

To Be or Not To Be: The Question of
Home Rule in Ireland (1912-1914)

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Senior Thesis for History
of Public Policy

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I Introduction

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I Introduction

Home rule for Ireland is an extremely complicated issue and is one of grave consequence. England's hegemony in Ireland was by no means complete. For over eight hundred years Ireland fought bitterly to resist any attempts of English domination, especially religiously. Her refusal of subjugation was finally encompassed in legislation by the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill on 11 april, 1912. The controversy over the Bill posed probably the worst crisis in twentieth-century English history, foreshadowing the inherent afflictions unfolded in Anglo-Irish relations today. To see why the ensuing Home Rule battle and its implications resulted in tragedy for both Ireland and England, it is necessary to look at the derived misconceptions and miscalculations of the various parties involved.

From the twelfth century until the end of the nineteenth century, Ireland was ruled as a conquered nation, England brutally imposing physical and cultural domination. Ireland's self-sufficient agrarian society was wiped out, her land redistributed to wealthy English and Irish gentry, and her people coalesced into a vicious culture of debt-peonage. In the middle of the nineteenth

century, a potato famine destroyed the island's only staple crop. From that point until the end of the century, emigration and starvation reduced Ireland's population from 8.2 million to just 4.3 million,¹ not deliberately orchestrated by England, but certainly a consequence of its repressive policy. The Act of Union in 1801 was England's first attempt to incorporate Ireland under political rule, but was only successful in the Protestant dominated north-east county of Ulster. It guaranteed a Protestant ascendancy both politically and economically in Ireland and created an integral economic position in the United Kingdom for Ulster.²

Ironically, the greatest opposition Irish nationalism faced was within her own borders. Through the Act of Union, Ireland existed as a paradox. One side, brutally oppressed for centuries, victims of cultural and physical annihilation, the scapegoats of racial hatred and religious intolerance; then another side far from denying any mis-governings of English rule, where her inhabitants enjoyed as much liberty as anywhere else in the world.

The Home Rule Bill was given Royal ascent on 18 September, 1914. The two years of political confrontation and debate engulfed and almost ruined one of the world's oldest and most established parliamentary institutions.

The world approaching its own crisis, was to see the nationalistic scream of a tiny island pierce the ears of its enormously powerful ruler, shatter its nerves and leave it in a state of shock. The "tremor" of the Irish question provides a lesson in history. Hundreds of years of inhumane subjugation cannot be settled in a solely peaceful manner. The English were absurdly ignorant of Irish intentions, misjudging not only their wants and needs, but their willingness to go to any length in order to uphold what they stood for.

Ireland was ruled in various manners after the Act of Union. For the English Conservative Party, the Act became its political creed, giving symbolic representation to their imperialist outlook in the United Kingdom.³ Any threat to the union with Ireland was looked at, by the Conservatives, as a threat to the integrity of the Empire. With this in mind, Conservative rule in Ireland, particularly pertaining to the nationalists, set out a campaign of naked repression. When this method became increasingly difficult to impose by the late nineteenth century, a campaign known as "Killing Home Rule with Kindness" was instituted. The Wyndham Acts (1902), a series of land reforms, sought to appease dissatisfaction and her nationalistic outcries, but was in no way willing

to relinquish any English control -- ever.

Up to 1885 the Liberal Party in England tried to settle Irish unrest through a series of coercive policies combined with economic, religious and social concessions, all intended to bind Ireland's loyalty to Britain. In the 1880's battling intense Conservative resistance, the Liberal Party under the leadership of William Ewart Gladstone granted reforms especially concerned with religious and land issues, but Gladstone was wholeheartedly distraught in discovering his hard-fought reforms did nothing to alleviate their dissatisfaction. Gladstone was now convinced that Britain could only pacify Irish nationalism by granting her some type of self-government. Irish unrest effectively gave voice through Augustine Parnell, who in 1880 seized control of the Irish Nationalist Parliamentary Party and rapidly changed it into a formidable political tool. At the 1885 General Elections, for the first time Ireland was able to return an overwhelmingly majority of Nationalist members to the Imperial Parliament at Westminster.⁴

Gladstone's conversion to a "Home Ruler" was to change the outlook of the Liberal Party for the next thirty years. His fanatical crusade for the nationalistic cause in Ireland led him to propose two separate Home Rule

Bills during his Ministry, the first in 1886 and the second in 1893. Both could be considered "dry runs" because they were inevitably blocked by the House of Lords, yet they succeeded in setting a deep Home Rule commitment in Liberal precedence, despite Liberal imperialist opposition. In rough terms, each Bill proposed a legislative body in Ireland, subservient to the Parliament at Westminster, composed of two "orders", each possessing a suspensory veto to protect the rights of minorities -- namely Protestants in Ulster. The two differed in Parliamentary representation at Westminster. Because the Imperial Exchequer controlled Irish taxation and the first Bill did not give Irish representation, the decision raised an Irish outcry of "no taxation without representation". The second Bill gave Ireland full representation in Parliament at a reduced number. Both Bills proved to be an electoral liability for the Liberal party and Conservatives were able to control power for the next decade.⁵

Gladstone's "fanatical zeal" in pursuing Home Rule led to the demise of his last two ministries. But he succeeded in establishing too deep and too powerful of a Liberal obligation for the party ever to abandon Home Rule.⁶ After the defeat of his second Bill, Gladstone

tried to battle the power of the Lordships, but the Home Rule issue was not pressing enough to rally Liberal support or stir the emotions of the public. After his subsequent retirement, sectionalism over the Home Rule question greatly weakened the Liberal party until Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman won leadership as a compromise candidate in 1887. The Liberal party then decided to temporarily "shelve" the Home Rule issue. First, despite Liberal responsibility towards Home Rule, the country had still elected a Conservative government and second, the Irish Nationalist Party was in chaos, having split into three separate factions after Parnell's death in 1891.⁷

Note: By 1905 the National and Liberal alliance had lapsed. Campbell-Bannerman adopted a more gradualist approach to Home Rule because it was causing a great division in his Party. The Liberal government of 1905-9 has been accused of abandoning the Home Rule question because Liberals contained a vast majority in Parliament without a coalition with the Nationalist Party (the first time since 1885)⁸. Yet it must be understood that there was nothing to gain from its introduction. The Lord's power of veto doomed any Home Rule legislation

The Gladstonian Liberalism that transferred into the twentieth century contained his deep-rooted commitment,

but lacked in enthusiasm. Newer Liberal tendencies began to concentrate towards "...continued emphasis on socio-economic reforms, whereas Home Rule was...an electoral liability."⁹ New Liberals began to look at the Home Rule cause with a "more stoic spirit of obligation", their enthusiasm declined as the years past. But in 1909, the then President of the board of trade, David Lloyd George, put forth a bold budget proposal where in its main provision a high tax was levied on land ownership. In an unprecedented act, the House of Lords rejected the Budget, causing a public and Liberal cry of indignation. The Liberals capitalized on this and formed a campaign to challenge the hereditary chamber's power of veto, which was staunchly conservative in its actions. The political climate was right for Liberal maneuvers. They released the issue to the "peers and public" bolstering public fury even higher. A Budget League was formed to show the rejected Legislation's democratic features and the Lord's selfishness by rejecting it. Dubbed the "People's Budget", any Conservative attempt to equate Liberal votes to Home Rule was written off as a diversion of the Budget controversy.¹⁰

The result of the 1910 General Election can be seen as momentous for Ireland's Nationalists. The election

severely weakened the Liberal majority in Parliament, and Liberals were now forced to rely on a coalition government with the Nationalist and Labor Parties. While the Budget issue dominated the election campaign, this new reliance on a coalition shifted emphasis away from the Budget Bill to the Parliament Bill.¹¹ A second General Election in the same year re-affirmed the governmental status.

Two months after Liberal Prime Minister Herbert Asquith gave complete commitment to the Home Rule cause during a campaign speech at Albert Hall, the Parliament Bill was given Royal ascent on 23 February, 1911, only two days after its introduction. It was a compromise to the Conservative order, which was threatened by an overwhelming majority of Liberal peers.

The general provisions of the Parliament Act are as follows:¹²

(i) "Money Bills" under certain conditions should become a law without Lord's consent (Speaker of the House of Commons defines the Bill).

(ii) Other Bills if passed by the Commons three consecutive sessions and rejected each time by the House of Lords, should become a law (having been passed within a two year "lifespan").

(iii) Five years (vs. seven) as maximum duration of Parliament.

It was the second provision which assured Ireland of

II A Two Front War

Home Rule. Once the Bill was introduced it was guaranteed

passage after two years, as long as a pro Home Rule

majority existed in the Commons. The last cog which

blocked Home Rule for the last thirty years was now

unplugged, setting the stage for Irish Home Rule and a

politically revolutionary era in Great Britain.

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rule. Seven ministries were appointed to a fact-finding

Home Rule sub-committee in January of 1911, a month before

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II A Two Front War

The Government in control of Irish Home Rule was under the leadership of Herbert Henry Asquith. He carried a strong and stable temperament and was a rigid parliamentarian. The difficulty he faced in handling the Home Rule issue was his inability to understand the amount of hatred and emotion involved. To Asquith, solution to the problem could be solved by employing the usual constitutional methods in Parliament. His pitfall was that he ruled his cabinet, but didn't create a convincing sense of Liberal Unity. He never bridged the gap between the New Liberalism and the Old Gladstonian commitment. His authority was undermined by his lack of personal magnetism over the Liberal party as a whole.¹³

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follows:¹⁴

Augustine Birrell - Chief Secretary of Ireland
David Lloyd George - Chancellor of the Exchequer
Winston Churchill - President of the board of trade
Lord R.B. Haldane - Secretary for war
Herbert Samuel - (not in cabinet)
Sir Edward Grey - Foreign Secretary
Lord Loreburn - (chair man) Lord chancellor

Their attention was focused on Home Rule finance and United Kingdom devolution, with devolution (or "Home Rule all round") emerging as the real issue. It obsessed the cabinet and blinded them to the main issue.¹⁵ Despite all the warnings starting in 1886, the sub-committee ignored almost entirely the Ulster voice of resistance in their calculations; most failed to comprehend the gravity of the situation. The only Liberal members of the cabinet who were actively concerned with Ulster were Birrell, Churchill and Lloyd George. Of these only the Chief Secretary of Ireland believed the Ulstermen to be a viable force.¹⁶ However, because of his position and his implied terms of commitment to Irish Nationalists, his personal belief in a separated Ireland within, in any practical terms, could not be expressed politically. To do so would jeopardize the confidence of the Nationals in the Liberal party.

The Irish secretary was merely to be the mediator between the Nationalists and the Liberals. Spokesman for the Irish in the Cabinet and scapegoat if the Home Rule

Ulster policy failed.¹⁷ Lloyd George and Churchill were the two remaining Liberal cabinet members who had the greatest impact on the Ulster cause, first in the pre-Bill era (1911) and then in the Parliamentary battle (1912-1914). Churchill played the more active and vocal role, while Lloyd George exercised more of a "behind the scenes" influence, keeping his public statements reserved and methodical. Churchill, on the other hand, was noted as being one who talks first and thinks later.¹⁸ It is safe to say that both men shared the Liberal commitment to Home Rule, but not the enthusiasm of its cause. Moreover, their actions in this respect are often viewed as a desire for expediency in Home Rule, in order to forge forth the newer concept of Liberal social reforms.

The more creative and dynamic elements for contemporary Liberalism wanted the traditional pledges discharged to allow the social reform impulses of New Liberalism to resume.¹⁹

It is this aspiration of convenience which would backfire on them, turning the tables on their control and direction of Home Rule and thrust into an even greater inconvenience than ever imagined.

So in 1911 the Home Rule sub-committee set out blindly on their formulations. Without even considering

Ulster they explored the various practical solutions for limited self-government in Ireland. The task was not easy even when considering the whole of Ireland. While celebrating somewhat of a socio-economic "renaissance" over the last thirty years, Ireland still amassed a huge debt, Ulster or no Ulster. From 1910-11 Irishmen received over 71 million more in benefits than they paid in taxes and total Irish revenue between 1896 and 1911 increased only 28% versus an increase in total Imperial expenditure of 91%.²⁰ But what was originally conceived as the main problem in formulating a Home Rule Bill actually turned into a secondary discarded argument in the eventual Home Rule debate. Committee concentration became obsessed with English devolution, where in the United Kingdom would divide its authority to four local assemblies: England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. These local assemblies would be subordinates to the Imperial Parliament and would be in charge of "purely local affairs", while the Imperial Parliament would control foreign policy, defense, trade and customs. Its main proponents argued devolution would not only provide a limited self-rule in Ireland, it would also increase regional efficiency within the United Kingdom and decrease the congestion at Westminster. For

the next two months Churchill and Lloyd George fought hard and proposed two separate plans, both of which were rejected on Birrell's insistence. For Irish Nationalists, "Home Rule all round" proposed enormous political problems in its implementation. Home Rule for Ireland would not exist along with Home Rule for England Scotland and Wales too.²¹

Morale in the Cabinet by this point was low. Home Rule was not the only priority for the Government. A cumbersome legislative load and prevailing social strife (coal miner strikes) was destroying their confidence. Strikes, militant suffragettes and political compromise as a result of bi-election losses in 1910 began to take its toll on the Ministry. The political climate was extremely tense and exhausting. The Cabinet was also receiving tremendous pressure from within, as a naval crisis temporarily diverted attention away from Home Rule.

After the failed devolutionary proposals, cabinet actions on Home Rule were very lax.²² Two supposed drafts were done in 1911, but both were almost complete plagiarisms of Gladstone's Second Home Rule Bill. When Nationalists finally got to see the Bill, they were informed that it was hurriedly thrown together and did not express the views of the Cabinet.²³

The Bill had to stay in the exact format and terminology of its predecessor; any change had to be thoroughly justified. The Liberals were not at the zenith of popularity at this point and any rallying point for a Conservative counter-campaign could destroy Liberal power. Departure from precedent leading to debate in the Commons could serve as a useful "prong" in a Conservative attack on the Liberal legislation.

Birrell worked with Irish Nationalist leaders John Redmond and John Dillon daily in 1911.²⁴ The Chief Secretary made every effort to assure restoration of the Gladstonian framework and the final legislation had to meet the approval of the Irish Nationalists. But in the same respect, Nationalists knew of their own limitations, creating a tenuous "tightrope effect" between Nationalist demands and Liberal concessions, the resulting balance of reform could not depart from precedence too radically. The only real demand Nationalists pressed for was fiscal autonomy, which was refused. Hence, despite Conservative fears, "Asquith's government was by no means the slave of the Nationalists leaders, as the Unionists claimed."²⁵ By the spring of 1911, confidence had been restored. Coal strikes, which had rocked the entire nation, were now settled. A change in attitude generated a renewed vigor

towards the Home Rule Bill. Asquith and Birrell worked furiously to finalize the Bill.

Yet as time would prove, their concentrated efforts were in vain. The key point the Bill should have had was in connection with Ulster. It is ludicrous how Liberals failed to see the potential problem Ulster would pose upon Home Rule. Granted Irish Nationals had no intentions of allowing a partition of Ireland, the Government still had an obligation to formulate the best legislation possible. Had they realized the gravity of the situation, which they should have, some type of concession would have to be made. But instead an ultimate reliance on a traditional policy in Ireland blinded Liberals to the severeness involved. Coercion was to be used if necessary, but even this plan had a flaw.

The awaiting crisis was foreshadowed many times, and particularly in January of 1911. Winston Churchill, former Conservative, a man of action and forceful personality, was given an invitation to speak at a Home Rule Rally in Belfast, Ulster. The location was to be Ulster Hall, where his father, Sir Randolph declared "Ulster will fight, Ulster will be right" twenty-six years earlier. Winston's visit was interpreted as a deliberate act of provocation and his appearance as an emissary for Home Rule created

"... a shocked feeling that his appearance...would be an act not only of political apostasy but of filial impiety."²⁶ The people of Ulster were outraged at his "betrayal" to his father. Leaders of the Ulster Unionist feared his attendance would ultimately lead to bloodshed; the rank and file looked to them to reach a solution. A resolution a week before Churchill's scheduled appearance vowed to impede any such talk "...proposed by rebel Nationalists and Liberals."²⁷ Churchill made a prudent readjustment of plans to alleviate the rising tensions. He changed the site to a Celtic football stadium in the Nationalist part of Belfast. But the damage to Home Rule had already been done. It provided a stronger unity in the Unionist camp, increasing their confidence and discipline. It created a clear realization to critics of the Ulster movement that the policy laid down at Craigavon could not be taken lightly.²⁸ Lastly, it destroyed the last chance to introduce the Home Rule Bill in a calm atmosphere.

The finalized Bill, approved by Nationalists, was now ready to be presented in Parliament. It proposed the establishment of an Irish Parliament, subject to the supremacy of Westminster. The Parliament would consist of a nominated senate (40 members) and an elected House of

Commons (164 members). It was to be granted general power to legislate for "...peace, order and good government in Ireland..." The crown would control the making of peace and war, treaties and foreign trade. A Lord Lieutenant, representative of the crown, would be head executive of the Parliament. Appointed for six years and would remain unaffected by a change of ministry. There would also be an advisory "cabinet" to aid the Lord Lieutenant in running "purely Irish affairs." Provisions were set to protect all social reforms since 1893, such as national insurance and old age pensions, and the list of general restrictions was much shorter than the 1893 Bill. The only procurement for Ulster were restrictions to promote religious equality, which in laymen terms were "a dollar short and a day late." Ireland would also be represented in the Imperial Parliament with 42 members.³⁰

In late March, 1912 at a Nationalist rally in Dublin, John Redmond, leader of the Irish Nationalist party, announced to a crowd of some 200,000 followers:

We have no wish to destroy the British, we only want our freedom...it is clear to me the [Home Rule] Bill which we support today will be for the good of Ireland and that we shall be stronger with it than without it. I am not accepting the Bill in advance. We may have to refuse it...Let the Gall [foreigner] understand that if we are cheated once more there will be red war in Ireland.³¹

The burden of assuring Ireland her own rule rested on his shoulders. To England, mistakenly he was the sole voice of Irish Nationalism. A true statesman and parliamentarian, Redmond was a leader of strong dignity and resolve, his political education having been born in the nineteenth century. A dedicated believer in the character of the English Parliamentarianism, Redmond's strength relied heavily on old school constitutionalism and the legality of actions within that framework. Yet it is here where Redmond is exploited by Home Rule resistance; because as it metamorphosis, the resistance veered further and further away from Parliamentary legality.³²

For Nationalism in Ireland their cause could not be more well found. The English had virtually destroyed them. Various small scale revolutionary attempts had been brutally quelled by British forces, those involved severely reprimanded and the bloodshed quite prominent. Their Nationalism was by no means new and did not exist wholly on geo-political lines. Anglo-Irish antagonism was (and is) a religious one, more unyielding and impregnable than can be conceived. Their hatred for one another could never be contained within constitutional guidelines. "How often in human affairs is moral indignation a fruitful

source of immoral action."³³

Unionists in Ireland, on the other hand, developed a close, intimate tie with England. This rested largely on religion as well, but not completely. English-imposed Protestantism found the majority of its success in Ulster County. Presbyterianism dominated the religious minority, and their consciousness as a minority generated a close-knit self-identity. Their beliefs were shunned by four-fifths of the populace and because of this Protestant Ulstermen came "...to regard themselves as the Bulwark of the Empire."³⁴ Their relationship with England was not one of coercion, but one of mutual admiration and respect. Economically in Belfast they enjoyed the success of being one of the world's leading ship builders,³⁵ a perfect compliment for England's vast commercial and maritime structure. Lastly, the Unionists of Ulster provided a sound political stance for the disunified Conservative party, a rallying point for Conservatives to centrify their efforts and bring down the Liberal Government.

The Ulstermen's cause was guided by Edward Carson. The emerging political scene called for a leader with excellent oratory skills to battle the expertise of Asquith and Redmond. Carson was asked to lead the Unionist Party because of his verbal skills, but he

even graver and Ulstermen feared the consequences which
detested

...The whining sentimentality, the tawdy and
exaggerated rhetoric; the manufactured hatred of
discontent that found vent in national
politics.³⁶

The leadership he accepted put him in a precarious
circumstance. Not only was he a Southern Irishman, of
unfamiliar with the psychology of the north and whose
preference was education not politics,³⁷ but leadership of
the Ulster Unionists meant the possibility of leading the
resistance of legal authority. Politically, this is a
seemingly dead end position. But Carson did understand
the basis of Ulster's resistance. He admired their
loyalty to the crown and their resolute stand for the
union. He himself converted from Liberal anti-orangism
to unionism in the late nineteenth century, as did all
protestant liberal sympathizers.³⁸ When Gladstone first
proposed Home Rule in 1886, it refreshed their loyalist
traditions: "...support given to Irish disloyalty for the
first time by one of the great political parties in Great
Britain would never be forgotten..."³⁹

Unionists cherished the label as "loyalists." It was
something definite to them. Nationalist policy in their
eyes meant "disloyalty" to the British Empire.
Nationalism under Catholic rule in Ulster meant something

even graver and Ulstermen feared the consequences which would arise if this were to occur. They equated Home Rule with "Rome Rule", having not only an imbedded hatred of Catholicism, but also an attitude of ascendancy towards it. Protestants in Ireland have an ingrained belief that they were morally and intellectually superior to those of any other religion. They considered Irish Catholicism as a separate and inferior "caste" of Irishmen. Their whole political attitude is determined by this outlook.⁴⁰

Reasonably, Protestants had a vast dislike of clerical participation in secular affairs. What were they to do with a Catholic dominated Parliament in control of marriage laws or public education? For Protestantism in Ireland the only answer was to resist Home Rule to the very end.

Organization and religious zeal are the two marked characteristics of the Unionist movement in Ireland. As early as 1892 Unionist lodges were formed to guide the anti-Home Rule movement and in 1985 the Ulster Unionist Council was founded as the

executive standing committee in charge of all questions of Unionist policy in Ulster. Its purpose was to form a Union of all local Unionist [lodges] in Ulster...Keep Ulster in touch with parliamentary representatives...[and] to be the medium of expressing Ulster Unionist opinion.⁴¹

This organizational framework helped orchestrate more

Unionist cause in the twentieth century when Home Rule was reintroduced in 1912. A need developed for "...[an] untiring organization for making effective defense against attack [by Home Rule]..."⁴²

On 25 September, 1911 Carson at Craigavon (home of unionist co-organizer James Craig) delivered Unionist resolutions, setting forth a distinct and definite policy against Home Rule. He claimed their cause was twofold:⁴³

- i) to resist any government in Dublin
- ii) arrange a provisional government to come into power the day Home Rule passes, and to remain there until Ulster has regained "unimpaired citizenship in the United Kingdom."

This Unionist rally clearly demonstrated the cohesive rank and file support for Carson. Extensively publicized in the English press this event caught the attention of the government, who chose to ignore the rally.⁴⁴

Conservative strength coincided with Carson's climb to leadership in Ulster. Andrew Bonar Law became leader of the British Unionist Party in November 1911. He brandished a more aggressive approach to politics, replacing the old moderation of his predecessor A.J. Balfour. His determination in providing strong leadership was especially forceful because the party was shattered

after the humiliating defeats in the 1910 bi-elections and the Parliament Act.⁴⁵ He and his party were determined to block Home Rule, but even more so to defeat the Liberal government and regain power. Their aggressive opposition could be seen in three steps between the years 1912 and 1914. The first was an attempt to rally public opinion and block Home Rule through a general election. By 1913, the second step had to be taken. A general election was unlikely, because Liberals had gained back some of their lost confidence. Now conservatives sought to negotiate the terms of the Bill, namely a provision for the exclusion of Ulster. These efforts were fruitless.⁴⁶

By the end of 1913 with Home Rule imminent under the Parliament Act, Conservatives chose their third and final step: to block Home Rule not only by a radical departure from traditional politics, but a pledged physical resistance. These are highly treasonous acts and from this point on, the unity of the Conservative Party began to disintegrate, each person acting on their own volition, differing on how they could aid Ulster and block Home Rule. Opposition, and as will be seen, proved to be beyond

The complexity of the Irish Home Rule crisis became increasingly more entwined during its two year debate in the English Parliament. It is extremely important to look

at the Bill's progression and its met resistance to fully comprehend what was at stake and why there were no "winners." For the two years proceeding World War I, the Home Rule Bill captivated and dominated the minds and efforts of some of the world's leading political figures. Through the myriad of alarming realizations, the unintentional disintegration of promises, the deliberate breach of precedence and the resulting party disruptions, one can find the true side effects Home Rule was to pose in Ireland once it passed into the Statute Book.

Particularly important was a proviso of the Parliament Act concerning amendments to any legislation. The Bill could be amended by the Commons before it reached the Lords for the first time, after that the Bill could be altered only by means of "suggestion" (from anywhere in the Parliament) and it required the Lord's approval. Hence, any exclusionary provision for Ulster would have to be realized and implemented at this stage, if Liberals were to control the entire legislation. Otherwise, any ensuing change of legislation would have to be approved by the Opposition, and as will be seen, proved to be beyond deprivation. Each side claimed sincerity in their attitude towards Ulster, but neither would acknowledge the other. It is quite apparent that both sides realized

Ulster was the center of controversy. With no provisions for an Ulster exclusion an amendment was imminent. Yet neither side at this stage was willing to make any proposals; to do so would be politically compromising. For the Liberals, any Amendment Bill meant that their Home Rule Bill was weak, for Conservatives any move to amend the Home Rule Bill admitted acceptance of Home Rule itself. With "both hands tied behind their backs," the Liberal and Conservative parties entered the first stage of the Home Rule crisis.

Having introduced the Home Rule Bill without any provision for Ulster, English Liberals were now vulnerable to the most poignant of Conservative attacks. As their last weapon, Conservatives "opened fire" on the Bill for a variety of issues, but predominantly for its lack of attention to the Ulster situation. It was their illicit plans to destroy Home Rule in any possible way. Conservative debate in the house disclaimed the initial assumption of Home Rule as wrong; they argued that Ireland only needed furthered reforms of the 1890's. "Ireland under Imperial Rule has been more prosperous than ever, Mr. Asquith avoided a historical review of the question from 1886 - 1912."⁴⁷ Appealing to the sentiments of the electorate, Bonar Law denied Asquith's "...right to pass

any form of Home Rule without a mandate from the people of this country [Great Britain], which he has never received."⁴⁸

Conservatives argued that Home Rule in Ireland as a first step in a greater devolutionary scheme is just a "cloak" to keep forty-two Nationalists at Westminster, thus insuring Liberal control. Furthermore, Conservatives objected that Nationalist presence would be a "haggle" in parliament, at every instance incurred by Home Rule "side effects," thus breaking down Westminster into an insubordinate machine.⁴⁹ They questioned who should pay for Ireland and why is it England? To them, the money spent so easily on "Irish purposes" (e.g. National insurance) should be spent on Naval ships--whose funds had to be "squabbled" for. They argued Liberals were worrying about a part of the Union when the security of the whole is the imperative. Financially, they argued Home Rule in Ireland could not exist without fiscal autonomy.⁵⁰ A.J. Balfour had this to add: "...The rotten hybrid system of Parliament with municipal duties and a national feeling [seems] to be a dream of political idiots".⁵¹

But the real focus of their antagonism was the Ulster question. They claimed that Home Rule would not work,

the resistance in Ulster was so vehement that the only end result would be civil war. Bonar Law spoke on behalf of the Ulster Unionists. He claimed the "gulf" between the ~~two~~ peoples of Ireland was "far wider" than the gulf between England and Ireland. He stated Ulster's opposition and the fact that they were willing to fight to the very end to prevent Home Rule and then questioned the government's ability to coerce the Ulstermen if need be.⁵²

This onslaught caught the Liberals by surprise.⁵³ They had failed to really explore the Ulster situation and were unable to counter any Conservative allegations. This left a chilling air of uncertainty in the Liberal camp. Their attempt at running the Bill through Parliament had hit its first stone wall. The first reading of the Bill passed 360 votes to 266, indicating the Opposition turned out to vote in greater force than the ministerialists.⁵⁴

The debate over the second reading lasted from 30 April to 9 May, 1912. The Bill passed again, 372 votes to 271,⁵⁵ with strong opposition pressure forcing Liberals to make more specific statements concerning Ulster. Their varied opinions demonstrated their lack of unity and unpreparedness in dealing with the Ulster question. Churchill's response admitted to Ulster's resistance and committed Unionism, but allowed:

Whatever Ulster's rights may be, they cannot stand in the way of the whole of the rest of Ireland. Half a province cannot impose a permanent veto on the nation.⁵⁶

The greatest dissension was found in the Liberal back benches. Resistance to Home Rule was expressed by Thomas Agar-Robartes a Cornish non-conformist, an anti-Catholic and a Liberal imperialist. He called for the exclusion of Ulster. Soon afterwards, the Agar Robartes Amendment of 1912 asked for the exclusion of four Protestant dominated counties in Ulster: Antrim, Armagh, Londonderry, and Down. Initially neither side would support the Amendment, because of the before-stated reasons, but Conservatives then decided to support it because if Home Rule were to pass, the Amendment might help prevent civil war.⁵⁷

A brief recess after the Amendment's proposal allowed Liberals to prepare for their opposition. A change of tactics allowed the Government to avoid further humiliation. Because Ulster Unionists had repudiated the Amendment, Liberals and Nationalists were able to adopt the "wrecking tactics" of the Unionists.⁵⁸ They blocked the Amendment by discrediting it as a Conservative attempt solely to wreck the Home Rule Bill.

During the summer recess of Parliament between July and October (1912) both sides struck out on campaigns and

rallies for party unity as well as garner public sentiments. Conservatives organized all Unionist delegates throughout the United Kingdom on 27 July, 1912 at the Blenheim Conference, pledging their support for the Ulster Unionists.⁵⁹ A vastly attended Ulster Unionist pledge in Belfast on September of 1912 (to be discussed in the next chapter) bolstered Unionist feelings. Upon returning to Parliament in late autumn of 1912, Conservatives and Unionists were anxious to propose a new Amendment to the Home Rule Bill. Carson has consulted the Unionist Council and they conceded with Home Rule approaching its second reading and General Elections unlikely, exclusion of Ulster is their best choice.⁶⁰ In January 1913, Carson proposed an exclusionary Amendment of the entire province of Ulster. It was rejected soundly 294 votes to 197,⁶¹ the Government's argument that any Amendment of the sort would ruin the machinery of the Home Rule Bill. "General opinion on both sides of the House agreed that the Amendment made the Bill impossible..."⁶²

Liberal chances to amend the Home Rule Bill under their own terms were now gone. If an amendment to conciliate the Ulster Protestants was not inserted by this stage, it could never be adopted at all, except by the Opposition's consent. Unionists reiterated their points

throughout the 1912 debates⁶³ together with the ominous warning that consent on an Ulster compromise would be highly unlikely in 1913 or 1914. Their reasoning for not proposing an Amending Bill at this stage causes a huge dilemma in their present stance. While Liberals had the chance to pass their own Amendment with their majority, they chose to wait and see what would arise. As time goes on, this tactic will prove even more difficult for the solution of the Ulster problem. One, because from the start Liberals pledged all of Ireland to the Nationalists and were increasingly dedicating themselves to the original Bill, whether this is their expressed view or not. Two, in order for any compromise there will have to be an agreement between all four parties involved: Liberals, Nationalists, Conservatives and Unionists. But this particular Liberal stance is not ill-founded. The Liberal Government after all is the Government of England, with control over her military. Should coercion be necessary, any resistance in Ulster could be easily quelled. As will be discussed later in this chapter, even this simple assumption loses foundation.

During the second reading of the Home Rule Bill, debates by the Unionists called for a General Election to decide whether or not the Bill has any constitutional

foundation.⁶⁴ The pressure on Asquith was intensified by adamant support of Liberal "die-hards," posing severe party strife if any compromise of Ulster was integrated. Yet in Ulster the Unionist campaign was audibly boisterous and their cause unavoidable (as will be described in the next chapter). The Government could act in two ways. One a provision for exclusion, which as pointed out, not only would cause complete opposition from Nationalist Party and within various parts of Liberal Party, but would also have to be agreed upon by the Opposition. Coercion, the second choice, is difficult. An essential question to the Liberal view of national self-determination is posed by Ulster. By granting Home Rule to Ireland, Liberals are freeing Nationalists from English coercive rule, but in order to do so, the Government might have to coerce Ulster. How could the Government allow self-determination of one part in Ireland and deny it in another?

Pressure was also imposed by the sentiments of the King towards the Ulster cause. After a visit to Ulster (1913), George V was convinced civil war was imminent. But he only developed a moral value in preventing a civil war, much to the Conservative's dismay he would not dissolve Parliament. In a published letter Lord Loreburn tremendous public reactions to the Government's policy in

Ireland. In it he called for a federalist government in Ireland and urged Liberals and Conservatives that a settlement by consent was an imperative.⁶⁴ This increased pressure changed the attitude of the Liberal party towards Ulster. In autumn of 1913 Birrell was replaced by Lloyd-George as Asquith's second in command and the Liberal Party began to debate an Ulster settlement. Churchill's late autumn speech expressed the developing Liberal view of the Ulster situation.

Ireland is a unit...The two nation theory is to us [the Liberal Party] an abomination and a blasphemy. [But] it is true that within the bosom of a nation there is room for diversities of the treatment of government and administrations.⁶⁵

His statement while denouncing an exclusion of Ulster but in the same time leaving perhaps a federalist network in Ireland, was good in providing a diversionary tactic to Liberal intentions. The speech left the Opposition guessing as to exactly what proposals the Liberals were going to put forth. This served to their advantage because while the Government now had to rely on the doubtful "goodwill" of the Opposition in an exclusionary proposal, it gave them valuable stalling time. It was the Government's choice to determine the timing and final terms of any settlement, they consequently stood more to gain with a later settlement.⁶⁶ In autumn (1913) Liberals

met for informed talks concerning Ulster. Lloyd George began an Ulster exclusion initiative, which would entitle four counties a limited exclusion period of five to six years.

Irish Nationalists were receiving conflicting accounts by the Liberal government, which illustrated the diverging view points within the cabinet and also a decreased confidence in the Government by Irish Nationalists.

The Prime Minister appears to have made no attempt to mediate between the two ministers [Birrell and Lloyd George] or coordinate their views. Consequently the combined effect of their three interviews with Redmond was more harmful than constructive.⁶⁷

From November 1913 to March the following year, Liberals were quiet about their policy in Ulster.⁶⁸ They needed to delay for time to assure a stronger bargaining point and had to convince Nationalists that concessions in Ulster were crucial. Adding to the confusion of Liberal intentions, in November of 1913, Asquith's speech at Leeds was resoundly uncompromising towards Ulster, but stated he would "close no door to a reasonable and honorable way of peace."⁶⁹ Meetings and discussions proceeded between the two parties, with Conservatives increasingly under the impression that a Liberal proposal, if one was to occur,

would be under "Home Rule within Home Rule" and not a simple exclusion of Ulster. Unable to come to any concession, the negotiations failed time after time. January 22, 1914, Asquith announced breakdown of talks with Conservatives, blaming it on their flat refusal to accept anything less than complete Ulster exclusion.⁷⁰

In February of 1914, after a resolved dispute in the Cabinet over Naval expenditure, Liberals created a new situation by agreeing to initiate proposals. Lloyd George's exclusion plan was reviewed, and proposed in a very strategic manner. It was introduced as Amending Bill, completely separate from the Home Rule Bill. They did this in order to protect the latter Bill, because if the Amending Bill was rejected, the Home Rule Bill could proceed and be carried out under the Parliament Act. This would prevent the Conservatives and Unionists from "wrecking" Home Rule or attacking various parts of the Bill. The provision for inclusion after 6 years sought to appease Nationalists while giving hope to Unionists that it would be enough time to get reprieve from ensuing elections.⁷¹ The Amending Bill was rejected by the Opposition and led Carson to call out his historic rejection on behalf of the people of Ulster. He argued that the problems were merely being postponed and

aggravated by the next two elections and Ulster men would remain a pawn in the British political game for the next six years: "Ulster wants this question settled now and forever. We do not want sentence of death with a stay of execution for six years..."⁷² The only way he could accept any exclusion of Ulster would be if it were for an indefinite period of time. His proposal was equally unacceptable to the Nationalists. For Home Rule time was running out. Political deterioration within Westminster made the only solution become a policy of coercion in Ulster. In the first year and a half after the policy decision in February of 1912, the Liberal approach was based on the assumption that the talk of physical resistance in Ulster was exaggerated. But by Fall of 1913, the ministry could no longer ignore the seriousness of the situation. It was increasingly evident that the movement in Ulster had grown tremendously since the spring of 1913 (to be discussed later). From this point on the government took a chance that civil strife or violence would not erupt in Ulster before political compromise was reached in 1914. Reiterating an earlier statement, this left the government very little option, except to show that it was willing to use the Army to deal with Ulster in

the event of a breakdown in negotiations.

With negotiations at a complete halt in January of 1914, the Government was now faced with their final option. After Carson's contemptuous rejection of Lloyd George's proposals, they were forced into actions. As talk of civil war and social unrest loudened, and with rumors of arrest warrants for Ulster leaders in the air,⁷³ the Government decided it was necessary for the Parliament to make some sort of show of authority in Ulster. The incidents which followed this policy are of the darkest in Nationalist history, no martyrs were created, no blood shed, but the repercussions of the "Mutiny at Curragh" changed the destiny of Home Rule forever.

On the 20th of March, 1914, Sir Arthur Paget, the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, was sent to Ireland with instructions to advance into Ulster in order to protect military stores and establishments from any Unionist raids. Part of his task was to explain to his officers the intentions of the Government, but what he accomplished in doing was to convince them that "...they were about to take part in a general plan designed to achieve the destruction of the Ulstermen's ability to resist the Home Rule Bill."⁷⁴ As well, he presented his subordinates with an unprecedented decision to allow them the choice of

Government demoralized and divided on the means of participation. Officers "domiciled" in Ulster would be allowed to abstain from further actions, afterwards they could resume their posts as if nothing happened; Paget's own words were that these officers "... would be permitted to disappear..." By the end of the day fifty-three officers had made their choice to "disappear", demonstrating a complete negation of any military precedent.⁷⁵

The Curragh crisis highlighted the Cabinet's inability to confront the issue of coercion soundly and to have a realistic military outlook in Ulster. Asquith's bold response to Curragh, "In view of this grave and unprecedented outrage...His Majesty's Government will take without delay appropriate steps to vindicate the authority of the law,"⁷⁶ was futile at this stage. How obtainable was Asquith's vindication with no practical way to achieve it? Very few steps had been taken for the prevention of arms in Ireland, the latest was a prohibition of the sales and importation of munitions in 1913.⁷⁷ But this was long after Ulster had effectively started drilling and arming their own militia. The Curragh fiasco aggravated existing Cabinet divisions. It strengthened the influences of the section in the Cabinet who opposed coercion⁷⁸ and left the

Government demoralized and divided on the means of enforcing the policy. It undermined the Government's credibility to the extent that the use of its very own armed forces was rendered ineffective, and left the Government little choice but to seek a political settlement on Unionist terms. The grimmest of all prediction for a united Ireland was expounded by an English Liberal newspaper, The Manchester Guardian: "A Government that is afraid of Ulster today will be afraid of Ulster to-morrow."⁷⁹

The timing of Curragh reflected the demise of the Conservative Party as well. Having failed in their attempts to either sway public opinion or arrive to a concession on Ulster, "passions began to dominate" their outlook on politics and Conservatives resorted to increasingly "un-English" and "un-precedented" acts of opposition.⁸⁰ Each member had his own idea of support for the Empire, the only unifying aspect was their hatred towards Home Rule. "They [Conservatives] adopted...the brutal posture of men who look forward to a clash of arms for the settlement of political affairs."⁸¹

Of the radical element in the Conservative Party, Lord Milner was one of the most extreme. He joined the Conservative Party not out of political devotion, but out

of fear that Asquith was destroying the Imperial Union just to remain in power. Milner did not participate in the Irish Crisis before 1914 because it was more of a parliamentary fight, but as the passing of Home Rule became imminent, he set out to bring the weight of public opinion upon the Liberal Government. He didn't have a need for "...tactical excursions of politicians. he dared not rely on them to save Ulster."⁸² His extremism allowed him to go beyond political lines and carried a strong compulsion to lead the resistance in a physical sense. Milner organized the British Covenant in 1914. Modeled after the Ulster Covenant, it was to be signed by all people residing outside Ulster, its main objective was to petition for a General Election before Home Rule was a law. By World War I two million people had signed it.⁸³ Another Unionist extremist was Lord Winterton who went to Belfast as a commando. His recount of physical assistance by various Conservatives claimed it to be quite large. "The number of us was increasing and the extent to which we were committed larger than was known at the time..."⁸⁴

Inside Parliament the Conservative activities, while less extreme, were still breaching tradition. Aside from William Waldorf Astor's attempt at reviving the traditional Federalist scheme to handle Ulster in March

1914, Bonar Law led the Conservative Party in an "...absolutely unprecedented breach of constitutional custom."⁸⁵ Not yet having realized the Liberal threat of physical coercion was "impotent," Law sought to undermine the Government control of the army in Parliament. In order to do so the House of Lords (not entirely unfamiliar with breaking precedent) would have to veto the Army Annual Bill, which each year regulated code of discipline for the Army under the power of the Parliament (no Bill, no Army). As a constitutional hold over for more than two centuries, the long standing custom in the House once rejected would force the King to dissolve Parliament. With the resulting General Elections, Conservatives quite possibly could win a majority. This action, while driven by the leader of the Conservatives, was causing an ever widening split in the Party. Astor vehemently opposed the tactic as a destruction of the basis of government and claimed "...as a statesman I am against it and as a politician I dread it."⁸⁶

Division was clearly evident in the Conservative Party by the time of Curragh Crisis. Factionalized, Conservative attempts to rally the public opinion to accusation that the Curragh incident was the result of a planned Liberal "pogrom" against Ulster, were not nearly

as strong as they could have been. Curragh also ended Conservative discussion on the Army Annual Bill, because it removed any suspicion of physical coercion of Ulster.

Four weeks later the consequences of Curragh were dramatically underlined. In a gun-running coup organized by the Ulster Volunteers (Ulster's militia for resistance of Home Rule), Unionists secretly raised one million and were able to purchase (from Germany) and land 35,000 rifles at Larne, quickly distributing them around the province. The coup was far more comprehensive in illegality than thought by the Government.⁸⁷ It left the Ulster Volunteer Force more effectively armed at exactly a time when the Government's military confidence had been shattered. The Government wavered for five days and upon Birrell's advice decided not to arrest or prosecute the gun-runners or move extra troops into Ulster.

The "mutiny" at Curragh and the gun-running at Larne, created a situation of vital circumstance. In Southern Ireland there was a great rush to join the Irish National Volunteers, a Nationalistic emulation of the U.V.F. Hence the predicament turned to one of imminent civil war (which will be discussed in the next chapter). With two standing armies in Ireland, Liberals were under even greater pressure for compromise, but far more unlikely to get it.

After Curragh and Larne, the Ulster Unionists were in a powerful bargaining position and not very inclined to allow the Conservative Party to agree to any compromise. To make matters worse, in July of 1914, the Irish Volunteers, at Howth port, attempted their own small scale version of Larne, which was foiled. The police intervened, the confrontation led to bloodshed and its organisers (Sir Roger Casement) were arrested. Not only did this increase Irish pressure to reject any compromise, it created another more pertinent ramification. The martyred victims at Howth bolstered Irish nationalism, giving their cause a very real sense that what is law in one part of Ireland is quite different in another.⁸⁸

The last Liberal attempt at an Amending bill was introduced by Asquith in May of 1914. It was a re-iteration of Lloyd George's proposal of six-year exclusion and received strong opposition from both sides. The Conservative Party allowed it to pass its first two readings, but then called for an amendment on its final reading, which would give "naked" exclusion of all nine counties and no time limit. Promptly rejected, the Amendment Bill was another attempt at a failed compromise. Nationalists in Ireland agreed to the Liberal proposed because it was impressed upon them the gravity of

resistance, but most openly because they feared the wrecking tactics of the Army Annual Bill might succeed.⁸⁹ This severely damaged Redmond at home. Nationalist extremists became very upset over their compromise and this helped contribute to a split in the Nationalist Party. Time had run out; under the Parliament Act the Third Home Rule Bill was to be carried out with no provision for Ulster and no aptitude to enforce it (in Ulster).

Asquith mistrusted the King and troops. He had an urgent decision to make but didn't call for an Amendment drop or Royal Assent. Instead he called for a very impractical stratagem.⁹⁰ In July Asquith broke down to King George's persistent requests for a meeting of all party leaders. Attending were Asquith, Lloyd George, Redmond, Dillon. Law, Landsdowne, Carson and Craig. But the attempt was fruitless. The argument rested on a provision for Ulster exclusion; it questioned how and where it should take place and for how long. Redmond continued to insist upon county option, which meant only four would be excluded, while Law wanted six. Carson demanded a "clean cut" of the entire province and Asquith was prepared to give up the time exclusion provided it be kept to county option.⁹¹ The Buckingham Palace Conference

broke up 24 July, 1914, the day Austria delivered its ultimatum to Serbia. Within three weeks England was at war in Europe.

In a meeting between Asquith and Law in October of 1913, the one agreement both men came to was the next time they met for negotiations, the fate of Ireland would probably be decided by "...people who cared nothing for English Politics or English Parties."⁹²

Ulstermen viewed themselves as traditional champions of law and order; they prided in themselves above all else their loyalty to the crown of England. They held the common opinion that the Liberal Government was unconstitutionally forcing Home Rule upon them, by breaking down the Imperial framework of the United Kingdom. In his book, Ulster's Stand for Union, Roger McNeill claims "There was nothing revolutionary in the Ulster movement. It was a resistance to the transfer of a people's allegiance without their consent...This is the very antithesis of revolution." As the Home Rule battle progressed in Parliament, Ulster men were hopeful something would turn up to prevent the Bill from receiving Royal Ascent - preferably a Conservative victory in a General Election, which would smash Home Rule for any and every part of Ireland. But admittedly, Carson stated

"Ulster might be coerced into submission, but in that case would have to be ruled as a conquered nation."⁹³

Their opposition rose in great force early in the Home Rule battle. They were not concerned with any specifics of the Bill, only with preparations to resist it. Ulster was marked with an invincible cohesion throughout their movement. Their goal was to peaceably demonstrate their intentions to remain loyal citizens of Great Britain. "Violence they knew would gravely prejudice their movement."⁹⁴ Two days before the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, Conservative and Unionists met at Craigavon, home of an Ulster resistance leader, Captain James Craig, and grasped hands in a common fight against separation, legal or not.⁹⁵

Five months later on 28 September, 1912, the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant was signed by over 470,000 Unionists.⁹⁶ The Covenant taken from the Scotch Covenant (1851), was short and concise, easily intelligible for even the "least learned" and it stressed opposition to Home Rule only in those districts they had control of. Coined "Ulster Day" it was officially accepted by the people of Ulster as a day of religious observance, asking God to view their plight. There was no excitement in the streets. "The average Ulsterman performs his religious

and political duties with a calm sobriety."⁹⁷ It was marked with strong sense of ceremony, signed in an orderly fashion. The Covenant brought a cooperation between rival Protestant factions, such as between the Episcopalians and the Methodists. Provisions were made for the Covenant to be signed in England and Scotland as well; all signatures were scrutinized and checked to assure no double signatures. Some even signed in their own blood. In commemorating this day, England's Conservative journal, The Observer, had to say:⁹⁸

The persistent skepticism, real or affected with which the government and their supporters treat the determination of the Ulstermen to defend [against Home Rule]...is a deplorable symptom of the modern attitude of mind towards political questions.

To back up their call for resistance, Ulster created its own militia, the Ulster Volunteer Force, which began its organization from the Unionist and Orange lodges of the 19th century. While broken down, the lodges provided the needed framework for effective organization. It's membership rose from mostly the uneducated to businessmen, country gentry, farmers and better class artisans.⁹⁹ The organised drilling of militia that started in these lodges had a dual purpose. One, to protect and maintain the Constitution of the King and two, to make themselves "more efficient" citizens in order to protect their own rights

and liberties. They kept their drilling to wooden rifles, which they claimed was because they wanted to obey the law.¹⁰⁰ As the Home Rule battle moved on in Westminster, the Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.) increased in size and efficiency. In September 1913, with no concessions made on their behalf, the Ulster Unionist Council drafted a plan to provide a Provisional Government in Ulster, if need be. The Provisional Government would be used to leading Ulster's resistance and remain there until her "loyalty" was returned to Great Britain. An "Indemnity Guarantee" of one million pounds-sterling was set off to provide for disablement and widows of the U.V.F. It was the wealthy in Belfast who contributed greatly. Carson, Craig and Londonderry each paid 10,000 pounds-sterling personally. Whatever their motives their contribution to a climate of rebellion and upheaval of which for them is not an attractive prospect, is a tremendously courageous gesture.¹⁰¹

The resistance was well antiquated with the Home Rule debate. Its leaders continually touched base with its rank and file and with vast foresight, not seemingly demonstrated by its opponents. The Unionists were able to cohesively formulate as much to their advantage as possible. In only a year after the Home Rule debate

began, Ulster had effectively organized not only a well drilled militia (lacking only a procurement of arms) but a genuine mass-following in its movement, religiously dedicated to fight to the very end. Its leaders were trusted by its people, and their actions were not taken in Westminster before the Unionist Council was consulted.

In a September speech in 1913, John Redmond emphasized the effectiveness of Ulster resistance. "No one...can doubt for one instant that if this opposition from...Ulster did not exist, Home Rule would go through to-morrow as an agreed Bill."¹⁰² He and his Nationalist Party did not have near the organization the Ulster Unionists enjoyed. The size of the party alone would not allow a complete cohesion of opinion. Prior to 1914, Redmond had through training and conviction realised how strong and effective the parliamentary procedure was in legislating and executing law and order. But in light of the recent events (Curragh and Larne), this reputation had been compromised. It was time for a change in policy for Redmond. If Unionists in the North were to be armed and ready, Nationalists could no longer rely on the government in Westminster to enforce their cause.

In September of 1913, Redmond was advised to start a similar militia to the U.V.F. by the more extreme

Nationalist wing in his Party, but refused to do so fearing a result in civil war. "It opened [for Redmond] a vision of fratricidal strife, of an Ireland divided against itself by new and bloody memories."¹⁰³ Despite Redmond's objections, militia drilling began in southern Ireland, started by Eoin MacNeill, Vice President of the Gaelic League. They were determined to not allow Parliament "...to make a football of Home Rule."¹⁰⁴ He called for all Nationalists to follow in suit, but the majority of Redmond's supporters, the United Irish League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, refused, generally out of fear that joining would severely weaken Redmond. By December only 10,000 members were enrolled in the Irish Volunteers.¹⁰⁵

While Carson was able to unify his people and his party in resistance, the gap in the Nationalist Party widened. Redmond's moderate compromises collided with the growing radical Nationalism, and his power was debilitated by this. The December 1913 proclamation prohibiting the importation of arms and munitions had serious repercussions in the Nationalist Party. With the U.V.F. reasonably armed, the national extremists were now blocked. The belligerence was antagonised, because Ulster had an advantage in its militia. The real split in the

Party occurred in 1914, with Redmond's acceptance of an Ulster exclusion and his pledge of support for England in the war.

It was Curragh and Larne which changed Redmond's stance on raising a militia in Southern Ireland. While Curragh "pained" Redmond "beyond belief," it was Larne which completely modified his attitude. He asked Asquith not to prosecute those involved and asked him to withdraw the prohibition of arms importation.¹⁰⁶ This was all for a good reason. First, he didn't want to have "martyrs" contributing to the Ulster cause, and second because once Redmond committed to the National Volunteers (newly named from Irish volunteers), the result was amazing. Membership rose from 80,000 in June 1914 to 132,000 in July -- 40,000 of which were army reservists.¹⁰⁷ If civil war were to occur, Irish Nationalists were going to be ready. But while the National Volunteers had a vast membership, there existed a major flaw in its network. The strength of Redmond was the fact that the majority of Volunteers looked to him as their leader, but the committee under which their enrollment took place was largely composed of the extremist section. Redmond wanted a similar connection as Carson had, this resulted in a clash and a split in the Volunteers.¹⁰⁸

Volun At the Buckingham Palace conference, Carson warned that peace was impossible "...unless something happens, the evidence of which is not present."¹⁰⁹ On August 9, 1914, that "something" did happen, England entered World War I. The newest crisis now diverted all attention away from the Home Rule Bill. The war extricated Asquith's Government, with the country's energy and time now focused on the continent. The war put off the approaching General Election until an indefinite future. A "party truce" was called, Conservatives and Unionists gave high priority to National Unity and offered to deter controversy in efforts to assure cohesion in the war effort. As Carson pledged, "England's difficulty is our difficulty," ¹¹⁰ he called for Ulstermen to realize they should ignore Asquith for his party, but rally behind him as the leader of their nation, which at that time was in grave peril. He urged them to join the Army and fight the Germans.¹¹¹ Home Rule Bill Nationalists in Ireland had a clear decision to make. Would they or would they not support England in its war against the Central Powers? The extremists implored refusal, but Royal Ascent to home Rule captured the commitment of Redmond. While he pledged only to protect the borders of Ireland¹¹², his moderation was too much and a split in the volunteers resulted -- 10,000 "Irish

Volunteers" left with MacNeill. For the Unionists Redmond's pledge caused grave apprehension. They feared what might occur while they fought on the continent and argued the British Coast Guard would do a better job in protecting Ireland; it was the coast of Flanders which needed protection.¹¹³

Liberals pledged to drop all controversial legislation, yet on 10 August Asquith announced he would advise King George V to sign the Third Home Rule Bill.¹¹⁴ This can be explained by the unclear intentions of Ireland's nationalists, who claimed any support for the war effort rested solely on the question as to whether or not the Home Rule Bill would become a law.¹¹⁵ For once Redmond discarded his deep rooted parliamentary loyalty and applied the old maxim, "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity." The postponed debate over the Amending Bill allowed Royal Assent of the Third Home Rule Bill with no agreement over Ulster, but provisions would be talked about after the war. A Suspensory Bill was also to be provided so that the Home Rule Act would "...remain in abeyance till the end of the war ..."¹¹⁶. With home Rule in the Statute Book Ireland's plight had just begun. The Liberals made a costly blunder. What they wrote off as a Unionist bluff turned into a nightmare, and when it

III Conclusion

As evidenced in this work, Liberals failed to give Ireland unified Home Rule. Ireland remains a divided land today because of it. Historical hindsight enables us to judge and evaluate the various policies and implementations in the Home Rule debate between 1912 and 1914. Still, it is a difficult guess as to what would have transpired had England not been thrust into the First World War. The War extricated the Liberal Party of England and shifted the country's attentions to a graver crisis. But the change of circumstance does not correct the Liberals failure to properly evaluate Ireland and particularly Ulster's stand for resistance. In doing so they left themselves ignorant to any Home Rule provision dealing with the issue. There were no Nationalists nor any Ulstermen on the Home Rule "fact finding" committee in 1911. It is no wonder the policy they adopted did not consider Ulster as a special case, how Ulster's vocal organised resistance could be ignored, and even though Liberals had ample time to do so, how they failed to formulate some amendment for Ulster in the Home Rule Bill. The Liberals made a costly blunder. What they wrote off as a Unionist bluff turned into a nightmare, and when it

came time to call this "bluff," they backed down. This is key in understanding Anglo-Irish relations today. Why has the Government in England continually failed to challenge Ulster's resistance? Bloodshed and civil unrest were their main deterrents. But why had the Government not taken extensive steps to prevent both the formation of armed forces and the procurement of weapons in Ireland? Dilemma: if they had succeeded in doing this, and they did cover Ulster, they would face a moral conflict. How could they grant self-determination to one part of Ireland, yet prevent it from another?

The British Government greatly misjudged the situation in Ireland. They were blinded by their own prejudices and hatreds. The sincerity of the Liberal party is highly questionable. While they remained deeply committed to Home Rule and fought for two years in the Parliament for its ascension, it is clearly evident that their battle was a fruitless by product of an attempt to run through the Bill and continue on with other agenda. It is this type of carelessness which blinded them to the Ulster cause. Asquith was asking for an impossible compromise. He wanted a Protestant minority to subjugate itself to a Catholic people, all to be controlled by the Imperial Parliament. Had he forgotten the great religious

wars of the past? These peoples hated each other. How could he ask the greatly outnumbered Protestants to give up their "liberty" and "freedom" for what they considered "enslavement" under Catholic rule? "union." Their will

was Asquith did not realize that Redmond's feeling for British democracy was not the same in respect to many others in Ireland, who were increasingly dubious of the Liberal Government. Liberals offered Nationalists an ultimate school at the start of the Home Rule campaign. Bit by bit, they reneged on their promise, eventually shattering Ireland's trust in them and the Nationalist leaders. Stipulations in the Bill itself are questionable. The Irish Parliament was to rule in "purely Irish affairs" only. Yet England was to control her police force, army, taxation and trade. Are these not "purely Irish affairs"? There was also a failure to protect the religious minorities in Ireland. What was to become of the Catholics in the north and the Protestants in the south, especially if they provided an exclusion for Ulster? The Conservative Party's motives and actions are questionable as well. A body of traditional politicians and aristocrats in a traditional institution became convincingly treasonous in their deeds. They were willing

to break apart the Government and the military of the country, in time of grave crisis, all in order to gain power (using Home Rule as their vehicle). Their intentions were not for saving any "union." Their will was to keep a crippled country under their domination. Ireland was a financial liability to England; her expenditures greatly exceeded her revenue. All of this was coming out of England's own pocket. Aside from Ulster, somewhat economically prosperous, there was very little Ireland had to offer England, except her resistance to any further subjugation.

English misgoverning allowed Ireland to foster two standing antagonistic armed forces. The increased polarization between Unionists and Nationalists outlined how each dichotomy saw the other as the enemy, one which they would have to kill. By World War I, England almost completely lost control in Ireland. The amount of coercion to dispel an imminent civil war was highly impractical. Even today Ulster remains in an almost ambiguous situation. Terrorism and bombings are a daily occurrence in his region, which suffers a 20% unemployment rate (40% in Catholic areas). The hatred and animosity Catholics and Protestants share for one and another is recognized in these extremist actions.

It is catastrophic to see such a beautiful land and people reduced into a generalisation as victims of religious war (Protestantism against Catholicism) but as far as a generalization goes, it is true. The people of the Republic of Ireland fought hard for what they have, their northern counterparts as well. Ireland lives in a constant antagonism, its economy does not permit the luxury of even part-time employment. Yearly, 50,000 state funded college graduates emigrate from her borders (state published figures from the Republic of Ireland). For them their future cannot be lived in native Ireland. Ireland today is a direct result of England's rule of the past. It violated her people and oppressed and impoverished her rich culture for centuries. In two short years the Liberal Government thought it could undo centuries of injustice. How could they expect to alleviate the animosity and hatred imbedded by hundreds of years of humiliation and degradation? The Home Rule Crisis is just not a lesson, but a reflection of a tragic circumstance. There is and never will be an answer for Ulster. Ireland is to remain a partitioned island; her internal plight to be battled out by terrorist organizations that serve as the only vent to an ill-fated sense of nationalism.

Footnotes

- 1 P.S. O'Hegarty, History of Ireland Under the Union (1851- 1922 (London, 1969), p. 811.
- 2 Patricia Jalland, The Liberals and Ireland (Sussex, 1980), p. 19.
- 3 Ibid., p. 19.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 20 - 22.
- 5 RCK Ensor, England (1870-1914) (London, 1936), pp. 68-70.
- 6 Jalland, op. cit., p. 26.
- 7 Ibid., p. 23.
- 8 Ibid., p. 26.
- 9 Ibid., p. 30.
- 10 Ronald McNeill, Ulster's Stand for Union (London, 1922), pp. 20-21.
- 11 Jalland, op. cit., p. 28.
- 12 McNeill, op. cit., p. 23.
- 13 Jalland, op. cit., pp. 33 - 37.
- 14 Ibid., p. 38.
- 15 Stephen Gwynn, John Redmond's Last Years (New York, 1919), p. 105.
- 16 Jalland, op. cit., p. 58.
- 17 Ibid., p. 32.
- 18 Ibid., p. 62.
- 19 Ibid., p. 30.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 36 - 38.

- 21 Ibid., p. 38.
- 22 Ibid., p. 39.
- 23 Ibid., p. 40.
- 24 Ibid., p. 42.
- 25 Ibid., p. 44.
- 26 McNeill, op. cit., p. 62.
- 27 Ibid., p. 63.
- 28 Jallard, op. cit., p. 63.
- 29 Ibid., p. 42.
- 30 Ibid., pp. 42 - 43.
- 31 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 63.
- 32 Ibid., p. 90.
- 33 A. M. Gollin, Proconsul in Politics (Letchworth, 1964), p. 173, hereafter cited as P.P.
- 34 McNeill, op. cit., p. 13.
- 35 O'Hegarty, op. cit., p. 381.
- 36 McNeill, op. cit., p. 9.
- 37 Ibid, p. 10.
- 38 Ibid., p. 11.
- 39 Ibid., p. 12.
- 40 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 89.
- 41 McNeill, op. cit., p. 36.
- 42 Ibid., p. 13.
- 43 Ibid., p. 45.

- 44 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 105.
- 45 Jallard, op. cit., p. 56.
- 46 Ibid., p. 70.
- 1212:8. 47 "Robbing John to Ruin Pat", The Observer, 14 April
- 48 McNeill, op. cit., p. 28.
- 1212:8. 49 "Robbing John to Ruin Pat", The Observer, 14 April
- 50 Ibid., p. 8.
- 51 McNeill, op. cit., p. 78.
- 52 Ibid. p. 90.
- 53 Jallard, op. cit., p. 83.
- 54 Ibid., p. 84.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 67.
- 57 Jallard, op. cit., p. 89.
- 58 Ibid., p. 97.
- 59 McNeill, op. cit., p. 90.
- 60 Jallard, op. cit., p. 110.
- 61 Ibid., p. 112.
- 62 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 69.
- 63 Jallard, op. cit., p. 116.
- 64 Ibid., op. cit., pp. 123 - 129.
- 65 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 85.
- 66 Jallard, op. cit., pp. 142 - 144.

- 67 Ibid., p. 174.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid., p. 178..
- 70 Ibid., pp. 174 - 186.
- 71 Ibid., op. cit., pp. 140.
- 72 McNeill, op. cit., p. 171.
- 73 Jallard, op. cit., p. 213.
- 74 A.M. Gollin, The Observer and J.L. Garvin (1908-1914) (London, 1960), p. 422, hereafter cited as Gollin, Observer.
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- 76 Ibid.
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- 78 Jallard, op. cit., p. 243.
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- 82 Gollin, P. P., p. 183.
- 83 Ibid., p. 187.
- 84 Gollin, Observer, p. 388.
- 85 Ibid., p. 400.
- 86 Ibid., p. 418.
- 87 Rck Ensor, The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott (London, 1970), p. 215.
- 88 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 90.

- 89 George Dangerfield, The Damnable Question (Boston, 1976), p. 115.
- 90 Ibid., p. 117.
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- 93 McNeill, op. cit., p. 151.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Ibid., p. 120.
- 96 Ibid., op. cit., p. 130.
- 97 Ibid., p. 118.
- 98 "The Signing of the Covenant" The Observer 29 September 1912: 10.
- 99 McNeill, cit., p. 31.
- 100 "The Signing of the Covenant" The Observer 29 September 1912: 10.
- 101 McNeill, op. cit., pp. 150 - 155.
- 102 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 76.
- 103 Ibid., p. 92.
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- 108 McNeill, op. cit., p. 229.
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- 112 Gwynn, op. cit., p. 101.
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- 114 McNeill, op. cit., p. 230.
- 115 Ibid., p. 231.
- 116 Ibid. p. 235. Manchester Guardian 28 September 1912:9.

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