethical area. In 1995 in response to Archbishop Carey's call for the English to ask forgiveness for 'our often-brutal domination and crass insensitivity in the 800 years of history of our relationships with Ireland' Cardinal Daly made a reciprocal call for the English to forgive 'the wrongs and hurts inflicted by Irish people'.⁶⁶ Calls for forgiveness in the most literal, biblical sense, without

⁶³ N.Watt, 'Unionists are out of touch, say business leaders', *The Times*, 24th February 1995.

⁶⁴ S. Boseley, 'Irish eyes are smarting at return to violence', *The Guardian*, 14th February 1996.

⁶⁵ 'Ireland's Queen Mary seeks common ground in Britain', *The Times*, 3rd June 1996.

⁶⁶ A. Pollak, 'Anglican archbishop ends visit with ecumenical service', *The Irish Times*, 19th November 1994; J. Ezard, 'Primate asks for Irish to be forgiven', *The Guardian*, 23rd January 1995.

condition, is for most people immeasurably difficult.⁶⁷ This can be seen in the response by letters expressing ‘utter disgust’ at Daly’s calls for forgiveness.⁶⁸ Throughout this period forgiveness was not merely a religious question. It had become a recurring political theme. President Clinton announced his intention to apologise for slavery, the Japanese Prime Minister had written a personal letter of apology for the treatment of British Prisoners of War during World War Two and in France an apology was given for the Dreyfus affair.⁶⁹ However this trend for apology was not universal as both the British Ministry of Defence and Conservative back-bench MPs were resistant to any apology concerning Bloody Sunday.⁷⁰

There extensive and multiple difficulties in such public expressions of apology and forgiveness. These are not just personal expressions, they are also declarations on behalf of the group, congregation or nation. They are attempts at encouraging reconciliation and to heal lingering wounds and a recognition of injustice. However, they can also be rejected by those who feel that they and the community should not be held responsible for historical events. Michael Sandel exposes the dilemmas that such apologies reveal concerning duties, obligations, solidarity, loyalty and their respective moral weight.⁷¹

What both Carey and Daly were doing was promoting a theo-ethical ideal. They recognised that wrongs, transgressions and acts that society find unacceptable can be committed by both the wrongdoer and the victim. Further problems occur concerning issues of justice. If the wrongdoer is given the gift of forgiveness then the guilty can appear to be admonished and free from blame, even though they remain guilty.⁷² Carey and Daly were attempting what Archbishop Desmond Tutu would later call ‘opening the door to allow the other person to begin’.⁷³ Calls asking for forgiveness are also pleas for acts of political generosity. This may mean governments explicitly recognising that non-state combatants may have a legitimate political aim. For those involved in violence, it may mean recognising

⁶⁷ A. Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics (New Studies in Christian Ethics)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.2.

⁶⁸ N. Frayling, ‘Cardinal’s Apology’, *The Irish Times*, 7th February 1995.

⁶⁹ M. Walker, ‘Clinton ponders apology for slavery: The fashion for saying sorry’, *The Guardian*, 18th June 1997; P. Fairhall, ‘War apology by Japanese PM’, *The Guardian*, 12th August 1995; P. Webster, ‘Framed Dreyfus gets apology’, *The Guardian*, 13th September 1995.

⁷⁰ McDonald & McSmith, ‘British Army stiffens its resistance to an apology for Bloody Sunday’, *The Observer*, 23rd November 1997.

⁷¹ M. Sandel, *Justice: What’s the right thing to do?* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), pp. 208-243.

⁷² Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, pp.2-12.

⁷³ Bash, *Forgiveness and Christian Ethics*, p.107.

that violence had either failed, or its use was unjust or illegitimate. Such acts of generosity are also political risks, if you are not generous enough, peace may fail, and if you are seen to be too generous you may not be able to bring your supporters with you.

Whilst the British and Irish Governments, in combination with others such as John Hume, were attempting to resolve the issues surrounding the removal of violence, Labour was attempting to find a way out of its own political cul-de-sac. All working looking for acts of political generosity that would move the peace process forward, without impacting their own support. Polls prior to the 1992 General Election showed that, despite the best efforts of the far-left and the Connolly Association, Irish voters in Britain were similar to their British counterparts in a number of ways. They were more likely to support Labour, but also placed education, health and housing above Northern Ireland as an election issue. In a poll the *Irish Times* found that 41% would support Labour (the figure for the British electorate was 39%) and 39% would vote Conservative (the British figure was 42%) with 16% voting for the Liberal Democrats (this was the same figure as British voters).⁷⁴ The message for Republicanism and Sinn Féin was also clear from the Irish in Britain with 60% saying that Sinn Féin should not be admitted into any talks while violence continued.⁷⁵ By March polls showed that Irish support for the Conservatives had declined to 36% and Labour support was at 40%. What was also revealed was that the Irish in Britain had a similar view of John Major and Neil Kinnock as leaders to the British voter. The Irish in Britain gave Neil Kinnock an approval rating of 35% against 36% of the wider population. They also trusted John Major when it came to the economy with 47% saying that Major would be better at managing the economy than Kinnock, with only 31% supporting the view that the latter would be a better custodian of the United Kingdom's economic interest.⁷⁶

Prior to the election in April, in an extended survey the *Irish Times* reported that a clear gap had appeared in the support between Labour and the Conservatives. Support for the Conservatives had slumped to 28% and Labour support had increased to 49%. The NHS and education were the primary political concerns of those who took part in the poll. Labour was viewed as more competent on every issue with the exceptions of defence and law and order.⁷⁷

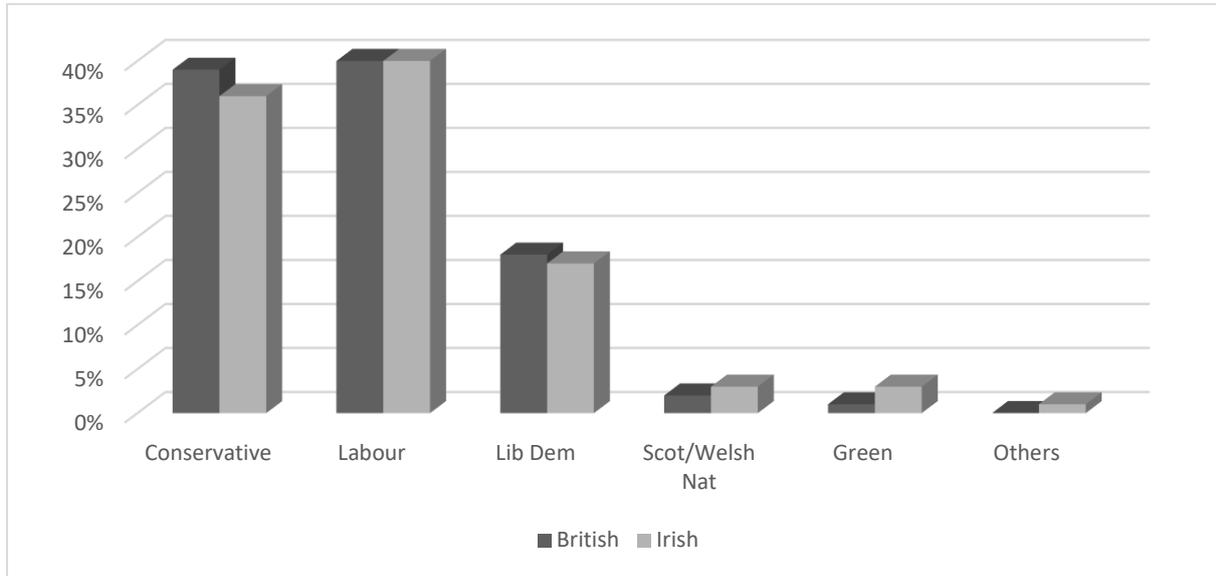
⁷⁴ 'Irish tend to follow the vote pattern of British people', *The Irish Times*, 27th January 1992.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

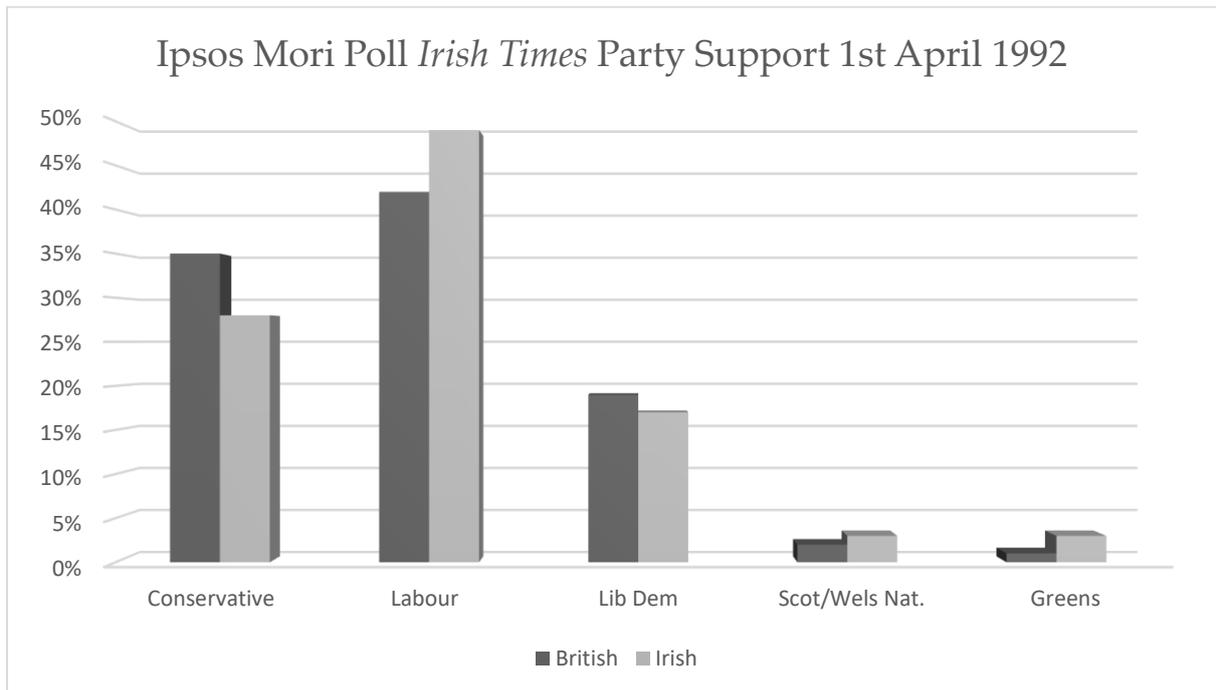
⁷⁶ F. Millar, 'Irish less likely to vote Tory', *The Irish Times*, 2nd March 1992.

⁷⁷ 'Britain's Irish prefer labour to tories by margin of 21%', *The Irish Times*, 1st April 1992.

Ipsos Mori Poll for *Irish Times*, Voting Intentions, 27th January 1992⁷⁸

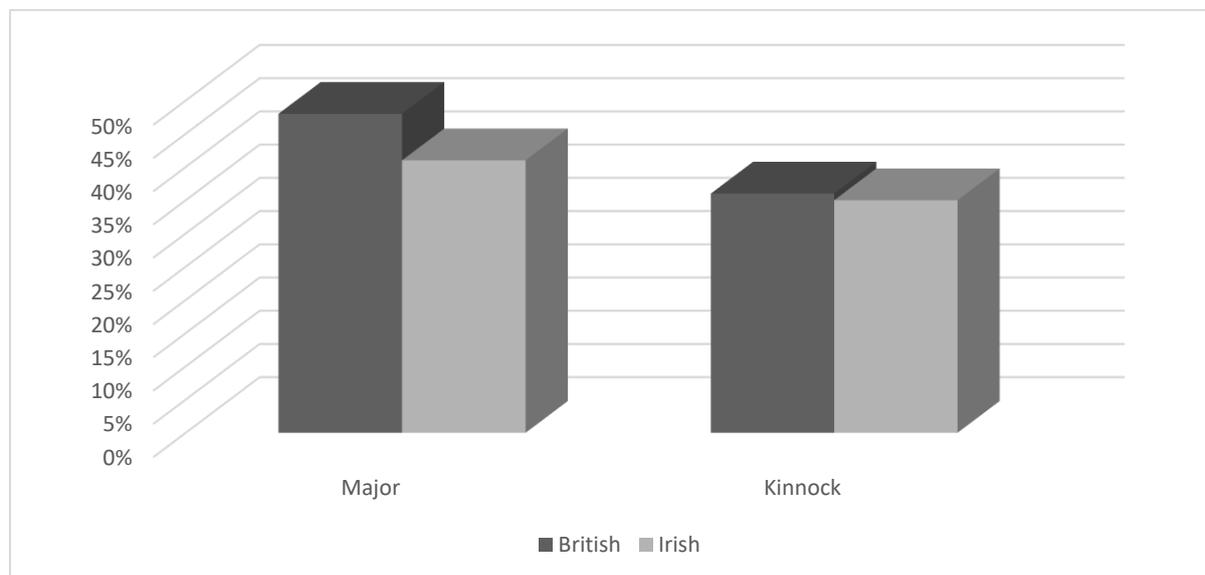


Ipsos Mori Poll *Irish Times* Party Support 1st April 1992



⁷⁸ 'Irish tend to follow the vote pattern of British people', *The Irish Times*, 27th January 1992.

⁷⁹ 'Britain's Irish prefer labour to tories by margin of 21%', *The Irish Times*, 1st April 1992.

Approval Ratings for Party Leaders 1992⁸⁰

The *Irish Democrat* wanted the electorate to vote for any candidate that had the opportunity to unseat the Conservative candidate. They viewed the 1992 General Election as an opportunity to remove the party responsible for the Hunger Strikes, the illegal use of hard power and the criminalisation of mass protests.⁸¹ Those that wanted to vote for Northern Ireland as a single issue were once again given the opportunity to do so. This time it was the Irish Freedom Movement that put forward a candidate. Alex Farrell stood as a candidate in direct opposition to Peter Brooke, the Northern Ireland Secretary in the City of London and Westminster South Constituency. The City of London had a population that contained 1.89% that were first-generation Irish and Westminster's population included 5.63% born in the Republic of Ireland.⁸² Farrell never really had any chance of unseating Brooke as his constituency was a safe Conservative seat. If Farrell hoped to gain publicity for the Irish Freedom Movement he failed, with a solitary mention in the national press.⁸³ Once again Northern Ireland as a single issue was ignored. Farrell finished sixth, behind the Monster Raving Loony Party with just 107 votes.⁸⁴ As with all previous single-issue candidates, the

⁸⁰ 'Britain's Irish prefer labour to tories by margin of 21%', *The Irish Times*, 1st April 1992.

⁸¹ *The Irish Democrat*, April 1992.

⁸² *Historical Census Tables* (Census Information Scheme), The London Datastore, Greater London Authority, London [accessed May 2017].

⁸³ *The Times*, 3rd April 1992.

⁸⁴ 'Votes and swing in full detail', *The Guardian*, 11th April 1992.

Irish in Britain ignored him. What Farrell's failure and the opinion polls show is that, just as they had done in the past, the Irish in Britain acted as if they were British voters.

The 1992 General Election was a peculiar event. The opinion polls, due to errors in methodology constantly got their predictions wrong.⁸⁵ Pundits also constantly ignored the poor approval ratings of Neil Kinnock. Peter Mandelson had created a good campaign for Labour. He removed much of the imagery of Old Labour and replaced it with the imagery of New Labour.⁸⁶ This though was not enough. While much has been made over the reception of the Sheffield Rally and its Riefenstahl overtones, the voting public had already made up their mind about Neil Kinnock and Labour.⁸⁷ Labour was still Old Labour, Neil Kinnock was not seen as a potential Prime Minister, and the Irish in Britain thought the same.

Whilst Labour licked its wounds, the far-left continued to fail to recognise that violence and its radical, anti-imperialist rhetoric was out of touch with the prevailing atmosphere of creating the history of the future. The Republican Workers Tendency (RWT), which emerged from the UK Socialist Workers Party, concluded that the Downing Street Declaration was an attack on resistance communities in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. They viewed it as a tool to remove the potential of those communities to effect genuine revolutionary change. They issued a warning to Sinn Féin that by being pulled into constitutional politics they were giving up their claims to be fighting a war of liberation and were in danger of joining the middle-class nationalists in the SDLP and becoming part of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. They concluded that Sinn Féin was close to disavowing its commitment to the revolutionary removal of the British State from Ireland. The RWT declared that the Downing Street Declaration was nothing more than a tool to defend the Union. They regarded it as a method to reinforce old alliances between the Conservatives and Unionists in Northern Ireland. The RWT failed to recognise that the Unionist Ultras they regarded as the enemy

⁸⁵ A. Marwick, *A History of the Modern British Isles 1914-1919 Circumstances, Events and Outcomes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.343.

⁸⁶ K. Morgan, *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.512.

⁸⁷ The Labour Party held a huge rally in Sheffield one week prior to the 1992 General Election. It was based on similar events held by presidential candidates in the United States of America. Neil Kinnock arrived by helicopter and descended into Sheffield and proclaimed the next Prime Minister. The whole event was choreographed in minute detail. It was noted by those attending that the whole thing could have been created by Leni Riefenstahl, the German filmmaker who created two of the most important Nazi propaganda films, *The Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*. The rally has entered political myth as the moment when the British electorate rejected what was seen as triumphalism. In reality Labour was already behind and the rally made little difference.

were also regarded with suspicion from both Labour and the Conservatives and that Blair was engaging with Unionism as part of a political conundrum to be solved, not because of ethno-cultural links.

Troops Out was equally critical of the Downing Street Declaration and John Major. The lack of a timetable for unification, its failure to assert legitimacy for a united Ireland and no joint authority were all aspects of the declaration that were failures in the view of Troops Out. They argued that it failed to show that the British Government were neutral and wanted to maintain a Unionist veto. Jeremy Corbyn, a long-time supporter of TOM, attacked the omission of any commitment to British military withdrawal but did think that the declaration was 'a step in the right direction'.⁸⁸ Corbyn, in common with Livingstone, had tried to make Irish historiography fit with his own politics and was not yet ready to give up his liberationist ideals. The *Irish Democrat* regarded the Downing Street Declaration as disappointing for Nationalists, good in parts but a 'typical politician's fudge'.⁸⁹ Following the issuing of the declaration, the President of the Connolly Association sent an open letter to John Major asking him to 'extricate' the British Government from Northern Ireland.⁹⁰

Although by 1994, the *Irish Democrat* and the Connolly Association had now become broadly supportive of the peace process, they were not afraid to voice criticism over the portions of the process that did not meet with their goals. The replacement of McNamara with Mo Mowlam was not universally welcomed. The *Irish Democrat* had become increasingly concerned about the direction of New Labour and concluded that this was another example of movement towards the centre of British politics and away from the left. The *Irish Democrat* was worried that Kevin McNamara was popular with Labour voters from an Irish background and that those voters had begun to express concerns over his removal. However, once again the importance of the Irish vote was being exaggerated.

The peace process was not only making divisions within the Labour Party over policy on Northern Ireland public, it was also making public once again divisions between New and Old Labour. The street politics and protests of TOM, Ken Livingstone and Jeremy Corbyn was being out-manoeuvred. Ken Livingstone used the decision to support John Major and the removal of McNamara to attack Peter Mandelson and Labour Party spin doctors as

⁸⁸ *Troops Out*, Vol.17, March/April 1994 (London: Blackrose Press, 1994).

⁸⁹ *The Irish Democrat*, January 1994.

⁹⁰ *The Irish Democrat*, February 1994.

another attempt to promote personal policy and to dominate party machinery.⁹¹ He was correct; this was not just a decision concerned with Labour and Northern Ireland, but part of the broader campaign to make Labour popular with the wider British electorate. Although they attempted to stress the reaction that the Irish in Britain may have about the removal of McNamara, the Irish in Britain showed little concern about either his removal or his replacement.

The political direction of New Labour was not popular with the Connolly Association and the *Irish Democrat*. Following the Hume-Adams talks there were calls at the Desmond Greaves Summer School for Labour to take a progressive new direction to ensure Irish unification and to resist any calls for the Labour Party to organise in Northern Ireland.⁹² The decision not to oppose the latest vote on the continuation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act was also unpopular and was met with protests from *The Irish Democrat*. The overwhelming majority of the Labour Party supported this significant change in policy, but some including Kevin McNamara, Chris Mullin, Ken Livingstone, Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn continued to vote against. The *Irish Democrat* issued a warning to Labour that it was putting its support from the Irish in Britain in danger and declared that 'New Labour has borrowed the entire Tory wardrobe.'⁹³ The truth was though that Labour was not in any danger of losing most of its Irish supporters.

The Connolly Association continued with its old clarion call, urging the Irish in Britain to organise politically and make a concerted effort to influence policy. It wanted the Irish in Britain to lobby their MP and to become advocates for unification, even if it was only raising the issue with their friends and neighbours. When the IRA did announce that it was ordering a complete cessation of violence the Connolly Association and the *Irish Democrat* announced that there was now an 'historic chance for peace with justice'.⁹⁴ They continued to list what in their view the British Government had to do to ensure success which included demilitarisation, an investigation into collusion and a commitment to end discrimination. Red Action declared the cease fire had shown that Britain had been 'bombed to the negotiating table'.⁹⁵ This conclusion neatly fitted with Red Action's long-term support for the PIRA and

⁹¹ *The Irish Democrat*, December/January 1995.

⁹² *The Irish Democrat*, October 1993.

⁹³ *The Irish Democrat*, April/May 1996.

⁹⁴ *The Irish Democrat*, October/November 1994.

⁹⁵ *Red Action*, Issue no.69, Autumn 1994.

their belief that those groups in Britain that wanted a genuine socialist revolution should support Sinn Féin and the PIRA. They condemned the older Labourist response to Northern Ireland as hypocrisy, willing to support other liberationist campaigns and not Northern Ireland.⁹⁶ In 1997 as others had done in the past, Republican Sinn Féin turned to Liverpool to attempt to find supporters. Ignoring that London had long over-taken Liverpool as the most important centre of Irish activity in the UK, they held on to the historic claims that 'Liverpool is Ireland's capital in England'.⁹⁷ Overlooking that the Irish in Britain had continually voted for the dominant British parties, they still chose to make an appeal to a Diasporic political community that did not exist. They did find enough support in Liverpool to establish a new Cumann in March, however, when their initial meeting took place only 30 people attended.⁹⁸

The British Government were not bombed to the negotiating table. The far-left in Britain and those groups such as the Connolly Association were out-manoeuvred, first by John Major and then Tony Blair. The Lilliputian imperialists in the Conservative Party for the moment were under control. John Major transformed the debate into one that was about the removal of violence. If violence was removed, he would ensure that Britain remained a neutral facilitator. The far-left in Britain did not trust him and failed to comprehend that with Hume and Albert Reynolds he had become part of a triumvirate that had moved away from old battles and old battlefields. The politics of the past had been replaced with the politics of the future. This allowed Tony Blair to include Northern Ireland in his project to modernise the Labour Party. He would take the progress made by Hume, Reynolds and Major and dress it in the language of political maturity. This political maturity could be sold to the electorate in Ireland and Northern Ireland as their own mature political decision making. In contrast to this message of maturity the far-left looked the very opposite of politically mature. The far-left's own in-fighting over ideological and philosophical issues resulted in a battle over political apostasy and recreancy that prevented a unified message appearing. It also resulted in these micro-groups on the left as being viewed as a remnant from 1968 that had failed to

⁹⁶ M. Hayes, 'Red-Action left-wing political pariah Some observations regarding ideological apostasy and the discourse of proletarian resistance', in, E. Smith and M. Worley, *Against the Grain, The British far left from 1956*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), pp.242-244.

⁹⁷ Linen Hall Library Belfast (hereafter 'LHL'), Divided Society Northern Ireland 1990-1998, *Irish in Britain Should use Electoral Strength to Promote British Withdrawal*, Irish Republican Information Service, 3rd March 1997.

⁹⁸ LHL, Divided Society Northern Ireland 1990-1998, 'Irish in Britain Should use Electoral Strength to Promote British Withdrawal', SAOIRSE, April 1997.

move on. Modernism and the message of political maturity won Blair his first General Election. The hand of history had not delivered the end of history, but it had out-manoeuvred the radical-left and those still making utopian calls for immediate British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

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What a nation thinks of its history is shaped rather by its colourful narrative and the need for political myth. The reality which is disinterred by patient scholarship is not so much disputed as simply ignored.¹

The colourful narrative and political myths that ATQ Stewart is writing about have ensured the political character of the Irish in Britain has been hidden or ignored despite a growing interest in the Irish abroad. The type of Irish community, with a Diasporic politics at its heart, of the type that Lord Dubs' was looking for did not take hold in Britain. He was not alone in his search for an Irish political Diaspora with the nation and the national project its primary concern. Ken Livingstone and the GLC also expected find an Irish Diaspora in exile. Both based their assumptions on historical depictions of the Irish in Britain. They both froze the Irish in Britain in 1922 and failed to pay any attention the changing character of the Irish state and the Irish. Others were also guilty of this such as those in the Conservative Party that retained lingering affection for the glory of empire. They all went looking for what they expected find and when it became clear that they were not going to find it, some such as Livingstone attempted make Irish historiography fit their own political ideology.

The foundations for the lack of Diasporic politics amongst the Irish in Britain can be found in the aftermath of the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922. As shown by Regan and Moulton, Ireland disappeared from British politics for reasons that could be found in both Ireland and Britain.² Regan exposes the rapid return to consensual politics in Ireland following the violence of 1916-1922. Irish Free State politicians consolidated the legitimacy of both the state and constitutional politics and the Irish electorate backed them in their efforts consigning radical-Republicanism to the green fringes of Irish politics. In 1937 the new constitution enshrined personal freedoms that for many in Europe were disappearing. Whilst the combatants of 1916-22 would be continually exalted, there was a swift return to the sobriety of constitutional politics.³ There would not be enough pressure to alter the path taken by the Irish State or the dominant political parties. The Irish in Britain would follow the

¹ ATQ Stewart, *The Shape of Irish History* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2001), p.185.

² M. Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); J.M. Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936: Treatyite Politics and Settlement in Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Mcmillan, 1999).

³ Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936*, pp.382-283.

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same pattern, they would become embedded in British politics that would be dominated by Baldwin's project to copper-fasten the stable, homogenous British state. As in Ireland the Irish in Britain would place their faith in mainstream, constitutional politics.

Those from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland that arrived in post-war Britain reflected the places and populations that they had left behind. Whilst it remains difficult to measure the Irish population in Britain, census material and previously published investigations all agree that the primary reason for emigration to Britain was economic. However, care must be taken to avoid generalisation. Some of this remained 'forced' due to lack of opportunities, others were making considered decisions concerning wages, status and promotion. The patterns of Irish settlement in Britain followed the British economy as it became concentrated in the Greater South-East. Older areas such as Liverpool and Scotland were not having their first-generation populations refreshed. The only areas outside of London with first-born populations greater than 5% in 1966 were Birmingham and Manchester.⁴ This trend continued and by 1991, outside the Greater South-East, only Manchester remained in the top 15 destinations for Irish migrants.⁵ Whilst claims are made for considerable numbers expressing second-generation identity, this has not been reflected in census returns, which have provided an opportunity to do this since 2001. This means that claims of large-scale transmission of Diasporic second-generation identity must be examined very carefully. Expressions of such identity can vary between nostalgic recognition of family history to genuine activism, each of which remain difficult to measure.

Although the primacy of economics as a reason for emigration remained a constant, others were leaving Ireland for societal reasons. Gender and sexuality both contributed to the outflow to Britain. In the immediate post-war years female migrants found themselves in a Britain that wanted the world of work to return to its pre-war masculine structures. They also found a Catholic Church that was determined to ensure that they remained good Catholics and that they did not surrender their virtue to the temptations found in British cities. For others British cities offered an escape from a society that instead of offering support to unmarried mothers, preferred to lock them away for 'rehabilitation'. Those from the LGBTQT community also found that Britain offered an escape. Homosexuality would remain illegal in

⁴ *Census 1966 United Kingdom General and Parliamentary Constituency Tables* (London: General Register Office, 1969).

⁵ *1991 UK Census*, UK Data Service, CASWEB.

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the Republic of Ireland until 1993 and some had no choice, they were chased from their homes, warned that they would be reported to An Garda Síochána. Others found they had no alternative but to leave Ireland due to the lack of support services for those with AIDS and HIV. However, despite viewing Britain as an escape, many found that conservative elements in British society not only rejected them because of their Irishness, but because of their gender or sexuality. It should not be surprising that a modern, European State such as the Republic of Ireland produces a diverse population, from muckshifters, nurses, city-bankers and punks, each of these experiences of Diaspora were authentic as each other. As Ireland transformed, so did the character of those leaving. This shows that McCann was much closer to reality when he described the Irish in Britain as no proletarian horde. The Irish in Britain are a diverse and dynamic contiguous population that continually adjusts to events in Britain and Ireland. For the majority themes of exile have little or no relevance.

This lack of universal experience brings with it questions of definition surrounding Diaspora. The popularisation of Diaspora masked its complexity. The labelling of groups as a Diaspora has changed from that which has been given from those outside the group, to one that has been claimed by groups themselves. It has become a term that comes from both within and without. The Irish in Britain do not share a universal Diaspora experience, they are a contiguous population engaged with both British and Irish civic society. Most important, and constantly forgotten by those who frame the Irish question as one of oppression and revolution, is that the Irish in Britain have transferred from one civic society to another; they are not in legislative terms, politically excluded or in exile, but a contiguous part of British civic society. The contiguous nature of the Irish in Britain shows that it is folly to try and ascribe both them and Ireland an identity that is fixed within our imaginations. Diaspora, in common with patterns of migration and identity has become something temporal that is constantly rebuilt and redefined.

These are not the only elements that are temporal. How the Irish respond to Ireland in British politics oscillates throughout the post-war period. As previously established, Ireland had been subdued within British politics after 1922 and most of the Irish became ingrained within British mainstream politics. The remaining few formed a political rump that struggled to gain the attention of the wider Irish population in Britain. This trend continued after the end of the Second World War. Attempts by the Anti-Partition League and the

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Connolly Association to raise the political saliency of partition and re-unification were ignored by the Irish population in Britain. The Connolly Association and the Anti-Partition League went looking for support in the old pre-war industrial Victorian cities expecting to find populations and audiences for their message of reunification and nationalism. It was an old message and they were preaching to an old audience. The audience that turned out to hear De Valera and others speak were those with memories and experience of 1916. These meetings were not political protests, they were public memorials. These were the last kicks of the pre-war generations that continued to reject the post-1922 settlement. The organisers failed to recognise that those arriving from Ireland in post-war Britain were following the British economy to the Midlands and the South. Even these old pre-war populations failed to find much enthusiasm when given the chance to vote for Anti-Partition League candidates; these candidates were ignored. The Irish in Britain had already found enough common ground with the traditional non-conformist philosophy of the Labour Party. Most still relied on the community brokerage of the Catholic Church and rejected the rhetoric of the Connolly Association, nationalism and revolution.

In 1949 The Labour Party took a pragmatic approach to the creation of the Republic of Ireland. It had a history of avoiding constitutional issues and did not want to face one while trying to rebuild the United Kingdom. The retention of Northern Ireland was not the primary concern for the Labour party. They had to show they were a responsible party of government. They had to protect the constitution and the relationship with the Commonwealth. Attlee and Labour were also creating the welfare state, committed to the creation of NATO, intent on the United Kingdom becoming a nuclear power and ensuring British national interests were protected in a world now dominated by super-power politics. To ensure this, the integrity of the state had to be protected. Ireland had to be dealt with quickly, allowing Labour to return to what it viewed as the primary issues facing the United Kingdom. The Ireland Act (1949) allowed Labour to concentrate on global and domestic issues and to subdue Ireland in British politics.

Attlee and Labour managed to avoid any lengthy debate about the constitutional settlement. In a masterstroke of pragmatism and political skill, Attlee and the Labour Party declared that the Irish in Britain were 'not foreign' and Ireland 'not a foreign country'. The Labour Party removed Northern Ireland from the political landscape, and their successors

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were in no hurry to uncover it. Northern Ireland received a guarantee to remain in the United Kingdom, not because of ethno-cultural links, but to avoid difficult constitutional problems for Attlee and the Labour Party. Inside Parliament the Friends of Ireland made no noticeable impact on Labour Party policy. Outside Parliament, if there was a political backlash from the Irish in Britain about the Ireland Act (1949), it barely registered and had no significant effect on the support for the Labour Party.

The Conservative Party did not want Ireland to resurface during the debates about the Commonwealth Act and continued to support the constitutional position of the Irish in Britain. The Conservatives had supported the creation of the Ireland Act (1949) and were not going to make an embarrassing U-turn. As far as the Conservatives were concerned the Irish were part of the 'British' family of nations. Despite the stereotyping and prejudice found in some parts of British society, most of British body-politic continued to regard the Irish as 'not foreign'. During the debates about the Commonwealth Act, the Irish in Britain were more concerned about losing their legislative status as defined by the Ireland Act (1949) than reunification.

The prospect of a Labour Government in 1964 encouraged those Britain that wanted to increase the saliency of the re-unification of Ireland in British politics. However, these hopes were without foundation. They were built on old myths and the failures of the Anti-Partition League and The Friends of Ireland had been forgotten. When the Connolly Association and the British and Irish press went looking for Wilson's Irish voters they found none. Only a few MPs had anything that was recognisable as an Irish lobby, most notably Paul Rose. Harold Wilson's own records are almost barren of correspondence from with his own constituency about Northern Ireland prior to 1968. This is reinforced by census information which shows that Liverpool was not having its first-generation Irish population refreshed and that outside the Greater South-East only Birmingham and Manchester retained any gravitational pull for Irish migrants. In Liverpool, and in the new estates on the edges of the city Desmond Greaves found nothing that could be called an Irish vote or large-scale Irish community. The work of Paddy Fahey provides a very visible record of the Irish in Britain during this period. His photographs reveal a snapshot of those attending political events and commemorations. They are overwhelmingly male, uniformly dressed in a suit and tie and

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middle-aged.⁶ Local county associations were no different. They had more in common with the middle-class anti-nuclear protests of the 1950s than the emerging sub-cultures of 1960s Britain. A younger generation arriving in Britain were more interested in The Beatles and Julie Christie than the Easter Rising.⁷ Society in Ireland was embarking on a tense conversation between conservatism and new social liberalism. Foster concluded this was a reaction to the inadequacy of the idea that independence would be a solution to all Ireland's social, political and economic problems.⁸ Bob Geldof would later recall his own rejection of Irish society in the 1960s while presenting a television documentary about W.B Yeats. Beyond the controversy surrounding his comments, the reaction to his views shows the battle between traditionalist and revisionist historiography has not gone away.⁹

In both Britain and Ireland these were years where the memory of the pre-war world would meet with a world undergoing social and technological change. In the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland politicians wanted to show that this new modernity would solve the prevailing political problems between them. Irish politicians wanted to promote Ireland as a modern European state, without giving up the national project. British politicians were willing to make gestures that dovetailed with their own plans. The atmosphere and prevailing idea between British and Irish politicians was that if economic, social and diplomatic relationships and conditions could be improved, this could then result in a responsible discussion about partition with much of the emotion removed. In Northern Ireland O'Neill wanted Northern Ireland to be seen as a modern, integral part of the United Kingdom. His modernity was a thin veneer. He wanted modernity to ensure a British Northern Ireland. This belief in modernity blinded them to each other's motives and the oppositional identities that were fermenting in Northern Ireland. The modern troubles were the result of a failure of modernity, even though their oppositional identities are rooted in centuries' old conflict.¹⁰

⁶ P. Fahey, *The Irish in London: Photographs and Memories* (London: Centerprise, 1991).

⁷ D. Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland* (London: Profile Books, 2005), pp.598-606.

⁸ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Allen Lane, 1988), p.570.

⁹ 'Bob Geldof eulogises Irish literary Rebel WB Yeats in BBC documentary', *The Irish News*, 28th May 2016; 'Television: Bob Geldof busts his baggage allowance in a poetry-political broadcast', *The Irish Times*, 1st April 2016.

¹⁰ T. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1981), p.227.

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Harold Wilson's papers expose a man that had run out of ideas about how to respond to the issues in Northern Ireland. The relationship with the NILP was not in good health. He wanted to pressure O'Neill, to twist his arm and found he could not. He had no political fixer in Northern Ireland to turn to and the traditional Labour tactic of arm-twisting and deal making was not working. It is no small irony that the closest thing Wilson had to a political fixer in Northern Ireland was O'Neill himself. When O'Neill could not deliver a solution Wilson prevaricated, particularly over his response to lobbying by Paul Rose, the Connolly Association and NICRA.

When Wilson was overtaken by events in Northern Ireland, the centres of Irish political activity in Britain would be Birmingham, London and Manchester. These were the centres of first-generation Irish population in Britain. However, despite the violence in Northern Ireland, the initial response by the Irish in Britain was muted. Few turned up to initial protests, even though they could call on support from the wider political left in Britain. The deaths in Derry in 1972 was the spark that motivated the biggest protests from the Irish in Britain and those that supported them. It was the shootings in Derry that resulted in the largest amount of correspondence being sent directly to Harold Wilson. He received telegrams from throughout the UK from individuals and a wide range of social and political organisations. However, as in his earlier political career, lobbying that came from within Liverpool and his constituency did not outnumber those from other areas. Throughout the UK there were notable street protests and demonstrations, but these were short-lived and although numbers attending spiked, they dwindled as quickly as they had risen.

The Birmingham and Guildford bombs had multiple consequences for the Irish in Britain. British Trades Unions which had previously supported the Civil Rights movement changed their stance and, in Birmingham in particular, began to campaign against Irish workers and Irish products. The violence also had a detrimental effect on Republican support from the Irish in Britain, with many refusing to support them and openly rejected their claims of direct lineage to 1916. However, the most important consequence was the creation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The Irish became a suspect community. This was a hasty response to paramilitary violence. It was racial profiling of an entire population and made no effort to differentiate between those who were suspects and the innocent. Life became extremely difficult for the Irish in Britain, particularly in Birmingham, where it made public

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expression of Irish cultural and identity impossible. However, whilst the PTA exacerbated already existing anti-Irish racism, it was not responsible for the ‘muting’ or reduction in numbers that made Ireland a political priority. Another factor that is often overlooked when examining the creation of the PTA was the wider political atmosphere in Britain. In Britain there was a shift towards the right with crime and law and order primary political concerns, with some calling for the restoration of death penalty. There was considerable pressure on Roy Jenkins to respond, not just about paramilitary violence, but all forms of violent crime. He had to ensure that any legislation went far enough without endangering the previous social liberalism of previous Labour Governments.

The controversy over British government reaction to violence and paramilitary activity reached its zenith under the successive Thatcher governments. The Hunger Strikes and the political response to them remain amongst the most emotive and contentious events of the modern troubles. The definitive history of the Hunger Strikes, quite possibly will never be written, due to privacy of conversations take took place within and outside of the prisons. Some of these will remain private for personal and political reasons, others as shown by Maria Power, will be protected by the seal of confession.¹¹ Despite the trauma unfurling in Northern Ireland, as in previous decades, the response by the Irish in Britain and their supporters was limited. Most of the Irish in Britain rejected the violence of the IRA. The street politics that did emerge was centred on London. This was for a number of reasons. London constantly had its first-generation population refreshed and remained the primary choice for Irish migrants. In an increasingly centralised state, the British regional political power was being curtailed, nothing was allowed to even remotely challenge the writ of Westminster.

Another crucial reason for the focus on London the centre of protest was the rise of identity politics with much of this promoted and supported by the GLC. The idea of recognising identity has focused on recognition and dignity. It has concentrated on removing barriers excluding groups from participation in civic society. Against this it has been argued that identity politics builds oppositional identities and threatens ideas of universalism. Whilst it is argued that the state must have a single, recognised and functioning political system, the question remains what options are available if political systems produce a form of national identity that many, not just minorities, reject? In this case identity becomes an escape. Identity

¹¹ M. Power, ‘Suicide or self-sacrifice: Catholics debate the hunger strikes’, *The Irish Times*, 6th July 2016.

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and second-generation identity offered an escape from the Anglo-Centric British identity created by Thatcherism. This escape took the form of project identities, based on new positive expressions of Irish identity which were not incompatible with remaining within the wider British body-politic.

Many of those promoting identity politics as an answer to Thatcherism were from the radical-left that had been maturing since 1956. However, their attempt to link culture, history and politics was ignored by most of the Irish in Britain. Many of these groups had an ambiguous attitude to violence and the majority of the Irish in Britain had already rejected Republican paramilitarism. Further, these groups were more interested in rhetorical arguments with each other and this weakened their ability to promote alternatives to mainstream political parties. Another reason for this rejection was that these micro-groups were ascribing an identity that they expected to find. They failed to recognise that what was taking place between Britain and the Republic of Ireland was an exchange of modern, European civic-populations and, as Nairn correctly recognised, both parts of Ireland are political democracies.¹²

This did not preclude a lively debate about Northern Ireland, Irishness and wider concerns about British politics. Much of this took place within the letters pages of the *Irish Post*. In an age before social media the *Irish Post* provided a forum for discussion of topics that included, contraception and abortion, employment in both Ireland and Britain, welfare, and mental health. As with previous decades, direct correspondence to MPs would peak during times of controversy. An example of this was the response to the shootings of IRA members in Gibraltar in 1987. In its aftermath, Eric Heffer MP received multiple letters, both supporting his questioning of the legality of the shootings, others condemning him and some threatening his and his families safety.

Whilst in opposition Labour had its own problems. In Westminster Labour divided between those who argued that Northern Ireland needed new ideas to deal with a complex problem. Others argued for immediate British withdrawal regardless of the consequences. Outside Parliament assorted radical-left micro-groups attempted to attract that portion of the post-1968 generation that wanted to end bipartisanship. Labour found that Ireland also crept into its own internal battles and its relationship between those former members who had

¹² Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, p.217.

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defected to the SDP. However, these micro-groups were a noisy fringe that had no impact of a Labour Party leadership that decided to support the Conservative stance regarding the Hunger Strikes and continuing paramilitary violence. Although Sinn Féin was now a genuine community broker, neither it nor mainstream British political parties were in a position to commit to acts of political generosity that would allow the peace process to emerge.

If the hope of paramilitary violence was to divide British politicians, it failed. In this period of bitter political divisions which created a chasm between Conservatives and Labour, the violence of the IRA unified them in their desire not to make political decisions under duress. The violence also retarded political progress in another way. Since the election of Sands, a small but growing number of Labour MPs from all sides of the PLP recognised that this gave Sinn Féin a genuine political mandate. Despite this recognition, when Sinn Féin appeared to be on the brink of further political progress, violence made them, and those who were willing to talk to them, politically toxic.

These micro-groups found little support from the Irish in Britain and had few supporters in the Labour Party. Whilst campaigns for the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four were widely supported, paramilitary violence was constantly shunned. Those that attempted to promote a Diasporic politics would also be disappointed. Many of the Irish in Britain rejected the identity politics ascribed by the GLC and others. Going further, others rejected attempts by the GLC and Livingstone to gain their support for reasons that had nothing to do with Ireland, viewing his leadership as profligate and were not afraid to make public their support for the Conservatives and Margaret Thatcher.

The arrival of John Major marked a significant change for Ireland in British politics. He was not content to wait for Ireland to wander into British politics. To his credit, unlike previous post-war Prime Ministers, he made Northern Ireland a priority. To be more accurate, he made the permanent removal of violence his priority. He realised that there was a contradiction as the United Kingdom sent out peace-keeping forces or election monitors, yet it could not keep the peace inside its own borders. Building on the work of John Hume, Major in combination with Albert Reynolds, began to transform the argument away from the history of the past to the history of the future. This could only be written with a permanent rejection of violence by all those involved. This was not welcome by all in the Conservatives with some in the Conservative Friends of the Union and the Bow Group still worshipping the ghost of

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Airey Neave. Whilst others were committed to acts of political generosity, there remained opposition within his own party that believed the IRA had to be defeated and still criminalised Sinn Féin. Major took a more holistic approach to Northern Ireland. Despite his slim majority, was not going to let the Unionist Ultras in Northern Ireland and their supporters take up their old position of intransigent deal wreckers.

Whilst John Major was attempting to ensure the peace process continued he was managing a Conservative Party that was mired in cash-for-questions scandals and divisions over Europe. Against this background, Tony Blair became the leader of the Labour Party. Blair quickly decided that he too, like John Smith, would support John Major. In common with Major, Blair did not look back to the ideology of the past. He was already approaching Northern Ireland as a purely political problem. He recognised that the argument had moved away from the politics of the past and become about the politics of the future. This he combined with the New Labour mission and he would style it as mature politics. He would ensure that any announcements regarding Northern Ireland would be done in a way that avoided confrontation with the Awkward Squad. This meant using the media to his advantage and moving away from public meetings. If the media was looking for ammunition to harm his image or campaign, Blair and his team were determined that they would not be the ones to supply it. Labour MPs also avoided potential public clashes with the Awkward Squad. In Parliament those MPs that supported the Awkward Squad were side-lined using party discipline and parliamentary rules. Avoiding them was more important than chasing Irish votes. It was this mature politics of the future that he would later sell to politicians in Dublin, Belfast and to the British electorate.

Those on the far-left were late to realise that the politics of the past had been overtaken by the mature politics of the future. They were lost in a new political landscape; the old political signposts and markers were being removed and the far-left behind disorientated. The Connolly Association and others involved in street politics thought that the peace process was little more than conniving to secure Northern Ireland's position in the United Kingdom. It was only when it became clear that all sides were making genuine efforts at peace building and there was a real chance of success did those on the far-left start to support the peace process. They were outmanoeuvred and left behind by Major and Blair. Later, those who supported the Troops Out option prior to the Peace Process, began to construct their own

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‘usable’ history. This time it is Birmingham, Clady, Guildford and Warrington that are submerged to avoid uncomfortable history.

Within this constantly changing political landscape there are elements that remain somewhat obscured. That segment of the Irish population that supported the Conservative Party remains largely ignored as researchers still chase the Irish vote and concentrate on the Labour Party. Northern Unionists living in Britain also remain something of a hidden enigma. Indications of their voting choice remain frustratingly concealed. This situation has been summed up superbly by Tom Paulin in his poem *An Ulster Unionist Walks the Streets of London*.¹³ He offers one of the very few literary insights into Northern Unionist migrant identity. Although raised a Protestant, his own politics are grounded in the 18th-Century Republicanism of Thomas Paine. Written in the shadow of the 1985 AIA, Paulin exposes the feeling of abandonment felt by Northern Unionists. Although composed from the point of the confessional self, it contains three separate voices. The first voice is that of Unionist politician Harold McCusker. The second is that of Ian Paisley and the final voice is that of Paulin himself. He confesses to walking among the London-Irish as the half-foreigner.¹⁴ This is a powerful commentary on the status of Northern Protestants and how they are regarded by both Britain and Ireland. Lord Lexden and Ferdinand Mount both recognised that the majority of wider British society either rejects Unionist claims of Britishness or simply labels them as Irish. They become submerged in strangers in the ‘stranger’s house’.¹⁵ Alongside this, wider British society has shown a constant indifference to the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. They remain the one part of Ireland that is viewed as a museum exhibit by many in Britain. These multiple rejections have resulted in Northern Unionists remaining indiscernible and difficult to uncover as Paulin discovered as he walked the streets of Kentish Town, ‘searching for my people’.¹⁶ Interviews undertaken by Devlin-Trew uncover why it was difficult for Paulin to find Northern Unionists in London;

First time living there, total culture shock, total identity crisis. Oh yeah, because I mean you sort of thought, right, British, that’ll be easy, London, you know, speak the same language, obviously I’m [from] the British part of Ireland. But

¹³ T. Paulin, *Fivemiletown* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), pp.42-43.

¹⁴ Paulin, *Fivemiletown*, pp.42-43.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

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you landed there and it was only then you realised you were Irish. That's the first time you are faced with that and then it becomes very clear that you're not English, you are Irish.¹⁷

When Unionist politicians attempted to bring their supporters to the streets of London they found few that would accept or recognise this motley collection attempting to re-create a new version of Carson's Army as British. Any Unionists looking for a mass Edwardian-style response to support their wish to remain part of the United Kingdom are going to be disappointed.

Ireland and Irish Nationalism only becomes a concern for British politicians when the integrity of the constitution, the state and British national interests become threatened. It is for these statist reasons that Ireland occasionally wanders into British politics. Unionism in Britain is about the integrity of the state; it is not about the preservation of ethno-cultural links with Unionism in Northern Ireland. If British class-based politics has found it difficult to cross the North Channel then the politics of Northern Ireland has also failed to make that journey.

The legislative status of the Irish in Britain is both an advantage and disadvantage. The appearance of Irish voices on British television, the re-emergence of St Patrick's Day, the Irish Pub, music and culture all now result in no public comment. In Parliament, it is possible for the son of a former Sinn Féin councillor, Conor McGinn, to become an MP (St Helens North) with little comment made about his identity. This was also the case with other MPs such as Conservative MPs Sally Oppenheim and Walter Sweeney. It would be Sweeney's response to the Dunblane school massacre that would ensure his notoriety, not his Dublin roots.¹⁸ Another example of this is Conor Burns, MP for Bournemouth West. Burns was born in Belfast, and once again, it is not his personal heritage that increased his public profile. It would be his voting record on Europe and same-sex marriage that would ensure he would be noticed by the wider electorate.¹⁹ The All-Party Group on the Irish in Britain focuses on ensuring not only supporting the Irish in Britain but improving relations between the UK and the Republic of Ireland and does so with little controversy. These all represent that relaxed,

¹⁷ J. Devlin-Trew, *Leaving the North Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland 1921-2011* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016) p.110.

¹⁸ Sweeney, Walter, *Who's Who*, 2017; D. Campbell, 'Fury as Tories reject handgun ban', *The Guardian*, 14th August 1996.

¹⁹ Burns is a Catholic and co-chair on the parliamentary committee on Vatican relations. His support for same-sex marriage brought him into conflict with some Catholic clergy and he received hate mail because of his vote in support of same-sex marriage.

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inclusive and culturally mature Irishness that Roy Foster was looking for.²⁰ The disadvantage is that it perpetuates the ignorance in British society about the complexities of Irish history. This ignorance is only exposed when events in Northern Ireland or a crisis in British politics forces parties such as the DUP or Sinn Féin into the political spotlight. Ireland in Britain is largely is a national-cultural identity and only a determined few continue to make partition their primary political concern.

Whilst the Irish in Britain continue to be regarded as ‘not foreign’ by the British Government, and most of British society, the paradox is that, those who defend their Britishness most fervently, the super-Unionists in Northern Ireland, have their identity constantly questioned. The parades, flags, fealty and regressive politics and the refusal to amend legislation regarding sexual equality or the excesses of the 12th of July are all viewed negatively by the majority in Britain. Most of British society continue to mark Unionism in Northern Ireland as something separate and different. The voices of progressive Unionism, for the moment, have trouble getting their message out to wider British society.

Ireland has consistently provided fuel to the flames of the post-1945 crisis of Britishness. This has come from within Ireland, not from the Irish in Britain. British politicians have constantly attempted to subdue this crisis for British reasons. To ensure this the British government have ensured the Irish have remained ‘not foreign’. The Irish in Britain, are, as described by McCann in 1971, no proletarian horde. They are a modern civic society; they are foreign with a small ‘f’. How long this continues, will be decided not by the Irish in Britain, but this time by Dublin, Brussels and the suspicions of atavistic English nationalism’s conceit over Europe and empire.

²⁰ Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p.596.

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