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THE LAST YEARS OF DUBLIN CASTLE
THE ADMINISTRATION OF IRELAND
1890-1921

by

Pauric Travers

A thesis submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Australian National University

March 1981
This thesis is my own work

Pauric Travers
... and now the city sleeps; wharves, walls and bridges are veiled and have disappeared in the fog that has swept up from the sea; the shameless squalor of the outlying streets is enwrapped in the grey mist, but over them and dark against the sky the Castle still stretches out its arms as if for a monstrous embrace.

George Moore, *A Drama in Muslin* (1886)
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The most significant thing about the finding of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in 1916 that the Irish administrative structure was 'anomalous in quiet times and almost unworkable in times of crisis' was the equanimity with which it was greeted. The defectiveness of the existing structure was widely recognised. There was less agreement about the causes of that defectiveness or how they might be remedied.

The main feature which distinguished the administration of Ireland from that of the rest of the United Kingdom was the existence of a separate Irish Executive. It was a barrier to closer union and sometimes promoted greater diversity. The Executive's functions were complex and varied, probably too much so. The respective powers of its main officers were poorly defined and proved a constant source of friction. These weaknesses were exacerbated by the weakness of the permanent civil service in Ireland.

Partly because of the absence of an effective contripetal force in Dublin Castle, the Irish boards and departments and the Treasury in London assumed an added importance. The Irish boards were numerous, their functions were poorly defined and often overlapped, and their operations were, in many cases, uncontrolled. This was guaranteed to infuriate the Treasury which managed to exercise a crippling control in some areas of Irish administration. The Treasury waged a prolonged campaign to limit Irish expenditure but was unsuccessful on this front because the exigencies of politics, more than anything else, shaped Irish administrative policy.

This was a two-way process. If political exigencies shaped
administrative policy, the administrative structure was an equally important factor in the shaping of Irish politics. That is an obvious point but one which has largely been ignored by Irish historians. With a few exceptions, they have been too preoccupied with the cut and thrust of political history to recognise how much is to be learned from the study of the theory and practice of Irish administration. The underlying theme of this thesis is the extent to which the history of the period 1890-1921 - the last years of Dublin Castle - was shaped by the machinery of government.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the many people and institutions whose help and support made the writing of this thesis possible, I express my sincere gratitude.

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I would like to acknowledge the assistance of a number of individuals: Cameron Hazlehurst, John McColgan, Eunan O’Halpin, John Turner, Chris Cuneen, Ronan Fanning and Donal McCartney were all generous with their time or in giving me access to their own work. I am also indebted to the various people who typed the thesis and who helped with proof-reading.

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### ABBREVIATIONS

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A NOTE ON TERMS AND CONVENTIONS USED

The Irish Government: This term is used throughout in the same way as it was used by contemporaries: to refer to those officers of the United Kingdom Government who were entrusted with the government of Ireland. There was, of course, no independent Irish Government. The term 'the Irish Administration' is used in the same way. To avoid ambiguity, capital letters have been used when referring to the institution of Government and lower case when referring to the process of government; similarly with the Irish Administration and the administration of Ireland.

Dublin Castle and The Castle: Again following contemporary usage, these terms are sometimes used as a shorthand for 'the Irish Government'.

Place of Publication: Unless otherwise stated, the place of publication of all books cited is London.
INTRODUCTION

It is of course obvious that, could we start afresh, no such system would be proposed by the wildest visionary.

Arthur Balfour

When West Ridgeway came to Ireland as Under Secretary in 1887, he brought with him considerable knowledge of colonial administration, having served in India as a soldier and as a political agent. His description of the system of government he found in Ireland was something less than enthusiastic. In a memorandum on the subject he declared that

nothing could be more chaotic and effete than the present system of government by boards. For at present Ireland is ruled by a congeries of boards who are by statute semi-independent, and by the Treasury in London. These boards have the power and licence to commit blunders but on the Chief Secretary rests the responsibility. When the Chief Secretary happens to be a man of commanding influence and when a common danger threatens the existence of the Castle this complicated machinery works smoothly, but in a cumbersome and unproductive fashion. But if this centripetal force were withdrawn all branches of Irish administration would fly off in their own aimless worn out grooves.

Though Ridgeway's memorandum was written in 1889, his description of the system of government in Ireland remained applicable throughout the next thirty years - the last years of Dublin Castle. Indeed the

period saw an increase in the number of boards and a huge growth in the funds disbursed by them. It was a period of growth in and extension of government rather than of fundamental reform. It was also a period of significant political developments. As a corollary of both, the pressure on the 'centripetal force' was greater than ever before. The Irish Executive stood between the 'congeries of boards' and the Treasury and between the Government and the people. The system could not function without it. As the wheel began to spin faster, the need for an Executive of 'commanding influence' became more and more pressing.

The 1916 Rising was followed almost immediately by the resignation of the 'triumvirate' who comprised the Irish Executive - the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Under Secretary. It was to be expected that heads would roll, but the clean sweep made does emphasise the fact that the Irish Executive was ultimately held accountable for the successful government of Ireland. Despite the widely accepted conclusion of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion that the whole administrative structure was 'anomalous in quiet times, and almost unworkable in times of crisis', it was still expected that the Irish Executive should be able to operate it reasonably efficiently.

One of the main questions to be asked about the Dublin Castle system is whether this presumption was not over-optimistic. That is a question asked in this thesis. Ridgeway pointed to one aspect of the problem when he referred to the need for officers of 'commanding influence'.

3. Lord Wimbourne, the Lord Lieutenant, was reappointed after he was exonerated by the Royal Commission on the Rebellion.

4. Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland, p.4 [Cd 8279], H.C. 1916, XI.
influence'. There are many others. Commanding influence was impossible without ability, experience, tact and access to reliable advice. It also required a facility for working with colleagues with whom one was in an ill-defined and confused relationship. Even then the recipe for success was not complete. Had the administrative structure been perfect, the structure of the society to be governed would have continued to pose serious problems for English administrators.

The claim that the administrative structure in Ireland was 'anomalous in quiet times and almost unworkable in times of crisis' followed a very brief investigation by the Royal Commissioners. They examined only a small number of witnesses and confined their attention almost entirely to the period 1912-16. The question which arises is whether the system broke down in those years or whether it had always contained the seeds of its own destruction. This thesis sets out to examine the working of the administrative structure in the quiet times and in the times of crisis in order to test the validity of the finding of the Commission on the Rebellion.

It is not my intention to write a political history of the years 1890-1922. No other period in Irish history has been so intensively researched and written about by political historians. My concern is with the administrative structure and the ways in which it influenced the course of events. That necessarily involves dealing with the political history of the period but always in the context of the administrative structure.

Neither is it my intention to write a comprehensive history of the administration of Ireland in the period. Clearly it will be necessary to establish how the country was administered in theory and in practice and to examine the more important areas and agencies of government. But my over-riding concern is with the political question
and my main concentration will be on that. Administrative history is much less well developed in Ireland than political history. R.B. McDowell's *The Irish Administration 1801-1914*, published in 1964, is the only major work on the subject. It is all the more fortunate, then, that it has proved to be a work of such enduring quality. It is an accurate and comprehensive survey, and indispensable even for the shorter period 1890-1914.

But, for the historian interested in the last years of Dublin Castle, McDowell's book has one major limitation. Because it covers a period of over one hundred years, it is obviously not possible to examine issues in any great depth. While it does trace the development of the Irish Administration, it does not give any impression of the Administration in action. Only by examining the Administration and administrators at work is it possible to assess their performance and to see inherent defects. For that reason, I have confined this study to roughly thirty years. An even shorter period might have allowed a more detailed picture to emerge, but probably at the expense of being misleading and unrepresentative. It would inevitably have been a static rather than changing picture. By including a number of Administrations, both Liberal and Tory, it is possible to assess whether and how the system changed, and to identify those problems which were unique to Liberal or Tory Governments and those which were common to both.

In his description of the system of government West Ridgeway identifies three of the most important parties to the administration of Ireland: the Irish Executive, the Treasury and the Irish boards and departments. Central to this study is the question of where real control lay. The four sections of the thesis examine the control exercised by the Irish Executive, the boards and the Treasury. It is perhaps not surprising that a member of the Irish Executive (Ridgeway)
should claim that the country was ruled by the boards and the Treasury. Only by examining the Administration at work is it possible to confirm or refute the claim.

As one administrative historian has recently remarked, nothing better typifies the importance of the Irish Executive than the fact that it was generally referred to as the Irish Government\(^5\). He might have added that it also symbolised the anomalous position in which the executive found itself and typified the misunderstanding which prevailed about its status. The Irish Executive was seen as having the responsibilities of a colonial governor. But it did not have his power or independence. It had, in effect, the status of a department of the central Government and was thus answerable on most things to Cabinet and Parliament. In Ireland it had the name of being the Irish Government. Circumstances were such that it did often in practice have more independence than the heads of English departments. But, as will be seen later, the control which it could exercise in some areas of Irish government was quite limited. Nonetheless, whether the actions of the Lord Chancellor or the local Justice of the Peace, the Land Commissioner or the bailiff, were in question, they were regarded by the general public as being under the immediate direction of the Irish Executive. But though the Executive was of fundamental importance, it was often much less powerful and less ubiquitous than it was given credit (or blame) for.

Such misunderstandings about the position of the Irish Executive are partly attributable to the differing definitions of its composition. The term is, and has sometimes been, used to refer to the senior officers

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5. Ronan Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance* (Dublin, 1978), p.2. For a list of members of the Irish Executive between 1890 and 1922, see Appendix 1.
of the Government in Ireland including the Local Chancellor, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General and even occasionally the heads of the Irish boards and departments and the Commander of the Forces in Ireland. More narrowly and more correctly, it is used to refer to the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Under Secretary. This is a useful and tidy definition containing as it does representatives of that trinity of interests, Crown, Parliament and Civil Service. However, even this is a little misleading. The Under Secretary was not strictly speaking a member of the Irish Executive: he was simply the most senior civil servant in Dublin and the Executive's Chief adviser and administrator. In reality, however, this made him one of the most important officers in the Irish Government. For this reason I have devoted a separate section to the role of the Under Secretary in the period.

Though this study is concerned with the administration of Ireland, it would be undesirable, even if it were possible, to divorce it completely from the administration of the United Kingdom as a whole. The Irish administrative structure was distinctive but it was certainly not autonomous. It was linked with Whitehall as much as with Westminster. While the Irish boards and departments emphasise how far Ireland deviated from the 'norm', the central position of the Treasury emphasises the ultimate unity of the system. Both are discussed with this in mind.

It has often been pointed out that the event which more than any other governed the course of Irish history in the nineteenth and

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6. It is these three which McDowell discusses in his chapter on the Irish Executive (pp 52-77). More recently, Ronan Fanning has defined the Executive as a 'triumvirate' composed of the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary and the Under Secretary (Fanning, *op. cit.*, p.2).
Ironically, however, it was the incompleteness of that union which shaped the administration of Ireland between 1800 and 1921. It is arguable in particular that when, later in the period, the union was increasingly threatened, the inability of the Government to respond to and counter that threat was partly attributable to the weaknesses inherent in the form of union which had taken place.  

The Act of Union changed the status of Ireland from that of a separate colony (technically a separate Kingdom) to that of an integrated part of the United Kingdom. Or at least it was supposed to. Though some of the supporters of the Act might have been reluctant to admit it at the time, complete integration was the logical implication of what was proposed. Thus the union of the two Exchequers in 1817 and the gradual equalisation of taxation, especially by Gladstone in the 1850's, were seen as merely regularising the new status of Ireland. However the Union left Ireland with one vital feature of colonial government, a separate Executive. Perhaps it was felt that this too, like the Irish Exchequer, would eventually be abolished: there were certainly good reasons to proceed slowly towards integration. If complete integration was the ultimate goal, progress in that direction was not continuous and was never completed. Indeed there were many developments which moved in the opposite direction. The existence of a separate Irish Executive was a barrier to closer union and it, at times, promoted greater divergence.

The successful union of Scotland with England in 1707 was quoted as a precedent for what was being proposed in 1800. In fact what are more instructive are the differences between the two unions. In the case of Scotland, all instruments of separate Scottish government were abolished. Only the Scottish legal system survived. In the case of Ireland, the union did not go much beyond a union of Parliaments. Much as the Treasury might have liked to enforce uniformity in administration throughout the United Kingdom, it is doubtful whether the existing structure would have allowed it.

The Secretaryship for Scotland was abolished as soon as the Stuart threat died away after 1745. This, in itself, may be revealing. It was probably the continuance of the equivalent of the Stuart threat in Ireland which made successive Governments wary about closer union. Ireland was too volatile and indiosyncratic in character to invite complete integration through the abolition of the Irish Executive. There were definite advantages in having a separate Executive to deal with a disturbed country not least of which was that the problem was thus isolated and less likely to prove contagious. Unfortunately an arrangement which was prolonged to guarantee peace was much less likely to be able to cope with the more mundane problems of governing the country. Ultimately it was therefore unable to guarantee either peace or good government.

8. It was revived in the 1880's.
Chapter 1

The Lord Lieutenant

Throughout the period from the Union to the Treaty, the head of the Irish Executive was the Lord Lieutenant. Though in practice his powers were increasingly usurped by the Chief Secretary, the War Office, the Home Office and the Treasury, legally he retained most of his powers. As the Sovereign's representative in Ireland, the power vested in him was considerable. With the growth of statutory authorities and the extension of the powers of various departments his discretion was limited but he did retain roughly those powers which the Sovereign would have possessed in Ireland: he was head of the forces and had the prerogative of mercy.\(^1\) His powers of patronage were severely limited by the growth of more organised government and specifically of the modern civil service but he continued to possess the ultimate authority in a number of appointments.

Officially the office of Lord Lieutenant existed from 1333 onwards although there were representatives of the King in Ireland almost from the arrival of the Normans.\(^2\) After a futile expedition to Ireland in 1171-2, Henry II gave Hugh de Lacy a large grant of land and entrusted him with the

1. Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Report, p. 3 [Cd 8279], H.C. 1916, XI. Lord Wimbourne, the Lord Lieutenant at the time of the Rebellion, was unaware that he was theoretically head of the forces. Ibid., Evidence, pp 37-8 [Cd 8311], H.C. 1916, XI; J.G. Swift MacNeill, 'The Breakdown of the Dublin Castle Regime', Contemporary Review, 110 (1916), 26.
2. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class II, 23 (Lord Lieutenant's Household), P.R.O., T 165/46.
care of Dublin Castle and the command of his Irish subjects. In reality, then, De Lacy was the first Viceroy and his responsibilities - to maintain the security of the King's new possession - remained the primary duty of all his successors. 3

As the Crown's representative in Ireland, the Lord Lieutenant was surrounded by all the trappings of Royalty. From the day of his arrival until the day he left he was accompanied by a pomp and ceremony which contrasted sharply with the generally sombre state of the country. Even when the political climate might not have been thought conducive to overt displays, the established forms were usually observed.

The most formal of these occasions was the State Entry of the new Viceroy. Generally he was met by a Guard of Honour at Kingstown Pier and at Westland Row Railway Station from where he rode in procession to Dublin Castle. There the Ulster King of Arms and the Comptroller of his Household conducted him to the Presence Chamber where the Lord Justices, sitting under the canopy as Chief Governors, received him. 4 A procession was then made to the Council Chamber in a rigidly determined order: four Aides-de-Camp were followed by Gentlemen-in-Waiting, Athlone Pursuivant of Arms, Officers of Arms bearing the Maces, the Master of the Horse, Chaplains, Chamberlain, Gentleman Usher, Comptroller of the Household, State Steward, the Lord Lieutenant's Private Secretary, Ulster King of Arms in his Tabard and Collar with his Sceptre bearing the Letters Patent from the Crown appointing the Lord Lieutenant, the Sword of State borne by the Chief Secretary or, in his absence, the Under Secretary, the Lord Justices, more Aides-de-Camp and finally the Lord Lieutenant.

3. Charles O'Mahony, The Viceroys of Ireland (1912), pp 15-16.
4. The Lord Justices fulfilled the duties of the Viceroy during the 'inter-regnum' and at any time he was absent from Ireland.
In the Council Chamber, the Lord Lieutenant, standing head uncovered, presented his Letters Patent to the Lord Justices and the Privy Councillors. who were seated with their heads covered. These were read aloud by the Clerk of the Hanaper and the oath of allegiance and official oath administered to the Lord Lieutenant by the Clerk of the Council. The Lord Lieutenant then produced another letter demanding that the Lord Justices deliver to him the Sword of State. When this was read by the Chief Secretary, or in his absence another Privy Councillor, the Sword of State was duly handed over and the Lord Lieutenant invested with the collar and insignia of the Order of St. Patrick. He then covered his head and took his seat at the Council Board as Lord Lieutenant General and General Governor of Ireland.  

Of the eight Lord Lieutenants between 1890 and 1922, only two - Lord French and Lord Fitzalan - did not make State Entries into Dublin. In both cases the circumstances were unusual. French came to Ireland in 1918 at a time of particular unrest because of the conscription crisis and it was intended that he should assume active control of the Irish Government. Fitzalan came in 1921 at a time of even greater unrest after the passing of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920. These were the only instances of discretion being considered wiser than formality.

Few, if any, of the Viceroys were guaranteed a unanimously popular reception. Almost by definition, Unionist incumbents were suspected and ignored by Nationalists and Liberal incumbents were equally assured of a

5. This account is based largely on the investiture of Earl Cadogan in 1895 (as described in the Irish Times, 8 July 1895). The procedure was much the same for other investitures. However the abolition of some of the offices in the Lord Lieutenant's Household in 1906 and the loss of the Crown Jewels in 1907 did necessitate minor changes. For a first hand account of the swearing in of one Lord Lieutenant, see Maurice Headlam, Irish Reminiscences (1947) pp 73-4.
frosty reception from the 'loyal' population while being by no means guaranteed the support of Nationalists. The State Entry was an occasion of symbolic significance. Equally symbolic was the refusal of Dublin Corporation from 1885 onwards to present the traditional address of welcome to the newly arrived Viceroy and the refusal by Lord Mayors after 1886 to receive the Viceroy at the Mansion House. Unfortunately for the historian, the route followed during the State Entry and Official Departure avoided many of the parts of the city which might have given an immediate indication of the popular response to the incoming or outgoing Viceroy. Nevertheless the route, which took the Viceroy within hailing or heckling distance of the Kildare St. Club, Trinity College and City Hall, did give him some indication of the esteem in which he was held in various quarters.

The popularity of a Lord Lieutenant did not depend solely on his political views or those of the Government which appointed him. The splendour of his ceremonials, the lavishness of his entertainments and his generosity to the poor all helped to make or break his reputation. The Lord Lieutenant's miniature court was the pinnacle of the social life of Dublin and the provinces. During the season he gave balls and dinners, levees and drawing-rooms to which the cream of society were invited. In the 1880's the Irish novelist and landowner George Moore repeatedly sought an invitation to a levee, drawing-room or Castle ball so that the book he was writing on 'the social and political power of the Castle in modern Ireland' could be 'as complete, as true, as vivid as possible'. He was refused an invitation probably because it was felt that his novel would be critical. Though

6. O'Mahony, op. cit., p.331; McDowell, op. cit., p.54.
7. Newspaper reports of the State Entry or Exit of Viceroys can be misleading as they were often coloured by the political persuasion of the newspaper concerned. Undoubtedly the most enthusiastic popular response was that which accompanied the departure of the Aberdeens in 1886. Only the visit of Queen Victoria in 1900 caused greater excitement. See Freeman's Journal 4 Aug. 1886; George Earl Buckle (ed.), The Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. III (1932), pp 521-3.
Moore's *A Mummer's Wife* had been critically acclaimed, it was not the sort of novel which would have been approved of by the Viceregal Court. The failure to gain an invitation to any of the Castle entertainments did not deter Moore from writing his novel. *A Drama in Muslin* is by no stretch of the imagination a novel about the social and political power of the Castle, but it does manage to capture some of the atmosphere of the Viceregal Court. The circle who might be invited and who if invited were likely to accept was small: 'acquaintances found themselves saluting each other more cordially than was their want'. There was little diversity but the honour and privilege of being part of the elite outweighed any feelings of unreality.

The unreality of Castle entertainments stemmed from the fact that they purported to be an exact replica of similar events in London even though political divisions in Ireland made that impossible. Nationalists generally avoided these functions altogether even when a Liberal Lord Lieutenant was in office. Those members of the Ascendancy who were active in the literary revival of the period and who might have added vigour and excitement to the functions were also reluctant to attend. Lady Aberdeen's efforts to give more of an Irish flavour to the Castle season by arranging an Irish Lace Ball and by having Irish singers and dancers perform did nothing to attract such people and her efforts were exposed to ridicule.

Political passions were sometimes such that the attendance of even the most loyal Unionists could not be guaranteed. The best example of this was the term of Lord Houghton (1892-5). Despite the fact that the Liberal


Government which appointed him was committed to the passing of a Home Rule Bill, Nationalists generally remained aloof. So too did a great many Unionists - as a gesture of protest against the Home Rule bill. Houghton was not a member of the Cabinet and was conscientious in trying to keep the Vice-royalty above politics. He refused to receive an address of welcome which contained a reference to the Home Rule question and, though he was in London while the administration of Ireland was being discussed in Parliament, he stayed away from the House of Lords. This did nothing to mollify Unionist opinion which remained openly hostile. With few exceptions, the landed class boycotted Castle entertainments during the 1893 season. Sir Peter O’Brien, the Lord Chief Justice of Ireland, not only stayed away himself but encouraged others to do likewise. Such a concerted boycott was unprecedented. Previously individuals might decline invitations for political reasons but never as a group.

Houghton protested to the Queen’s secretary about this 'marked disrespect towards the office of Viceroy'. It was outside his English experience for politics to affect social obligations. Houghton felt compelled to bring the situation formally to the Queen’s notice. Her response must have been a disappointment. Henry Ponsonby reported a 'rather mixed expression of opinion' on Houghton's complaint. The Queen agreed that it was 'uncivil' of the Irish gentry to 'abstain' from going to Court when he was officially representing her but added that he was after all a member of her Government and attendance at levees would be considered in Ireland a mark of support for the measures of the Government. She was inclined to blame the Government which raised Home Rule for bringing the Crown into politics.

14. In 1886, when a number of Lords and Duchesses refused appointments to the Queen's Household lest they seem to support the Government's Irish policy,
Houghton was not the only Lord Lieutenant to suffer the embarrassment of being shunned by the gentry. During the Viceroyalty of Lord Aberdeen (1906-15) many Irish Peers stayed away from Castle entertainments but it is difficult to know whether this was because of disapproval of Liberal policy or of the standard of the Aberdeens' entertainments. Only when the third Home Rule bill was before Parliament did their absence assume the proportions of a boycott. By then the slight had lost its novelty and it was rather expected, even by the Aberdeens, that those strongly opposed to Home Rule would not attend.15

At no time during the period did the gentry comprise a large enough percentage of those invited for their absence to affect the viability of Castle entertainments or alter their character. The vast majority of those who attended were Castle officials, senior and not-so-senior civil servants, soldiers, judges and doctors. As the period progressed there was certainly a tendency for this element to become more dominant. More than one observer of the Aberdeen court noted the absence of the 'right people' and of the 'smart' set and their replacement by 'blue reefer coats and brown boots'.16 However, even in the 1890's the official element dominated. Despite the boycott of the gentry, Lord Houghton had almost 700 guests at the first levee of the 1893 season and almost 580 at the first drawing-room. This was about 100 less than had attended the same functions the previous year. Houghton himself commented that most of his guests were 'official and military'.17 So, even allowing for the 100 or so gentry who were absent, the 'official'

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the Queen defended their actions as patriotic and instead blamed Gladstone for being responsible. Buckle, op. cit., vol.I, p.57.


element would still have dominated. In researching his book on Dublin 
Castle and Irish society, George Moore was struck by this very point.
Describing one Castle entertainment, he commented that Dublin was

a city without a conviction, without an opinion. Things were right 
and wrong according to the dictum of the nearest official. If it 
be not absolutely ill-bred to say you think this, or are inclined 
to take such and such a view, it is certainly more advisable to say 
that the Attorney-General thinks so, or that on one occasion you 
heard the State Steward, the Chamberlain, or any other equally 
distinguished underling express this or that opinion.18

The problem for Liberal Viceroys was that the very fact that they were 
appointed by a Liberal Government was sufficient for them to be accused of 
being 'political'. Tory appointments, on the other hand, were seen as being 
above politics and their stewardship was judged by different criteria, at 
least by the Unionist population. Houghton's successor, Earl Cadogan (1895-
1902), is a case in point. Cadogan was given a seat in Cabinet and was thus 
at least nominally in control of Irish policy. The Nationalist Freemans 
Journal immediately attacked the appointment of 'a third-class nobleman' to 
administer Ireland. The Unionist Irish Times, on the other hand, warmly 
welcomed his appointment for reasons which had nothing to do with politics. 
After the sharp political divisions of Houghton's Viceroyalty it is probably 
not surprising that the Irish Times should emphasise social rather than 
political considerations. Cadogan's appointment had, it noted,

given intense satisfaction to sportsmen at this side of the channel. 
Like Lord Londonderry, Lord Cadogan is wealthy and distributes his 
money generously. The assistance which Lord Londonderry gave to Irish 
racing a few years ago will be remembered, and there is the memory of the 
excitement caused by the appearance of Cambushmore and the late 
P. Archer at the Curragh. Thousands journeyed from Dublin on that 
ocasion to get even a glimpse of the renowned jockey. Our new Vice-
roy is one of the principal props of the English Turf, and it is safe 
to predict that he will become as popular in a sport-loving country like 
Ireland admittedly is as he is in England. Lord Cadogan will, it is

18. George Moore, A Drama in Muslin (1886), p.191.
understood, race horses in this country, and his colours are certain
to be cheered whenever they are exhibited, for the reason that they
are the banner of a sterling sportsman.19

A Lord Lieutenant who was a sterling sportsman and who 'distributed his
money generously' obviously had a head start in the popularity stakes. A
wife who would share in distributing his money was another useful asset.
The Lord Lieutenant's wife, apart from being the hostess at Castle entertain­
ments, was also expected to act as patron of and take an interest in local
charities and other non-political organisations. Though her social position
demanded frequent attendance at race-meetings, Lady Aberdeen was 'frankly
bored' with racing and did little to hide the fact.20 Neither was she a
renowned hostess largely because of her modest means. Maybe in compensation
for this her involvement in other areas of Irish society was unusually active.
She and her husband took a keen interest in the condition of the poor both in
Dublin and the west of Ireland and were conspicuously generous in their
donations to charitable organisations. At the same time, she had no illusions
about the efficacy of charity. In 1886, during her first spell as Vicereine,
she founded the Royal Irish Industries Association to promote the sale of
Irish crafts.21 In 1907 she founded the Women's National Health Association
which, under her guidance, launched major campaigns against tuberculosis and
insanitary and unhygienic conditions. Within a short time the Women's National
Health Association was claiming 150 affiliated branches throughout the country.
It certainly was partly responsible for the reduction in the number of deaths
from tuberculosis in Ireland from 1907 onwards.22

20. Headlam, op. cit., p.40. Lord Houghton was unmarried so he brought his
  sister to Ireland with him. Lord French (1918-21) was not accompanied
  by his wife.
21. Irish Times, 23 Nov. 1905. Between 1895, when a London branch was set
  up, and 1906 when Lady Aberdeen returned to Ireland, the Association
  had arranged for sales of Irish goods costing $120,000.
  was the establishment of a Peamont Sanitorium in 1912 despite strong
Ishbel Aberdeen was an unusual and remarkable woman. Her commitment to improving the conditions of Ireland's poor extended far beyond what was expected of or even considered desirable in a Lord Lieutenant's wife. However she was not unique. Other Lord Lieutenants' wives, either for philanthropic reasons or from simple boredom, became involved in similar activities.

Rachel Gurney, wife of Lord Dudley, Lord Lieutenant from 1902 to 1905, found her social duties trying and boring but was an enthusiastic and energetic supporter of efforts to improve conditions in the west of Ireland. Her sister records that she had never before been in contact with poverty, dirt and disease. She encouraged cookery instruction and established the Dudley Nurses so that women and children in rural districts might have proper nursing attention. Such philanthropy was expected of the Lord Lieutenant's wife.

Lady Dudley, her sister admitted, for all her sympathy, threw 'mist-like wreaths of fantasy' over the situation and saw the Irish poor 'through the eyes of such dramatists as Lady Gregory, or such poets as Yeats, as the unconscious and inarticulate victims of a tragic destiny.' The same might be said of the attitude of many of the Vicereines of the period. The 'mist-like wreaths of fantasy' and of convention dictated the limitations of what might or might not be done to alleviate the poverty.

opposition. It was the first sanitorium opened under Lloyd George's Insurance Act.

23. Whether her concern was tuberculosis or folk-dancing in schools, she did not feel debarred from using her position and her contacts to further her case. This led to repeated clashes with government departments. 'Polite society' viewed her with some amusement while officials who had to deal with her thought her a nuisance. Ibid., p.168; Henry Robinson, Memories: Wise and Otherwise (1923); Leon O'Broin, The Chief Secretary (1969), pp 124-7.

24. Lady Troubridge, Memories and Reflections (1925), pp 121-51. Lady Dudley was also President of the Irish Central Bureau for the Employment of Women. For the aims of this organisation, see the Irish Times, 24 Oct. 1905.
In keeping with his status as the representative of the Crown, the Lord Lieutenant had a large Household to assist him in the performance of his social and administrative duties. As with the Lord Lieutenancy, however, the shadow was greater than the substance. On the face of it, the list of officers assigned to the Lord Lieutenant, to 'keep up the state properly belonging to the Viceroyal Court' was very impressive. The Household of the 1890's was little different from that of the previous century despite the reduced importance of the Lord Lieutenant. The main officers were the Chamberlain who was responsible for the Viceroy's entertainments, the Comptroller of the Household who from a domestic point of view was 'the most important officer in the Viceroyal Household' and the Private Secretary. There was a Master of the Horse, a Military Secretary and various Aides-de-Camp, a State Steward, a Gentleman Usher, Gentlemen-in-Waiting, a Surgeon to the Household and various other lesser officers. There was also a Viceroyal Chaplain and a Chapel with its own choir and organist. 25

A glance at the cost of these offices is enough to indicate that in practice the Household was much more modest than this list might suggest. In 1890-1, the total cost of salaries and expenses for the Household and the Chapel was only £4,704; in 1905-6, £4,649; and in 1918-19, £2,519. 26 Most of the Household salaries were small, though large in terms of services rendered. Generally these services were required only during the six weeks of the Castle season. While the Lord Lieutenant was residing at the Viceroyal Lodge in Phoenix Park, not much more than a mile from the Castle, he was considered to be 'in the country' and his entertainments were of a 'semi-private character'.

25. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class II, 23 (Lord Lieutenant's Household), P.R.O., T 165/46; 1910-11, T 165/36; 1900-1, T 165/17.
26. Ibid. The absence of ceremonial and the Viceroy's decision not to fill vacancies during the War account for the reduction in 1918-19.
In 1903 Lord Dudley, then Lord Lieutenant, wrote a candid review of the existing organisation of the Household. He complained especially about the custom of appointing a large number of officials at small salaries and with very slight duties. The practice was motivated by the desire that 'an appearance of importance and dignity should be given to the Court Ceremonies and entertainments at the Castle'. He concluded that the Household was inefficient, uneconomical and a sham. The Lord Lieutenant was unable to get his officers to give up more than a short part of the year to Viceregal service and was forced to fall back on his Private Secretaries or Aides-de-Camp. For instance the Chamberlain who kept 'social records' of Irish society from which invitation lists for Castle functions were drawn up, worked for only six weeks per year. If a function had to be organised out-of-season, the Chamberlain had to be summoned back to Dublin or the Lord Lieutenant had to make do with his Aides-de-Camp. The result, Lord Dudley complained, was that 'unfortunate mistakes' were sometimes made.27

The £200 per annum which the Master-of-the-Horse was paid was not sufficient to ensure that he would stay in Dublin for longer than the Castle season. In his absence, Dudley suspected, the Lord Lieutenant was 'constantly exposed to extortion and robbery of a very extensive kind' and 'waste and extravagance' flourished. Similarly, the salary of the Comptroller of the Household, upon whom its efficiency depended, was not high enough to ensure his full-time attendance. On the other hand, Dudley concluded that a great deal of public money was wasted because of the appointment of officials whose duties were 'of the slightest possible kind'. Most of these offices dated from before 1783.28

28. Ibid.; 'Blue Notes' 1920-21, Class II, 23 (Lord Lieutenant's Household), P.R.O., T 165/46.
Dudley's solution to these problems was to propose a major reorganisation of the Household. A number of the more blatant sinecures were abolished and the duties of the more important offices were more clearly defined. The office of State Steward was amalgamated with that of Chamberlain, the salary of which was increased, and its holder was henceforth required to be available for duty all the year round. The Treasury readily agreed to the changes because they did not involve any increase in the total cost of the Household but they could not be implemented in full until a new Lord Lieutenant was appointed in 1905.29 Further changes in the way of increased salaries in return for amalgamation of duties were agreed to in 1909-10, 1910-11 and in 1913-14. Taken along with the Dudley reorganisation, these changes did much to increase the efficiency of the Household. It is all the more ironic, therefore, that from 1914 onwards the duties of the Household were drastically reduced, first because of the cancellation of ceremonial during the War and the decision not to fill vacant positions, and then by the overshadowing of the social aspects of the Viceroyalty by political unrest.30

All these elaborate social obligations had an important bearing on the type of person who could be chosen as Lord Lieutenant. To entertain in the style demanded, to be a patron of the arts and sports and of deserving charities required a sizeable independent income over and above the official salary. The first Viceroyalty to which a definite salary was attached was that of Geoffrey de Marreis in 1226. £500 was set aside for his expenses.31 By 1763 the salary was £12,000 with various emoluments. This was raised to £20,000 in 1784 and £30,000 (Irish) in 1810. In 1831, it was reduced again to £20,000 (sterling) at which sum it remained until the office was abolished in 1922, despite the complaints of many incumbents that it did not cover the.

29. Lord Aberdeen approved the changes when he was appointed.
30. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class II, 23 (Lord Lieutenant's Household), P.R.O., T 165/46.
31. O'Mahony, The Viceroy's of Ireland, p.22.
expenses of the office.  

It is impossible to estimate just how much the Lord Lieutenant spent each year, but it was nearly always in excess of his official salary. Lord Aberdeen told the Treasury Remembrancer that he never spent less than £6,000 per annum in addition to his salary and often much more than that. When the Remembrancer related this to an acquaintance he was told that Aberdeen should spend another £20,000 'like his predecessors'. 33 It was certainly expected that the Lord Lieutenant should be free with his money. As we have seen, the Irish Times welcomed the appointment of Lord Cadogan partly because 'like Lord Londonderry', he was wealthy and distributed his wealth 'freely'. Cadogan did not disappoint them in this regard. It was later reported that the Cadogans had 'spent their great wealth freely' and that their 'unostentatious munificence...was not the least factor which contributed towards their success'. 34 Lord Dudley was equally munificent and hospitable, as befitted someone of his immense wealth, although unostentatious is hardly a word which would be used in his case. 35 It was reported that Dudley's annual expenditure on the social duties of his office exceeded his salary by £30,000. 36

Generally speaking, Liberal Lord Lieutenants were not as well off as their Tory counterparts and were not in a position to 'spend their wealth freely'. Lord Wimbourne, like Lords Zetland, Cadogan and Dudley, was a keen sportsman and was known as a keen frequenter of the turf and a generous host. 37

32. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class II, 23 (Lord Lieutenant's Household), P.R.O., T 165/46. The salary of the Lord Lieutenant was charged on the Consolidated Fund. His Household was paid for from the Estimates.
33. Headlam, Irish Reminiscences, p.41. In 1901 Lord Salisbury reported that the Lord Lieutenant was obliged to spend from fifteen to twenty thousand per annum in excess of his official income. Sidney Lee, King Edward VII (1927), vol. II, p.161.
34. O'Mahony, op. cit., p.311.
However most of his entertaining was on a small semi-private— and therefore less expensive— scale because of the War. He also resisted repeated attempts by the Treasury to have his salary reduced during the War.  

It is likely that Lords French and Fitzalan, the last two Lord Lieutenants of the period, were able to meet all their expenses from their official salaries as their social obligations had been much reduced by circumstances. French was not accompanied to Ireland by his family and entertained on only a small scale. Even so, he refused to agree to the suggestion that his salary should be reduced, dismissing the Treasury Remembrancer with a reminder of the cost of good champagne.

The one Viceregal couple who were forced to curtail their entertainments for financial reasons were the Aberdeens. They made it plain from the outset that they neither favoured nor could afford the munificence of some of their predecessors. Lady Aberdeen told the Prime Minister that they could not attempt to

keep up the magnificence of the Dudleys and the Cadogans but I fancy you will regard an effort to make the expenditure so near as possible come within the income a desirable object from the Government’s point of view as well as my own. I fear we shall not totally succeed but there seems a pretty general opinion in Dublin that a simplification of the entertainments is desirable.

The Aberdeens quickly discovered that, while many people professed to be in favour of simplification of entertainments, in practice this could not be achieved without enduring widespread criticism. It became almost de rigueur

38. See below, Chapter 8.
40. Lady Aberdeen to Campbell Bannerman, 9 Jan. 1906, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, f.51.
in fashionable society to sneer at the Aberdeens' entertainments. They were certainly not so lavish as the Dudleys' or the Cadogans' but impartial observers commented that though they lacked style they were pleasant and interesting. In fact some of the criticism probably had more to do with Lady Aberdeen's personality and her reputation as a domineering, opinionated woman. It was widely known that while Aberdeen was Governor General of Canada Queen Victoria had asked Lord Rosebery, then Prime Minister, to ascertain whether it was true that they dined once a week with their servants. Similar rumours circulated during their time in Ireland and they can only have been strengthened by Lady Aberdeen's efforts to promote Irish song and dance at Castle functions. When the rumours reached King Edward VII he too inquired whether there was any truth in them. He was assured that all Viceregal dinners and parties were carried out 'in the most correct manner according to procedure and under the Chamberlain's instructions'.

Lady Aberdeen had an unhappy facility for alienating people. This extended to the King himself who, she admitted, could not abide her. His feelings could only have been confirmed during his visit to Ireland in 1907. In inviting the King to Ireland, Lord Aberdeen had added that there might be some difficulty about staying at the Viceregal Lodge. The King accepted the invitation but was obviously irritated by the lack of hospitality. 'All right,' he replied 'I look on it as a settled matter that we live on board the [Royal] yacht'. A clue to the ungraciousness of Aberdeen's invitation is provided by a letter his wife wrote to the Prime Minister informing him about the arrangements for the visit, including the fact that the King would sleep on the yacht. She dwelt in particular on the difficulties of entertaining


43. Ibid.; Lady Aberdeen to Campbell Bannerman, 30 May 1907, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, ff 106-9.
and pointed out that they could not go to 'unlimited expense'. This initial unpleasantness may partly explain why the King reacted so furiously to the news during the visit that the Irish Crown Jewels had disappeared.  

When the Aberdeens finally left Ireland in 1915, the Government considered appointing the Irish peer, Lord Powerscourt. However Powerscourt was unwilling to serve partly because he could not afford the expense which would be involved. This was a fairly common experience. As Disraeli complained, 'the wealthy avoid the office and paupers won't fit'. The Government often encountered considerable difficulty in finding suitable candidates and occasionally was forced to make some unusual appointments. One interesting feature is the number of young inexperienced peers chosen. Because of his great personal wealth and his friendship with the King, Lord Dudley was an obvious candidate for the position in 1902 but it is surprising that his age - he was thirty-five - and inexperience did not rule him out. He had had a rather short and unsuccessful political career and his main reputation was as an exemplar of the ostentatious tastes and hedonistic values of some of the wealthy nobility in late Victorian England. His career in Ireland proved how great a drawback inexperience could be. His appointment owed a great deal to the fact that he was a protege of the King and that the Government's first choice, Lord Pembroke, had declined the offer.

44. Lee concedes that the King's language on the occasion was 'vigorous and forceful'. Later he expressed his impatience and dissatisfaction with Aberdeen's investigation of the theft. Lee, op. cit., pp 473-4.
46. Quoted in McDowell, The Irish Executive, p.55.
47. At seventeen he inherited his family's ironworks, 30,000 acres in Britain and estates in Jamaica. D.N.B., 1931-40, p.890; The Times, 30 June 1932.
48. His mother had been a close friend of the former Prince of Wales. See Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, p.254 and Anita Leslie, Edwardians in Love (1932).
49. Cunneen, op. cit., p.269.
Lord Houghton was one year younger than Dudley when he was appointed in 1892. Also like Dudley he was relatively inexperienced though he had been Assistant Private Secretary to Lord Granville, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and later a Lord-in-Waiting to Queen Victoria. Unlike Dudley he was not married and this fact should normally have meant that he was not even considered for the Viceroyalty. However, as often before and later, the Liberals had difficulty finding anybody with sufficient wealth who was willing to go to Ireland. The matter was complicated by the fact that John Morley, who was returning to Ireland as Chief Secretary, was strongly opposed to appointing Lord Aberdeen, who had been Lord Lieutenant when he was Chief Secretary in 1886. Morley wanted a younger, more pliable Viceroy and much to the surprise of most observers succeeded in persuading Gladstone to appoint Houghton.  

Houghton and Dudley were easily the youngest Lord Lieutenants of the period although Zetland, forty-two when he was appointed in 1889, and Wimbourne, also forty-two when he was appointed in 1915, were also relatively young. As in the case of Dudley, both were second choices and nothing in their earlier careers marked them out as particularly outstanding appointments. Both had had short and undistinguished political careers. Zetland had long since retired from politics and had spent a short time as a Lord-in-Waiting. Wimbourne, who before he accepted a peerage in 1910 was plain Ivor Churchill Guest, was a brother of F.E. Guest and was well connected in the upper echelons of the Liberal Party. He was Paymaster General from 1910 to 1912 and after the outbreak of the War was appointed to the staff of Sir Bryan Mahon, then commanding a division at the Curragh. Ironically, when he was plucked from this relative obscurity by Asquith, he became, in theory at least, Commander-in-Chief of all the forces in Ireland.  

51. D.N.B., 1941-50, pp 183-6; The Times, 21 June 1945; Pentland, A Bonnie Fechter, pp 100-2. Houghton, who, in 1895, was created Earl of Crewe, later had a distinguished political career.
None of these four Lord Lieutenants enjoyed the same status as Cadogan or Aberdeen. Cadogan was fifty-four when he was appointed in 1895. Despite the Freeman's Journal's jibe that he was a third class nobleman, he was well qualified for the position by both background and experience. During the second Salisbury administration (1886-92) he was Lord Privy Seal and responsible for Irish business in the House of Lords. From 1887 he was a member of the Cabinet, the only Lord Lieutenant of the period to have previous Cabinet experience. He was a close friend and adviser of both the Queen and the Prince of Wales.  

Aberdeen was fifty-eight when he returned to Ireland in 1905 but when he was appointed for the first time he was only thirty-eight. Though relatively young and inexperienced then, his spell as Lord Lieutenant had been an outstanding success largely because of the popular acceptance he gained. When he was reappointed in 1905 he had spent five years as Governor General of Canada and could therefore claim to be well-qualified for the Irish position.

Both French, appointed 1918, and Fitzalan, appointed 1921, were sixty-five when they took office. Their backgrounds were particularly important considerations when they were chosen but for very different reasons to their six predecessors. Field Marshal Lord French of Ypres had had a long and fairly controversial career as a soldier and it was as a soldier that he was sent to Ireland. He was to take charge of the implementation of conscription. When the Government's policy on conscription changed, and even more when the War finished, his role reverted to something more like that of

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54. D.N.B., 1931-1940, pp 347-8; The Times, 8 Mar. 1934; Lord and Lady Aberdeen, We Two.
55. See Edward Gerald French, Field Marshal Lord French (1931).
the traditional Lord Lieutenant. At that stage his complete lack of
administrative or political experience assumed greater importance.56

Lord Fitzalan was the last Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and the only
Catholic holder of that office since the Reformation. The Government
of Ireland Act 1920, made it legally possible for a Catholic to be appointed.
With an Irish settlement looming, it was considered tactful to take advantage
of this provision to appoint one. Fitzalan, who was a strong Unionist, had
for a long time been a Conservative Member of Parliament. He had begun his
career as secretary to St. John Brodrick, later the Earl of Midleton, and
eventually became Chief Whip and then Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury.57

All the Lord Lieutenants of the period were English, except Lord
Aberdeen, a Scot.58 Occasionally, as in the case of Lord Powerscourt, attempts
were made to find an Irishman but there were major obstacles in the way. Apart
from the difficulty of finding someone wealthy enough who was willing to take
the position, which would have been greater in Ireland than in England, to
appoint a local would have involved abandoning all pretence of the position
being above politics.

The Political Power of the Lord Lieutenant and his Relationship with the
Chief Secretary

Much of the difficulty in persuading peers to accept the Lord Lieu-
tenancy was due to the fact that it offered so little scope for the ambitious
to further their political careers. The expense of Viceregal entertainments
and the isolation from London society might have been tolerated more readily
if the position carried with it real power. It was and is generally known

58. Lord Londonderry, Lord Lieutenant 1886-92, was Irish. Between 1800 and
1922 there were four Irish Lord Lieutenants. Lord French was of Irish
extraction and owned some land in Ireland, and Lord Cadogan's mother
was Irish.
that this was not the case. The powers of the Lord Lieutenant had been increasingly usurped, especially by the Chief Secretary. It is worth examining in some detail the relationship between these two offices not just for what it can tell us about both but also for what it shows of the muddled nature of the Irish Administration as a whole.

In the next chapter I will be dealing with the role of the Chief Secretary as a Secretary of State directly responsible to Cabinet and to Parliament. He was also Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant. That apparent paradox lies at the root of all the divisions and misunderstandings which arose between the Chief Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant. It is a paradox which was never officially resolved. If in practice it was resolved by asserting the supremacy of the Chief Secretary, the practice was never entirely consistent or trouble-free.

Given the amount of friction which arose between the two it is surprising that there was no formal public definition of their respective positions and powers. Probably the best semi-official definition is contained in the 1908 edition of Anson's *Law and Custom of the Constitution*:

The Lord Lieutenant represents the Crown, but the Chief Secretary is the minister mainly responsible to Parliament for the conduct of Irish administration. This office is one of increasing importance, since the holder is in everything but name and rank a Secretary of State for Ireland...The Lord Lieutenant has large prerogatives, and his immunity from action in the Courts of the country for any act done in his official capacity is larger than that of a Colonial Governor. But the reality of power tends to pass to the man who is responsible to the House of Commons for the exercise of these prerogatives, and the office of Lord Lieutenant, with its costly and dignified surroundings, becomes more and more a survival of a time when Ireland was not as near to us in point of communication, nor as closely connected in point of constitution, as it is at the present day.59

This definition is cautious but not any more so than the inconsistency of recent practice required. It is particularly useful because it almost

certainly is based on a much larger but unofficial definition of the position written by Arthur Balfour in 1905. Balfour, who was then Prime Minister, was of course an ex-Chief Secretary himself and he had served in Cabinet when the Lord Lieutenant and not the Chief Secretary was a member. He was thus well placed to make a statement on recent practice and on what was most desirable. The occasion of his definition was a dispute between the then Lord Lieutenant, Lord Dudley, and the then Chief Secretary, Walter Long. Dudley wrote to the Prime Minister asking whether it was his intention that the views of the Chief Secretary should always prevail over those of the Lord Lieutenant. Balfour's reply, which constitutes the best single definition of the respective powers of the Chief Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant and the best analysis of the development of both offices in the nineteenth century, was in effect that the views of the Chief Secretary should prevail. 60

The question, he said, went to the root of 'that practical paradox - the present system of Irish Government'. If they had to start again, even the 'wildest visionary' would not propose such a system. The Lord Lieutenancy was originally contrived when Parliamentary Government was in its infancy, Ireland was inaccessible and British immigrants were seen as colonists and the natives as barbarians. In those days the Lord Lieutenant was what the Viceroy of India was in their day. He possessed a large measure of independence from parliamentary criticism and Cabinet control. However, with the growth of the power of the House of Commons, the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility, the Act of Union and the telegraph, the real headship of the Irish Government had transferred to the Minister who happened to be in both

60. Balfour to Dudley, 15 Aug. 1905, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49802, f.223. Walter Long was so enthused with the reply that he said that it should be published as a State Paper. Long to Sandars, 21 Aug. 1905, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49776, f.82.
the House of Commons and the Cabinet. If the Lord Lieutenant was in the Cabinet, the change from the old system was 'not so violent' but it was 'even more difficult to work, for nothing can deprive the man in the H. of C. both of power and responsibility so long as Irish subjects are the occasion of daily Parliamentary skirmishing - and divided power is fruitful in friction'.

So, though the Lord Lieutenant's legal status and social duties were unchanged, his political responsibilities were completely altered by 'the unconquerable force of circumstances'. 'There can be but one head of the Irish Administration', Balfour concluded, and that had to be the Chief Secretary. He added however that while the Viceroyalty continued to exist, the Viceroy had an important part to play. He was not a mere figure-head or the equivalent of an Under Secretary: he resembled a constitutional Monarch and by working harmoniously with the Chief Secretary he fulfilled 'a most valuable work'.

Dudley very perceptively pointed out in reply that if the War Office, Admiralty, Colonial Office and Board of Trade could be administered successfully by peers why not the Irish Office. Still, the logic of Balfour's case is undeniable. It was the growth of the power of the House of Commons which led to the supremacy of the Chief Secretary. Membership of the Cabinet was obviously crucial. A Lord Lieutenant who was in the Cabinet could more than compensate for his absence from the House of Commons.

Between 1890 and 1921, only two Lord Lieutenants were members of Cabinet. In both cases this was due to the circumstances of the appointment


62. During the 1880's Lord Spencer and Lord Carnarvon were members of the Cabinet. Spencer had previously been in Cabinet. In 1879 and 1880, Disraeli had neither the Chief Secretary nor the Lord Lieutenant in his Cabinet.
rather than to a decision on the part of the Prime Minister to revive the importance of the Viceroyalty for its own sake. Cadogan was, as we have seen, already a member of the Cabinet when he was appointed Lord Lieutenant. His status was probably too high to appoint him Chief Secretary: he would probably not have accepted it. His background made him a suitable Lord Lieutenant from a social point of view. And to have excluded him from Cabinet would have been to deprive the Government of the advice of someone who had for a number of years been an influential shaper of Tory policy on Ireland. French was the other Lord Lieutenant to be a member of Cabinet. He was appointed to be an active head of Irish Government, and not a figurehead. He was not a member of the War Cabinet but when the old-style Cabinet was revived Lloyd George initiated the unusual arrangement of having the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary in the Cabinet alternatively. 63

Not everyone agreed that membership of the Cabinet or of the House of Commons was crucial. When he had been back in the Viceregal Lodge for one year, Aberdeen prepared a memorandum on the position of the Lord Lieutenant, with special reference to this question, and concluded that the Lord Lieutenant could perform his proper functions better when not in the Cabinet. At the same time, he did not believe that the Chief Secretary should be dominant. He thought that there should be 'some definite method and understanding, not necessarily of a rigid sort' which would recognise the Lord Lieutenant as a partner in the Irish Government. This understanding would recognise the right of the Lord Lieutenant to be informed and consulted on all matters of policy and administration and to control most appointments. The Lord Lieutenant, 'being, practically in a continuous manner the man on

63. There was no new rationale behind this arrangement. It was merely a compromise which recognised the decreasing importance of French without precipitating his abrupt departure.
the spot' in Ireland, with ample opportunities of gathering information etc., may often be in the best position for forming an opinion.  

Aberdeen certainly had a point when he spoke of the Lord Lieutenant, the man on the spot, sometimes being in a better position to form an opinion. Had the Lord Lieutenant been allowed more opportunity to influence policy, then, for instance, the 1916 Rising might well have been avoided. Without the distractions of Parliament and Cabinet, issues might look very different. Not only was the Lord Lieutenant on the spot, he had generally longer experience of Ireland than the Chief Secretary, as the figures for the number of both between 1900 and 1922 show.

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However, though Aberdeen's point is appealing it is not valid. The Lord Lieutenant could often be much more isolated from Irish society than the Chief Secretary. This isolation was guaranteed by the very formality of the office. The Lord Lieutenant had access to no more reliable sources of information than the Chief Secretary. Indeed some of the 'information' which he was constantly exposed to could be misleading. Information received or views expressed over dinner at the Castle even when disguised as emanating from a 'reliable source' could not provide a scientific or politically sound basis for formulating policy. As Augustine Birrell put it on one occasion.

64. Memorandum by Aberdeen, 28 Dec. 1906, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, ff 80-82.
65. See below, pp 175 and 178-9.
66. These figures have been compiled from J.L.J. Hughes, 'The Chief Secretaries in Ireland', *I.H.S.*, VIII, No.29 (March, 1952), pp 59-72. Lord Castlereagh, Chief Secretary from 3 Dec. 1798 to 26 Apr. 1801, is not included in this total. Five of the fifty-three served a second time and one - Lord Naas - served three times.
the class who drank tea in the Phoenix Park were incapable of forcing the Nationalists in the House to accept their policies. To believe otherwise was an illusion.\textsuperscript{67}

To allow an officer who was in neither the Cabinet nor Parliament a major say in the shaping or implementation of policy would have been a step back towards at best paternalistic administration. During the potato failure of 1890 Lord Zetland pressed on the Chief Secretary the views of a 'thoroughly practical man' of whom he had a high opinion as an Agriculturalist. The man, it transpired, was his own land agent. Zetland's considered opinion after consulting his agent was that 'Providence' had endowed the Celt with 'sufficient energy to do no more than eat potatoes that are put into his mouth'. He recommended that the Government confine itself to distributing leaflets which he thought would serve the purpose of letting the people see that the Government was interesting itself on their behalf.\textsuperscript{68} The effect of Aberdeen's suggestion would have been to risk undue weight being attached to such advice.

Many Lord Lieutenants were well aware of how isolated they were.\textsuperscript{69} This isolation mitigated any advantages of being on the spot; and for much of the time the Lord Lieutenant was not even 'on the spot'. The routine trips to the country which most Viceroy's thought of as an opportunity to 'see for themselves' the state of the peasantry were encouraged by Chief Secretaries as a means of getting rid of the Lord Lieutenant for a while. And most Lord Lieutenants spent part of their year in England. When the Lord Lieutenant wanted to leave Ireland he had to arrange for the appointment

\textsuperscript{67} Birrell to Bryce, 17 June 1907, Bodl., (Uncatalogued Bryce Papers) U.B.46.

\textsuperscript{68} Zetland to Balfour, 27 Oct. 1890, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49802, f.127. Zetland later supported a relief scheme.

\textsuperscript{69} See, for example, Dudley to Balfour, 22 Feb.1905, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49802, ff 190-3.
of Lord Justices to act in his absence and he had to inform the Home Office
of the date of his departure and return. Lord Justices were appointed,
on average, eight times a year during this period. Often the Lord Lieutenant's
absence was brief but quite regularly it extended to more than a month.  

The occasion of Aberdeen's memorandum was the replacement of James Bryce
as Chief Secretary by Augustine Birrell. He wanted a statement issued by the
Prime Minister to the effect that the Lord Lieutenant was felt to have 'freer
scope for his various functions when he was not a member of the Cabinet'.
Campbell Bannerman wisely refused and counselled that the relations between
the Chief Secretary and Lord Lieutenant were really a "solvitur ambulando".  
It was true that because of the confused and inconsistent theoretical position,
the matter could only be worked out between themselves. This is in practice
what happened - with widely differing results, as can best be seen by examin-
ing briefly the good and not-so-good working relationships which developed
during the period.

Clearly a lot depended on the personalities of the two people involved,
on their backgrounds and on who had the ear of Cabinet. Though the 1880's
were a period when, on balance, the Lord Lieutenant rather than the Chief
Secretary was in charge, Balfour quickly restored the balance in favour of
the Chief Secretary. Londonderry repeatedly complained about not being kept
informed about Cabinet decisions and being generally ignored by his Chief
Secretary. Londonderry's successor, Zetland, was treated in much the same
way but he seemed more willing to accept the situation as he found it. The

70. These figures are calculated from the number of form letters for each
year in the Circulars and Returns Volume, VIIIIB/5/36, in the State
Paper Office, Dublin Castle.
71. Aberdeen to Campbell Bannerman, 28 Dec. 1906 and 17 Jan. 1907, Campbell
Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, ff 77-9 and 83-6.
72. See Londonderry to Balfour, 1 Apr. and 31 Aug. 1887, Balfour Papers,
B.L., Add. MS 49802, ff 1 and 22; Balfour to Londonderry, 2 Apr. 1887,
loc. cit., f.2.
only serious differences between Zetland and Balfour arose over the always troublesome question of honours for Irish judges.\textsuperscript{73}

When the Liberals returned to power and Morley became Chief Secretary and Houghton Lord Lieutenant, no one was in any doubt as to who would be in control. Like Balfour, Morley believed that there was no room for a partnership in the Irish Administration. This had not always been Liberal policy: Gladstone had once had the Lord Lieutenant in Cabinet and once the Chief Secretary. In 1892, Morley persuaded him to revert to the latter arrangement and Houghton, as we have seen, was chosen partly because he represented no serious threat to the Chief Secretary's supremacy. Within these limits the two seem to have worked well together.\textsuperscript{74}

Subsequently when Cadogan was appointed Lord Lieutenant with a seat in the Cabinet, the power of the Chief Secretary waned. However Cadogan did not have things all his own way. The fact that Arthur Balfour was in the Cabinet lessened his possible influence somewhat. Balfour retained his interest in Ireland and controlled the Cabinet's Irish policy. His brother Gerald, the Chief Secretary, though not a member of the Cabinet had thus an important ally. In trying to arrange a settlement of the Irish University question in 1901 Arthur Balfour often dealt directly with his brother and his successor, George Wyndham, who had previously been his own Private Secretary.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{73} See Zetland to Balfour, 15 July 1891, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49802, f.136.

\textsuperscript{74} Morley wrote in his Recollections that 'no appointment could have been better justified, nor was any chief secretary more fortunate in a colleague. He quickly divined the spirit and difficulties of Irish administration; from first to last he showed himself assiduous, acute, uncommonly clear-headed, invariably cool, considerate, loyal'. Morley, Recollections, vol I (1921), p.295.

\textsuperscript{75} See, for example, Balfour to Cadogan, 25 Apr. 1901, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49802, f.162. Balfour did keep Cadogan informed and consulted him but it was he who was the driving force.
Wyndham, like Gerald Balfour, was originally not in the Cabinet, but after two years of this both he and Arthur Balfour had become more convinced than ever that the Chief Secretary and not the Lord Lieutenant should be in the Cabinet. Wyndham compared the frustrations of being responsible for a policy in Parliament from the shaping of which he was excluded to a lunatic in a padded cell trying to speak through a megaphone which was blocked with a pudding. He clashed repeatedly with Cadogan on matters of policy. Cadogan was reluctant to accept Wyndham's far-reaching plans for land purchase in Ireland, and when the matter was raised at Cabinet did not support him. Balfour reported to Wyndham that in the circumstances he had been unable to press Wyndham's case.

Early in 1902, Wyndham again clashed with Cadogan, this time on how to deal with disorder in the west of Ireland. The Cabinet had previously agreed to a three-step policy which envisaged strengthening the police in disturbed areas, prosecutions for unlawful assembly under the Crimes Act and finally the proclamation of certain areas if necessary. Under the influence of strong pressure to have the United Irish League proclaimed, Cadogan began to call for the implementation of the third part of the policy. Wyndham protested strongly about the adoption of a policy, 'improvised to meet Newspaper attacks and gossip'. He accused Cadogan of being scared by The Times and the Irish gentry at his levee. Cadogan had been absent from Ireland during most of the winter and Wyndham had been directing matters. He now insisted that the 'reins' be left in his hands. Despite the urgings of Cadogan the Cabinet first decided to postpone a decision until Wyndham had

77. Wyndham to Balfour, 13 Jan. 1901, Memorandum by Wyndham to Cadogan, 11 Jan. 1901, Balfour to Wyndham, 18 Jan. 1907, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49803, ff 151-64 and 191-3. The main point of disagreement on the land question was over Wyndham's idea of purchasing whole estates.
78. Wyndham to Balfour, 3 and 9 March 1902, Wyndham to Cadogan, 10 March 1902, Balfour Papers, B.L.,Add. MS 49804, ff 5-13.
recovered from a bout of influenza and could more fully consider the matter and then decided against proclaiming disturbed areas under the Crimes Act. 79

This rebuff by Cabinet was the last straw for Cadogan who for some time had been anxious to retire. Not long afterwards he resigned. His place in the Cabinet was taken by Wyndham rather than by Dudley, the new Lord Lieutenant. Both Wyndham and Balfour were convinced that this would be a much more sensible arrangement. And so it proved until the 'devolution crisis', which I will be discussing later, once more exposed the inherent inconsistencies in the position of the Lord Lieutenant. Dudley's role is best discussed in the context of the devolution crisis itself. 80 For the moment suffice it to say that in approving the Under Secretary's involvement with Lord Dunraven in the production of an unofficial devolution scheme, Dudley overstepped his practical discretion. When the scheme was rejected by the Government, it proved a considerable embarrassment that the Viceroy seemed to have given it his blessing.

In fact Dudley did not support the Dunraven scheme unreservedly. He supported a semi-elective financial Council to supervise Irish expenditure but was unhappy about the proposal to invest a statutory body in Ireland with legislative powers. 81 Even this, Balfour thought, went far beyond Unionist policy but he agreed that he should not resign. 82 In the event, Dudley's approval of the Under Secretary's action made it necessary that the Chief Secretary should resign.

79. Ibid.; Prime Minister's Letter to Monarch, 28 Feb., 11 and 22 March, P.R.O., Cab. 41/27/7, 8 and 11.
80. See Chapter 4.
After the resignation of Wyndham, Dudley's position remained insecure. In February 1905 he complained that he was 'completely cut off' in Ireland 'without a soul of any experience' to help or give him advice. Under the Chief Secretaryship of Walter Long this isolation only increased. Long ignored him almost totally. He found his position completely 'uncongenial'. He was not consulted about anything, he complained to Balfour, nor was he told what was going on and if he expressed his views they were ignored. Long was allowing himself to be advised by the 'extreme Unionist and Protestant section of the Irish community', he claimed, and he was 'completely out of sympathy with his policy'.

It was at this stage that Dudley asked Balfour for a definition of the relative positions of the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary. His response to Balfour's assertion of the complete supremacy of the Chief Secretary was that it would be better to abolish the Lord Lieutenancy altogether. His 'legal status' made him responsible for the Irish Administration though he was, in practice, excluded from exercising his powers. His 'social functions' would have been important had they been exercised in the Provinces but the existing Castle entertainments were not of 'the slightest real importance' as 'very few of the genuine Irish families' came to them and those attending were 'nearly all of the military, official and professional classes'. No Lord Lieutenant would be willing to incur the expense of entertainments in the Provinces unless as a compensation he was granted some real share in the government of the country.

Dudley agreed to stay on as Lord Lieutenant only at the specific request of Balfour. When, at the end of the year, the general election

83. Dudley to Balfour, 22 Feb. 1905, ff 190-3. Dudley admitted that this was his first experience of being involved in an awkward political position.
85. Ibid.
brought a change of Government, he automatically vacated the position. Aberdeen, his successor, held rather similar views on the potential usefulness of the Lord Lieutenant. But, in practice, Campbell Bannerman's advice of solvitur ambulando meant that the Lord Lieutenant would only have as much influence as the Chief Secretary allowed him.

Aberdeen had a good working relationship with James Bryce, Chief Secretary during 1906, probably partly because they had been friends since being at Oxford together. Under the Chief Secretaryship of Augustine Birrell, Aberdeen was much less able to wield influence. He attempted to influence appointments, advise on agrarian policy and play a part in settling the Dublin labour disputes. But Birrell always tried to keep him at arms length, making it clear that the formulation and implementation of policy was outside the Lord Lieutenant's scope. While Campbell Bannerman was still Prime Minister, Aberdeen used his friendship with him to try to influence policy. He was also on good terms with the Under Secretary, Antony MacDonnell, probably because they shared a dislike of Birrell. When MacDonnell considered that Birrell was ignoring his views he appealed to Aberdeen who, in turn, put his case directly to the Prime Minister. Aberdeen supported MacDonnell's views on the Irish Council Bill against Birrell's. He did the same on the question of suppressing agrarian disorder, using Birrell's absence abroad to try to force through a change of policy.

Birrell agreed that the Lord Lieutenant should be kept informed as much as possible but he would not commit himself any further than that. However

86. Aberdeen to Campbell Bannerman, 28 Dec. 1906, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, ff 77-9.
87. Aberdeen to Campbell Bannerman, 26 Feb., 23 May and 1 Sept. 1907, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, ff 87-96, 101-5 and 118-21.
88. Birrell to Campbell Bannerman, 12 Jan. 1907, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41235, ff 196-7.
it proved difficult to confine Aberdeen to merely being kept informed. He continued to offer his views on matters of policy. Birrell wrote to the Prime Minister in 1913 complaining about the fact that the Aberdeens could be left out of nothing. It was, he thought, a 'capital disaster' that they should be in Dublin at such a critical time. Aberdeen had already served longer than any Lord Lieutenant since the Union so it was decided to replace him. Despite the protestations of the Aberdeens and of many of their admirers in Ireland, Asquith refused to change his mind. Birrell refused to intervene on their behalf which is not surprising as he was certainly instrumental in the decision to replace them. Much to his horror, they managed to have their departure postponed until February 1915. When they finally did leave he breathed a sigh of relief at their departure from a city which, he thought, they had 'done so much to make absurd'.

Birrell was determined to ensure that the new Lord Lieutenant, Wimbourne, would not be allowed to interfere in the way Aberdeen had done. He warned the Under Secretary, Matthew Nathan, that this should be insisted on from the outset. When Nathan noticed a tendency on Wimbourne's part to meddle in areas not his concern, Birrell asked his secretary to 'explain to his Bear that he must not dance on my platform. If he exhibits any tendency to do so it must be checked'.

89. Birrell to Asquith, 16 Oct. 1913, Asquith Papers, Bodl., MS Asq. 38, f.235.
90. The decision was precipitated by the publication of a private letter in which Lady Aberdeen questioned the motives of some members of the Red Cross Society and recommended that Home Rulers try to take it over. This incident and the final months of the Aberdeens' stay in Dublin are well described in Leon O'Broin, The Chief Secretary (1969), pp 125-34.
91. Ibid.; Asquith to Aberdeen, 8 Oct. 1914 and to Lady Aberdeen, 2 Dec. 1914, MS Asq. 46, ff 97-100; Birrell to Nathan, 14 Feb. 1915, Nathan Papers, Bodl., MS Nathan 449, ff 123-4.
92. Birrell to Nathan, 21 Jan. and 21 Feb. 1915, MS Nathan 449, ff 109-12 and 126-7. In the first letter, Birrell remarked that in preventing meddling from Wimbourne his 'entourage' would be 'of great importance'. Shortly afterwards Sam Power, an official from the Chief Secretary's Office, was assigned to his staff.
All these precautions were successful. Wimbourne told the Royal Commission on the Rebellion that the ruling principle adhered to was the 'complete irresponsibility' of the Lord Lieutenant. He was not even kept properly informed about developments until he complained about being in the dark. When the situation in Dublin deteriorated early in 1916, he unsuccessfully urged the necessity of immediate action. Largely because he was not confided in by the Chief Secretary and Under Secretary, Wimbourne was exonerated from blame for the Rising and emerged with a slightly enhanced reputation. 93

On his reappointment after the Rising, he requested that his exact position be defined. The Chief Secretary, Duke, agreed that he should have the right to have his views presented to Cabinet and that he be given more power of patronage. However the control of the Chief Secretary was reaffirmed. Between 1916 and 1918 his views were routinely sought on important matters, most notably on the conscription question. But, though he was consulted, there is little evidence to suggest that his views were seriously considered. In October 1916, he told Lloyd George that the imposition of conscription was impossible without 'a general measure of consent' of which there was no evidence at the time. That remained his position. In April 1918, the Cabinet decided to ignore the views of the Irish Executive and extend the Compulsory Military Service Acts to Ireland. The open rift between the Government and its advisers led inevitably to the replacement of the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary. 95

93. Wimbourne's position prior to the Rising is discussed below, pp 175 & 177-9.
95. Wimbourne to Lloyd George, 2 Oct. 1916, 28 Apr. and 9 May 1918, H.L.R.O. Lloyd George Papers, E/3/9/1 and F/48/1/8 and 10. War Cabinet 381 A, 3 Apr. 1918, Cab. 23/14. Interestingly enough, the 'dual policy' of offering Home Rule in return for conscription which was adopted by the Cabinet, had been suggested by Wimbourne in 1916 when he told Lloyd George that if the Irish Parliamentary Party could be placated, conscription would not meet with serious opposition. Wimbourne to Lloyd George, 6 Nov. 1916, Lloyd George Papers E/3/9/2.
The most striking thing emerging from this survey of the relations between Lord Lieutenants and Chief Secretaries is how few successful working relationships there were. This was a fact well known to anyone with any experience of Irish administration so the question which arises is why the system was not reformed. Part of the answer to this is that as with the other weaknesses in the Irish administration, the political question - Home Rule - overshadowed all else. Liberals might justify delaying administrative reform on the grounds that political reform was on its way; and Conservatives could avoid anything which smacked of constitutional reform.

That is not to say that administrative reform was not seriously considered by both Liberals and Tories. The appointment of Lord French in 1918 was the final version of a more radical innovation decided on by Lloyd George. During the conscription crisis of that year Lloyd George decided to dispense with both the Lord Lieutenancy and the Chief Secretaryship and to appoint instead a council of three Lord Justices to administer the country. It was an ad hoc arrangement designed to meet the needs of an emergency but it fell through when it proved too difficult to get three people willing to serve. Lloyd George offered the position of President of the Lord Justices to Lord Midleton with a promise that he would have 'a free hand in the government of Ireland and the status of a Cabinet Minister'. Midleton was willing to accept but demanded guarantees that he would have 'full powers to deal with the situation in Ireland and advise on all questions of policy'. In particular he argued that Home Rule was impossible for the moment at least, and asked that if it was passed its implementation should be subject to the advice of the Lord Justices. He also pointed out that in imposing conscription it might be necessary to suppress the Freemans Journal and the Independent and to 'come to such an arrangement with Ulster in regard to the time and the nature of Home Rule as will prevent Ulster joining the South in resistance to Conscription'. He wanted to know in advance whether the Cabinet would
be agreeable to such actions. 96

Lloyd George was unwilling to give Midleton the guarantees he re­quested and eventually decided to appoint French alone. Though officially Lord Lieutenant, French always referred to himself as Viceroy as he felt that the latter term carried greater status. He defined his powers as those of a Military Governor. This was an accurate description of his intended role. He had attended the crucial Cabinet meeting at which conscription policy had been decided upon, having just returned from Ireland where he was overseeing measures to quell agrarian unrest. Unlike almost all the Irish authorities consulted, French was 'strongly of the opinion that it would be possible with a slight augmentation of the existing troops in Ireland to maintain order and still carry out any policy of army recruitment there’. His confidence about the feasibility of introducing conscription made him an obvious choice to replace the existing Irish Executive which strongly opposed the policy. In accepting the Lord Lieutenancy, he defined his position clearly. He wrote to the Prime Minister:

I understand that it is ... proposed to set up a quasi-Military Government in Ireland with a soldier as Lord Lieutenant. It is on this condition that I am prepared to accept the post of Lord Lieutenant. 97

Even French accepted that conscription could not be imposed until order had been restored. While he was engaged on this task it was decided to try


97. War Cabinet 372(13), 25 March 1918, Cab. 23/5; French to Lloyd George, 5 May 1918, H.L.R.O., Lloyd George Papers, F/48/6/10.
voluntary recruitment again. Conscription was postponed. When the immediate crisis passed, French's position became increasingly anomalous and control of the Executive passed slowly but surely back to the Chief Secretary.

The process was aided by French's own inconsistency, unreliability and indeed eccentricity. He produced a crackpot scheme whereby those who absconded to avoid being conscripted would be rounded-up by airplanes based throughout the country. He changed his mind on a number of occasions on whether the Government should try to placate moderate nationalist opinion and the Catholic hierarchy in particular or whether complete Martial Law 'and a few regiments from the trenches' were all that was necessary. 98

Not the least of his inconsistencies was his attitude to his Chief Secretary, Edward Shortt. Shortt, an Asquithian Liberal, had only accepted the position after getting permission from his leader. He had opposed Irish conscription and took a moderate approach as Chief Secretary. Such characteristics did not enamour him with French with whom he clashed repeatedly on such diverse matters as the desirability of overtures to the Catholic bishops and the need to disarm the Ulster Volunteers. In September 1918, French assured Lloyd George that Shortt was 'doing excellent work' and that he was glad to have him as a colleague. The following month, however, he changed his tune and complained that from the start Shortt had not accepted that he, French, was the head of the Irish Executive. He had continually disagreed with his recommendations even at Cabinet. 'Unless Mr. Shortt can be induced to change his methods', he wrote to Lloyd George, 'I do not think it will be to the

98. French to Lloyd George, 18 and 19 Apr. 1918, H.L.R.O., Lloyd George Papers, F/48/6/7 and 8. For French and 'appeasement', see below, pp 74-5 & 189-93. In 1920, Henry Wilson remarked on French's 'inconsequential gusts of illogical passion'. 'He is', he said, 'an Imperialist, a Democrat, a Home Ruler all at the same time', Wilson Diary, 2 Apr. 1920. Imperial War Museum, HHW 29.
general advantage that he and I should any longer be associated together in
the government of Ireland'. Three months later Shortt resigned. 99

On the face of it, the replacement of Shortt was a victory for French
and for his argument that the Lord Lieutenant was now the senior partner.
In practice the Chief Secretary gradually resumed control, and French became
more and more isolated. 100 Nevertheless the ambiguity of the respective
powers of the Chief Secretary and Lord Lieutenant continued to cause con­
fusion and controversy. Though the War Cabinet sent French to Ireland as
Lord Lieutenant with 'additional responsibilities', it also affirmed that
the status of the Chief Secretary was not reduced. 101 This obvious contra­
diction was tolerated probably because it facilitated the implementation of
policies which changed repeatedly during the next few years.

The suggestion of a council of Lord Justices to rule Ireland vanished
almost as quickly as it appeared. French was allowed to form a 'Viceroy's
Advisory Council', composed of seven Irishmen, to advise him on Irish matters.
But the Council had no power and was little more than a gesture. 102 Despite
that, the Lord Justices idea came closer to implementation than any other
major reform of the Irish Executive.

99. French to Lloyd George, 2 and 12 Oct., 29 Nov. 1918, H.L.R.O., Lloyd

100. The new Chief Secretary's regular absences from Ireland allowed French
to retain some involvement in the day-to-day administration but he com­
plained of being excluded from the formation of policy. The appointment
of Hamar Greenwood as Chief Secretary and John Anderson as joint Under­
Secretary according to one observer completed his isolation from both
policy-making and routine administration. Lloyd George to French, 14
May 1919, H.L.R.O., Lloyd George Papers, F/48/6/26; G.C. Duggan
('Periscope'), 'The Last Days of Dublin Castle', Blackwoods Magazine,
MCCLXXXII (August 1922), 156.

101. War Cabinet 412 (17), 15 May 1918, Cab. 23/6.

102. French to Lloyd George, 7 Sept. 1918, H.L.R.O., Lloyd George Papers,
F/48/6/19; War Cabinet 421 and 456, 30 May and 9 Aug. 1918, Cab. 23/6
and 7.
The most frequently mooted reform was the abolition of the Lord Lieutenancy and the appointment of a Secretary of State for Ireland in place of the Chief Secretary. This was one reform envisaged but not implemented by Asquith in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. It is easy to see why he should have hesitated. Abolition of the separate Irish Executive suggested complete integration of the Irish administrative structure with the English at a time when the drift of political opinion was decisively in the other direction. And even if such a shift was conceivable politically, it would have involved a considerable amount of administrative change.

The idea was by no means new. As early as 1850, Lord John Russell presented a bill to Parliament for the abolition of the Irish Executive and the creation of a number of Secretaries of State. The bill was dropped for lack of time but the idea continued to surface for the next seventy years. It was not always considered necessary that the Viceroyalty should be abolished. A number of schemes were produced for the creation of a non-political Viceroyalty, i.e. one in which the holder would not change with the Government. One step in this direction would have been the appointment of Lord Lorne, the Queen's son-in-law, to the Viceroyalty, proposed by Gladstone in 1886. The Queen refused to agree, 'ostensibly', she noted 'on account of expense...but really on political grounds'.

The idea of creating a non-political Viceroyalty or of substituting for it a Royal Residence at which some of the Royal Family could live for part of the year did not recommend itself to Queen Victoria. King Edward VII, however, favoured the idea. When Cadogan announced his intention to resign

103 McDowell, *The Irish Administration*, p.68.
104 Gladstone revived the idea in 1871 but got nowhere. Ibid., p.70.
105 Gladstone to Queen Victoria, 4 Feb. 1886 and note by Queen of the same date, in Buckle, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, p.44.
the King told Lord Salisbury's secretary that he wished his son to be appointed. Salisbury tried to discourage him by pointing out that the Lord Lieutenant spent fifteen to twenty thousand pounds in excess of his annual income but admitted that finance should not be a barrier. Cabinet discussed the idea of creating a non-political Viceroyalty but thought the difficulties 'insuperable'.

In 1902 the matter was revived by Cabinet and a proposal to appoint a member of the Royal Family as Viceroy or for the Prince of Wales to live in Ireland for the Castle season was put before the King. Balfour, who favoured the scheme, forwarded it to Lecky who attacked it strongly. As Lord Lieutenants were invariably unpopular he could not recommend compromising the Royal Family. So the scheme was rejected though the King continued to favour it.

Ironically, in view of the fact that Home Rule was partly responsible for postponing reform or abolition of the Lord Lieutenancy, all the Home Rule Bills and the Irish Council Bill of 1907 provided for the continued existence of that office. Of course, its status and functions would have been altered. It was to be a non-political appointment the main function of which was to assent to legislation. When the Free State was set up the office was replaced by that of Governor-General.

John Morley described the Lord Lieutenancy as he knew it in 1892-5 as 'the most thankless office that any human being in any imaginable community could undertake'. It can only have become more and more thankless in the

107. Salisbury to King Edward VII, 1 Feb. 1901, P.R.O., Cab. 41/26/1.
next twenty years. The pretence that it fulfilled an important social function became less and less tenable in the face of the divisiveness engendered by Home Rule and the increasing assertiveness of the great majority of people for whom the Viceregal Court had no meaning. Only very rarely was there a compensating access to the exercise of real power. Slowly but surely the more practical and more democratic assessments of Balfour and John Morley found acceptance to the exclusion of the traditional Cadogan model and even of the more moderate versions of Dudley and Aberdeen. The appointment of Lord French in 1918 saw a temporary reversal of the trend but even this is more interesting as an example of the 'ad-hocery' which guaranteed that the Irish Administration would be characterised by inconsistency rather than coherence.

110. Just how thankless it could be was shown when there was a nearly successful assassination attempt on Lord French's life in December 1919.
Ko-Ko. - Pooh-Bah, it seems that the festivities in connection with my approaching marriage must last a week. I should like to do it handsomely, and I want to consult you as to the amount I ought to spend on them.

Pooh-Bah. - Certainly. In which of my capacities? As First Lord of the Treasury, Lord Chamberlain, Attorney General, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Privy Purse or Private Secretary? ..... Speaking as your Private Secretary, I should say that as the city will have to pay for it, don't stint yourself: do it well .... Of course you will understand that, as Chancellor of the Exchequer I am bound to see that due economy is observed .... As your Solicitor, I should have no hesitation in saying Chance it .... if it were not that, as Lord Chief Justice, I am bound to see that the law isn't violated .... Of course, as First Lord of the Treasury, I could propose a special vote that would cover all expenses if it were not that, as leader of the Opposition, it would be my duty to resist it tooth and nail. Or, as Paymaster-General I could so cook the accounts that as Lord High Auditor I should never discover the fraud. But then, as Archbishop of Jitipu, it would be my duty to denounce my dishonesty and give myself into my own custody as Commissioner of Police. *The Mikado.*  

In the period 1890-1921, the Chief Secretary was the officer mainly responsible for the government of Ireland. As we have seen, the fact that he was both a Secretary of State and Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant led to conflict and confusion within the Irish Executive. However that conflict was generally resolved in favour of the Chief Secretary. That had not always been the case. The post originated in the early seventeenth century. During the next two hundred years a number of other positions grew up around it to form the Chief Secretary's Office. Until the time of the Union the Chief Secretary was chosen by and remained the personal assistant of the Lord Lieutenant. Thereafter his status

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gradually increased because of his membership of the House of Commons which itself was assuming a more active role in the control of government. From then on the appointment was made by the Prime Minister and not by the Lord Lieutenant, and the Chief Secretary was at first occasionally, and later very often, a member of the Cabinet, both acknowledgements of his increased importance.

Unlike a Secretary of State in England, the Irish Chief Secretary was responsible for most of the branches of government which touched Ireland rather than just for one. Barry O'Brien's amusing comparison of his functions to those of Pooh-Bah, 'Lord High-Everything Else' of the Mikado of Japan, though it may over-estimate the actual power of the Chief Secretary, does give a vivid impression of the wide variety of his concerns. Apart from a small number of English departments functioning in Ireland, the Chief Secretary was responsible for all the other agencies of government in the country.

Another analogy drawn by O'Brien and other contemporaries was with the functions of the Prime Minister. The role of the Chief Secretary was similar to that of the Prime Minister in that both were at the hub of the machine and were ultimately responsible for the administration of a number of departments. But, as in the case of the Lord High-Everything-Else analogy, where the comparison breaks down is probably more interesting.

In practice the power of the Chief Secretary was limited. Though nominally under his control, many of the Irish boards and departments were

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2. 'Blue Notes' 1920-21, Class II, 34 (Chief Secretary, Ireland Offices), p.1, P.R.O., T165/46; McDowell, 'The Irish Executive in the Nineteenth Century', I.H.S., IX, No.35 (March, 1955), 265-7. For the numbers of Chief Secretaries in the Cabinet in the nineteenth century, see ibid., 267. From 1850 onwards, the Chief Secretary's salary was £4000 with a miscellaneous necessities allowance of £425 which in 1888 was absorbed into the salary. He had also an official residence in Phoenix Park and a £300 gardening allowance.

The extent to which the Chief Secretary's control varied was not widely appreciated at the time. The fact that he was answerable in Parliament for boards with which he had very little to do served to confirm the impression that he was, in effect, the 'Prime Minister' of Ireland. But not only did he not control some very important organs of Irish government, his administration of even those which were directly responsible to him was limited by the fact that on major matters of policy he himself was subject to Cabinet. Some British statutory authorities may have been outside the direct control of the Prime Minister but they were not as many or as important as in Ireland; and although the Prime Minister may have required the agreement of his Cabinet colleagues for major matters of policy, there was clearly a difference between his status in the Cabinet and the Chief Secretary's. Thus, while the responsibilities of both Prime Minister and Chief Secretary were comparable, their real power was not.

The Graveyard of Reputations

The Irish Office, as one recent historian has remarked, was 'not a particularly coveted position in British politics'. Writing in 1908, Barry O'Brien made exactly the same point:

The congratulations which a Chief Secretary for Ireland receives, on his appointment, from his friends in England, are mingled with expressions of sympathy, and perhaps sometimes even of regret. He is congratulated as a man who is promoted to an office on the Gold Coast is congratulated: for Ireland is the grave of many English political reputations.

Nineteenth Century, LXXI (June, 1912), 1237 and 'How Ireland is Governed', Nineteenth Century, LXXIV (Sept., 1913), 574.
4. For a detailed account of these departments, see Chapters 6 and 8.
The high turnover in Chief Secretaries - 53 in 122 years - is one indication of how unpopular the position was and how unsuccessful some Chief Secretaries were. Between 1888 and 1922, the turnover was not quite so rapid: the average term was 2.8 years compared to 2.3 for the longer period. However the slight increase is accounted for by the near-record nine year term of Birrell. The office continued to live up (or down) to its reputation as a potential graveyard.

Two Chief Secretaries in particular had their careers and reputations ruined in Ireland: George Wyndham and Augustine Birrell. Birrell's undoing, brought about by the 1916 Rising, was probably the more spectacular. He frankly admitted that he had failed in his primary task of maintaining order in Ireland and must accept the consequences. The modest success of the early part of his term in Ireland was completely overshadowed by the 1916 debacle in the eyes of contemporaries and later historians. Even the authors of his entry in the Dictionary of National Biography remarked that there could be 'no question of public responsibilities being entrusted to him again'. He did not seek re-election to Parliament in 1918 and lived quietly in retirement until his death in 1933.

In terms of Greek tragedy, Birrell's fall was not so dramatic as Wyndham's. Birrell was after all sixty-six in 1916 and could, in the normal course of events, have been expected to retire shortly. Wyndham, on the other hand, was only forty-one when the devolution crisis gave a set-back to his career from which it never recovered. He was young, able, ambitious and was looking forward, not without justification, to the day when he would be Prime Minister,

7. Chief Secretaries 1900-5 and 1907-16 respectively.
when the storm broke at the end of 1904. No more than a few months later
he left Ireland a broken man, physically and mentally.  

Wyndham and Birrell were exceptional cases but only in the extent of
their failures. Many of their fellows saw their careers go into decline
after their term as Chief Secretary. William Lawies Jackson was fifty-two
when he left Ireland but he was never appointed to a post of any significance
afterwards. Gerald Balfour became President of the Board of Trade but
retired shortly after. Henry Duke asked to be relieved of his post in May
1918 and immediately left politics to become Lord Justice of Appeal.
Edward Shortt went to the Home Office but, like his two successors, Ian Mac-
pherson and Hamar Greenwood, his political career ended in 1922.

Not all Chief Secretaries were quite so unlucky. Arthur Balfour, the
first Chief Secretary of the period, left Ireland to become Leader of the
House of Commons and eventually Prime Minister. This subsequent success
owed not a little to the reputation for toughness and political shrewdness
which he made in Ireland. He showed that he was not quite so frail as was
supposed and that this advancement was based as much on merit as on nepotism.

10. For the details of the devolution crisis, see Chapter 4.
14. Shortt was Chief Secretary from May 1918 to January 1919, Macpherson
from January 1919 to April 1920 and Greenwood from then to 1922. It
should be said that all three were 'protégés of Lloyd George and their
defeat in 1922 is partly attributable to this. Greenwood was later re-
elected but did not achieve much further distinction.
Without winning his spurs in this way he could not become a serious contender for higher office. John Morley, Chief Secretary in 1886 and from 1892 to 1895, suffered no political ill-effects from his time in Ireland. He later had a distinguished career as Secretary of State for India and Lord Privy Seal. Similarly with Walter Long, Chief Secretary for nine months in 1905, who later became President of the Local Government Board, Secretary of State for the Colonies and a serious contender for the leadership of the Unionist Party. James Bryce achieved his ambition of becoming British Ambassador in Washington but half the attraction of that position was that it got him out of Ireland.

It is also worth noting that Wyndham and Birrell whose terms ended so disastrously built up reputations in Ireland to a large extent. Wyndham had useful connections within the Unionist Party, having been Arthur Balfour's Private Secretary when he was Chief Secretary, but his political experience was limited. His most senior position before the Irish Office was the Parliamentary Under Secretaryship at the War Office. When he was appointed to Ireland it was as a junior colleague to Cadogan, the Lord Lieutenant, who was to be in the Cabinet. Wyndham was admitted to the Cabinet only after Cadogan's retirement. In the prolonged dispute with Cadogan on the question of agrarian disorder, described in the last chapter, Wyndham proved himself resourceful and firm. Though not in the Cabinet he managed to win his point and thus precipitated Cadogan's retirement and his own promotion. This promotion was followed soon afterwards by the biggest triumph of his career: the Irish Land

16. See Catherine Shannon, 'Arthur Balfour and the Irish Question, 1874-1921', Ph.D., University of Massachusetts, 1974, pp 28-9. Campbell Bannerman (1884-5) was another Chief Secretary who later became Prime Minister.


18. Ibid., pp 517-20.

19. Ibid., pp 127-35.
Act of 1903. As soon as he had arrived in Ireland Wyndham had become convinced that a new Land Act was necessary. In 1902, despite the disapproval of the Treasury and of many of the Cabinet he was allowed to introduce a bill which would have enabled landlords to sell their estates in globo to the Land Commission for cash. He admitted that it was a 'makeshift bill' and when it was opposed by the Irish Members of Parliament it was allowed to drop. It was this experience which induced him to enthusiastically endorse the suggestion of a conference of landlords and tenants to settle the issue, which was held shortly afterwards. His endorsement was crucial to the success of the conference. Later he overcame stiff opposition within the Cabinet when he embodied the unanimous recommendations of the conference in the Land Act of 1903. His triumph was widely acknowledged. The King, who was visiting Ireland when the bill passed the House of Commons, immediately offered Wyndham a knighthood, but he refused it. Shortly afterwards, Balfour offered him the War Office but with the approval of the King he decided to stay in Ireland.

Birrell was not quite as untried and unproven as Wyndham when he was appointed. He was a distinguished man of letters but his only ministerial experience was as President of the Board of Education in 1906. His handling of the controversial Education Bill of that year brought him to public notice. He did not have the main responsibility for the framing of the bill. This, in fact, was a great asset to him as it facilitated his taking a detached and accommodating line with its opponents, not least of whom were the Irish Nationalist M.P.s. When, inevitably, the bill was rejected by the House of Commons.

Lords, Birrell was chosen to replace Bryce. He was still a political novice whose main credentials for his new position were his popularity with the Nationalist M.P.s and a proven ability to work with them. In Ireland, Birrell quickly came under attack from Irish Unionists for his conciliatory attitude, especially on the question of agrarian unrest. But he increased his popularity with the Nationalists and, in the years before Home Rule overshadowed everything else, was responsible for an impressive list of beneficial legislation, such as the 1908 Universities Act and the 1909 Land Act. Had he been allowed to retire in 1912 or 1914, as he wished to, then the verdict of most of his contemporaries and of historians would probably have been that his was the most successful Chief Secretaryship since Balfour’s.

Thus the Irish Office and failure were not always synonymous. A new incumbent was guaranteed an eventful time but with skill and luck he might succeed, if not in enhancing his reputation, at least in surviving without damaging it too greatly. That so few Chief Secretaries managed to achieve this was partly due to the fact that the skill and experience required was greater than it was reasonable to expect of an office which occupied such a low status in the ministry.

Of the twelve Chief Secretaries in the period, only five - Arthur Balfour, Morley, Long, Bryce and Birrell - had previously been in the Cabinet and, as we have seen, Birrell’s previous Cabinet experience had been rather limited. Of the remaining seven, four - Jackson, Wyndham, Macpherson and Greenwood - had been Parliamentary Under Secretaries and two - Gerald Balfour and Henry Duke - had held no permanent Government position of any significance. Only one - James Bryce - was Irish and very few had any previous experience

of Ireland or Irish politics. Arthur Balfour had been Secretary of State for Scotland for a short time and encountered there similar agrarian problems to those which existed in Ireland. Jackson, his successor, had, as Financial Secretary to the Treasury, worked closely with Balfour on matters concerning the Irish Administration but he had no other relevant experience. Morley, who was active in radical politics, was a long-time supporter of Home Rule. Wyndham's mother was a granddaughter of the Irish rebel Lord Edward Fitzgerald and he himself had gained some knowledge of Irish politics when he acted as Private Secretary to Arthur Balfour. Morley and Bryce had been involved in the framing of the first and second Home Rule bills. The other Chief Secretaries had little or no first hand experience of Ireland. On their appointment, they found themselves in the same position as Birrell who when he accepted the position wrote himself the following note:

Ireland! What do I know about it? From personal knowledge and experience, save as a tourist - Nothing!

The obvious remedy for this lack of knowledge among Chief Secretaries was to appoint an Irishman. But, even presuming that one who was both suitable and willing to serve could be found, his appointment would probably have been too divisive. An Irish Unionist would be attacked with added vigour by the Nationalists and an Irish Liberal or a Nationalist would have met with a similar reception from the Irish Unionists. The next best remedy would have been

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26. Bryce was born in Belfast. When he was eight the family moved to Glasgow but he was sent back to Belfast for his secondary education. *D.N.B. 1822-1930*, pp 127-8. Seven Chief Secretaries were English, three were Scottish and one - Greenwood - was Canadian. The average age on appointment was fifty. Wyndham (37), Balfour (38) and Macpherson (38) were the youngest. Birrell (58), Duke (60) and Bryce (67) were the oldest. Interestingly all three Liberal appointments were above the average age. They were also all distinguished men of letters.

27. He had some success in dealing with a 'no-rent' campaign in the Hebrides in 1886-7, Shannon, op. cit., p.29.


been to choose an experienced English politician. In practice, however, this only occasionally happened because the Government did not always attach great importance to the post and, when it did, many experienced politicians were simply unwilling to risk their reputations in Ireland.

Very few Chief Secretaries in the period went to the Irish Office willingly and none sought the position. Even the relatively junior appointees had strong reservations. George Wyndham accepted the Chief Secretaryship with considerable reluctance and viewed it as a stumbling block rather than a stepping stone. Birrell was 'scared...with foreboding' that he would be chosen to succeed Bryce but accepted after a 'few...protestations'. Later he commented that his long tenure of that 'disagreeable office' was probably due to the fact that none of his colleagues coveted it. Long only agreed to accept the 'disagreeable office' after extreme pressure from Balfour who told him that while he could not ask him to accept, he would be doing him 'a great service and rendering a still greater one to your country'. His acquiescence was made easier by the likelihood that the Government could not survive for long. In 1918, during the conscription crisis, Long was again asked to render a service to his Prime Minister and country by returning to Ireland. This time he refused though he agreed to become adviser on Irish policy to the Cabinet. Lloyd George would probably have understood and sympathised with his refusal as his own efforts to negotiate a settlement after the Rising had been singularly unsuccessful.

30. Allison, op. cit., p.141. He told a friend that he did not 'like the idea of Ireland' and would prefer the War Office. Mackail and Wyndham, op. cit., p.402.
This general reluctance to accept the Chief Secretaryship should not be attributed simply to a preoccupation with the potential damage to one's reputation. The position also necessitated an inevitable dislocation of family life and carried with it the possibility of being seriously overworked. Part of every year had to be spent in Dublin and part in London and at least occasional visits had to be made to the west of Ireland. In other circumstances this constant travelling might have provided a pleasant interlude away from the busy schedule of London life. However the evidence shows that most Chief Secretaries found the interlude far from pleasant. Dublin, as John Morley remarked, was an 'acquired taste' and it was not a taste many of his colleagues managed to acquire. The west of Ireland, for all its poverty, had greater attractions and Wyndham and Birrell, at least, found it a welcome break from the political in-fighting and 'dishonourable intrigue' of Dublin and London.

Birrell's view of Dublin Castle was less than favourable. He told the House of Commons that he did not think that any Chief Secretary, with 'the slightest tincture of popular feeling in his bones' could enter the gloomy portals of Dublin Castle without a sinking of the heart almost amounting to the abandonment of hope ... No pulse of real life runs through the place. The main current of Irish life as it rushes past its walls passes by almost unheeded. There it stands 'remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow', regarding this great stream of national life and feeling with a curious expression, mingled, it may be, with cynicism and amusement, coupled also, I admit, with a passionate tutorial desire to teach the wild Irish people how to behave themselves, just and exactly as the great Roman provincial of Anno Domini 120, living in his delightful villa in York or Colchester, or Bath, may have regarded the vagaries of the inhabitants of this island.

35. John Morley's wife pleaded with him to leave Ireland when Gladstone retired. Recollections (1921) p.368.
36. Ibid., p.335.
37. Birrell to Nathan, 18 Apr. 1916, Bodl., MS Nathan 449, ff 350-1; Allison, op. cit., p.150.
Nor were such sentiments confined to Liberal Chief Secretaries. Shortly after his arrival in Ireland, Wyndham wrote to his family and friends describing his position. He was, he told his mother, 'a Ghibelline Duke of the 13th Century representing Empire and a larger organic conception in a Guelph republic'. And to another friend he wrote 'I have my province. It can be governed only by conversation and arbitrary decision'.

The physical demands made on the Chief Secretary were of great importance. During the 1880's, one incumbent was assassinated and two more retired because of ill-health. When George Otto Trevelyan's hair turned white he asked to be relieved as the life he led was 'not a human life at all'. Two years later, Hicks Beach retired because of ill-health caused by overwork. When the position was offered to Arthur Balfour, he had a medical check-up before he accepted. Even then there was widespread surprise at the choice of one so delicate. Hicks Beach immediately wrote to Lord Salisbury pointing out that physique was 'quite as important as ability - perhaps more'. He added that if yet another Chief Secretary broke down because of ill-health it would 'almost prove that no man could do the work' and would strengthen the Home Rule argument.

The Pall Mall Gazette opined that an Irish Chief Secretary should be 'as tough as catgut and as hard as nails'. Balfour, it thought, was 'the very antithesis of a pachyderm'. To offer him the Chief Secretaryship was 'murderous'. It amounted to the 'presentation of a silken bowstring to the doomed victim of the caliph'. Even the Freeman's Journal in its own critical

40. Lord Frederick Cavendish.
41. G.O. Trevelyan and Michael Hicks Beach.
42. McDowell, op. cit., p.59.
44. Ibid., p.149.
way expressed its concern. It was like 'breaking a butterfly to extend Mr. Arthur Balfour on the Rack of Irish Politics' as this 'elegant fragile creature' was 'a prey to an aristocratic languor' and noteworthy for 'a sublime affectation of intellectual culture, which has proved singularly useless to him in making a mark as a politician'. His life to date seemed to be 'a protest against being called upon to do anything but sniff a heavily perfumed handkerchief while he sprawls in poses of studied carelessness on the benches of the House of Commons'.

Balfour quickly disproved the charges of delicacy and downright effeminacy. He proved himself 'as tough as catgut and as hard as nails'. These physical and mental qualities continued to be demanded from his successors. Most of the Chief Secretaries in the period at one time or another showed signs of the strain they were working under. The pressure was particularly acute during the Home Rule Crisis of 1912-14 and from 1919 onwards. However the most notable instance where the strain led to serious consequences was the case of Wyndham. Within a year of his appointment he was complaining of being overworked and wishfully anticipating the defeat of the Government. By 1904 he was in danger of having a nervous breakdown so instead of coming to Ireland during the August recess he took a vacation. His absence helped to cause the misunderstanding with his Under Secretary which ultimately caused his downfall. The devolution crisis was caused by the simple fact that for very understandable reasons Wyndham was out of touch with Dublin Castle. In the controversy which followed, his health again proved decisive. He was unable to stand up to the constant stream of accusations made against him and resigned.

46. Macpherson in particular suffered from ill-health brought on by overwork. D.N.B., 1931-1940, p.593.
48. See Chapter 4.
49. Allison, op. cit., p.182.
The Chief Secretary in Parliament

Though the Chief Secretary's Office was actually located in Dublin Castle, much of his work was done in London. Unlike the Ministers he did not have a parliamentary assistant. As the Government's spokesman on Irish affairs his presence was necessary at all times when Parliament was sitting. It was practicable to visit Ireland only during the recess or the long vacation. Constituency and family duties competed for attention during the same periods so it is not surprising that only a fraction of the year was spent there.

After the 1916 Rising, Birrell was attacked for having spent so little time in Ireland, especially in the years 1914-16. Maurice Headlam, the Treasury Remembrancer, recalled that he had seen him only twice in four years and both times in London. However, the critics ignored the fact that he had less choice in the matter than any of his predecessors as Parliament was in almost continuous session. The Royal Commission on the Rebellion conceded that 'during this critical period' Birrell had 'little opportunity of making himself personally acquainted with the state of affairs in Ireland'.

Accusations of not visiting Ireland were levelled at many Chief Secretaries. Some were less conscientious in the matter than others and Birrell was certainly not the worst offender. Arthur Balfour spent only six months in Ireland during his four and one half years as Chief Secretary and almost all of that in Dublin. This was by no means exceptional. Despite the criticism of Birrell, his successor came to Ireland no more often and then only for short trips which he spent almost exclusively in Dublin. As the state of the

50. It would have been possible to spend two days a week in Ireland during the session but the boat-train journey was so exhausting that few Chief Secretaries were willing to make the effort.
51. Maurice Headlam, Irish Reminiscences p.69.
country deteriorated from 1918 onwards there was even less of an incentive to visit Dublin. Macpherson and Greenwood did so very rarely and when they did they confined themselves to the Castle and to the Chief Secretary's Lodge in Phoenix Park.  

This remoteness from Ireland, or at least Ireland outside Dublin Castle, could not but have a deleterious effect especially after 1916. However it is worth noting that, in physical terms at least, Chief Secretaries during most of the period 1890 to 1921 were probably less isolated than at any time since the Union. As Henry Robinson, the organiser of many trips to the west of Ireland by Chief Secretaries remarked, the advent of the motorcar made a great difference. Instead of deriving their knowledge of the country from a study of the map on a wall in their rooms at Dublin Castle and from police reports, Chief Secretaries could go and investigate conditions for themselves. The commitment of Wyndham and Birrell to a generous policy of land purchase and the promotion of the Congested Districts Board respectively was inspired directly by their visits to the west of Ireland.

It was theoretically possible for the Chief Secretary to fulfil all his duties without ever going to Ireland. Though the Irish Office in London was officially only a sub-branch of the central office in Dublin Castle, a large amount of Irish Government business was transacted from there. It had a staff of only three - the Chief Secretary's Private Secretary, the Irish Government draftsman and a first class clerk - and even they were only present during the parliamentary session. However it was in direct telegraphic communication with the Chief Secretary's Office. Birrell told the Royal Commission that in the wire, the staff of three and a small library he had

54. A.P. Magill Papers, Bodl, MS Eng. lett. c.213, ff 176-178.
55. Robinson, Memories, pp 247-56.
all the machinery of Government ... we communicate by wire with the Under Secretary hourly, and we are in constant course of long correspondence on most private and confidential subjects, and I have got into the habit, and I still think on the whole it is not a bad one, of regarding the duty of the Chief Secretary to carry on the business of Irish Government while Parliament is sitting, in London. 56

In fact Birrell's mention of hourly communication was misleading. Most of the communications with the Chief Secretary's Office were concerned with routine matters such as the answers to parliamentary questions. The work of the Irish Office was primarily oriented towards parliamentary business. Only in the most haphazard way did it supervise or was it even aware of much of the work being done at Dublin Castle. Very few papers were referred to the Chief Secretary. Only those considered of particular importance by the Under Secretary were sent to him. Even during the potentially explosive 1912-1914 period, he did not see all police reports as a matter of course. Instead he was kept informed by means of a weekly 'journal'. 57

The Chief Secretary might have been forgiven for believing that what happened in Parliament was his main concern. No other Minister had to spend more time in Parliament than he. Not only was he held responsible for all areas of Irish Government, even those over which he had little or no control, but he was faced by a party - in fact two parties - whose sole concern was Ireland. A Tory Secretary of State for War came under the scrutiny of the Opposition only periodically. A Tory Chief Secretary was perpetually under the gaze of the Irish Parliamentary Party and of the Irish Unionists. That was their raison d'être. So he was in effect faced not with one Opposition spokesman but with more than a hundred. Largely because of this unity of

56. Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Evidence, p.23, [Cd 8311]
H.C. 1916, XI.

57. Ibid., p.11; G.C. Duggan, 'Chief Secretaries Office - second phase 1912-4', Chapter iii of an unpublished book by G.C. Duggan entitled 'The Life of a Civil Servant', manuscript in the possession of Leon O'Brien. Duggan was at the time Acting Private Secretary to the Under Secretary.
purpose, the Irish Parliamentary Party had developed a mastery of parliamentary tactics which made it the scourge of all Chief Secretaries. Though he would hardly have admitted it when he was Chief Secretary, Arthur Balfour declared many years later that it had been 'in many respects the most brilliant parliamentary party which the British system of representative government has ever produced'.

The Irish Parliamentary Party used the debates on the King's or Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament, the motions for the adjournment and debates on the Estimates, censure motions, Private Members Bills and parliamentary questions as a means of promoting their policy of Irish self-government. Some relatively obscure aspect of Irish administration would be cited to show that the existing system was inefficient, costly or unworkable. Not surprisingly the speeches changed little over the years but that did not make the task of the Chief Secretary any easier.

As Barry O'Brien pointed out, for the Irish Party to be effective in the House of Commons it had to be troublesome. Nothing was more troublesome than that 'tremendous instrument of torture', the parliamentary question. Throughout the period Irish Members dominated question-time. Sometimes there were as many as forty Irish questions on a single day. Occasionally the purpose was to elicit some piece of information. More often it was to draw attention to some failure of the Irish Administration or simply to harass the Chief Secretary. Much of the Irish Office's time was spent preparing answers to unnecessary questions.

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61. Actually the Irish Office simply drafted the reply. The necessary information was supplied by the Chief Secretary's Office.
Probably the best way to illustrate the parliamentary work of the Chief Secretary is to look more closely (though not by any means exclusively) at a particular year. Obviously no one year can be taken as being 'typical'. However there are enough common factors to make the exercise worthwhile. I have chosen the year 1906 for no better reason than that it is mid-way through my period.

The landslide victory of the Liberals in the general election of 1905 seemed to augur well for the prospects of the Irish Parliamentary Party during the 1906 session. It had been made clear that Home Rule was not immediately feasible. Instead the Liberals were committed to a policy of 'Home Rule by instalments'. Bryce, the new Chief Secretary, might have expected an easy time from the Irish Party. To begin with they were certainly friendly and cooperative. They found the King's speech encouraging though their response was non-committal. The speech announced that the Government had under consideration plans for improving and effecting economies in the system of government in Ireland and for introducing into it means for associating the people with the conduct of Irish affairs. It is my desire that the government of the country, in reliance upon the ordinary law, should be carried on, so far as existing circumstances permit, in a spirit regardful of the wishes and sentiments of the Irish people; and I trust that this may conduce to the maintenance of tranquillity and of good feeling between different classes in the community.

In the subsequent debate, Bryce freely admitted the existence of major problems in Ireland. John Dillon, for the Irish Party, responded that so long as the Government adhered to the spirit of Bryce's speech they would find in the Irish Party

practical men, reasonable men, men not difficult to deal with, men with whom it was easy to carry on a transaction so long as they were convinced that those with whom they were dealing were honest and earnest.\textsuperscript{64}

These then were the terms of the 'Liberal alliance'. Dillon accepted that the Government was 'thoroughly sympathetic' to Irish demands and accepted that it would need time to formulate proposals. But 'practical' and 'reasonable' though they might claim to be, the Irish Party could not for one moment depart from their central policy of Home Rule. Both Dillon and Redmond explicitly reserved the right to criticise the Government's proposals when published and in what was, in effect, a warning to Bryce, explained that their welcome for the Government's policy as explained in the King's speech was due to their certainty that it was impossible to associate the Irish people with the conduct of their own affairs except by creating an Irish Parliament.

Despite the fact that the Liberals had disavowed any intention of introducing such a large measure, the Irish Party continued to talk about it in those terms. Home Rule had not been an issue in the election despite the efforts of the Ulster Unionists and some members of the previous Government to revive their fortunes by raising the Home Rule bogey. The Liberals had been concerned to play down the question.\textsuperscript{65} Once the election was over the Irish Party was keen to emphasise the part Home Rule had played and to claim that the Government had received a mandate on the issue. The fact that the party which had been pledged to Home Rule for twenty years had been triumphant

\textsuperscript{64. Ibid., 433-9.}

\textsuperscript{65. When it became apparent that the election was going against the Unionists and that the Liberals were unbeatable on the free trade and education issues, the Home Rule bogey was increasingly used. Arthur Balfour told an election Rally in East Manchester that Home Rule was 'the greatest dividing line between the two Parties in the State in spite of any assertion to the contrary. I fail to see who is going to limit the power of the new Parliament in the matter, or how the Government is going to exclude Home Rule, even in its largest form, from the consideration of the House'. Ibid., 180-1.}
and the party pledged to oppose it had been 'wiped out', was claimed by Redmond to be sufficient evidence that the British electorate was prepared for 'some great reconstructive policy with regard to the government of Ireland'.

There were good reasons why the Irish Party should try to exaggerate the prospects of Home Rule and in particular the likelihood of the Government's Irish Council scheme being such a major measure. The effect of this however was to lead ultimately to the rejection of the bill in 1907 by rank-and-file nationalists because of the undue expectations of what it might contain which had to be encouraged by their leaders. In the shorter term it made the drafting of the bill extremely difficult for Bryce. Indeed, despite extensive behind the scenes negotiations, he found it impossible to produce a scheme which would meet the demands of the Irish Party and at the same time not go beyond Liberal Party policy, and have a prospect of passing the House of Lords.

The only other reference to Ireland in the King's speech was a promise to introduce a new Labourers Bill. The unanimity with which it was welcomed tends to belie its importance. Introduced in May 1906, it was designed to remedy defects in the existing Act for the provision of labourers' cottages, which had been a failure because of the costly and lengthy procedure involved and the reluctance of most rural district councils to build cottages which were a burden on the local rates. The new bill removed responsibility for appeals from the Privy Council to the Local Government Board, allowed that board to act independently if the rural district council did not prepare schemes for cottages, facilitated the Estates Commissioners making provision for cottages on the sale of estates, and provided for more loans to be made available at better terms and for a free grant.

66. Ibid., 180-93.
67. See Chapter 4.
The Labourers Bill was a relatively minor piece of legislation compared to the Home Rule bills or the Land Purchase Acts. Its provisions were straightforward and its aims limited. Yet the framing and passing of the legislation occupied a considerable amount of Bryce's time during 1906. As soon as the Government took office the Irish Party had pressed on Bryce the need for such legislation. While it was being framed they were in regular contact with him about its provisions. When it was introduced into Parliament they welcomed it as an 'honest measure' which would not settle the question completely but which would 'enormously mitigate it'. And when the measure was passed they claimed the credit. In fact Bryce had consulted other interests too. The Local Government Board as the Government agency directly concerned played a large part in drafting the bill, which it favoured. However, this relatively straightforward task was complicated by the fact that Henry Robinson, the head of the Local Government Board was politically suspect because he was a Unionist: he had been appointed by the previous Government and had been a close friend of Long, the outgoing Chief Secretary.

Another complication was the division in the ranks of the Nationalists. Since 1904 the Irish Land and Labour Association had been campaigning for a new Labourers bill. Bryce's Act implemented many of the demands of the Association as originally outlined by William O'Brien. The Irish Party distrusted the Association because of O'Brien's connections with it and played little or no part in its campaign. Bryce was in contact with O'Brien when the bill was being drafted and according to O'Brien at least it might have been postponed to allow Bryce to concentrate on the Irish Council bill but for his strong protest. After a fairly uneventful passage through the Commons, a final complication arose when amendments were introduced in the Lords. The bill was saved however when the Speaker ruled the Lord's financial amendments
One way in which the Irish Party could exert pressure on the Chief Secretary was by the introduction of Private Members bills. Few of these were ever passed but they provided yet another opportunity to attack the existing system of government. Because of the limited time assigned for such bills very few actually got beyond the first reading stage. By pooling the rights of all its members in the ballot for the right to bring in a Private Members bill, the Irish Party managed to dominate the time available. In 1906 the most important Private Members bill introduced was the Town Tenants Act. In its original form, it was quite a radical measure providing compensation for disturbance and improvements and the right to purchase rather than be evicted. The bill also, in effect, limited the right of the landlord to raise the rent at the expiry of a lease on the ground that he contributed nothing to any increased market value.

The immediate intention in bringing the bill forward was to focus attention on a serious case which had arisen in County Galway. Lord Clanricarde, who had been involved in a long series of disputes over agricultural holdings dating back to Land League days and who refused to sell any of his land or cooperate with the Estates Commissioners, served notice to quit on a Loughrea shopkeeper, allegedly because of his activities as organiser of the local United Irish League branch. Whatever the justification for the eviction, the tenant was being treated unfairly as he would receive no compensation for

69. In 1907, the Irish Party introduced six Private Members bills of which only the Irish Tobacco Bill, which removed the restrictions which had been placed on the growing of tobacco in Ireland, was passed. H.C. Debs, 4th Series, CLXXXII (General Index). 169 Private Members wills were put down for introduction during the session.
71. It was introduced by William McKillop (South Armagh) but only because he had been successful in the ballot. The names of Redmond, Dillon, Joe
having built up a thriving business. When Redmond raised the case in the
Whitsuntide Adjournment debate, Bryce agreed that, while the letter of the
law was being complied with, an injustice was being done and he regretted
that the law could do nothing about it. It was agreed that the Government
should 'adopt' McKillop's bill which would otherwise have had no chance of
being passed.

Bryce's price for this concession was the omission of its more radical
clauses. The Irish Party reluctantly acquiesced in the compromise. They
took little part in the subsequent debates on the bill partly to emphasise
the fact that it was no longer their bill and partly to speed its passing, as
it was being fought tooth and nail by the Opposition. Predictably it was
drastically changed in the House of Lords: it ceased to be retrospective,
the compensation for improvements was limited and the disturbance clause was
re-cast. The Government was preoccupied with the fate of its Education bill
in the Lords and was loth to make a stand on this bill. A compromise was
reached by which only the latter two amendments were agreed to. 72

The Act as passed did improve the position of town tenants in Ireland
but in a more modest way than the Chief Secretary desired. It bore little
relation to the bill originally introduced by McKillop. Meanwhile a potenti-
ally explosive situation had arisen in Loughrea where the tenant had barricaded
himself inside his premises. After letters from Campbell Bannerman and Bryce
and the personal intervention of the Under Secretary, Antony MacDonnell, he
agreed to accept the eviction because of the disastrous effect a confrontation
might have on the bill then before Parliament. The retrospectivity clause

and Charles Devlin, Mooney, Clancy and O'Brien were also on the bill.
Ibid., CLII (22 Feb. 1908) 517-8 and CLVII (18 May 1906), 782 and 786.
72. Ibid., CLXVII (19 Dec. 1906), 1532-6.
Apart from the Labourers Act and the Town Tenants Act, 1906 was rather barren for Irish legislation, largely because the formulation of the Irish Council scheme occupied most of Bryce's time. Nevertheless he was not allowed to ignore the other areas of Irish administration. Day after day questions were asked about Irish education, appointments to minor positions in Ireland, the Land Act of 1903 and agrarian questions generally. These questions were used to provide a basis for further debate. When the figures concerning the rate of re-instatement of evicted tenants became available during the summer recess, Redmond put down a question to draw attention to them. He then moved an adjournment of the House to debate the issue. The re-instatement of evicted tenants had been one of the aims of the 1903 Land Act, but because of the drain on the Exchequer caused by that Act the previous Government had framed regulations which the Estates Commissioners admitted had seriously hampered the work of re-instatement. In February 1906, Bryce changed the regulations and authorised the employment of six inspectors to speed up the work. Yet the rate of re-instatement did not appreciably increase. Redmond predicted serious trouble if something was not done. He was anxious, he said,

that the fullest fair play should be given to the present government till he saw what next year, or whenever they attempted it, they were going to propose on the question of Irish self-government. But there were limits to their power, and when he was asked to use his influence to preach patience to the Irish people, he told the Right Hon. Gentleman [Bryce] that he might make that task an impossible one if he did not act more strenuously on this question of the evicted tenants.

73. Ibid., CLXI (26 July 1906), 1527-32, and 1543-7.
74. According to the figures released, there had been 5912 applications for re-instatement and only 161 tenants had been restored. Under the new regulations, 1285 cases had been investigated and only 86 tenants restored. Ibid., CLXII (29 Oct. 1906), 778-91.
75. Ibid.
Bryce defended the rate of re-instatement and attributed any delay to the unwillingness of tenants who held evicted farms to relinquish them, the difficulty of finding untenanted land which the owner would sell and the unwillingness of landlords to restore evicted tenants. In 444 of the 1285 cases investigated since the new regulations were issued the landlord would not even allow the Estates Commissioners to enter his property to investigate or negotiate. By promising that he would seriously consider the introduction of compulsion to deal with such cases, Bryce was able to persuade Redmond to allow his motion to lapse. 76

The main opportunity for the discussion of the administration of Ireland came when the Irish Estimates were being debated. The time assigned for this purpose was never more than two days. 77 Because of the limited time available, the Irish Party usually had to be content with raising one major area of expenditure. In 1906, it was the question of congestion. In a motion to reduce the estimates of the Department of Agriculture, they proposed the introduction of compulsory powers of purchase, the extension of the congested districts and an inquiry into the whole question. The Chief Secretary accepted the suggested inquiry with such alacrity that it seems likely that he knew in advance what was going to be proposed. Agreeing to an inquiry had the advantage of allowing Bryce to postpone consideration of compulsory powers, the evicted tenants and the powers of the Congested Districts Board. 78

It is significant that the Irish Party chose to discuss congestion rather than the Vote for the Chief Secretary's Office which would have enabled them

76. The sense of urgency on the part of Redmond may have been due to the fact that the Cork Evicted Tenants Association had invited the members of the Land Conference, which had negotiated the 1903 Land Act, to re-assemble to discuss the Evicted Tenants problem. Redmond refused this invitation, probably because the idea smacked too much of William O'Brien's influence. O'Brien, op. cit., pp 387-8.


78. H.C. Debs, 4th Series, CLIX (28 June 1906), 1161-1207.
to review the Irish Administration as a whole. It was left to the Irish Unionists to raise the overall performance of the Government by moving a motion to reduce the Chief Secretary's salary. It was claimed that what the King's speech meant by 'Irish ideas' was 'nationalist ideas' and that the Irish Government was now in effect a partnership between the Liberals and the Nationalists. Because the time allocated for the Estimates debate was limited, it had for many years been accepted that the Irish Party could choose the area for discussion. In 1906 and subsequently the Irish Unionists claimed this prerogative and despite the objections of the Nationalists they were allowed to nominate one Vote for detailed discussion. 79

Though it was an exaggeration to say that the Irish Party was a partner in the government of Ireland it is certainly true that generally when the Liberals were in power the position of the Irish Party was different to when the Tories were in power. A Liberal Chief Secretary could expect more tolerance and cooperation than his Tory counterpart, but only as long as he placated the Irish Party. To do this could be quite as demanding as to ignore them. And to placate one side was to alienate the other as successive Chief Secretaries discovered. George Wyndham's policy of conciliation earned him the distrust of the Ulster Unionists and it was their sustained attack on him in Parliament early in 1905 which finally forced his resignation. 80 With Wyndham's fate in mind, Walter Long went out of his way to placate the Ulster Unionists and to restore their trust in the Balfour Government. 81 For his pains he earned the lasting opprobrium of the Irish Nationalists. The 1916 Rising provided ammunition for those who disapproved of Birrell's policy of governing Ireland according to Nationalist ideas, but even if the policy had

79. Invariably they chose the Vote for the Chief Secretaries Office which allowed them to review the Administration as a whole. See H.C. Debs, 4th Series, CLXXIX, 201-2.
80. See below, pp 132-7.
81. See below, pp 138-40.
been a spectacular success rather than a spectacular failure he would still have come under fire.  

The fact that 1906 was the first year of a new Administration also shaped the demands placed on the new Chief Secretary. He could not be held responsible for the problem of congestion or the evicted tenants or the poor state of Irish education or whatever. Bryce had a relatively easy time. The Irish Party was content to allow him to parry awkward questions which he did by expressing his sympathy and promising to consider how improvements might be made and/or appointing a Royal Commission. That was how he dealt with the questions of congestion, evicted tenants, University education, and the powers of the Congested Districts Board. These matters could not be placed on the long-finger indefinitely. All were dealt with by legislation in the next three years.

The pressure a Chief Secretary came under from the Irish Members varied from year to year. It is arguable, for instance, that the Irish Parliamentary Party never regained the tightly knit, well disciplined character which had been such a feature of the Parnellite Party. In the late 1890's and early 1900's they were certainly an inefficient parliamentary force which posed little threat. However from 1906 on they were once again active and influential. The reconciliation of most of the old guard, an infusion of new blood and the return of the Liberals ensured that. The remedial legislation of the years 1906-10 and the general policy of the Administration owed a great deal to them. The decline of the Liberals in the general elections of 1910 further increased their leverage which they used to obvious effect in the next four years. The parliamentary truce during the First World War, the dominance

82. See below, pp 176-7.
84. The Home Rule Bill was the most obvious manifestation of that leverage.
of the War over all other questions and the co-operativeness of Redmond reduced their potential influence, although Birrell's policy obscured that fact until 1916. Thereafter their effectiveness decreased largely because they were no longer reaping the benefits of being closely associated with the Government and did not adopt the policy of 'outright opposition' urged by John Dillon, which might have secured their popular position and at the same time forced an accommodation from the Government. The decision to impose conscription, which was made without consulting any members of the Party and which was persisted within Parliament despite their vociferous opposition and eventual withdrawal, merely emphasised the extent of their decline. With their virtual extinction at the 1918 general election and the abstention of Sinn Fein from Parliament, the Chief Secretary found himself in the comfortable though hardly healthy position of being free from the close scrutiny of the representatives of the nationalist population.

Despite all the differences of detail, the year 1906 in Parliament does illustrate well the pressures under which the Chief Secretary worked and the problems he had to resolve. Not only did the main political questions - Home Rule, Land Purchase, Congestion - recur but the underlying questions of procedure also remained the same. All Chief Secretaries had to decide what their relationship with the Irish Members was to be, how agrarian or political disorder was to be dealt with and, on a more mundane but in Ireland a rather important level, how government positions were to be filled. The first of these depended to a large extent on the political persuasion of the Government but there was room for manoeuvre; the second was often a matter for Cabinet decision but it came under parliamentary scrutiny even if the means of implementing the final policy did not require legislation; and the third,

85. Dillon to O'Connor, 19 Aug. 1916, O'Connor File 335, Dillon Papers, Trinity College, Dublin. See also Travers, op. cit., Chapter 2.
though theoretically a matter of routine administration had also often to be fought out on the floor of the House of Commons.

The fate of Wyndham is sufficient indication of the need to avoid the simplistic assumption that Chief Secretaries of one political persuasion automatically pandered to those of a similar persuasion in Ireland. Long before the devolution crisis Ulster Unionists were hostile to Wyndham and he took little trouble to pacify them. Balfour, who was not overly deferential to the Ulster Unionists during his own Chief Secretaryship, was disgusted with their unfair treatment of Wyndham; but that did not preclude him from appointing Long primarily to placate them or from acquiescing in the appeasement policy he adopted. There were similar differences in the experiences of the Liberal Chief Secretaries. As the Chief Secretary while the second Home Rule bill was being prepared it was natural that John Morley should have worked closely with the Irish Nationalists. Nevertheless he always retained his independence, a fact which is reflected in the number of times they felt it necessary to attack him in Parliament. Bryce, as we have seen, was willing to cooperate with the Irish Party, but even more than Morley he believed in the virtue of Dublin Castle maintaining its independence. Much to the chagrin of the Irish Party he resisted their attempts to make the proposed Irish Council approximate as closely as possible to a Home Rule Parliament. On other matters too, he refused to be dictated to with the result that the Irish Party rapidly became critical of him and urged his replacement. Campbell Bannerman discussed possible replacements with John

86. The animosity probably dated from Wyndham's opposition to coercion in 1901 and his appointment of MacDonnell as Under Secretary.
88. See, for example, Morley, Recollections, p.312.
89. See below, pp 141-3.
90. See, for example, Morley to Campbell Bannerman, 20 Jan. 1907, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41223, ff 229-31.
Redmond who approved the appointment of Birrell.\textsuperscript{91} It is hardly surprising then that Birrell proved so willing to defer to the Irish Party, which he did on many major issues beginning with his Irish Council Bill.

The question of appointments was closely related to that of the relationship between the Chief Secretary and the Irish Members. Obviously the closer the relationship, the more careful the Chief Secretary had to be in making key appointments lest he offend his allies. Perhaps for this reason the Liberals found the question much more difficult than the Tories. The dominance of many positions by Unionists was not something which they felt it necessary to redress. With a Liberal Government in power, Nationalists expected moves towards a more manifest nationalist presence in such positions. Those filled by competitive examination presented no great problem. But vacant Judgeships, Resident Magistracies, temporary Land Commission jobs and positions on Boards were a constant thorn in the side of Chief Secretaries. Political considerations weighed as heavily as competence in even the most humble of 'non-competitive' appointments. Morley posed the question which constituted a perennial dilemma for his successors: faced with a choice between a first rate Cambridge man and a third rate Dublin man who happens to be a Catholic, whom should he appoint Professor of Mathematics in a Queens College in the South of Ireland where only three out of fifteen chairs were held by Catholics? Or should he risk appointing a Presbyterian to a chair of midwifery when he was warned that it would give 'enormous offence'.\textsuperscript{92}

Morley had no doubt as to what should be done to redress the imbalance in the number of Protestant and Catholic Resident Magistrates. Administration

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 27 Dec. 1906, f.204.

\textsuperscript{92} Morley, op. cit., p.309. He appointed the Presbyterian but does not record how he resolved the other dilemma.
of the law was, he held, more important than many purely political questions. While Chief Secretary he appointed more than 600 county justices of whom over 500 were Catholic. This reduced the Protestant majority on the bench from over 3 to 1 to nearer 2 to 1.\textsuperscript{93} Such a drastic reduction inevitably led to strong criticism from the Irish Unionists and to allegations of political jobbery. The Nationalists were not concerned what it was called so long as they got the jobs. As T.W. Russell put it in 1906,

> It was high time that they should have some prejudice in Ireland in favour of the tenants. Hitherto the prejudice had been all in favour of the landlords. Did the Conservatives imagine that though the Liberals were in office, they were to remain in power; that though the Liberals were at the Castle, the Tories were to be in power everywhere in Ireland?\textsuperscript{94}

In 1906 a major controversy arose over the reappointment of land sub-commissioners whose term had expired. It had more than a little to do with the Irish Party’s disillusionment with Bryce. Kerry County Council passed a resolution protesting against the unfairness and partiality of many of these commissioners and asking that they should be replaced.\textsuperscript{95} The matter was of some importance because the commissioners were responsible for fixing judicial rents and under the 1903 Land Act the purchase price was determined by reference to rent. The Irish Party claimed that the outgoing commissioners were representatives of the landlords and that the system could not work if the tenants did not trust them. Redmond specifically denied that he supported political jobbery. During the twenty-five years he had been in the House of Commons, he had

never asked for an appointment or an emolument of the smallest kind from any Government for a friend of his, and that had always been the policy of the Nationalist Party. They had always refused

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., pp 307-8.
\textsuperscript{94} H.C. Debs, 4th Series, CLV (11 Apr. 1906), 1331-2.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., CLII (26 Feb. 1906), 797.
to submit any names, and had sent in no list; neither did they make any application on behalf of any single individual. 96

When Bryce reappointed twenty-two of the twenty-seven commissioners, seventeen Protestants and five Catholics, Redmond complained bitterly and warned that 'the confidence of the Irish people in him and his Government would not stand many more shocks of that character'. 97

Bryce commented during this dispute that 'almost everyone in Ireland who did not want to be a resident magistrate wanted to be an assistant commissioner and many were willing to serve the Government in both capacities'. 98 He should perhaps have been thankful for this as in some cases the difficulty was in finding qualified candidates who were willing to serve. The huge number of those willing to serve as land commissioners and magistrates was probably related to the advent of popular control of local government, heralded by the Local Government Act of 1898 which brought into public life a new generation of nationalists. However this had no effect on largely ceremonial offices such as Lieutenants and Deputy Lieutenants of counties which, despite persistent efforts by the Liberals, remained largely in the hands of the Ascendancy. 99 Nor did it affect the more senior legal positions in Ireland. The scarcity of Liberal, let alone Nationalist, lawyers, at least partly attributable to economic and educational considerations, made it difficult to redress the Ascendancy domination of the High Court. In 1906, Bryce decided

96. Ibid., CLV (11 Apr. 1906), 1325.
97. Ibid., CLVI (3 May, 1906), 752 and 821. Redmond alleged that of the nine assessors of the Court of Appeal, which dealt with rents and land purchase, only three were Catholics and these were a grazier, a landlord and a land agent. Ibid., CLVI (3 May 1906), 821.
98. Ibid., CLV (11 Apr. 1906), 1332 and 1342-3.
that it was important to replace the then Judicial Commissioner, Justice Meredith, with 'a man of popular sympathies' and to appoint another Judge to deal with the backlog of Land Appeals 'to which the Nationalists attach the greatest weight'. The Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor agreed that Meredith should be 'promoted' as a means of getting rid of him and that another Judge should be offered a baronetcy as an incentive to retire. However the plan came partly unstuck because of the difficulty in finding two replacements acceptable to the Nationalists. 

The senior legal positions always posed a problem for the Liberals. The under-representation of the majority population was clearly a matter of major importance. At the same time any overt interference in the pecking-order for promotions to correct this was understandably resented by the legal fraternity and was attacked by the Unionists. Not that political interference did not work in reverse. For instance, James Campbell, a staunch Unionist, owed much of his professional advancement to his influence with senior Unionist politicians. He was promoted from Lord Chief Justice to Lord Chancellor in 1918 after intense lobbying by himself and by other hard-line Unionists. He frankly admitted that but for the help of Bonar Law he would not have gained the promotion. It is ironic that it was Campbell who then led the protest against the new Irish Executive's policy of trying to appoint Catholics to vacant legal positions. He told Shortt, the Chief Secretary, that the practice of political appointments was humiliating. James O'Connor, Shortt's choice as Lord Chief Justice, was, Campbell asserted, 'a junior and a second rate man'.

100. Bryce to Bannerman, 4, 11, 16 and 19 Oct. 1906, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41211, ff 340-3, and 351-8. For the functions of the Judicial Commissioner, see Chapter 6.


He successfully blocked O'Connor's appointment, but despite further objections by him about the 'prostitution of judicial appointments', the Government insisted on giving O'Connor the position in the Court of Appeals vacated by the new Chief Justice.  

All the preoccupation with appointments and promotions was due to more than simply personal ambition or a factional insistence on a division of the spoils. Because of the depth of political divisions, the religion or politics of the lowly Magistrate or of the Chief Justice, of the land sub-commissioner or the Judicial Commissioner were seen, sometimes justifiably so, as affecting the performance of their duties. The prolonged operation of the spoils system completely undermined the public trust in many government agencies which was essential to their success. To some Liberal Chief Secretaries it seemed that the only way to regain the trust of the Catholic population was to contain the spoils system. Though he viewed the practice with distaste, Birrell consciously adopted a policy of, where possible, promoting Catholics to positions where they were under-represented. He considered that their 'legal destitution' was a 'grave disaster' but thought that the effort to redress it caused more trouble than it was worth. 'Doing anything in Ireland', he complained to his Under Secretary in another context, 'is like walking over the upturned faces of Irishmen and trampling on their tenderest features, vanity and morbid self-love'. After making one judicial appointment which caused a storm of protest he wrote 'And now let us pray for long life to all Judges on Irish soil'.

103. Campbell to Bonar Law, 3, 7 and 16 July 1918, H.L.R.O., Bonar Law Papers, 83/5/2, 4 and 17. Campbell's real objection to O'Connor was that he felt he was 'politically a most dangerous man and entirely in the pockets of the priests' (Campbell to Bonar Law, 8 July 1918 loc.cit.).
With the formation of the Coalition Government he was forced to change his policy on appointments in favour of one of appointing Nationalist and Unionist supporters turn about. He conceded that it was only to be expected that 'the greediest pig on record - the Irish Unionist Pig' should want a turn at the trough.\textsuperscript{105} Despite this he was reluctant to agree to the appointment of James Campbell to the Attorney Generalship because of the vociferous objections of the Irish Party who took to their tents on the matter. Nevertheless the Conservative partners in the Coalition insisted on the appointment which required a considerable rearrangement of judicial positions with 'a shove to a Judge here and a Judge there' before the vacancy even arose. Asquith, Birrell told his Jewish Under Secretary, 'like your famous Abraham ... would offer up his son Isaac, or at all events Herbert Samuel, to get himself out of this horrid mess'; so Birrell was forced to comply.\textsuperscript{106}

The composition of the semi-independent boards also came under close scrutiny from both sides and presented Chief Secretaries with a constant headache. When all but the \textit{ex officio} positions on the Congested Districts Board came up for renewal early in 1915 Birrell lamented to Nathan that as soon as a name was suggested it would be greeted by cries of 'A Landlords Man - An Agents Man - A Priests Man! A Cattle Driver and so on through and down the weary scale'.\textsuperscript{107} As with the judicial appointments the difficulty was to find suitable people who would be acceptable to both sides. In the case of the National Commission where cooperation between Catholics and Protestants was essential if it was to operate at all, a makeshift but workable solution had been institutionalised. Since 1860 the Commission's Charter had


\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 8 Dec. 1914, Bodl., MS Nathan 449, ff 42-5.
provided that ten of the commissioners should be Catholic and ten Protestant. The result was that a lot of needless controversy was avoided.\textsuperscript{108} Unfortunately this was not the case with the Intermediate Education Board, a fact which led to a minor crisis in 1906 when Bryce discovered that the normal operations of the Board were outside his purview.\textsuperscript{109}

The Chief Secretary and Cabinet

The Government of the United Kingdom was not preoccupied with Ireland. Only when major pieces of legislation were to be introduced or at times of crisis did it constitute a high priority. Thus the second and third Home Rule bills and the Irish devolution crisis brought the Irish Question to the fore. So did the need to deal with disorder, notably in 1916 and in 1920-21. Otherwise Ireland and Irish issues took a back seat.

The Tory policy of maintaining order and of resisting constitutional change left much of the initiative to the Chief Secretary in Ireland. Liberal policy necessarily involved more consultation with the Cabinet but this was periodic not constant. One way for the Chief Secretary to raise Irish subjects was to circulate a memorandum to his Cabinet colleagues. Between 1890 and 1905, forty-two memoranda printed for Cabinet dealt specifically with Irish subjects or an average of less than three per year.\textsuperscript{110} This was tiny in proportion to the total number of such memoranda. In 1890, the proportion was one out of sixty-four; in 1898, six out of ninety-seven; and in 1900, none out of two hundred and forty-one. Between 1906 and 1914, there

\textsuperscript{108} McDowell, op. cit., p.245.

\textsuperscript{109} See Chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{110} These figures are compiled from P.R.O. Handbooks, No's 4 and 11. Only nineteen of these memoranda were written by the Chief Secretary; one came from the Lord Lieutenant; two from ex-Chief Secretaries; two from the Prime Minister; two from the Chancellor of the Exchequer; six from the departmental Treasury; one from the Irish Lord Chancellor; one from the Irish Party; two from other departments; and most of the remainder from the Irish Office or Chief Secretary's Office.
were seventy-nine Irish memoranda - almost double the previous number in half the time.\textsuperscript{111} During the War when, despite the 1916 Rising, Ireland was discussed by Cabinet on only a small number of occasions, and by the War Cabinet on even fewer, the number again dropped and only picked up during 1918.

The function of the Chief Secretary in Cabinet was, for much of the time, similar to the role of the Irish Party in the House of Commons. It was his job to remind his colleagues of the existence of Ireland. Birrell told the Royal Commission on the Rebellion that his presence was necessary because when new legislative proposals were being introduced Ireland was invariably included or excluded without any consideration being given to the matter. On the other hand he admitted that it would do just as well to have a magpie or a jackdaw which was trained to cry 'Ireland, Ireland, Ireland' during the proceedings.\textsuperscript{112}

Though he was left to his own devices in the administration of Ireland, the Chief Secretary's scope for independent action was limited. Generally he could initiate a new policy or change an old one only after receiving the sanction of his colleagues. Had Bryce really been an Irish 'Prime Minister without a Cabinet' as Barry O'Brien and others claimed, he would not have had to consult the Prime Minister about appointing a new Judicial Commissioner. Because the Ministry was subject to close scrutiny in Parliament, the Prime Minister was wary about anything which might expose the Irish Administration. and through it the Government as a whole to attack. The vital subjects of political policy and law and order were decided by Cabinet.

Both the Home Rule bills in the period were prepared by Cabinet Committees and not by the Chief Secretary. The Chief Secretary's Office in

\textsuperscript{111} It should be said that the overall number of memoranda also increased significantly.

\textsuperscript{112} Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Evidence, p.23 [Cd 8311] H.C. 1916 XI.
Dublin had little to do with the bills and in the latter case, at least, the British Parliamentary Counsel's Office was used to draft the bill and not the Draftsman at the Irish Office. In both 1886 and 1893 the Chief Secretary and the Prime Minister assumed joint control of the Home Rule Bill but in 1912 Birrell was relegated to a secondary role. He successfully prevented the bill being way-laid by being bound up with 'Home Rule all round', a policy which was supported by all of his colleagues on the Cabinet Committee. Otherwise he was overshadowed by his colleagues. He was over-ruled on the two vital questions of Ulster and the financial provisions of the bill.

Birrell's eclipse was partly due to the extraordinary pressure under which he worked during the years 1912-14. The Home Rule bill demanded constant attention but so did the situation in Ireland where serious political and labour unrest threatened to erupt into violence. And on top of that, his wife was terminally ill with an inoperable brain tumour. However, it is likely that the initiative in the Home Rule crisis would in any event have rested with his Cabinet colleagues because of the importance of the issue for the Government as a whole.

Cabinet Committees were used on less important issues too. The final version of the Irish Council bill of 1907 was produced by a Committee, and in 1918 when it was proposed to introduce Home Rule in return for conscription a Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Walter Long to draft the bill. Neither the Chief Secretary nor the Lord Lieutenant were members. Probably as a result much of its time was spent discussing 'Home Rule all round'. In

15. See Jalland, The Liberals and Ireland, pp 47 and 58.
16. Ibid., p.32.
the event its labours came to nothing because the 'dual policy' was shelved.\textsuperscript{117} The idea of a Cabinet Committee to draft Home Rule proposals was by then well established and the format was used for the Government of Ireland (1920) Act and the settlement in 1921.

It was not just Home Rule and the political question generally which were reserved for consideration by the Cabinet. All proposals requiring legislation had to be approved. If the legislation required a substantial financial outlay or was liable to be controversial, the assent of Cabinet was by no means automatic. Despite the bipartisan origins of the 1903 Land Act, for instance, it was only accepted by Cabinet after the strong intervention of the Prime Minister.

Even the treatment of isolated unrest was often brought before Cabinet for discussion. Virtually no Chief Secretary was allowed a free hand. For Tory Chief Secretaries law and order was a much less troublesome issue than for the Liberals because they had few qualms about adopting a coercion policy. Arthur Balfour came to Ireland specifically to impose such a policy. It was not a policy of his own creation: it was merely a continuation of Salisbury's existing policy. His own contribution was to link coercion with conciliation. From the outset he made clear what his policy would be. 'Cromwell', he said, failed because he relied solely on repressive measures. This mistake I shall not imitate. I shall be as restless as Cromwell in enforcing obedience to the law, but at the same time I shall be as radical as any reformer in redressing grievances and especially in removing every cause of complaint in regard to the land. It is on the twofold aspect of my policy that I rely for success.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{117} The minutes of the meetings of the Committee are in the Lloyd George Papers, F/68/22, H.L.R.O.

\textsuperscript{118} The Times, 9 March 1887.
Thus was born the policy of 'killing Home Rule with kindness' which along with 'resolute government' dominated Tory policy until 1905. Balfour was as good as his word and immediately passed a severe Coercion Act followed by the Land Act which created the Congested Districts Board. The firmness of his commitment to coercion enabled him to gain acceptance within his party for his conciliation policy. This policy was maintained by his brother from 1895 to 1900 and by George Wyndham until 1904. Fortunately for Gerald Balfour the country was in a subdued if not pacified state during his Chief Secretaryship. Wyndham was not so fortunate but, as we have seen, he was able to use his influence with Arthur Balfour to block Cadogan's plan for renewed coercion. Wyndham did not oppose coercion per se but he objected to imposing it unless it was absolutely necessary. The victory of his policy, symbolised by his being given a seat in Cabinet, heralded a short period of outright conciliation. That was a policy which made many of the Government's supporters rather uncomfortable and the reversion to the more traditional 'resolute government' by Long can best be seen as a reaction against the conciliation policy.

The question of how to deal with disorder posed more severe problems for the Liberals. Morley summed up the dilemma in 1893 when he had to decide whether to proceed against a number of Parnellite M.P.s who had been involved in agrarian disturbances. He recorded in his diary:

> Easy in comparison was Balfour's position. He had only to think of enforcement and the law. I have to think how, while enforcing the law, I shall not leave my Nationalist allies planted in a position which they cannot defend on Irish platforms.\(^{119}\)

That was essentially Birrell's position in 1907-8 when he was being pressed by his own advisers to take action against the leaders or inciters of cattle-driving who again included Nationalist M.P.'s. He was reluctant to make heroes

of those involved and to risk pushing the Irish Party into being forced to support their imprisoned colleagues. He also confessed to uncertainty about whether it was just to use the law against agrarian disturbance while the House of Lords was thwarting the efforts of the government to remove the root causes of the unrest. Unlike Morley, Birrell resolved his dilemma by deciding not to act. In doing so, he was supported by the Cabinet. That remained his policy down until 1916. He was retained as Chief Secretary after 1912 when he wanted to resign precisely because of the friendship he had established with the Irish Party leaders. This in itself was a tacit acceptance by the Cabinet of the policy he adopted. Asquith later explicitly endorsed Birrell's approach. Thus, if the policy was misconceived, as the Royal Commission on the Rebellion concluded, a share of the blame must lie with the Cabinet. Unfortunately the terms of reference of the Commission precluded it from attaching responsibility to any but the Civil and Military Executive in Ireland.

Ironically one of the most significant decisions taken by the Liberals in the law-and-order sphere was a Cabinet initiative acquiesced in by a reluctant Chief Secretary. Under pressure from the Irish Party it was decided to allow the Peace Preservation Act to lapse in 1906. This Act was a temporary measure originally introduced in 1881 which gave the Government power to control the importation and sale of arms, to ban the carrying of arms in proclaimed areas and to arrest suspects without a warrant. It had been renewed annually since then under the Expiring Laws Continuance Act even by Liberal


121. Jalland, The Liberals and Ireland, p.32.


The King's speech referred to the Government's desire to rely on the ordinary law to rule Ireland. This, it was explained, was designed to indicate the Government's intention to repeal Balfour's infamous Crimes Act of 1887 which was still on the statute book. When the repeal of the Crimes Act had to be postponed because of lack of time, the Irish Party began to press for the Peace Preservation Act to be allowed to lapse.

When the matter was first raised in Parliament Bryce expressed the opinion that the Act had 'an excellent precautionary effect' and as it involved no hardship he was not inclined to drop it. He later promised to reconsider the question when the Irish Party again raised the subject. In the meantime, Redmond put down an amendment to the Expiring Laws Continuance Bill and began to lobby senior Liberal Ministers. In response, Bryce circulated a memorandum to Cabinet putting both sides of the case. Though Ireland was quiet, proclamations under the Act remained in force in all but three counties. The Inspector General of the R.I.C. favoured dropping the proclamations but protested strongly against dropping the Act. The opposition of the police and judiciary, the disturbed state of a small number of districts in the west and the importance of preventing 'partisans especially in Ulster' from arming, were cited by Bryce in favour of retaining the Act. Against it he cited the inevitable row with the Irish Party who would exploit the fact that in Opposition many Liberal Ministers had voted for the dropping of the Act. He was also inclined to think that the Act did not prevent the commission of crime. Anyone dedicated enough could always secure arms. Bryce's memorandum did not recommend one course or the other though it leaned slightly towards retention.

124. Ibid., p.4.
126. Ibid., CLV (3 Apr. 1906), 512-13, CLXII (2 Aug. 1906), 1442-56; Redmond to Campbell Bannerman and Bryce, 28 June 1906, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41239, ff 93-5.
and it seems that that is what Bryce advocated at the Cabinet. If so he was rebuffed as it was decided to allow the Act to lapse.\textsuperscript{127}

It is clear that Cabinet could be a powerful restraining force on the Chief Secretary. It could also undermine his position. The close connections between the Irish Party and senior Liberals such as John Morley were exploited by the Nationalists to bring their case directly to Cabinet. This is what they did in the case of the Peace Preservation Act and later in the case of the Irish Council bill. Similarly the Under Secretary occasionally resorted to using such tactics.\textsuperscript{128}

Some Chief Secretaries were able to counter the possible threat to their independence by using their own 'friends at court'. Balfour's independence was only possible because he maintained close contact with Salisbury. After he left Ireland he retained his interest in Irish affairs and acted as an 'insider' for both Gerald Balfour and Wyndham. Wyndham, in particular, owed much of his success to his efforts behind the scenes. It is a moot point, however, whether the effect of Balfour's role between 1891 and 1905 was to maintain the independence of the Chief Secretary or in fact to reduce it while in the process enhancing his own position.

Liberal Party policy on Ireland was less inclined to be dominated by a small caucus. Under Lloyd George, however, the Coalition developed a similar tendency. Because of the need to concentrate on the War he appointed Walter

\textsuperscript{127} 'Renewal of the Irish Arms Act', Memorandum by Bryce, 26 Nov. 1906, P.R.O., Cab 37/85/90; J.V. O'Brien, \textit{William O'Brien and the Course of Irish Politics, 1881-1918} (1976), p.168. The Irish Party had raised the question in Parliament every year since 1900. Within one year of the Act lapsing there was a serious increase in the number of offences involving the use of firearms. There were 39 such offences in 1906, 87 in 1907, and 113 in 1908. Bryce was then blamed for his 'stupidity' in dropping the Act. By 1914 they were even greater reasons for recriminations but it is doubtful whether the blame lay with Bryce. 'Firing Outrages in Ireland', memorandum by Birrell, 7 Dec. 1908, P.R.O., Cab 37/96/162.

\textsuperscript{128} See below, pp 144-5.
Long as the War Cabinet's adviser on Irish policy. The new Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary were encouraged to work through Long. Not everyone was happy with Lloyd George's habit of working through small advisory groups. When he decided to appoint his council of three Lord Justices he did not consult the War Cabinet, and Curzon complained that he only heard about the proposal by accident whereas many people who were not members of the War Cabinet had been consulted. He demanded that the proposed new arrangement be discussed and sanctioned by the War Cabinet as a whole, but by this time the plan had already fallen through. 129

Writing in 1918, the editor of The Times complained that while Lloyd George's small War Cabinet was an effective structure for prosecuting the War, it did not serve other lesser though still important needs quite so well. He suggested that the only way to counter this weakness was for the Prime Minister to appoint advisers on whom he could rely, lay down a general policy for them to follow and give them power to get on with it. 130 The appointment of Long as Irish adviser and French as Lord Lieutenant fitted this prescription. It might also have been expected that the Chief Secretaries after 1916 might have had their powers enhanced too. In fact the opposite was the case. As the pace of events quickened so did their day-to-day responsibilities, but their say in the creation of policy declined. The high turnover of Chief Secretaries - four in less than six years - meant that it could hardly be otherwise.

The inevitable effect of this was, as The Times pointed out, that discussion of Irish policy could only be inadequate, fitful and belated. Even

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129. Curzon to Bonar Law, 30 Apr. 1918, H.L.R.O., Bonar Law Papers, 83/2/37. Apparently Bonar Law was the only member of the War Cabinet consulted.
130. The Times, 21 June 1918.
after the end of the War and the reversion to the larger Cabinet, Ireland was only one of a number of pressing issues and the rapid and sometimes inexplicable changes of policy which were such a feature of the years 1916-1918 continued until the beginning of 1921 at least. Duke, Shortt and Greenwood all favoured conciliation at one time or another. Macpherson was more inclined to enforce coercion. None of the four carried sufficient weight to commit Cabinet irrevocably to his policy. 131 The first three found themselves presiding over severe coercionist policies which they accepted but would not have chosen for themselves. It would be too simplistic to talk in terms of a lasting Cabinet/Irish Executive split. But it is evident that there were often serious divisions. It is also evident that, in the sense that it did not allow the formulation and implementation of any consistent policy, the existing machinery for administering Ireland had all but broken down. The pressures of the War and the unrest in Ireland precipitated that breakdown but many of its causes - the intolerable pressures on the Chief Secretary, the potential for conflict with Cabinet and within the Irish Executive - had long since been manifest.

131. See, for example, Hazlehurst and Boyce, 'The Unknown Chief Secretary', *I.H.S.*, XX, No. 79 (March, 1977), 502-31; 'Results of any endeavour to Enforce Conscription in Ireland', memorandum by Shortt, 7 Oct. 1918, Cab P.R.O., Cab 24/66, G.T. 5918; Macpherson to Lloyd George, 14 Apr. 1919, H.L.R.O., Lloyd George Papers, F/46/1/2.
In 1920, faced with the existence of a rival Parliament in Ireland which had all the trappings of a de facto Government, and with its own inability to maintain order, the Government finally accepted that there was something seriously wrong with the administration of Ireland. Sir Warren Fisher, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury and, thereby, head of the civil service, was sent to Ireland to discover precisely what. His report came as a shock, even to those of his superiors who had been expecting the worst. Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, told the Prime Minister that, though he had been prepared for 'none too satisfactory an account of the Irish administration', Fisher's report revealed 'a condition of administration and staff which is worse than I had anticipated'. In a scathing indictment of the Dublin Castle Administration as he found it, Fisher wrote

The Castle administration does not administer. On the mechanical side it can never have been good and it is now obsolete; in the infinitely more important sphere (a) of informing and advising the Irish Government in relation to policy and (b) of practical capacity in the application of policy it simply has no existence.¹

Fisher was in no doubt as to where most of the blame lay. The main burden of his criticism was directed at the Under Secretary for Ireland. The office was, he said, 'inadequately held'. This was not simply the fault of

The prevailing conception of the post of Under Secretary - who *should* be the principal permanent adviser of the Irish Government in Civil Affairs - appears to be that he is a routine clerk. This is due to obvious causes amongst which are (a) the personality of some of the occupants of the post and (b) the attitude of some Chief Secretaries. The position at the present moment is seemingly that no one in the Chief Secretary's Office, from the Under Secretary downwards, regards himself as responsible even for decisions on departmental papers, let alone for a share in the solution of difficulties in the realm either of policy or of execution.

The Chief Secretary, for his part, appears to be under the illusion that a Civil Servant - even though he has the position and emoluments of permanent head of the Irish administration - is entirely unconcerned with the exploration or settlement of the problems which the Irish administration exists to solve.

So long as these notions continue, the attainment of mere *mechanical* perfection has next to no value. For with the Chief Secretary skied on Olympus and his top permanent official hewing wood in the remotest valley the natural expectation is that *essentials* must suffer.

Fisher argued that for the system to work the Under Secretary had to be 'a driving force', 'a man of marked ability...and of long general experience' and that the proper conception of his duties should be adopted. His solution was to bring in a team of top civil servants on secondment from England, led by Sir John Anderson. As Fisher predicted, they quickly cleared the cobwebs and ran Dublin Castle with unprecedented skill and efficiency. So, was Fisher correct? Did the root of the problem lie in the failure of successive Irish officials to realise that the Under Secretary should be more than a routine clerk? Was the Under Secretary always a mere hewer of wood, as Fisher seems to have thought? In this section I shall examine the conception or conceptions of the Under Secretaryship which prevailed between 1890-1922, their development, the ways in which they conformed to the British civil service pattern and the ways in which the circumstances of Ireland or political

2. The Under Secretary at the time was James MaMahon.
expediency caused divergence. I will do this by examining in a general way the position and power of the Under Secretary and analysing the work and background of the typical Under Secretary; and then in the next two chapters I will examine in detail the careers of the nine Under Secretaries of my period.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the executive government of Ireland in the period 1890-1922 is the almost complete lack of an authorative definition of the relative powers of the main officers to whom it was entrusted. In my first chapter I dealt with the uneasy relationship which existed between the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary. The relationship between the Under Secretary and his two immediate superiors was equally uneasy and confused. The Under Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to give him his full title, was, as the name suggests, originally responsible to the Viceroy. He held his office direct from the crown and was appointed by the Viceroy by virtue of his patent. In practice, however, his immediate superior was the Chief Secretary. The Under Secretary was, in effect, permanent head of the Chief Secretary's Office and even when the Lord Lieutenant was a member of the Cabinet and was as a result the 'dominant partner' in the government of Ireland, the Under Secretary worked under the instructions of the Chief Secretary. When the Chief Secretary was absent from Ireland, a dominant Lord Lieutenant would, if he felt it necessary, issue instructions to the Under Secretary but he would never assume direct control of the Chief Secretary's Office. When the Lord Lieutenant was in the Cabinet, the relationship between the three could with some obvious reservations be compared to the relationship between the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the permanent head of the Treasury. When the Lord Lieutenant

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3. *Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth report, first appendix*, p.5 [Cd 7339], H.C. 1914, XVI.

4. The most obvious difference is that the regular absence of the Chief Secretary from Ireland led to more interference by the Lord Lieutenant than was liable from the Prime Minister.
was not in the Cabinet, the best comparison of their relationship would be with the relationship between the Monarch, the Prime Minister and the permanent head of the (modern) Prime Minister's Department, again with obvious reservations.

The offices of Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary were political offices, changing as they did with the Government. Even when he was merely a figurehead, when he took no active part in the administration of Ireland and simply represented the Crown, the Lord Lieutenant changed with the Government. The one office which was, at least theoretically, not a political one, was that of Under Secretary. That had not always been the case. In the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, the office was openly treated as a political appointment. Those appointed were former or prospective politicians or active sympathisers with the Government in power, and they usually, though not always, changed with the Government. However, during the nineteenth century, Ireland, at least officially, followed the British trend away from an overtly political civil service. As we shall see, the progress in this direction was slow and fitful and was sometimes more apparent than real. Under Secretaries continued to be appointed and sometimes dismissed for political reasons and, as late as 1908, the incoming Under Secretary was an unsuccessful Liberal candidate who, on his retirement, resumed his political career and became the member for Derry City.

The post became a permanent pensionable civil service appointment in 1859 during the Under Secretaryship of Sir Thomas Larcom. Larcom had had a

5. MacDowell, The Irish Administration, p.63.
6. The office of Under Secretary was created in 1777. The Under Secretary in the civil department (there was also an Under Secretary for military affairs) was originally paid £1000 per annum. By 1868 the salary had risen to £2000. Apart from a short period in the 1880's when an extra £500 was paid, it remained at that figure until 1922. The Under Secretary also had an official Residence in Phoenix Park. 'Blue Notes' 1920-21, Class II., 34 (Chief Secretary's Office), p.2, P.R.O., T 165/46.
distinguished career, first in the Ordnance Survey and then as a Commissioner of Public Works in Ireland, and in 1850 he had been appointed deputy-chairman of the Board of Works. He was thus an unlikely Under Secretary and on his appointment he was warned by the Lord Lieutenant of the dangers of leaving a permanent position for one which he would lose on a change of Government. In the event, Larcom served as Under Secretary from 1853 until his retirement in 1868 and survived four changes of Government. In the meantime it had been established both in theory and in practice that the Under Secretaryship was a permanent civil service appointment.\footnote{MacDowell, op.cit., pp 63-4; \textit{D.N.B.}, vol. XI, pp 584-6. The office was included as a permanent civil service position in the Superannuation Act of 1859. \textit{See The Statutes of the United Kingdom}, vol.24 (London, 1860).} That, of course, did not necessarily mean that it was above politics or that Under Secretaries could not be hired or fired for political reasons. 'Dependable' civil servants were fairly readily available and it was a simple matter to transfer or 'promote' awkward incumbents. But it did lessen the scope for blatant political jobbery and reduce the number of options open to the Government.

During one controversy over the role of the Irish Under Secretary Arthur Balfour officially defined Irish Under Secretaries as civil servants who were 'always bound to follow the rulings of the Government which they serve and always bound by those rulings which are the great strength of the administrative machine'.\footnote{H.C. Debs, 4th series, vol.141, 994.} The Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland in 1916 elaborated this definition. The Under Secretary was, it found,

a civil servant, residing in Ireland. For practical purposes he can only take action under authority delegated to him by the Chief Secretary. His duty is to report fully and fairly to his Chief all information that he can obtain, to give his advice freely as to what should be done, and then loyally to carry out the instructions of his Chief without regard to any personal opinion of his own.\footnote{Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Report, p.4 [Cd 8279], H.C. 1916, XI.}
He was, in other words, exactly like the permanent head of any other department. Or at least that was the theory of it. In practice he was often treated and acted very differently. Successive Governments, including Balfour's, connived at or acquiesced in departures from normal civil service procedure when dealing with their Irish Under Secretary. Sometimes he acted like a normal permanent head; however, he could often be much more or, as Warren Fisher found, much less. The main fault in Fisher's report, in which he found that the Under Secretary was seen as a mere routine clerk, is that he seems to have believed that this had always been the case and that no changes had taken place in the previous thirty years. In fact, the role of the Under Secretary constantly swung between that of principal permanent adviser, politician and routine clerk.

Even had the Government been intent on treating the Under Secretary in the same way as the permanent head of any other department and on ensuring that he behaved as such, the circumstances of Ireland would have conspired to defeat its efforts. The Under Secretary occupied, or should have occupied, a more important position in relation to this department (if we can call it that) than the head of any of the home departments.

The system could, and indeed often did, survive an inefficient Chief Secretary or Lord Lieutenant; an inefficient Under Secretary, especially at a time of crisis, was a recipe for disaster. There were two main reasons for this. The first had to do with the complicated nature of Irish administration. Instead of being responsible for one particular branch of government such as education, the Irish Chief Secretary was, as we have seen, responsible for almost all, from policing to lunacy, and from prisons to education. The demands placed on a new Chief Secretary were thus considerable. Success or failure, at least in the early stages, was very much dependent on his having a capable Under Secretary to rely on.
This dependence was increased by the high turnover in Chief Secretaries and Lord Lieutenants. It is instructive to put the figures for Chief Secretaries and Lord Lieutenants, already cited, alongside the figures for Under Secretaries - See Table I. In the period 1800-1922 there were 53 Chief Secretaries, 32 Lord Lieutenants and only 25 Under Secretaries. For the period 1890-1922 the divergence is not quite so great: there were 12 Chief Secretaries, 8 Lord Lieutenants and 9 Under Secretaries. Of course the numbers involved are so small that they are not statistically significant. On the face of them, they show an increase of the average length of service of Chief Secretaries and Lord Lieutenants and a marked decrease in the length of service of Under Secretaries. The increase in the case of Chief Secretaries is, however, solely attributable to the long service of Augustine Birrell. As for the Under Secretaries, the decrease probably does reflect the controversy which surrounded their office during the period.

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The second reason for the importance of the Under Secretary was, of course, that he could enjoy much more autonomy than his English counterparts. He was more often free from the supervision of his minister than the permanent head of any other department. As we have seen, few ministers had to spend more time in Parliament than the Irish Chief Secretary. 'Question time' was used to such good effect by the Irish Parliamentary Party that the Irish Chief Secretary, who had no parliamentary assistant, had to be present in London for all of every parliamentary session. And if he could persuade a reluctant Home Secretary to read his answers, there was always the regular
spate of Irish bills and the inevitable Irish amendment to the Address and debate on the Estimates demanding his presence. Even when the Chief Secretary was in Dublin, he was generally not familiar enough with the day-to-day workings of the administration to be in complete control. The position of Under Secretary was therefore crucial for the effective working of the machinery of Irish government.

Freedom from supervision did not necessarily mean that the Under Secretary always used his freedom. However the system was such that for it to work it needed, as Warren Fisher put it, a 'driving force' as Under Secretary. A driving force was likely to generate controversy and might as a result ultimately prove counter-productive; but the other option was potentially as bad, meaning as it did that instead of controversial government there would be weak government. Writing in 1909, R. Barry O'Brien, one of the most astute though certainly the most partisan critic of the Dublin Castle system, went straight to the heart of the matter. 'The Chief Secretary', he said, '...is really the captain of the ship... The Lord Lieutenant ... wears the insignia of command, but only signs the log. The Under-Secretary is the man at the wheel'. An active helmsman might steer the ship into troubled waters, but a helmsman who neglected his duty would just as surely land the ship on the rocks.

It would seem clear that there were some serious weaknesses inherent in the system. Exactly how serious they were can only be seen by examining how the system operated in practice. A Government aware of the inherent difficulties and in particular of the need for a driving force could minimise these weaknesses. But did they? This question can only be answered by examining -

10. See Chapter 2.
at least selectively - the careers of the nine Under Secretaries between 1890 and 1921.

The Under Secretary at Work: The Chief Secretary's Office

The Chief Secretary's Office, of which the Under Secretary was permanent head,12 was organised along the same lines as a Secretary of State's Office in London. But unlike a Secretary of State's Office in London, most of the work of the Chief Secretary's Office did not originate within the department but came from other Irish boards and departments over which it exercised direct or indirect control. So, much of the work of the Under Secretary consisted of examining and supervising the work of other departments.13

The Chief Secretary's Office itself was divided into three main divisions, the financial, the judicial and the administrative. The financial division was, as the name suggests, the accounting branch. It accounted for the parliamentary votes of a large number of Irish departments and it prepared the annual Estimates and appropriation accounts for the Lord Lieutenant's household, the Chief Secretary's Office, Law Charges, Criminal Prosecutions, Reformatory and Industrial Schools, Universities and Colleges, Ireland Development Grant, Hospitals and Charities and the Local Taxation Account. In addition, the Estimates for the following public departments were communicated to the Treasury through the finance division, having first

12. Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, p.77 [Cd 7338], H.C. 1914, XVI.

13. Ibid., Second Appendix [Cd 7312] p.181. The following description of the Chief Secretary's Office is taken from the evidence given at the Civil Service Commission in 1914. There were some changes in its organisation during the period. The most important of these was the fluctuating importance of the judicial division. This was set up by Antony MacDonnell in September 1903 and took over the work of the old police and crime branch. The administrative and judicial divisions were amalgamated in 1918 but in 1920 they were separated again. A lands and works division set up in 1903 to handle land purchase was abolished in 1911. 'Blue Notes' 1920-21, Class II., 34 (Chief Secretary's Office), p.3, P.R.O., T165/46.
been examined there and approved, disapproved or forwarded without comment: the Local Government Board, the Commissioners of National Education, the Public Records Office, the Registrar-General, the Land Commission, including the Estates Commissioners, the Irish Development Grant, and the Public Trustee, the Vote for Resident Magistrates which was part of the County Courts Vote, the Royal Irish Constabulary, the Dublin Metropolitan Police, the General Prisons Board, the Criminal Lunatic Asylum, Dundrum and the Endowed Schools Commissioners. All the initial and subsequent negotiations with the Treasury about these Estimates were conducted through the finance division.

The judicial division dealt with matters relating to law and order, and, as such, was a crucial branch of government. It had responsibility for questions relating to the magistracy and police. (Indeed much of its work involved analysing police reports.) This division also dealt with prisons and, strange to say, all correspondence with the Boards on National and Intermediate Education, except that which related to finance.  

The administrative division conducted all correspondence with English departments and all appointments to paid and unpaid positions were made through it. This division also dealt with routine questions concerning relations between the civil and military powers and looked after the administration of various Acts such as the Cruelty to Children Act, the Vivisection Act and the Anatomy Act.

In addition to these three divisions, there was a small convicts department and a registry attached to the Chief Secretary's Office, and the Irish Office in London was a subordinate branch staffed by the main office.

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14. Ibid., pp 183-4. The strange arrangement whereby the judicial division dealt with education seems to have been made for reasons of convenience of distribution of work within the office. It originated during the Under Secretaryship of Antony MacDonnell. Before that, educational matters were dealt with by the administrative branch. Ibid., p.184.
Finally, the Privy Council, which had originally been a separate office, was part of the Chief Secretary's Office. The work done by the Privy Council, though in the main formal, was considerable. It was responsible for the wide range of matters dealt with by 'Order of the Lord Lieutenant in Council'. For example it had to issue rules under the Inebriates Act, the Judicature Act, and the Pharmacy Act, the last of which, in particular, took up a great deal of time. It was also responsible for municipal by-laws, County Council by-laws, the settling of times for Quarter Sessions and Revision Sessions and other miscellaneous activities. When the Privy Council was a separate office, it had the services of two clerks, but, when it was incorporated in the Chief Secretary's Office, the two clerkships were abolished on the insistence of the Treasury and their duties fell to the Assistant Under Secretary who acquired the title 'Clerk to the Council'. He received no extra remuneration for this addition to his normal work.

All of this diverse work of the Chief Secretary's Office was supervised by the Under Secretary, who was also an *ex-officio* member of the Congested Districts Board and of the Local Government Board. The staff at his disposal fluctuated only slightly during the period. In 1914, there was a principal clerk at the head of each of the three main divisions and there were only five first class clerks in the Office. (Three of these were of the lower division and two had to be in London during the parliamentary session.) The Treasury resisted all requests for extra first class clerks, arguing that the proportion of higher administrative staff to the total establishment was already high. However this ignored the fact that the Office was unlike the English departments which the Treasury used as a basis for comparison.

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15. Ibid. Thus the Irish Office differed from the Scottish Office which had its main branch in London and its subordinate branch in Scotland.
16. Ibid., pp 184-5.
fact, the department to which it bore closest resemblance was the Treasury itself. Much of the mechanical work was done in other Irish departments, and the supervisory role of the Chief Secretary's Office necessitated a large number of senior staff. This the Treasury steadfastly refused to concede. Indeed it even attempted on several occasions to make the Assistant Under Secretary take over the duties of one of the principal clerks.\(^{17}\)

In the absence of the often-requested increase in senior staff, the Under Secretary and the Assistant Under Secretary found themselves having to do much of the routine work. Even then, as one Under Secretary told the Royal Commission on the Civil Service in 1913, they were 'just able to carry on'.\(^{18}\)

The problem was not simply a question of lack of staff. There was also lack of staff of high enough quality. At the best of times it would have been difficult to attract first rate civil servants to Ireland. But the difficulty was compounded by what the Royal Commission found was a complete lack of promotion prospects in the Chief Secretary's Office. The Under Secretary was almost always brought in from outside. So, advancement in that direction was unlikely. The Treasury was vigilant in its campaign to prevent the creation of new posts within the office and to secure the amalgamation of the duties of existing positions where possible as soon as a vacancy occurred. And access to such a prerequisite as the private secretaryship to the Chief Secretary was limited by the practice of many Chief Secretaries of bringing their private secretaries with them from England.\(^{19}\)

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17. Ibid., pp 185-6, 188.
18. Ibid., p. 186.
19. Ibid., p. 185; Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, p. 79 [Cd 7338], H.C. 1914, XVI.
It was thus possible for an Under Secretary to occupy his time with routine matters, in Fisher's phrase, to act as a 'routine Clerk'. The affairs of the judicial division alone would have kept him occupied. Because his office was responsible for the police, he was in constant contact with the Inspector General of the RIC whose office was next door to his own. An Under Secretary received not just one but several police reports every day which had to be examined and any important ones passed on to the Chief Secretary. In troubled times, this was seen as a necessary part of the job, but when things were more peaceful it was something which was resented by Under Secretaries. Antony MacDonnell, when he was Under Secretary, ordered that some of the police reports be discontinued. 20

The preponderance of such routine work reduced the attractiveness of the position of Under Secretary and tended to limit the number of people interested in it. Antony MacDonnell himself only accepted the position when he was promised that he would not be tied down by routine administration. He was more interested in the role of permanent adviser. There was certainly a great need for a reliable permanent adviser. And in the absence of the Chief Secretary, it was the Under Secretary who met deputations, who consulted the various interested groups when a decision was being taken and so on.

Whether the Under Secretary was a routine clerk or a permanent adviser did not depend mainly on his personality as Warren Fisher seems to have thought. It also depended on the circumstances of his appointment, on the political situation of the day and on the attitude of the Chief Secretary and the Cabinet as a whole. Fisher knew a great deal about administration, and

20. Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Evidence, p.11 [Cd 8311], H.C. 1916, XI.
not very much about Ireland. To understand the role of the Under Secretary, it is necessary to see how circumstances in Ireland shaped what was possible and what was not.

The 'Typical' Under Secretary

Of the nine Under Secretaries between 1890 and 1922, only one, Sir James Dougherty, was promoted from within the Chief Secretary's Office. And even he had been originally brought in from outside to be appointed Assistant Under Secretary. This may partly reflect the weakness of the senior staff in the office which, ironically, was partly caused by the practice of bringing in outsiders. However it also reflects an unwillingness on the part of both Unionist and Liberal Governments to appoint someone too closely associated with Dublin Castle. In the aftermath of 1916, for instance, when Sir Matthew Nathan resigned, there were two civil servants in Dublin with strong claims to the succession. One was Sir Henry Robinson, president of the Local Government Board, and the other was Sir Edward O'Farrell, the Assistant Under Secretary. Both had been overlooked in 1914, when Nathan was appointed, and indeed every time there was a vacancy between 1900 and 1922 Henry Robinson's name was mentioned as a possible successor. In the event, in 1916, as on most other occasions, it was felt better to bring in someone untainted by contact with the previous administration.21

Apart from James Dougherty, only two Under Secretaries in the period had any previous experience of administration in Ireland. One of these had been Secretary of the Irish Post Office and the other had been Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police.22 There was a marked preference for people

22. James MacMahon (Under Secretary 1918-22) had previously been Secretary of the Irish Post Office. Sir David Harrel (Under Secretary 1893-1902) had previously been Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police.
with a background in the civil service in England or in colonial administration. Three Under Secretaries came from English departments, and three came to Ireland after distinguished careers in the colonies. In all six cases, there was a definite impression of an outside expert being brought in to handle a trouble spot. The colonial administrators all came from positions equal to or greater in status than the Under Secretaryship for Ireland.

Equally significantly two of the three who came from the home civil service came from the Treasury or one of its subsidiaries. It is interesting too that in the early part of the period the preference was for an Under Secretary with colonial experience, whereas in the later part of the period, the preference was for people with experience close to the heart of the administrative machine. Four of the five Under Secretaries between 1914 and 1922 had served at the Treasury, Home Office or Board of Inland Revenue. This change no doubt reflects the growing crisis in Ireland and a change in the conception of Ireland's status in the minds of British politicians and administrators.

Events in Ireland which brought the country into the public eye rendered it difficult to treat her administration as colonial (in practice, if not in theory) and made it essential to oversee it more closely.

To point to the practice of appointing those whose experience was in the main outside Ireland is not to suggest that appointments were made without any regard to Irish susceptibilities. Attempts were occasionally made, especially

23. Sir Antony MacDonnell and Sir Joseph West Ridgeway both served in India, MacDonnell as an administrator and Ridgeway as a soldier and an administrator. Sir Matthew Nathan also had a long career as a soldier and administrator abroad though his last post before coming to Ireland was as Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue. Sir Robert Chalmers was joint Permanent Secretary at the Treasury when he was appointed though, of course, his long career at the Treasury had been punctuated by a short spell as Governor of Ceylon. Sir William Byrne had spent most of his life at the Home Office and Sir John Anderson, like Nathan, left the Chairmanship of the Board of Inland Revenue to come to Ireland.

24. Chalmers came from the Treasury and Anderson from the Board of Inland Revenue. Though Nathan also came from the Board of Inland Revenue, it would probably be misleading to class him as a 'Home Civil Servant'.
by the Liberals, to find candidates who might make some claim to popular acceptability. Of the nine Under Secretaries in the period, four were Irish and two of these (and one other) were Catholics. (The two other Irish Under Secretaries were Ulster Protestants.) These cases were not accidental, but reflected a conscious decision on the part of the Government. These figures compare quite favourably with the figures for Irish Catholics occupying senior positions in Ireland at the time.  

It is interesting to contrast them with the figures for the period between the Union and the late 1880's. Of the sixteen Under Secretaries between 1800 and 1887, only five were Irish and only two (both Irish) were Catholic. It is evident then that in the last thirty years of Dublin Castle, despite the survival of a tendency to appoint outsiders which was revived strongly at times of crisis, there was a trend towards appointing Under Secretaries who had something in common with those they governed.  

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<th>TABLE III</th>
<th>IRISH UNDER SECRETARIES: NATIONALITY</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish</td>
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<tr>
<td>1800-1887</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887-1922</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
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25. The Irish Under Secretaries were Harrel, MacDonnell, Dougherty and MacMahon. The Catholics were MacDonnell, Byrne and MacMahon. Harrel and Dougherty were Ulster Protestants.

26. Interestingly the trend faltered when Ireland became more unsettled. I use 1887 as a starting point in this case because West Ridgeway's term began then and ended in 1892.
More important than previous experience, nationality or religious affiliation as a criterion for choosing an Under Secretary was political disposition. By 1890 the days of an overtly political civil service were over, even in Ireland. But even within the confines of a permanent civil service structure it was still possible and indeed common to choose Under Secretaries on political grounds. Partly this is attributable to the blatant political jobbery which flourished in Ireland throughout the period. In the case of the Under Secretary, however, it owed more to the position of that office in the government of Ireland. Because the office was so important, it was felt that it was essential to have someone who, as it was euphemistically put, would be 'sympathetic to the policies of the government'. In the other case in which tradition was departed from and an Under Secretary was appointed whose politics differed from the Government which appointed him, the results were so disastrous as to dissuade subsequent Governments from repeating the experiment.  

Where the Under Secretary was nothing more than a routine clerk, his politics were not quite so important, but where, in the absence of his Chief

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<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>1800-1887</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887-1922</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
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27. Tables III and IV have been compiled from information obtained mainly from the various biographical dictionaries.
28. Matthew Nathan was a Jew.
29. Sir Antony MacDonnell's appointment eventually brought about the resignation of George Wyndham, the Chief Secretary, and severely embarrassed the Government.
Secretary, he took on the role of a junior minister, they were crucial. Though this was clearly undesirable for a permanent civil servant, it was understandable. The duties of the Chief Secretary were so wide as to require the assistance of his Under Secretary, even though that assistance might at times involve the latter in politics. The answer, as many critics pointed out, was to give the Chief Secretary a political assistant. Originally there had been two Under Secretaries, one for civil and one for military affairs, and at one stage at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were three. In 1887, it was suggested that this arrangement be reverted to and that the additional Under Secretary be a 'Parliamentary Under Secretary'. This would have served the dual purpose of easing the parliamentary burden of the Chief Secretary and of allowing the permanent Under Secretary to avoid direct political involvement.

This new initiative came to nothing largely due to the inept way in which it was handled by the Government. News of the Government's plan leaked out before it was officially announced or explained. The Liberals and the Irish Parliamentary Party repeatedly attacked the cloak-and-dagger approach of the Government and dismissed the plan as yet another case of political jobbery. The Government, for its part, made no attempt to correct this impression.

Colonel King Harman was appointed to the newly created, temporary, unpaid office of Parliamentary Under Secretary. The following year a bill was introduced to make the office permanent and salaried, but King Harman died while it was still before Parliament so the bill was not proceeded with and the temporary office lapsed. During the next thirty years, it was occasionally suggested that the bill be revived, but it never came to anything. The only significant change in this direction was the provision when the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction was being set up that its Vice President should be a

30. O'Brien, *Dublin Castle*, p.84; H.C. Debs, 4th series, vols 313, 5 and 9, cc 887-9 and 1002-3, 720-21, and 1110 respectively.
Member of Parliament who would be responsible for the administration of his own department. 31

No further attempt was made to reform or reorganise the duties of the Under Secretary. The position of Under Secretary remained political and was treated as such by all sides, as can be seen from a survey of the careers of those who held it. Loyalty to the Government in power was ensured by choosing carefully and, if necessary, getting rid of those who did not toe the line. And when tradition was departed from and the Government appointed someone not known to be a supporter of the Government, it had little to do with magnanimity or recognition of ability, but sprang from other, though still recognizably political, motives.

Chapter 4
The Under Secretary for Ireland 1890-1908

Sir Joseph West Ridgeway and David Harrel

The first Under Secretary of my period was Sir Joseph West Ridgeway. Before coming to Ireland in 1887, he had served in India as a soldier and as an administrator which, from a Tory point of view, was the ideal combination. However, he also had an abiding interest in the organisation of government and later reorganised the civil service in both Ceylon and Borneo.

1. Sir Joseph West Ridgeway, second son of Rev. Joseph Ridgeway, Rector of High Rooting, Essex, was born in 1844. He was educated at St Paul's, London, and obtained a commission in the Bengal Infantry when he was sixteen. In 1869 he joined the Central India and Rajputana agencies and four years later became an Attaché in the Indian foreign department. He returned to Rajputana in 1875 to become Assistant Agent of the Eastern States. In 1879 he was appointed Political Secretary to Major General (later Earl) Roberts, was twice mentioned in dispatches, received the brevet rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and became Junior Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. In 1886 he was invested with the K.C.S.I. and in 1887 promoted to the rank of Colonel, both for his military and diplomatic services in the Anglo-Russian dispute over the borders of Afghanistan. On his return from a mission to Russia in 1887, he was appointed Under Secretary for Ireland. In 1889 he became an Irish Privy Councillor. His main contribution in Ireland was to help frame Balfour's Land Purchase Act of 1891, for which he was created K.C.B.

Ridgeway served as Governor of the Isle of Man from 1893 to 1895 and of Ceylon from 1896 to 1903. He was created G.C.M.G. in 1900. He was an ardent free trader and, after the Unionist split on this subject, he became a Liberal and, ironically, twice stood unsuccessfully as a Liberal candidate. In 1906 the Liberal Government made him Chairman of the Committee of Inquiry on the constitutions to be given to the Transvaal and Orange River Colony which recommended immediate responsible government for both States. He became a G.C.B. in 1906. He was an honorary LL.D. of the universities of Cambridge and Edinburgh and a Vice President of the Royal Geographical Society. He died in 1930. The Times, 17 May 1930; D.N.B. 1922-30, pp 718-20.

2. Ibid.
The system he found in Ireland he described as 'chaotic and effete'.

The various boards had power without being accountable, whereas the Chief Secretary, he felt (no doubt with his Indian experience in mind), had increasingly less control. He recommended that the system of administration by boards should be replaced by popularly elected local bodies which would have power devolved to them and which would be supervised by the Chief Secretary's Office. To ensure that this supervision would be carried out efficiently, he proposed that an additional Under Secretary should be appointed, if it proved necessary.

Ridgeway was unsuccessful in his efforts to have his scheme implemented. He did convince the Chief Secretary, Arthur Balfour, that some reform was necessary. In 1888, Balfour had opposed the inclusion of Ireland in the proposed British local government legislation largely because he feared that the new councils would be dominated by the National League to the detriment of the landlords who were at the time fighting the 'Plan of Campaign'. By 1890, Ridgeway had helped to change his mind and an Irish Local Government Bill was drawn up. Apart from the proddings of his Under Secretary, Balfour was also influenced by the fact that the Liberal Unionists had long since been promised democratic reform of local government and delay, now that the land agitation had abated, risked provoking a split and giving a consequent boost to the Home Rule movement.

The announcement of Balfour's intention to deal with the local government question met with a storm of opposition from Irish landlords who saw that,

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4. Ridgeway to Balfour, 29 Aug. 1889, Balfour papers, B.L., Add. MS 49810.
5. Memorandum by Ridgeway, 6 Oct. 1889, Balfour papers, B.L., Add MS 49810.
Ridgeway envisaged that there would continue to be an Irish Minister, with an Under Secretary (or two) at the head of a central office. It would have thus been simply a reformed Chief Secretary's Office, whether it would have been called that or not.
coupled with land purchase legislation, popular control of local government would spell an end to the ascendancy. They insisted on the insertion of safeguards into the draft legislation which made nonsense of the bill's original democratic intention. The bill provided for the setting up of County and District Councils but it also contained some unprecedented features. Councils could be dismissed for a variety of reasons, any taxpayer could challenge a Council presentment in court, those who paid the highest County Cess were to have a 'cumulative vote' and, most significantly, a joint committee of Council members and Grand Jurors were to have power of veto over all expenditure and local government appointments. The bill was condemned by both Nationalists and Liberals and still did not satisfy the landlords, so it was allowed to drop. When, in 1898, the Local Government Act was finally passed, it left the organisation of the Chief Secretary's Office and the board system largely untouched.  

It was not for his administrative skills that West Ridgeway was appointed; it was for his experience of dealing with unrest. In Ireland, most of his time was spent in implementing Balfour's policy of 'firm government'. When the Liberals returned to power, they got rid of him at the earliest opportunity. John Morley, the new Chief Secretary, and the Nationalist Members of Parliament distrusted him because he was associated with this policy, so it was decided that he had to go. This was achieved only after an embarrassing exchange of letters between the Prime Minister, Mr Gladstone, and Queen Victoria. In a rambling letter to the Queen, Gladstone wrote


7. This was a bit unfair to Ridgeway who had been in favour of reform and who had been closely involved in the setting up of the Congested Districts Board, an initiative for which Balfour has tended to be given the sole credit. It would seem from Balfour's correspondence and from the Government records that Balfour was fortunate in his choice of Under Secretary. Ridgeway contributed no little amount to making Balfour's 'Irish' reputation.
It has been the desire of the Irish Government to conduct the executive government of that country without a change in the office of Under Secretary, but, while fully recognising alike the talents and the character of Sir West Ridgeway, they have come to the conclusion after an experience of some months that they can hardly expect from him an entire efficiency in the administration of the Government according to their views; and they have decided upon proposing arrangements which, if approved by Your Majesty, would enable them to offer to him honourable and appropriate employment under the Crown elsewhere.  

What Gladstone was saying, in effect, was that Ridgeway could not be trusted especially as a Home Rule Bill was in the offing. Queen Victoria, whose views on Home Rule were a lot stronger than Ridgeway's, replied immediately in a sharp note expressing her regret that it was felt necessary to remove 'so able an official as the Under Secretary for Ireland' and her hope that 'the office he now holds will not be converted into a political appointment'. Queen Victoria obviously felt that it would be better not to try to deny a minister the right to choose the head of his own department. That did not, of course, mean that she would cooperate with the Government in its plans.

Gladstone was unmoved by the tone of her letter. He replied in his usual placatory style

It is no reproach to Sir West Ridgeway that, after administering Irish Government under a system of exceptional law (for the Parliamentary duties of the Chief Secretary require that very much should be left to his permanent assistant in Dublin), it should be difficult for him to work the administration of the country under the ordinary law, and still more, and very much more, difficult to establish the necessary relations of confidence and understanding with all the local agencies throughout the country on the new footing.

8. Gladstone to Queen Victoria, 17 Dec. 1892, P.R.O., Cab. 41/22/2.
9. Queen Victoria to Gladstone, 19 Dec. 1892, in George Earl Buckle (ed.), The Letters of Queen Victoria, vol. II, p.191. It is doubtful whether the Queen would have been so concerned if a Home Ruler was being replaced.
Gladstone's rationale was honest and, with a few changes, the letter might have been written by any of the Chief Secretaries or Prime Ministers in the period: it recognised the realities of politics in Ireland viz. that a senior official, albeit a civil servant, appointed by one side would not be trusted by the other.

However, the knowledge that the chief 'local agency' referred to by Gladstone was the Irish Parliamentary Party can only have heightened the distaste of the Queen. When the Government proposed that the new Under Secretary, David Harrel, should be knighted so that he would have 'somewhat higher precedence', she protested that the suggestion was 'quite unusual' and said that Harrel ought to wait. She pointed out that there had been other Under Secretaries who had not been knighted including T.H. Burke. This was strictly true. As the Irish Government was forced to admit, there was no definite practice in relation to the knighting of Under Secretaries, but most Under Secretaries were already, or immediately became knights on appointment. In the period 1890-1922, for instance, only one Under Secretary besides Harrel was not already a knight when he was appointed. That was James MacMahon. The circumstances of his appointment were unusual, as we shall see.\footnote{MacMahon was never knighted though the joint Under Secretary and the Assistant Under Secretary at the time were both knights.}

In the case of Harrel, apart from the normal practice, there was an additional ground for granting him the honour. As Lord Houghton, the Lord Lieutenant, argued, 'nobody deserved the distinction better'. He had risen 'by sheer merit' from being a Constabulary officer and Resident Magistrate. The 'social recognition' accompanying the honour would, thought Houghton, be 'particularly marked in his case'; which was probably another way of saying that, without a knighthood, Harrel would lack the social status for the post.
Whether persuaded by this appeal to her snobbish instincts or not, the Queen relented. The editor of her published letters notes that Harrel was knighted 'at once'.

Ironically, in view of their insistence on Ridgeway's unsuitability, the Liberals choice as his successor was not very different. It is true that he was Irish and had had thirty years experience in public departments in Ireland, but twenty one of these had been as an officer with the Royal Irish Constabulary and ten more as Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. The appointment of a local is explained by the fact that a Home Rule bill was imminent and it was obviously desirable to have an Irish Under Secretary if control of the Irish Administration was to pass to an Irish Parliament.

However, Harrel was first and foremost a policeman. He relished the work in the police and crime branch of the Chief Secretary's office and rarely aspired to being an adviser or shaper of policy. That suited John Morley who had previous experience as Chief Secretary and his own ideas on how things should be run. It also suited the Tories who, when they returned to

12. Houghton to Queen Victoria, 11 Jan. 1893, in Buckle, op. cit., pp 200-1 & 203. To avoid embarrassment, Ridgeway was sent on a 'special mission' to the Sultan of Morocco, the necessity of which, as Henry Robinson commented, 'I doubt if anybody, even Ridgeway himself, ever discovered', Henry Robinson, Memories: Wise and Otherwise (1924), p.100.

13. Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Evidence, p.41 [Cd 8311] H.C. 1916, XI. Harrel was born in Downpatrick, Co. Down, in 1841 the son of a land agent. He was educated at the Royal Naval School as Gosport and, after spending some time at sea, he joined the Royal Irish Constabulary. He took a sympathetic interest in the Land Question and wrote to Gladstone on the subject. He served as a Resident Magistrate in Mayo during the height of the Land League agitation there. He was appointed Chief Commissioner of Dublin Metropolitan Police in 1883, a position which he held until 1893. As Under Secretary he retained an interest in the Land Question and was an active member of the Congested Districts Board. He did not become a member of the Irish Privy Council until 1900. He was appointed C.B. in 1887, K.C.G. in 1895, K.C.V.O. in 1900, G.B.E. in 1918 and G.C.B. in 1920. Though he retired for reasons of 'ill-health' in 1902, he later served on many commissions in England and Ireland and lived until 1939. D.N.B. 1831-40, pp 402-3; The Times, 13 May 1939.
office after the defeat of the Home Rule bill had no hesitation in retaining Harrel. There was never any question about his loyalty and he was good at the police work which, when the Tories were in office, tended to be voluminous. One contemporary reported a saying which was ascribed to Harrel which, even if the ascription is wrong, says a lot about his reputation: 'I am a policeman', he is reported to have said, 'I do what I am told'.\textsuperscript{14} That probably explains how he managed to survive as Under Secretary for ten years, to serve two administrations with diametrically opposed policies and, in the process, to earn himself a reputation as one of the more successful Under Secretaries.\textsuperscript{15}

Harrel's malleability made him a very popular official, especially with the heads of the various Irish boards and departments. They were allowed much more independence by Harrel than Ridgeway. Ridgeway's main criticism of the government of Ireland was, as we have seen, that it lacked efficient central control. In an attempt to remedy this, he tried to have all Irish Government business channeled through himself. The heads of boards were instructed that they should not deal with the Chief Secretary directly but work through the Under Secretary. In the case of the Congested Districts Board, an attempt was made to place it under the control of the Chief Secretary's Office by denying it the right to deal with the Treasury directly. This was thwarted only because the Board's independence in this regard had been laid down explicitly at its foundation.\textsuperscript{16} Such attempts at more efficient

\textsuperscript{14} O'Brien, \textit{Dublin Castle} p.13.

\textsuperscript{15} See, for example, Robinson op. cit., pp 100-1; Wyndham to Balfour, 25 Aug. 1902, Balfour papers, B.L., Add MS 49804, ff 22. Wyndham admitted that he was 'loyal, energetic and discreet'.

\textsuperscript{16} Robinson, op. cit., pp 47-8 and 100; W.L. Micks, \textit{An Account of the Constitution, Administration and Dissolution of the Congested Districts Board} (Dublin, 1925), pp 14-7. Ridgeway's unpopularity with Henry Robinson is largely attributable to the former's attempts to supervise the Local Government Board more closely. Robinson referred to Ridgeway dismissively as 'an \textit{ex-officio} junior member of the [Local Government] Board'. Robinson's opinion of the Under Secretaries he came in contact with was generally determined by the extent to which they interfered.
administration made Ridgeway rather unpopular, even with officials of Unionist views and facilitated the Liberals getting rid of him.

When John Morley became Chief Secretary, he immediately ordered that there should be a reversion to the previous practice of departments dealing directly with the Chief Secretary. He did this partly to placate the departments and partly to deprive Ridgeway of any influence until his transfer could be arranged. Its effect, however, was to restore the independence of the departments and to undo the work of Ridgeway. When Harrel became Under Secretary, he was less energetic in his attempts to change the procedure he found in operation. The 1890's were a period, therefore, when, despite considerable administrative innovation in Ireland such as the setting up of the Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture, the control exercised by the Chief Secretary's Office decreased rather than increased.  

Harrel's one major effort at an overhaul of the system came after he had been Under Secretary for four years. Describing the Board system as 'cumbrous in its action and prejudicial to departmental discipline and authority', his memorandum of 1896 proceeded to analyse where the faults lay and how improvements could be made. He considered that it would be impractical to interfere with the operation of the various English departments, such as the Post Office, Admiralty and so on, which functioned in Ireland completely outside the control of Dublin Castle. However, he recommended that the Irish Government be informally consulted on all matters of policy which involved Irish interests. He also proposed that the control of the Board of Works be

with his control of the Local Government Board. Thus Ridgeway and MacDonnell are commented on unfavourably in his memoirs, whereas Harrel gets his imprimatur. Robinson, op. cit., pp 97-8, 100 & 114-6. It should be said however that Robinson did admit that MacDonnell and Ridgeway were able officials.

17. This partly explains the huge growth of expenditure in this period. See Chapter 8.
transferred from the Treasury to the Irish Government because the Treasury tended to be unsympathetic to Irish needs. Similarly, he thought that control of the Supreme Courts of Judicature should be transferred to the Irish Government as they were 'not examples of perfect organisation, either in the matter of expenditure, or administration'.

Finally, regarding those departments already under the control of the Irish Government, he ventured that they were not 'constituted in a way which makes them responsive to the Head of the Irish Executive'. It would help efficiency, he said, if the numbers of boards and departments were reduced and if instead of being run by boards they were under single heads. He cited in particular the three or more bodies engaged in agricultural work. His memorandum had some influence on the decision to set up a Department of Agriculture. His other recommendations were largely ignored.  

While Harrel's character may have endeared him to those with a vested interest in the status quo, it was not very attractive for anyone who might want to implement sweeping changes. Wyndham, who became Chief Secretary in 1900, was such a man. He quickly became disillusioned with the traditional firm government policy which was being urged by some sections of his party and was keen to embark on a programme of reform. His relationship with his Under Secretary seemed to pose a problem in this regard. Wyndham was quick-witted, intellectual and visionary. Harrel was slow, cautious and reserved. In retrospect, it was probably the ideal partnership to take charge of any reform programme. But each found the personality of the other difficult to cope with. For that reason, it was no surprise when Harrel resigned because of 'ill-health'.

19. Robinson, op. cit., pp 138-41; Wyndham to Balfour, 25 Aug. 1902, Balfour papers, B.L. Add. MS 49804, ff 22-5. Harrel was sixty one when he resigned. He lived until 1939. His replacement was fifty
Sir Antony MacDonnell

Harrel's successor was less compliant than he. Partly as a result of this, he found himself in the midst of a huge controversy about the nature of the Under Secretaryship and the function of the Under Secretary. The controversy is interesting of itself, but it also influenced the general conception of the post of Under Secretary right up until 1922. It is therefore worth examining the career of Sir Antony MacDonnell in some detail.

When Harrel announced his intention to resign, Wyndham, in consultation with the outgoing Under Secretary, drew up a list of four possible replacements. Interestingly, the first person considered was West Ridgeway. He was quickly ruled out because of the obvious objections to bringing a man back after ten years, especially someone like Ridgeway whose departure had been somewhat controversial. The second person considered was Sir Henry Robinson, Vice President of the Local Government Board. Wyndham ruled him out because he felt that he lacked the necessary amount of 'drive' and 'initiative'. The third contender was Walter Lawrence, private secretary to Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, whom Wyndham considered clever and tactful but unlikely to succeed. The fourth possibility and the one favoured by both Wyndham and Harrel was Sir Antony MacDonnell who, as Wyndham put it, 'combines the merits of being an Irishman and having been out of Ireland most of his life'.

eight when he was appointed. Wyndham had twice persuaded Harrel not to resign. Though he 'could scarcely conceal his impatience' with Harrel (Robinson op. cit., p.141), he certainly respected his ability and knowledge of Ireland. Shortly after his arrival in Ireland he told Balfour that he had 'complete confidence' in Harrel. Wyndham to Balfour, 26 Nov. 1900, Balfour papers, B.L., Add. MS 49803, ff 139-44. His resignation was to his 'deep and poignant regret' as he had worked 'with the utmost loyalty, energy, and discretion'. Wyndham to Balfour, 25 Aug. 1902, Balfour papers, B.L., Add. MS 49804, f.23. Despite his malleability, Harrel was certainly loyal and able. Though he did not originate or contribute significantly to the framing of the proposals he did oversee the implementation of the measures setting up the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and the new popularly elected local government bodies.

20. Ibid. Balfour shared Wyndham's view of Ridgeway. Balfour to Wyndham,
Antony MacDonnell had other things to recommend him. Having graduated from Queens College, Galway, in 1864, he entered the Indian civil service where he remained almost continuously for the next thirty seven years. He served as Accountant General and later as Revenue Secretary to the Provincial Government at Calcutta and took a leading part in the preparation of legislation for the protection of Bengali tenants from rack-renting and arbitrary ejectment. This was followed by spells as Home Secretary to the Central Government, Chief Commissioner of Burma and then the Central Provinces, and as a member of the Viceroy's executive council. In 1895, he began two terms as Lieutenant Governor of the North West Provinces and Oudh, in which position his main achievements were the Agra Tenancy Act, which improved the security of tenure of agricultural tenants, and a prolonged fight against famine. For this work he was, in 1898, appointed to be G.C.S.I., an honour not previously conferred on a serving Lieutenant Governor; and, in 1902, he became a Privy Councillor and was given a seat on the Council of India.

When he resigned his Lieutenant Governorship, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, wrote that his record was 'unapproached at the present moment, and equal to that of the most illustrious of Indian administrators of the past'. This was a judgement which was widely held and which, indeed, has been echoed by historians. It was partly his distinguished record which saved MacDonnell...

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3 Sept. 1902, Balfour papers, B.L., Add. MS 49804, ff 63-4. Wyndham told Robinson that he could not be spared from the Local Government Board and assured him that youth was on his side. As a compensation, he recommended him for a Privy Councillorship. Robinson, op. cit., p.142.

21. This biographical sketch is taken largely from the entry written by H.V. Lovett for the D.N.B. 1922-30, pp 531-5.

22. Ibid., p.533.

23. See, for example, Martin Gilbert, 'Famine in India: Sir Antony MacDonnell and a Policy Revolution in 1902', in D. Williams and E.D. Potts (eds), Essays in Indian History (Bombay, 1971). A statue of MacDonnell by Sir George Frampton was erected at Lucknow by the Talukdars of Oudh in 1907.
of his great admirers later recalled that he was 'over-inclined to gather all authority into his own hands, ignoring the susceptibilities of his commission-ers'. That was a tendency not likely to endear him to his new colleagues in Ireland.

MacDonnell was recommended to Wyndham by Lord Lansdowne, himself an Irish landlord who, as Viceroy of India, found him his 'best administrator'. Wyndham, who was always more inclined towards the imaginative than the predictable, was enthusiastic and consulted Arthur Balfour, the Prime Minister. Balfour was much more circumspect. Because of what it reveals about the de facto position of the Under Secretaryship, and, in view of what happened later, it is worth quoting Balfour's reservations at some length. In essence his feeling was that it was unwise to risk alienating their friends (the Irish Unionists) by doing something which might not placate their enemies (the Irish Nationalists). Having pointed out that MacDonnell had a reputation of being a Home Ruler, Balfour went on:

Now for most offices under Government, an academic preference for this or that form of government for Ireland need be no disqualification; but for the person who, next to yourself, is chiefly responsible for actually governing that country, is it not rather important? It might, no doubt, be argued that a Home Ruler, if a genuine law-and-order man, would, so far as the Nationalists are concerned, be the fittest person to act as your lieutenant. Without disputing this proposition, is it not also true that he would excite the most violent suspicion among your friends; that everything you did against the Orange extremists would be put down to his advice; while even the most rigorous action you might take against the Nationalists would, on his account, be regarded as mere tinkering and compromise? I think you ought to consider well before you take a step

25. Wyndham to Balfour, 25 Aug. 1902, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49804, ff 22-5. MacDonnell was also recommended to Wyndham by George Hamilton, Secretary of State for India. Wyndham to Balfour, 29 Aug. 1902, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49804, ff 30-2.
which most of your colleagues in the Cabinet and most of your friends in Ireland would regard with the gravest misgiving.26

MacDonnell himself had some misgivings about accepting the offer of the Under Secretaryship and consulted his long-time mentor, Lord Ripon, another of the Viceroy's he had served under in India. Significantly, Ripon's advice closely resembled that of Balfour to Wyndham. Ripon told him that if it was any other office, there would be no bar to its acceptance by a person of Liberal opinions from a Conservative Government, once they understood that his views were different from theirs. Appointments in the permanent civil service were held independently of political opinions, and their holders 'serve with equal loyalty Ministers of all Parties'. But though he admitted that some Under Secretaries had been independent of politics he doubted whether an Irish Catholic of Liberal opinions could achieve anything by accepting what was in effect a political position in a Conservative Government. He advised MacDonnell to accept only if he was convinced that he could be more than a mere Under Secretary but could be in a position to influence policy.27

MacDonnell was not deterred by Ripon's pessimism or by the advice of other friends who warned that he would be abused by the Orangemen as a Catholic and Home Ruler, and denounced by the Home Rulers as a turncoat. The idea of achieving something in Ireland seems to have appealed to his vanity.28 He

27. Ripon to MacDonnell, 20 Sept. 1902, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 89-91. In his letter to Ripon, MacDonnell explained that the offer had been unsolicited and that he had told Wyndham frankly that he was a 'Liberal with Nationalist leanings'. His own opinion was that his appointment might 'do some good towards making Executive Govt [his abbreviation] in Ireland more acceptable to the mass of the people' and that he might be of some use in 'establishing a coordination between the jarring depts [his abbreviation] of the Irish Government'. MacDonnell to Ripon, 17 Sept. 1902, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 85-8.
28. See, for instance, ibid., and MacDonnell to Ripon, 27 Sept. 1902, Ripon Papers, B.L. Add. MS 43542, ff 92-3.
did however seek, and was given, guarantees that he would be consulted on all matters of policy and administration and that he would have freedom of executive action within the limits of policy laid down by and subject to the control of his parliamentary chief.  

The broad outlines of what that policy would be were clearly outlined by MacDonnell in his letter of acceptance and approved by Wyndham. MacDonnell explicitly stated

If I held office in Ireland, my chief aims would be the maintenance of order; assisting you in the solution of the land question on the basis of voluntary sale, and, where sale fails, to operate on the basis of fixing rents on a self-acting principle, excluding local inquiries; the coordination, direction and control of Boards and other administrative agencies; the settlement of the education question in the general spirit of Mr. Balfour's views, and administrative conciliation.  

Wyndham for his part satisfied himself that MacDonnell was not a Home Ruler. He did this both in person and through Lord Lansdowne who discreetly sounded MacDonnell on the subject. MacDonnell frankly confessed to having 'strong Irish sympathy' but he informed Wyndham and Lansdowne that he had refused the offer of a seat in Parliament from the Irish Parliamentary Party. He disapproved of their tactics and believed that an Irish Parliament was out of the question, though he believed that a 'convention' for the transaction of


30. MacDonnell to Wyndham, quoted in Wyndham to Balfour, 24 Sept. 1902, Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS 49804, ff 65-8. The letter was later incorporated in Hansard (H.C. Debates, 4th Series, vol. 141, 295) and both
purely local business might in time be permitted. Armed with the support of Lansdowne, Wyndham convinced the still hesitant Balfour to take the risk. He assured him that he was willing to take all responsibility, on the grounds that he needed a first rate man, with large administrative experience. I believe I have got him in Sir Antony MacDonnell. He is a landlord. He repudiates a Parliament for Ireland...He is sound on law and order, and contemptuous of the methods as well as the aims of Redmond's party. He is fearless and as straight as a dart.

I am ready to 'stand the racket' on the simple ground that I wanted an administrator, and, luckily, found one of the best available.32

Within a year of his appointment, it seemed as if Wyndham's gamble was paying off. The first part of the programme agreed on with MacDonnell was triumphantly achieved. A major Land Purchase Act was passed which promised to be the final solution of the land question in Ireland. The Act introduced a number of new principles, the most important of which were a bonus to landlords to induce them to sell and the sale of whole estates en bloc, with all the tenants agreeing to common terms of purchase. Wyndham freely admitted that the measure would never have seen the light of day if it had not been for MacDonnell. He had experience of similar legislation in India and his own it and Wyndham's acceptance of his terms are quoted in a memorandum by MacDonnell on the history of the controversy, written in February 1905 ('Memorandum', 8 Feb. 1905, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 101-9, hereafter cited as 'MacDonnell Memorandum').

31. MacDonnell to Ripon, 27 Sept. 1902, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 92-3; Wyndham to Balfour, 13 Sept. 1902, Balfour Papers, B.L. Add. MS 49804, ff 36-47; though he later became an active proponent of Home Rule, MacDonnell had, until then, avoided politics. The origin of his reputation as a Home Ruler was probably the fact that his brother was a Nationalist M.P., and of course MacDonnell was a Catholic. His view on Home Rule, as explained to Lansdowne and Wyndham, was that, though he favoured the principle, it was impossible in the foreseeable future. Wyndham was sufficiently enthused about MacDonnell's other qualifications to be willing to take this as meaning that he was anti-Home Rule.

32. Ibid., and Wyndham to Balfour, 24 Sept. 1902, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49804, ff 65-8.
background meant that he was uniquely placed to handle the negotiations which preceded the Act: he was after all a skilful administrator, a landlord and a Catholic. The discussions which led to the passing of the Act had begun long before MacDonnell took office, but he handled the crucial negotiations with all the parties and the drafting of the bill with consummate skill. For his efforts he was awarded the K.C.V.O. during the Royal visit to Ireland in 1903.

The 1903 Land Act marked the zenith of the careers of both Wyndham and MacDonnell. Shortly afterwards, MacDonnell was offered the Governorship of Bombay by Lord Curzon, a post which he had long desired. He intended to accept but was persuaded to remain in Ireland by Wyndham and by King Edward VII. The King had been much impressed by MacDonnell and according to Sidney Lee found him 'an influence for lifting the long standing Irish quarrel above the bitterness of party warfare'... He took the unusual step of personally expressing to MacDonnell his wish that he should remain in Ireland. MacDonnell kept the King informed about the subsequent developments in his career and this evident royal favour was another reason which prevented the Government from sacking him later.

MacDonnell's efforts at educational reform were less successful. The time seemed right for a settlement of the Irish University Question as the Catholic bishops had long since dropped their demands for an overtly Catholic University and Arthur Balfour himself had some years previously published the

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33. Wyndham told MacDonnell: 'Had you not seen your way to work with me, the Land Act could never have been passed or even negotiated'. Wyndham to MacDonnell, 7 Mar. 1904, quoted in 'MacDonnell Memorandum'. Some 195,000 tenants purchased their holdings under the terms of the Wyndham Act, at a total cost of some £70 million.


outlines of a possible settlement. MacDonnell embarked on a round of extensive negotiations but they came to nothing when Balfour withdrew his support. With the collapse of Government credit and the precarious position of the ministry, he was unwilling to take up anything which might cause dissension in the ranks or require any major Government spending. 36

The clear lesson was that innovation in Ireland would have to wait. MacDonnell again decided to leave but again he was persuaded by Wyndham that he might still accomplish something in Ireland. Wyndham was probably unwilling to admit publicly that his Irish policy was in cold storage. Some other Unionists were more inclined to allow MacDonnell to go. There were some indications that his adjustment from the Indian civil service was not uneventful or trouble-free. As Wyndham put it, the forms and traditions of Ireland and of 'British Parliamentary, Treasury and official practice' were not those of India. 37 Like Ridgeway, he found that attempts to improve efficiency by increasing centralisation tended to be resented in the Irish departments; and the fact that he had so little time for party politics and patronage only served to make him unpopular with politicians on both sides. 38

Added to this was the fact that he was a Catholic with nationalist connections. As Balfour had predicted, the phantom of MacDonnell and Home Rule was seen behind every Irish Government action. He was 'unremittingly attacked' by the Ulster Unionists and accused of every conceivable crime,

great and small: it was said that he was anti-landlord, that he was secretly working for Home Rule, that he had secured the dismissal of a Protestant constable from RIC, that he refused to deal with disorder, that he interfered in routine appointments to secure the appointment of his co-religionists and so on. And these were only the charges that were made openly and often enough to be raised in Parliament. They were later investigated by Walter Long who was no friend of MacDonnell. He concluded that all the charges were unjustified. Indeed in the case of the dismissed constable he found that the only undue interference was by Wyndham who had the constable reappointed at the behest of the Ulster Unionists. 39

Administrative Reform

All the rumours and allegations might have been dismissed as the usual abuse with which Under Secretaries had to learn to live were it not for the controversy MacDonnell found himself embroiled in towards the end of 1904. This controversy made a show-down inevitable, but when it came the end result was unexpected.

Like West Ridgeway before him, MacDonnell's first impression of Irish government was how chaotic and uncoordinated it was. The higher co-ordination of the various boards and departments was, as we have seen, one of his top priorities. Before he was appointed, MacDonnell had called on Wyndham at the Castle who discussed the organisation of the Irish Executive, the relations of the various boards and departments with each other and the relationship of the Under Secretary with them and with the Chief Secretary. He illustrated how the system worked by going through all the files he had with him. MacDonnell came away with an impression of Irish government which nothing

in his six years as Under Secretary did anything to change. He reported to Lord Lansdowne:

The impression left in my mind is that the system is defective, (1) in the matter of control over and coordination of the work of the Departments and Boards, (2) in the character of the secretarial work. There must be a loss of power, and a general likelihood of friction and misunderstanding owing to the separate and disconnected action of the Departments; and the control of the Chief Secretary must be weakened owing to the imperfect and jerky way the actions seem to be considered and dealt with. I do not forget that one centralised Indian system may be unsuited to Home Affairs, but centralisation does not necessarily mean interference. There ought to be in the Central Office full information as to what is going on in every Department; otherwise surprises are sprung on one, and regular settled administration cannot be counted on.

To remedy this situation, MacDonnell recommended that the Under Secretary be allowed to oversee and coordinate the work of the various departments instead of being merely a 'conduit pipe' to the Chief Secretary. Such co-ordination was strongly approved of by Wyndham not just as the price of attracting MacDonnell to Ireland but as a positive necessity. He wrote to Balfour on the subject. 'Co-ordination', he told Balfour, sounded 'formidable', but

...as a matter of sheer necessity, I must have someone of sufficient experience and calibre to pull the office together, and, if not to co-ordinate, at least to correlate it with the Boards. This is necessary on another ground, namely, of the financial relations of the Irish Government with the Treasury. Austen Chamberlain was convinced of this before he left the Treasury. Now, in addition to the Local Government Board, the Board of National Education - and that is a nut to crack - the Prisons Board, the Inspector of Reformatories, &c., we have the Congested Districts Board administering larger funds, and overlapping with Horace Plunkett's Department, which administers 170,000 a year.

When Ridgeway was here he drew the strings tighter together, and made the Local Government Board, at least, work through him. Harrel abandoned that as Robinson made difficulties.

But now the problem is larger and more complex. The Local Government Board is running the new Local Government Act well, but all the schemes for labourers' cottages, drainage, &c., are assuming proportions that call for constant attention, and a "policy". And this again, is beginning to inter-act with questions of local taxation that cannot long be deferred, in view of Balfour of Burleigh's Report (Royal Commission). 40

40. MacDonnell to Lansdowne, 13 Sept. 1902. Copy in Ripon Papers, B.L., Add MS 43542, ff 168-71; Wyndham to Balfour, 13 Sept. 1902, Balfour Papers
On his appointment MacDonnell immediately began the 'large' and 'complex' task of correlating the various organs of Irish government. His first step was to reassert the primacy of the Under Secretary. The heads of all boards and departments were instructed that papers and other communications for the Chief Secretary should be sent via the Under Secretary. Under the previous arrangement the independence of the individual boards was guaranteed because the Chief Secretary rarely had time to deal with the papers referred to him directly and they could proceed on their own initiative.

MacDonnell's efforts were successful in only some cases, the most notable being the Congested Districts Board. As Under Secretary he was an *ex officio* member and, partly because the Board had a new and inexperienced secretary, he was able to dominate its workings to a large extent. As we have seen, the Board was intended to be semi-independent of Dublin Castle, but MacDonnell treated it as if it was a subsidiary of the Chief Secretary's Office. The Board was forced to deal with the Treasury through the Chief Secretary's Office whereas previously it had dealt directly with it. It was decided, without reference to the Board, that certain of its agricultural functions should be transferred to the Department of Agriculture. The staff of the Board began increasingly to act on the instructions of MacDonnell rather than on the resolutions of the Board itself and much of its routine business was carried on by the Chief Secretary's Office. The final indignity was MacDonnell's practice of summoning meetings of the Board to be held at Dublin Castle. This only served to emphasize its subservience, especially as one of the distinctive features of the Board when it was set up was its independence

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41. Robinson, op. cit., pp 144-5.
42. Micks, op. cit., pp 17 & 112; see Chapter 8.
43. Ibid., pp 111-2.
from Dublin Castle. MacDonnell's tactlessness in this matter led to one of the most active members, Dr O'Donnell, Bishop of Raphoe, refusing to attend meetings. 44

MacDonnell's dominance of the Congested Districts Board was facilitated by the fact that it had no real permanent head. He was less successful with the other government agencies which he tried to bring under his direct control. Henry Robinson of the Local Government Board, for instance, had seen similar attempts by Ridgeway. He told Wyndham that if it was simply a question of the Chief Secretary not having enough time to deal with matters himself the Local Government Board could be relied on to 'save him trouble and annoyance, as we had done heretofore'. If MacDonnell wanted to keep in touch with what was going on, he could attend the Board's meetings (he was an *ex officio* member); but if all papers had to be referred to the Chief Secretary's Office and if he (the Vice President) was debarred from access to the Chief Secretary (the President), then he would have to send a 'vanload of papers' to the Castle every day. Wyndham recognized that the Board could not function without Robinson's co-operation, and told him that he should use his 'discretion' in acting on the offending minute. Robinson records that 'following the dictates of experience, I took no more notice of it'. 45

Without the co-operation of Wyndham, MacDonnell had little hope of imposing his will on the Local Government Board. He did apparently enlist the help of Lord Dudley, the Lord Lieutenant, who began to exercise his right to call for reports on various aspects of the Board's work. However the Board circumvented these efforts by referring to the fact that the Chief

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44. Ibid., pp 112-4.
45. Robinson, op. cit., p.146.
Secretary, as *ex officio* President, and not the Lord Lieutenant, was its official head.  

It quickly became evident to MacDonnell that the force of his personality alone would not be enough to bring about the desired degree of co-ordination. So he moved on to produce a series of proposals to reorganise the structure of the Chief Secretary's Office and its relations with the various boards and departments. The main feature of the scheme was the proposal to set up a 'Secretariat Branch' in the Chief Secretary's Office the chief function of which would be to supervise the expected rapid increase in land purchase under the 1903 Land Act and to supervise the work of the Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture. It was essential, he argued, that the Irish Government have effective control over land purchase in the interest of efficiency and economy. Also he felt that the Department of Agriculture could not long remain in its 'present anomalous position' with its independent head and 'a policy separate, and liable to become different, from the Irish Government'. He predicted, quite correctly as it proved, that, with the land question in 'a new phase', the Department of Agriculture would come increasingly under the scrutiny of the opponents of the Government in Parliament.

MacDonnell pressed for a complete reorganisation in other areas of Irish government as well. He had been unable to make any impression on the Commissioners of National Education so he brought forward a separate proposal for the formation of a new Department of Education which would, like the Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture, be supervised

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46. Ibid., pp 146-7.
47. MacDonnell to the Secretary of the Treasury, 21 Sept. 1903, S.P.O., Dublin Castle, Government Letter Books VIIIIB/6/20, pp 202A-3. As in the case of the Congested Districts Board, MacDonnell's proposals with regard to the Department of Agriculture ran counter to the whole idea behind the structure and powers of the Department.
by the new 'Secretariat Branch'. The Branch would also examine more fully than was possible under existing conditions the details of the different projects for the construction of harbours, railways, and other works which were the subject of continuous correspondence between the Board of Works, the Chief Secretary's Office and the Treasury. MacDonnell justifiably complained that the only knowledge that his office possessed about such projects came from the Board of Works; this was only a courtesy of the Chairman and the knowledge tended to be 'personal to the Chief Secretary' and was not shared by his Office. The same applied to the Local Government Board which, unlike the Board of Works, was officially under the Chief Secretary, but which, as we have just seen, was not 'in any definite relation with the Chief Secretary's Office'. It too would be placed under the watchful gaze of the 'Secretariat Branch'.

MacDonnell's scheme was guaranteed to raise the hackles of almost all the boards and departments of the Irish Government. He had tried to sell them the scheme on the grounds that it would lead to 'greater efficiency of work' and 'ultimately, greater economy of administration'. However, as the price for Treasury agreement to the generous financial terms of the 1903 Land Act, the Irish Government had already promised savings in the administration of Ireland of £250,000. MacDonnell's scheme would naturally have involved an increase of expenditure, at least in the short term, so the Treasury would only accept a slightly less ambitious reorganisation of the Chief Secretary's Office. It was unfortunate that the increase was proposed in the one area of Irish expenditure that the Treasury could, and did, effectively control: the establishment of the Chief Secretary's Office. MacDonnell's very valid point, that his original scheme would lead to savings ultimately, was overlooked because of the precarious financial position of the Government. He pointed out that, under existing circumstances, no substantial savings could be expected because the Chief Secretary's Office 'has in
fact no detailed knowledge or control of the more important part of the machinery of government' (my emphasis) and that the heads of the several departments could hardly be expected to form such a 'general view of their relative importance as would render possible a scheme for adapting their staff to changed requirements', but to no avail. 48

It was about this time that MacDonnell decided again that he should leave Ireland but was persuaded by Wyndham that should remain as he might still accomplish more. So it was that, during 1904, he began to develop his plans still further. His experience of dealing with the Treasury and the Irish departments convinced him that his reforms could only be successful if they included a scheme of financial decentralisation which, subject to the control of Parliament, would give the Irish Government complete control over the allocation and expenditure of an Irish budget. 49 His motivation for suggesting local control was administrative rather than political. He hoped to be able to enforce savings in many areas which could then be used for economic development.

MacDonnell borrowed his idea of an Irish budget from the Indian system of Provincial Contracts which gave the provinces freedom to administer their budgets subject to the ultimate control of the central authority. He discussed his ideas with both Lord Dudley and Wyndham on various occasions and found what he considered an 'approving' audience. He urged Wyndham to consult Sir David Barbour, an authority on Indian finance who was equally well

48. Ibid., and G.H. Murray to MacDonnell, 27 Sept. 1903, P.R.O., (Treasury Outletters, Ireland) T 14/83/322. Murray explained that the Treasury could not sanction the proposals as they did not comply with the conditions laid down at an interview between the Chief Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. For the changes made in the Chief Secretary's Office, see Chapter 3, footnote 48.

49. MacDonnell Memorandum, 8 Feb. 1905, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 101-9. Interestingly enough, MacDonnell recalls that he saw that the true root of Irish mal-administration lay in the financial arrangements between the two countries.
versed in Irish financial matters, having been a member of the Financial
Relations Commission. Wyndham certainly seemed impressed with the idea for,
as early as October 1903, he wrote to his Under Secretary that an 'Irish
Budget on the lines of the Indian Budget is the first step towards sound
government in Ireland and a due recognition of her claims here [Whitehall]'.

Though Wyndham's reaction was encouraging to MacDonnell, he cannot have
been in any doubt that the prospects of the Government directly adopting his
idea were not bright. For that reason a development which took place early
in 1904 began to assume a great importance. Lord Dunraven, a Unionist land-
lord who had played a leading part in the negotiations which preceded the 1903
Land Act, decided that the time was right to try to form a 'Third Party'
which would push for reform in Ireland and which would draw its support from
the ranks of moderate Unionists and Nationalists. MacDonnell and Wyndham were
both sympathetic. It was agreed that MacDonnell should invite to dinner to
meet Dunraven the more prominent Unionists who were likely to form the nucleus
of the party. However, on consideration, MacDonnell decided that, with the
Land Act just coming into operation the timing was in fact inopportune and
that it would be unwise to risk compromising Wyndham. So, with Wyndham's
agreement, the matter was dropped.

The timing was particularly inopportune for Wyndham as he had a busy
parliamentary session to cope with. Indeed before the end of the session
the signs of the strain were showing and his Private Secretary feared that he
would have a nervous breakdown before the recess. When the mid-August break

50. For more on Barbour and Ireland, see Chapter 8.
51. Quoted in MacDonnell Memorandum, 8 Feb. 1905, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add.
MS 43542, ff 101-9.
52. Ibid.
53. Mackail and Wyndham, op. cit., p. 91.
finally came, it was decided that Wyndham should take a holiday, rather than
go to Ireland, MacDonnell assuring him that he could do without him for about
six weeks. Wyndham did not need the reassurance and left instructions that he
be communicated with only about matters which could not wait his return.  

In the meantime, during August, Dunraven had finally decided to proceed
with his plans for a new party. He again spoke to MacDonnell who, having
ascertained that Wyndham was in contact with Dunraven on the subject, felt
free to give him the benefit of ideas about an Irish budget and to help him in
formulating a programme for Dunraven's Irish Reform Association. The programme,
which was published on 31 August 1904, was rather vague. It called for the co-
operation of all Irishmen in the economic development of the country and such
Irish control of Irish affairs as would be 'compatible with the maintenance
of the legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland and the supremacy
of the Imperial Parliament.'  

When the Reform Association was pressed for a more detailed statement
of its programme, MacDonnell agreed to the request of Dunraven that he pre-
pare a draft. The expanded manifesto, which was published on 26 September,
made two proposals: financial decentralisation for Ireland and the devolution
of some limited legislative functions.

54. Ibid., pp 91 and 791. Wyndham holidayed first in England and then in
Germany.
55. MacDonnell wrote to Wyndham asking whether he had seen Dunraven.
Wyndham replied that he had seen him and hoped to see him again.
MacDonnell Memorandum, 8 February 1905, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS
43542, ff 101-9.
56. Mackail and Wyndham, op. cit., p. 92.
57. The Times, 26 Sept. 1904. For the Reform Associations programme, see
Dunraven, The Outlook in Ireland, pp 271-80.
Though the initial reaction was fairly critical, it was not any more so than might have been expected. What was surprising was the fact that Wyndham, only just returned from his holiday, immediately wrote a letter to The Times condemning the scheme. No one was more surprised than MacDonnell who had mentioned his own involvement in a letter to Wyndham a fortnight previously:

In the Irish Reform Association Manifesto I fancy you have recognized the trace of conversations we have had. I have helped and am helping Dunraven in the business, which has for many a day seemed to me to offer the best hope of unravelling of the tangled skein of English and Irish relations.

Far from trying to conceal his involvement, MacDonnell had 'more than once' reported back to the Lord Lieutenant, who, unlike Wyndham, was in Dublin at the time and who gave his approval.

At the first meeting of the Chief Secretary and Under Secretary after Wyndham's condemnation of the scheme, Wyndham instructed MacDonnell to end his association with Dunraven as the Government could not support his devolution proposals. As it happened, MacDonnell had done this as soon as he had seen Wyndham's letter to The Times. However the damage was already done. Wyndham's

58. The Ulster Unionists and most of the Nationalists rejected it out of hand. John Redmond outlined what was his attitude to all subsequent proposals: he welcomed it if it would lead to Home Rule. Michael Davitt, however, thought that it was part of the policy of 'killing Home Rule with kindness' and labelled it a 'Trojan Horse'. Peter Bradley Allison, 'George Wyndham: Romantic Conservative, 1863-1913' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Rochester, 1974) p.180.


60. Mackail and Wyndham, op. cit., p.91; 'MacDonnell Memorandum'. Later when MacDonnell asked Wyndham why he had not expressed his disapproval in response to the letter, Wyndham replied that he could not have attached to the paragraph the importance MacDonnell did. Ibid.

61. Ibid. Dudley later confirmed MacDonnell's version. This made it impossible to fire MacDonnell without firing Dudley too. See note dated 9 Feb. 1905 added by MacDonnell to the copy of his memorandum which he sent to Ripon. Ripon Papers B.L., Add. MS 43542., f.109.

62. Mackail and Wyndham, op. cit., p.95. 'MacDonnell Memorandum'.
mistake was to rush into print condemning the scheme when he could instead have simply ignored it. That was the view of his close friends and of MacDonnell who had not expected that 'official notice would be taken of what, at that stage, was only a project of Reform put forward for public discussion by a body of Private Gentlemen'.

Wyndham's repudiation of the scheme was made all the more surprising by the fact that he was known to be not unsympathetic to some form of devolution and the fact that MacDonnell's involvement could not long remain a secret. The Ulster Unionist distrust of the Government's Irish policy, which had been growing at least since 1902, and their animosity towards MacDonnell, came to a head and crystallised around this single controversy. The long break before Parliament resumed only served to encourage some of the wilder rumours concerning MacDonnell, Wyndham and even Balfour, and when parliamentary questions and debates brought the 'special conditions' of MacDonnell's appointment into the open, the outcry increased rather than abated.

Ironically, the weakness of the Government which had doomed the scheme from the beginning also made it particularly vulnerable to the resultant fall-out. The Government's first reaction was to try to get rid of MacDonnell quietly. Officially MacDonnell was only on loan from the Indian Council and it had always been intended that he would return to it eventually. This arrangement suited MacDonnell but it had been specifically designed by the Government to give them, as Wyndham put it, 'a line of retreat'. It is no surprise therefore that the India Office should decide, at the end of 1904,

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63. Ibid. On the other hand the scheme and MacDonnell's part in drawing it up had immediately been publicly condemned by the Irish Attorney General, John Atkinson. Robinson, *Memories*, pp 161-2.

64. Allison, op. cit., p. 182.

65. Wyndham to Balfour, 22 Sept. 1902, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49804, f. 59.
that MacDonnell's presence was essential and press him to return. Wyndham, for his part, was willing to part with MacDonnell 'with regret' because he said the depression of public credit made further reform impossible. MacDonnell protested that his good name was at stake and suggested that if the India Office could wait for three years it could wait a while longer. However, Brodrick, the Secretary of State, demanded a definite reply, so MacDonnell resigned his reversion to the seat on the Council of India rather than seem to confirm the allegations being made against him. 66

MacDonnell seems genuinely to have wanted to leave Ireland but he was intent that he would only do so at a time of his own choosing when his name was clear. 67 However, this could only be achieved at the expense of Wyndham, so not surprisingly relations between the two began to deteriorate. As late as the end of October, Wyndham was describing MacDonnell as 'truly remarkable for his administrative capacity; indefatigable, quick, loyal to me as his Chief, and impartial in his attitude towards all creeds and classes', but there followed an acrimonious correspondence about the Cabinet's censure of MacDonnell and by early 1905 MacDonnell was taking the extraordinary step of briefing His Majesty's Opposition because he felt that he could not trust his Chief to defend him. 'He cannot make a real defence of me', he wrote to Lord Ripon, 'without compromising himself'. 68

66. Brodrick to MacDonnell, 1 and 7 Nov. 1904; Wyndham to Brodrick, 25 Oct. 1904; MacDonnell to Brodrick, 4 and 30 Nov. 1904. All were later printed for Cabinet. P.R.O., Cab. 41/37/43. Though a landowner, MacDonnell was far from wealthy and he deeply regretted having to resign his reversion to the seat as it would have guaranteed him financial security if he had to leave Ireland. See, for instance, MacDonnell to Ripon 20 Sept. 1907, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 201-2. I have found no documentary evidence to prove that Brodrick was not acting on his own initiative, but this is hardly surprising. It is difficult to explain Brodrick's persistence unless there was an ulterior motive; and moving MacDonnell back to Indian affairs was the most obvious solution to the thorny problem facing the Government.

67. MacDonnell to Brodrick, 4 and 30 Nov. 1904. P.R.O., Cab. 41/37/43; Memorandum by Long, 'Sir Antony MacDonnell, Under Secretary for Ireland', p.2, 1 Apr. 1905, P.R.O., Cab. 37/75/55. MacDonnell told Lord Lansdowne
After MacDonnell's refusal to be shifted from Ireland, the Cabinet discussed his case, on two occasions in December. Without giving him an opportunity to explain himself in person and, it seems, without Wyndham telling his colleagues that MacDonnell had kept Dudley informed, it was decided to censure MacDonnell in the following terms:

that he had been forced into a 'representative position' against his will: 'I am the representative of the principle that a Roman Catholic Irishman, being competent and admittedly loyal, shall be entitled to serve the King in Ireland without molestation from besotted people: I shall not be intimidated, or cajoled or frightened into a betrayal of that principle: and I shall not willingly leave my post till the principle is vindicated'. MacDonnell to Ripon, 3 March 1905, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 132-5.

68. Wyndham to Brodrick, 25 Oct. 1904, P.R.O., Cab. 41/37/43; 'MacDonnell Memorandum'; MacDonnell to Ripon, 9, 16 and 26 Feb. 1905, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 96-100, 113-8, & 121-4. All these letters were written in reaction to forthcoming questions or debates in Parliament, specifically because MacDonnell did not 'think Mr. Wyndham will defend me properly. He will pretend to defend me: but he cannot make a real defence without compromising himself'. MacDonnell asked Ripon to pass on his memorandum to 'someone who can help me in Parliament'. Ripon showed some of MacDonnell's letters to Campbell Bannerman and more to Lord Spencer. Ripon to MacDonnell, 1 March 1905 and Note by Ripon on letter from MacDonnell, 9 May 1907, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 131 and 155. MacDonnell admitted to a feeling that he 'ought not to "brief" the opponents of the Govt' [his abbreviation], but he quickly added, '..this is a matter of honour and dishonour for me and, if in the debate Mr. Wyndham does not act fairly by me, I think it is allowable for some friend to put out a hand to save me from sacking'. He also briefed Lord Dunraven to help his defence in the House of Lords. As the crisis developed MacDonnell briefed Ripon on each contentious point which arose. On 27 February, for instance, he clarified the matter of his censure and Lord Dudley's attitude to Devolution, both of which had arisen in Parliament that afternoon. He told Ripon that he would be 'most grateful' if he could 'let my friends know how the matter stands'. Ripon promised to let Lord Spencer see his letters. (MacDonnell to Ripon, 27 February 1905, Ripon to MacDonnell, 1 March 1905, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 127-9 and 130-1). Soon afterwards John Redmond asked a question in Parliament about MacDonnell having been censured without being given any opportunity to explain himself. MacDonnell commented that it could not have been more pertinent if he had drafted it himself, and indeed he was accused of doing just that. MacDonnell suspected that Redmond's information must have come directly or indirectly from Ripon, but Ripon assured him that he had only shown the letters to Spencer. It is interesting that MacDonnell, though Redmond was serving his interest, obviously disapproved of his briefs going to the Irish Parliamentary Party.

Later, Walter Long reported that MacDonnell denied the allegations of briefing the opposition. If he did, it is the only case I have encountered of MacDonnell being less than frank. Memorandum by Long, 1 Apr. 1905, P.R.O., Cab. 37/75/55.
The Cabinet consider that Sir Antony MacDonnell's participation in the formulation of Mr. Dunraven's scheme of Devolution was contrary to the Rules regulating the Permanent Civil Service and indefensible. But the Cabinet consider that Sir Antony MacDonnell had not the smallest intention of behaving disloyally to his official superiors.69

Clearly this was an attempt to satisfy both sides and to pre-empt the expected row in Parliament. However, MacDonnell felt he had no case to answer and, not unnaturally, resented not having been called on for an explanation before being censured, while the Ulster Unionists were in no mood to be placated by anything short of his dismissal.70

MacDonnell's action in helping Dunraven was certainly outside the normal scope of a permanent civil servant, but in refusing to accept his censure he argued that the terms of his appointment meant that the rules regulating the permanent civil service did not apply in his case. He also insisted that he 'neither acted, nor attended to act' disloyally and that he had informed his superiors about his actions at all times.71

Such subtleties did not particularly impress the Ulster Unionists who, when Parliament reassembled, vigorously pursued the matter. When the controversy showed no signs of abating, the Government was left with only two options. The first and most obvious was to sack MacDonnell. The trouble with this option

69. MacDonnell Memorandum. Long criticised Wyndham for not informing the Cabinet about Dudley at its first meeting after he heard the news. Long to Balfour, 21 February 1905, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49776, ff 46-7.

70. The two Cabinet meetings were on 10 and 16 December. Following the first, Wyndham informed MacDonnell of the censure. MacDonnell immediately challenged it but to no avail. He was never called on for a formal explanation of his actions. He stated his case verbally to Wyndham who relayed it to the second Cabinet meeting. For MacDonnell, this was, not surprisingly, completely unsatisfactory because, as he put it to Ripon, 'I can only be exculpated fully at his [Wyndham's] expense'. Ibid.; MacDonnell to Ripon, 27 February 1902, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 127-9. Balfour told the King after the first Cabinet meeting that he hoped to interview MacDonnell in an attempt to 'reconcile the rival claims of official propriety and distinguished services' but this was not done. Balfour to King Edward, 11 Dec. 1904, P.R.O., Cab. 41/29/42.
was that if MacDonnell's actions warranted dismissal so too did Lord Dudley's, as he had given MacDonnell his approval. Even if Dudley was not sacked, it was expected that he might resign in support of MacDonnell. And, in addition to MacDonnell's distinguished career and obvious favour with the King, there was the fact that, freed from the constraints of office, he could publish all the relevant correspondence. This would be guaranteed to embarrass Wyndham and the Government as it would show that the Chief Secretary had, in fact, been informed, however tentatively, and that he had a long standing sympathy for devolution of some sort.

The other option, and the one which became more and more likely as the strain began to take an obvious toll on him, was that Wyndham should resign. The issue was finally forced when Lord Londonderry and Edward Carson threatened to resign if MacDonnell was not sacked. Something had to be done, so Balfour announced his 'reluctant' acceptance of his protege's resignation on 5 March 1905.

The devolution crisis, which ruined Wyndham's career and severely embarrassed the Government, generated a great deal of discussion about the position of Under Secretary. In defence of his position, Wyndham claimed that
the terms of his appointment made MacDonnell more of a 'colleague' than a
'mere Under Secretary'. MacDonnell, too, claimed that he did not take
office as 'an ordinary Under Secretary'. Both of them saw the traditional
position of the Under Secretary as being that of a 'mere clerical assistant'. However MacDonnell's special conditions of appointment, about which much was
made by his opponents, did no more than specify what was customary in England.
Walter Long, Wyndham's successor, admitted as much when he commented

These are conditions which I venture to say no wise Minister would
fail to accept in regard to any permanent Head official serving
under him. They are universally adopted in practice.

Unquestionably, a Parliamentary Head can, if he so desires,
legally ignore his permanent Head; but there can be no doubt that,
in practice, no Minister in England ever ignores his chief permanent
officer.

The history of Irish Government shows that traditions have not
always pointed in the same direction, and I consider, therefore, that
Sir Antony MacDonnell was justified in making the two demands I have
mentioned.

In spite of all this, Long still concluded that Wyndham should have refused
to specifically meet MacDonnell's conditions because 'the traditions and
practice of the Civil Service' had to be 'upheld' and because it would be
impossible to avoid 'misunderstandings'.

When Long was sent to Ireland, his first and greatest problem remained
what to do with MacDonnell. He quickly concluded that there were no grounds
for dismissing him and that any attempt to do so would land them in even hotter

publication and the allegations against Balfour. The volume of the
correspondence is a fair indication of how important Long considered
the question was. Balfour was not convinced, though there is no doubt
that his reputation did suffer in some quarters. Shannon, 'Arthur
Balfour and the Irish Question, 1874-1921', University of Massachusetts

75. H.C. Debates, 4th series, vol. 141, 650 (20 February 1905).
76. 'MacDonnell Memorandum'.
78. 'Sir A.P. MacDonnell, Under Secretary for Ireland', memorandum prepared
for his Cabinet colleagues by Walter Long, 31 March 1905, P.R.O., Cab.
37/75/55.
water, not least because he found that 'on all sides the respect for Sir A.M. is deep and real'. He decided that the 'contract' with him would have to be maintained. However he was equally adamant that the Government should 'clearly define it and not exceed it by one inch'. Long subsequently clarified MacDonnell's position for the benefit of Parliament. He held his office on the same basis as the other permanent heads except that on his appointment he had been assured that he would be treated with 'complete confidence', consulted on matters of policy and allowed administrative freedom of action subject to the approval of the Chief Secretary. This, Long explained, had always been the case with his own permanent officials.

79. Long to Sandars (Balfour's secretary), 15 March 1905, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49776, ff 52-5; 'Supplementary Note' by Long, 3 April 1905 P.R.O., Cab. 37/75/60. Long's comment about the respect for MacDonnell 'on all sides' is an exaggeration. He was certainly popular with the Nationalists and with some Southern Unionists, but he was detested by the Ulster Unionists. Within Dublin Castle, he was respected by many of his colleagues for his ability and energy, though many disliked him for just these reasons, as we have seen, and some of the staunch Unionists in senior positions in the Castle threatened to resign if he was not replaced. Henry Lucy, The Balfourian Parliament 1900-1905(1906), pp 393-4; Maurice Brett, Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher (1934), vol. II, p.76.

80. H.C. Debates, 4th series, vol. 144, 647-8 (6 April 1905). This explanation was given in reply to a question from Mr Sloan, an Ulster Unionist. Long drew up an alternative reply which specifically revoked MacDonnell's conditions of appointment but decided against it as he felt that MacDonnell would resign immediately if it were read. Long also proposed to issue a minute to MacDonnell defining his position: 'It will be of a permanent Head of Department, enjoying the full confidence of its Parliamentary Chief. The position will be analogous to, and will carry with it, the privileges and limitations of the offices such as are held by Sir George Murray, Sir Arthur Godley, and other great permanent Heads of Department of the State, coupled with this additional assurance, rendered requisite by the peculiar conditions of the Irish Government, that in all questions of policy and administration I should, subject to the exigencies of Parliamentary business, consult you, and that in the discharge of Executive functions you would exercise the discretion ordinarily vested in a chief permanent official, subject, of course, to my absolute control'. Memorandum by Long, March 31 1905, P.R.O., Cab. 37/75/55.
Despite his promise to treat MacDonnell with 'complete confidence' and to consult him, Long in practice ignored him as much as possible. This was facilitated by the fact that Long saw his mission as being to keep Ireland out of the news as much as possible. Consolidation rather than innovation was his aim. 'What the country needs now', he wrote soon after his arrival, 'is rest and peace, steady quiet but firm administration, wholesome food and drink, she has had too much quack medicine lately'. It was also facilitated by the fact that the controversy had taken its toll on MacDonnell's health, and for much of 1905 he was on sick leave.

Long was appointed to placate the Ulster Unionists, as he was well known as a staunch Unionist. Their hostility, however, did not abate. Instead they resolved not to support the Government in any votes on the administration of Ireland until MacDonnell was transferred. Without their support the position of the Government was made even more shaky. As a result, most of Long's time was spent trying to regain their allegiance.

MacDonnell and the Liberals

Things took a turn for the better for MacDonnell when the long awaited general election brought the Liberals back to power at the end of 1905. At the end of 1904, when MacDonnell was considering resigning his reversion to the seat on the India Council, Lord Dudley had approached Asquith on his

81. Long to Sandars, 15 Mar. 1905, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49776.
82. Balfour thought his appointment would give 'great satisfaction' to the Orangemen. Draft note to Sandars, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49763. The other reason for Long's appointment was that there was no one else available and willing to go.
83. Memorandum by Long, 28 Apr. 1905, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add. MS 49776, ff 56-67; The Times, 31 March 1905.
84. The RIC was strengthened; there was a clamp-down on boycotting and sales under the Land Act were allowed to slow down to a trickle. Annual Register, 1905, p.93, R. Clifford, 'Long of Wraxhall', The Johns Hopkins University Ph.D., 1970, p.93.
behalf asking whether he would be retained if the Liberals returned to power. Asquith, and Lord Spencer and Campbell Bannerman when they were consulted, would not make any promises but they did go so far as to say that there would be the 'strongest predisposition to retain the benefit of Sir Antony MacDonnell's continued service in Ireland. And if for any reason such an arrangement proved to be unworkable, his claims to a place on the India Council would hardly be overlooked'. Armed with this reassurance, MacDonnell decided to remain in Ireland. The return of the Liberals would therefore have been doubly welcome to him. His views were closer to those of James Bryce, the new Chief Secretary, than to those of any of the other Chief Secretaries he served. In particular, both believed in an independent administration. Also, devolution appealed to the Liberals because it was a way of relieving the pressure from the Irish Parliamentary Party for immediate Home Rule. It was no surprise then when MacDonnell's devolution scheme was revived.

Little more than a month after Bryce's appointment, MacDonnell had an outline of a scheme ready for him. It was little different from that of 1904. An Irish Council was to be set up to introduce a measure of popular control over Irish departments. The departments were to remain largely untouched except for the creation of a Department of Education and the Irish Government was to be given a limited control over Irish expenditure.

85. Asquith to Campbell Bannerman 1 and 6 Dec. 1904, Asquith to Dudley 6 Dec. 1904, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, ff 231-40. MacDonnell and Bryce did cross swords occasionally. See for instance A.C. Hepburn, 'The Irish Council Bill and the Fall of Sir Antony MacDonnell', I.H.S., XVII, No. 68 (Sept. 1971), 479. However, generally Bryce found it 'a pleasure to work with so able and keen a mind'. He later declared that he had never met anyone with a 'more sincere devotion to Ireland or a higher sense of public duty'. Bryce to Alice Stopford Green, 5 and 6 May 1907, Alice Stopford Green Papers, N.L.I., MS 15070 (3).

86. 3 Feb. 1906, MacDonnell Papers, Bodl., MS Eng. hist. c 354. The best account of the formulation of the Irish Council Bill during 1906-7 is A.C. Hepburn's 'The Irish Council Bill and the Fall of Sir Antony MacDonnell', I.H.S., XVII, No. 68, (Sept. 1971) 470-99. See also
One interesting feature of the scheme was that MacDonnell proposed that the Under Secretary would be an *ex officio* member of the Irish Council and of the various committees through which the Council was to oversee the government of Ireland. To outflank any criticism of this proposal, he promised that if the scheme was carried he would resign. He urged that the fact of the Under Secretary being a permanent civil servant should not stand in the way of his taking his place on a political Council:

Formerly the Irish Under Secretary was eligible for Parliament and his duties do really differentiate him from the other Under Secretaries of State. Owing to the absence of the Chief Secretary during the Sessions of Parliament the Irish Under Secretary is more of an Administrator than any other Under Secretary of State.  

I have already referred to the Irish Council bill in another context. It is worth discussing in greater detail for what it shows about MacDonnell's position.

Though he had assured John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, that his scheme would go much further than was proposed in 1904 and though he had given William O'Brien the same impression, MacDonnell's main concern in drafting the scheme was to ensure that it remain a measure for increasing administrative efficiency and not be turned into an overtly political vehicle. At the same time, he was genuinely confident that his scheme would transform Irish administration. The combination of unusual secrecy while the

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87. MacDonnell to Bryce, 3 Feb. 1906; MacDonnell Papers, Bodl., MS Eng. hist. c 354.
88. See Chapter 2.
89. MacDonnell discussed the scheme with Redmond in December 1905 and with O'Brien in August 1906, but he did not go into details. He managed to reassure both of them but only, Bryce feared, by misleading them. 'Note of an interview with Sir A. MacD.', n.d., Redmond Papers, N.L.I., MS 15203; MacDonnell to Bryce, 9 Aug. 1906, Bryce Papers, N.L.I., MS 11013; Bryce to MacDonnell, 13 Aug. 1906, Bodl., MacDonnell Papers, MS Eng. hist. c 350, f.27.
scheme was being drafted and the publicly and privately expressed optimism that a new day was dawning in Irish government only served to create a climate which ultimately helped to wreck his scheme. 90

MacDonnell and the Nationalist leaders interpreted the role of the proposed council differently. He was anxious to create a non-political body owing as little as possible to the existing division of parties: in John Dillon's words, 'that favourite abstraction of amateur solvers of the Irish problem, non-political businessmen'. 91 On the other hand, Redmond and Dillon were opposed to anything of the sort, not just, as William O'Brien suggested, because it might leave the existing nationalist M.P.'s high and dry, but, more important, because they felt that the political nature of the Council should be emphasised so as to suggest Home Rule. 92

The scheme, as drawn up by MacDonnell and approved by Bryce, provided for an Executive Council of thirty members 'to advise and assist the government of Ireland'. One third of the membership was to be nominated and the remainder elected indirectly by the local authorities. The Council, presided over by the Lord Lieutenant, would be responsible for the control of a number of Irish boards. When the Irish Party leaders were consulted, they demanded that the Council should be much larger, with all Irish M.P.'s being members. Bryce and MacDonnell eventually agreed to direct elections of two thirds of the members of the Council on the Parliamentary franchise but failed to reach agreement on its size and composition. 93

90. The Times, 3 Aug. 1906.
91. Hepburn, op. cit., p.478.
92. O'Brien.
93. Hepburn, op. cit., pp 476-77. Interestingly, MacDonnell threatened to resign when he was excluded from a meeting with Redmond, but Bryce assured him that he enjoyed his full confidence. Ibid., and 'MacDonnell's Position', a note in Bryce's hand, 8 Oct. 1906, N.L.I., Bryce Papers, MS 11014.
The impasse continued until Bryce was appointed British Ambassador in Washington and was replaced by Augustine Birrell. MacDonnell was able to wield much less influence with Birrell than he had with Bryce. The Nationalists were convinced that MacDonnell had been responsible for the limited nature of the proposals and viewed with alarm a rumour that he was to succeed Bryce. When Birrell was appointed, Campbell Bannerman promised them that he would keep MacDonnell in line, so they had good reason to be more optimistic about the new proposals which were to be drawn up. In the last months of Bryce's term, they had begun to use their influence with senior Liberals to appeal directly to Cabinet rather than dealing with the Irish Executive. One of Birrell's first jobs was to try to placate them. Another outcome of their pressure was an increasing involvement by the Cabinet in the framing of the new scheme. Both these developments increased the isolation of MacDonnell.

Birrell was inclined to side with the leaders of the Irish Parliamentary Party on the question of the powers and composition of the Irish Council. The Cabinet committee, which considered the scheme in February 1907, also moved towards this position, under the influence of John Morley. Much to MacDonnell's dismay, the committee decided to agree to the suggestion of a very large Council with direct control over the Irish departments. Unable to get his views across through Birrell, MacDonnell reverted to his practice of 1904-5 of lobbying the Lord Lieutenant and senior members of the Government. Lord Aberdeen, Lord Ripon and Lord Grey were all approached with some success.

95. See Ch. 2 and Hepburn, op. cit., 479.
96. Ibid., MacDonnell favoured an element of popular control but was adamant that the changes should not 'disturb the Departmental Administration' or weaken the responsibility of the departmental heads. MacDonnell to Ripon, 18 Apr. 1907, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, f.16.
97. Hepburn, op. cit., 482-7; MacDonnell to Ripon 18 and 24 Apr. 1907, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 180-2.
It was finally decided that Birrell and MacDonnell should prepare memoranda for Cabinet. Birrell's case boiled down to the argument that it was impossible to proceed without the agreement of the Irish Parliamentary Party whereas MacDonnell argued that to meet their demands would ensure the failure of the scheme. Later when MacDonnell threatened to resign because Birrell was ignoring his views, he was again allowed to present a memorandum to Cabinet.

The final bill enabled MacDonnell to save sufficient face to stay on for the moment. Nevertheless, it went a long way beyond what he had originally envisaged. The proposed Council was to be 107 strong, 82 of whom were to be elected on the local government franchise. The ultimate control of government was to rest with the Lord Lieutenant and not with the Council.

It seems clear that Birrell, no doubt with the fate of his Education Bill of 1906 in mind, was convinced from early on that no bill, whatever its content, was likely to pass the House of Lords. Therefore he saw no reason not to make it as acceptable to the Irish Party as possible. Even some members of the Irish Party were well aware of the unlikelihood of the bill ever passing. Thus a lot of the negotiations amounted to nothing more than political maneuvering. MacDonnell, on the other hand, believed that a bill could be passed. He considered the whole devolution idea his own creation and stayed on as Under Secretary only to see it passed into law. To have any hope of this, it had to be at best a mild measure of reform. In the event, it fell between two stools.

98. MacDonnell's memorandum entitled 'Irish Council' was prepared on 28 February and printed for Cabinet on 2 March (Cab. 37/87/23). Birrell's was prepared on 5 March (Cab. 37/87/26).


100. Hepburn, op. cit., 486-7.

101. Birrell told the Cabinet this in early March though he was probably aware of it much earlier. P.R.O., Cab. 37/87/26.

It was rejected by the Nationalists and withdrawn. Thus, neither the needs of the political nor the administrative reformers were met. From then on, attention turned to Home Rule per se. Administrative reform was, in MacDonnell's words, postponed until the Greek Kalends.103

The respective positions of MacDonnell and Birrell and the uneasy relationship which existed between them were well summed up by Birrell in a letter to Bryce. It is worth quoting at length as it reveals a good deal about both men. Birrell is his usual flippant and slightly condescending self but he does put his finger on two of MacDonnell's main characteristics: a disdain for (if not ignorance of) politics which is no doubt attributable to his Indian career, and a dogged persistence, even self-righteousness, which led to his being seen by some people as an awkward nuisance. Birrell wrote

My life has been one long controversy and perhaps my main antagonist has been our excellent friend and 'colleague' (Wo is me!) Sir A.M. late of Benghal. We looked at the same problem from opposite ends. I may have attached too much importance to the House of Commons. He ignored it entirely and with the obstinacy of ten thousand mules could only be drawn back with oaths from each position that he assumed. He is such a good fellow that we never quarrelled, but anything more irritating and exhausting I could never have imagined. I daresay he still believes that if we had brought in a snug little advisory Anglo Indian Parlour Council of 50 members nominated by the County Councils it would now be very nearly the law of the land. Whereas every member of the House of Commons knows that such a Bill would have been received with shouts of derision and would never have been read a first time. Sir A.M. still believes that the Moderates in Ireland who drink tea in the Phoenix Park are capable of compelling the Nationalists in the House to accept 'Moderate' Measures. No bigger delusion ever got hold of a man. Not even an Anglo Indian.104

103. See, for example, Bryce to Alice Stopford Green, 23 May 1907, N.L.I., Alice Stopford Green Papers, MS 15070 (3). Bryce had dissuaded MacDonnell from resigning in 1906 because he still believed that they might succeed in passing the measure. And even after the failure of the Council Bill in 1907, MacDonnell insisted that the Government should try again. England would not give Home Rule 'within a period that can be foreseen'; she would give administrative and financial devolution. To raise the question would postpone administrative reform 'to the Greek Kalends'. MacDonnell to Birrell, Sept. 1907, copy in Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 202-3.

Next to the solution of the land question and administrative reform, the solution of the Irish University Question had been the main plank of MacDonnell's programme when he came to Ireland. Birrell who came to Ireland from the English Board of Education also saw this as an area where major reform could take place without provoking too much controversy. A close partnership between the two might have been predicted on the issue: the opposite was in fact the case. Under Secretary and Chief Secretary differed radically on the solution to be adopted and Birrell's successful scheme emerged in spite of, rather than with the cooperation of, MacDonnell.

As in the case of the Irish Council Bill, the difference between Birrell and MacDonnell was between what was seen as politically feasible and what was seen as objectively desirable. Since 1903, MacDonnell had been working on possible solutions to the University Question. In 1906, he helped Bryce to formulate a scheme which was acceptable to the Catholic Hierarchy. It involved the creation within the University of Dublin of a second college alongside Trinity College which would cater for Roman Catholics. The advantage of this 'solution' was that it avoided the creation of an avowedly Catholic University and was therefore acceptable to (Nonconformist) opinion in England and accorded with current educational principles. Its one major drawback was that it involved

confirmed in Henry Robinson, *Memories*, p. 143. MacDonnell's view of Birrell was no more kind than Birrell's of him. He apparently found Birrell a difficult and irritating person to deal with. Francis Mowatt of the Treasury, in trying to persuade MacDonnell not to resign in frustration, ventured the opinion that this was a result of want of tact not of good will. He then added what might have constituted the official civil service response to Birrell's criticism of MacDonnell: 'You must recollect that, until his [Birrell's] appointment last year, he had never had any work as an administrator, and had no knowledge or experience in the difficult work of working with other men for a common object... Initial confidence, and a good fellowship are not learned in writing "obiter dicta" or articles for Reviews, but in a long apprenticeship of Public Administration work. You and I most often, in dealing with Ministers, have had to console ourselves with the prayer "Father forgive them. They know not what they do". Mowatt to MacDonnell, 27 May 1907, MacDonnell Papers, Bodl., c 351, ff 82-5.

interfering with the independent status of Trinity College. Trinity enjoyed a considerable international reputation and wielded a good deal of influence with British Universities and with many Unionist politicians. From the outset, it actively opposed the scheme. Bryce had originally thought that the opposition of Trinity would be insurmountable. MacDonnell persuaded him that though Trinity could make 'a great noise', it would only be a noise.

Birrell was quick to see that the opposition of Trinity made Bryce's scheme unlikely to pass the House of Lords. Conversely, a scheme Trinity would support would stand a much greater chance of success. He decided that the Non-Conformist conscience was a much less formidable obstacle than the House of Lords. Much to MacDonnell's dismay, he shelved Bryce's scheme and produced his own which was a variation of one which Bryce and MacDonnell had earlier rejected out of hand. It proposed the creation of two new Universities, one in Belfast and the other a federal University composed of the existing colleges at Cork and Galway and a new college to be created in Dublin. Officially the new Universities were to be non-denominational but it was clear that one would be largely Presbyterian while the other would be a de facto Catholic University. MacDonnell tried to convince him that he was overestimating the importance of 'Trinity College and its clientele' and insisted that 'whether judged by Academic or Political tests', Bryce's advice was the best, but to no avail.

106 'University Education in Ireland', Memorandum by Birrell, 19 Nov. 1907, p. 10, P.R.O. Cab. 37/90/99. Birrell was deluged with resolutions from virtually all the Universities in England and Wales warning against any interference with Trinity. During 1906, a number of Professors and Fellows at Trinity College Dublin drew up a compromise scheme. Those involved included Culverwell, the Professor of Education and W. Starkie, an ex-Fellow and member of the Academic Council who was then Resident Commissioner of National Education. 24 July 1906, MacDonnell Papers, Bodl., MS Eng. hist. c. 367, f. 67-8.

107 MacDonnell to Birrell, Sept. 1907, Copy in Ripon Papers, B.L., Add MS 43542, ff 203-7.
Birrell's official reason for jettisoning Bryce's scheme was that the 'so-called agreement' to it by the Catholic Hierarchy and the Presbyterians was 'quite imaginary'. This was untrue. Bryce had announced his scheme prematurely because he was about to leave Ireland and some details remained to be settled. However both the Catholic Hierarchy and the Presbyterian Church were willing, albeit reluctantly, to settle for what was offered though they would have preferred, but did not expect to get, what Birrell gave them in 1908. Birrell's real motive was his desire to produce a scheme which, by being acceptable to Trinity College (and at the same time more than satisfying the Nationalists), would pass both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. 108

Most of the behind the scenes negotiations which preceded the formulation of Bryce's scheme were done by MacDonnell. He was in regular communication with leading Ulster Presbyterians, with members of the Catholic Hierarchy and, less frequently, with Trinity College. 109 His communications with Archbishop Walsh were particularly important. From the beginning, Walsh left no doubt that the Hierarchy would agree, if necessary, to an expanded University of Dublin. He repeatedly and convincingly reassured MacDonnell about this. 110 There was opposition to the idea among the bishops but Walsh was confident

108. Ibid.; 'University Education in Ireland', Memorandum by Birrell, 19 Nov. 1907, p.10, P.R.O., Cab. 37/90/99. This memorandum gives Birrell's 'official' view of the issue. He is slightly more frank in his memoirs, which, given their otherwise bland nature, is rather unusual. Birrell, op. cit., pp 200-1. Bryce's views on the possible solutions are given in a memorandum with the same title as Birrell's and dated 17 Dec. 1906, P.R.O., Cab. 37/85/99.

109. See, for example, Ian Hamilton, President, Queen's College Belfast, to MacDonnell, 12 Nov. 1903; J. MacDermott, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, to MacDonnell, 16 Jan. 1904; Archbishop Walsh to MacDonnell, 28 Oct. 1903 and MacDonnell to Culverwell, Professor of Education at T.C.D., 6 Aug. 1906; MacDonnell Papers, Bodl., MSS Eng. hist., c. 351, ff 144-5 and c 354, f. 29 respectively.

110. See, for example, Walsh to MacDonnell, 28 Oct. 1903 and 20 Oct. 1906, MacDonnell Papers, Bodl., MS Eng. hist. c 351, ff 144-5 and 151-3.
that it would prove insignificant. In fact, he reported that Bryce's statement, in announcing his scheme, that it had the agreement of the bishops, had not provoked 'a whisper of questioning in any quarter'. Later he again assured MacDonnell that he could take it that 'there never was as clear a case of unanimity in Ireland outside of T.C.D., coupled with an outspoken determination to suppress all individual divergences of personal views as to details for the sake of combination in support of the splendid scheme now before us'.

Walsh's enthusiasm may have had something to do with the vindictive pleasure he got from the prospect of Trinity College having its wings clipped. His colleagues would not have been so fulsome in their praise of the scheme. But they would accept it. MacDonnell could not but be horrified, therefore, when the new Chief Secretary set about persuading his Cabinet colleagues that the agreement was 'quite imaginary'. Indeed in the very same paragraph, Birrell accepted that there was agreement but dismissed it as 'reluctant'. Apart from Walsh, he said, the bishops were lacking in 'affection' for the scheme. He had been 'given to understand in various indirect ways' that, again with the exception of Walsh, 'nobody of any importance whatsoever in Ireland outside the Castle has, or ever had, any feeling in favour of the scheme' [my emphasis].

This was a clear criticism of MacDonnell and it is again indicative of the cool relations between the two. MacDonnell was not called on to handle the main negotiations for Birrell's scheme. Birrell himself made direct contact

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111. Ibid., 4 Feb. 1907, ff 154-7.

112. Ibid., 13 Feb. 1907, ff 158-9. It is true that Walsh was more committed to the scheme than his colleagues but Birrell's suggestion that he stood alone is not correct. At the end of 1903, the bishops appointed a committee of four archbishops to handle the issue. This committee was in broad agreement with Walsh at that stage and it is unlikely that there was any major change by 1907. Birrell's 'University Education in Ireland' memorandum, 19 Nov. 1907, P.R.O., Cab. 37/90/99; Walsh to MacDonnell, 28 Oct. 1903, MacDonnell Papers, Bodl., MS Eng. hist. c 351, ff 144-5.
with the parties concerned including various bishops and the Provost of Trinity College. The Provost was assured from the beginning that Trinity would be untouched. The success of Birrell's scheme was guaranteed by his taking the line of least resistance in its formulation.

The whole affair served to increase MacDonnell's isolation still further. There was no area, it seemed, where both Chief and Under Secretary could work amicably together. Another instance of this was their respective attitudes to the strong recrudescence of cattle driving which occurred in the west of Ireland during 1907. MacDonnell, who prepared a memorandum for Cabinet on the situation, strongly urged on several occasions that it should be firmly dealt with by strengthening the police and by prosecuting those who incited such activities, rather than just those actively involved. As the 'inciters' included some Irish Parliamentary Party M.P.'s, Birrell's response was what might have been expected. He accepted the force of what MacDonnell said but he feared the consequences. He was 'not disposed to drop half the Irish Party into prison during the vacation'. What MacDonnell proposed was, he said, a 'well-nigh impossible task for a Liberal Minister, who finds himself thwarted for party purposes by the House of Lords'.

MacDonnell was horrified at this line of thinking and begged him to reconsider. He wrote

I submit to you that no matter what may be the existing or what may have been the antecedent conditions, the maintenance of order is the primary duty of a Liberal or any Government. Everyone must admit that existing conditions make the maintenance of order in Ireland difficult, but no day passes without proving to me how

greatly the existence of disorder handicaps our best laid plans for
doing good. There should, of course, be perspective in Administra-
tion, and small evils must often be tolerated if, by tolerating them,
greater evils can be avoided. But the path of safety here is a
narrow one.

MacDonnell was here referring only to the need to suppress cattle
driving. His words could, however, serve as a commentary on Birrell's whole
career in Ireland.\(^{115}\)

Birrell was at this time on holiday in St. Moritz. MacDonnell felt
strongly enough about the situation to consult the Lord Lieutenant, Lord
Aberdeen. They then contacted the Prime Minister seeking action on the lines
already suggested by MacDonnell. But Campbell Bannerman and Asquith refused
to be rushed into action in Birrell's absence. Furthermore they disapproved
of MacDonnell's suggested action against the 'inciters' on its merits. When
Birrell returned, he confirmed the conclusions reached by Campbell Bannerman
and Asquith.\(^{116}\)

Despite all this, MacDonnell was never really an old fashioned law-and-
order man.\(^{117}\) His proddings for firm action were accompanied by acknowledge-
ments that the only solution to cattle driving was relief of congestion. He
constantly advocated that the Government should make clear its intention of
tackling the problem. He was an active member of the Dudley Commission on
Congestion in Ireland, but, interestingly enough, even on this issue, his
approach was different from many of his colleagues.

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115. MacDonnell to Birrell, Sept. 1907. Copy in Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS
43542, ff 203-7.

116. Asquith to Campbell Bannerman, 10 Sept. 1907, Campbell Bannerman Papers,
B.L. Add. MS 41210, f. 293. The police had already been strengthened
and the Irish Law Officers were against further action.

117. Ironically, the abandonment of the Peace Preservation Act in 1906, which
facilitated the arming of the Volunteers later, was attributed to his
influence. However, this was largely a 'political' decision and there
is some evidence to suggest that MacDonnell opposed it. Robinson,
Memories, p. 219; Royal Commission on the Rebellion: Evidence, p.93
[Cd 831111], H.C. 1916, XI.
The Dudley Commission, in June 1908, unanimously recommended the enlargement of small holdings in the west of Ireland to relieve congestion. This was to be achieved by the compulsory purchase of both tenanted and un-tenanted land where necessary. But on the machinery by which recommendations should be implemented, there was a major difference of opinion between MacDonnell and his fellow Commissioners. The majority proposed entrusting the work to the Congested Districts Board which would be reconstructed, given extra funds and have its area of operation more than doubled to include one third of Ireland.

The suggestion to hand over to a non-Parliamentary department more than one third the area of Ireland, a revenue of £360,000 a year and wide powers of compulsory purchase was too much for MacDonnell. In a separate report, he boldly proposed the abolition of the Congested Districts Board and the transfer of its functions to the Department of Agriculture and the Estates Commissioners. He saw the Department of Agriculture as administratively and politically preferable to the Congested Districts Board because it combined an element of popular control with accountability to Parliament through its Vice President and to the Treasury through its Vote.

In reporting to Cabinet on the Commission's report, Birrell admitted the strength of MacDonnell's case. But, as in the cases of the Irish Council Bill and the University Question, there were overriding political considerations

118. Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Report and Appendices [Cds 3266-7] H.C. 1908,XXXII; Under the chairmanship of Lord Dudley, the ex-Lord Lieutenant, the other members of the Commission were Sir John Colomb, an Irish Unionist landlord, Walter Kavanagh, a more moderate Irish Unionist, Bishop O'Donnell of Raphoe, Conor O'Kelly, Nationalist M.P. for North Mayo, Francis Mowatt from the Treasury, Annan Bryce, Angus Sutherland and MacDonnell. The papers of the Commission which are largely unsorted and 'preserved' in brown paper parcels in the S.P.O. in Dublin contain a wealth of material on social and economic conditions in Ireland at the turn of the century. For a more detailed description of the work of the Congested Districts Board, see Chapter 6.
involved. The Congested Districts Board, unlike the other Irish boards and departments, was popular with the Nationalists (except William O'Brien). It numbered a priest and a bishop among its members and had become 'a real national institution'. An attempt to abolish it would provoke 'a great fight in Parliament' and a 'furious controversy'. Whatever the merits of MacDonnell's proposals, Birrell was not willing to risk that.  

Failing abolition, MacDonnell recommended a reconstructed Congested Districts Board with fewer members and powers and less money than envisaged by his colleagues. The existing Board had eleven members: three *ex officio* and eight nominated by the Crown. The majority recommended that this be increased to twenty, comprising four *ex officio*, three permanent (civil servants), four nominated and nine elected by the County Councils of the districts concerned. MacDonnell strongly opposed the idea of elected members and favoured keeping the Board as small as possible. He suggested that it remain as it was numerically except that one of the *ex officio* members be replaced by a permanent member. Birrell was initially attracted to the idea of having some elected members and thought four would be a suitable compromise. However, after some consideration by a Cabinet committee, the idea of elected members was rejected. The Board finally set up had fourteen members: three *ex officio*, nine nominated and two permanent.  

More was involved in this matter than an academic preference for one type of Board or other. There were at the time three separate Government bodies  

120. Ibid., p.4; Micks, *The Congested Districts Board*, p.121; 'Questions raised by the Dudley Report', memorandum by Birrell, 28 Nov. 1908, and 'Irish Land Bill: Heads of Clauses to make further provision for the Relief of Congestion in Ireland', memorandum by Birrell, n.d. (late 1908), P.R.O., Cab. 37/95/130 and 136 respectively.
dealing with the general problems of agriculture in Ireland. Their activities continually overlapped. The Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture were both concerned with improving farming methods, introducing machinery and so on. And the Congested Districts Board and the Estates Commissioners were competing with each other to purchase land, both using State credit. It was now proposed to give powers of compulsory purchase to the Congested Districts Board which with its increased endowment and larger membership would be more independent than ever of Dublin Castle.

MacDonnell proposed that, if the Board was not to be abolished, at least its agricultural functions which were not related to land purchase should be transferred to the Department of Agriculture. He was willing to agree to an increased endowment, but only from £86,000 to £150,000. And, as regards land purchase, the actual purchase, voluntary or compulsory, should, he suggested, be carried out by the Estates Commissioners on behalf of the Board. The final decision was a compromise between the two sets of proposals. The Board's agricultural functions were transferred to the Department of Agriculture; its endowment was increased to £231,000; and exclusive powers of purchase in the Congested Districts were given to the Board and not to the Estates Commissioners. If they needed to buy land, they had to get permission from the Congested Districts Board.\textsuperscript{121}

Though MacDonnell influenced the shape of the Birrell Land Act of 1909 which implemented these changes, by the time the bill was being drafted, he was no longer Under Secretary. With the rejection of the Irish Council Bill by the Irish Parliamentary Party his days as Under Secretary were numbered. He realised that because of Birrell's second thoughts, a settlement of the University Question would not be achieved until 1908 at the earliest. He also

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
realised that he would not play a major role in framing it. In May 1907, he told Birrell that he wished to resign if the Council Bill was lost but he offered to stay on until the end of the session. He told Lord Ripon a few days later that of his three priorities when he came to Ireland - land reform, administrative reform and solving the University problem - he had failed in all but the first. He continued:

Dublin Castle and its routine of police work and of squalid quarrels with the Treasury has no attractions for me, and I therefore have asked to be relieved.

In September, he went to America for a month. On his return, he again indicated his desire to resign, but he was again persuaded to stay on temporarily. By now it was public knowledge that Birrell did not trust him and did not consult him on some major questions of policy. Finally, in May 1908, in answer to a question in Parliament, Birrell publicly acknowledged that MacDonnell wished to retire and intimated that he had been persuaded to remain until the end of July to enable him to have 'the great benefit of his advice' in the consideration of the Dudley Commission Report. For all his public display of appreciation, there is no doubt that Birrell was more than happy when the end of July came.

Even though he had long since resigned his reversion to the seat on the India Council, MacDonnell still had hopes of returning to the Council. At the end of 1906, Bryce had tried to persuade John Morley, the Secretary of State for India, to promise him a seat. Morley not only refused, he also piloted a


123. Bryce to Alice Stopford Green, 23 May and 5 Aug. 1907, Alice Stopford Green Papers, N.L.I., MS 15,070(3).

new bill through Parliament, one of the clauses of which he knew would have the effect of excluding MacDonnell permanently. Morley was intent on not having MacDonnell back. He resented the tendency to use the India Council as an asylum for retiring civil servants. 125

This presented the Government with a problem which Asquith settled by offering MacDonnell a peerage, which he gratefully accepted. 126

It might have been expected that that would be the end of the tired and dispirited MacDonnell's public career. In fact, he used his seat in the House of Lords to continue to expound the themes which had dominated his Under Secretaryship. 127

He also served on a number of committees which enabled him to put his experience to good use. He took a part in an India Office inquiry into the system of government in India and, at Asquith's request, was chairman of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service from 1912 to 1914. Ironically, part of the Commission's time was occupied in examining the civil service in Ireland, a subject in which few of the witnesses could have been more expert than MacDonnell himself. 128 In 1917, he was a member of the Irish Convention and in 1922 he was offered and declined a seat in the Free State Senate. 129

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125. Morley to Ponsonby, 1 Aug. 1907. Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41223, ff 215-6. Morley told Ponsonby that the Prime Minister could if he wished appoint MacDonnell Secretary of State but that as long as he (Morley) was Secretary of State, MacDonnell would never have a seat on the India Council. MacDonnell admitted that he regretted losing the money and the 'congenial employment'. He was very bitter about Morley's actions. MacDonnell to Ripon, 22 Aug., 14 and 20 Sept. 1907. Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43542, ff 197-202.

126. Asquith to MacDonnell, 11 June 1908, MacDonnell Papers, Bodl., MS Eng. hist. c 350, ff 5-6. Asquith told him that the peerage was 'a well deserved tribute' to his 'long and varied services to the Crown'.

127. For instance, he urged that firmer action be taken against the instigators of cattle driving, H.L. Deb., 4th Series, Vol. 194 (21 Oct. 1908), 1092.


The main lesson drawn from the MacDonnell affair, even by the Liberals, was that an independent Under Secretary could be a serious liability. It is arguable that though MacDonnell survived the onslaught on his position the Under Secretaryship never quite recovered. There was certainly a tendency from then on to rely on safe unspectacular appointments. James Dougherty, MacDonnell's successor, was a classic example.

Sir James Dougherty had been a Presbyterian minister, Professor of Logic at Magee College, Derry, and unsuccessful Liberal candidate for Derry City when, in 1895, he was appointed Assistant Under Secretary in place of Sir William Kaye. This unusual transition was arranged by John Morley who desired to place more Liberals and Home Rulers in senior positions in the Irish Administration. Dougherty's subsequent career as Assistant Under Secretary was uneventful. His background as a teacher and as an Ulster Presbyterian made him a useful adviser and negotiator when efforts were made by both the Tories and Liberals to solve the University Question; and he was a keen supporter of MacDonnell's devolution schemes. Indeed when the Irish Council Bill was being prepared he proved himself more perceptive than most by warning the Chief Secretary that the priests might oppose the bill because of its proposals for a Department of Education. MacDonnell, John Dillon and Stephen Gwynn when consulted all doubted that the priests would oppose the bill; but

when the bill was ultimately rejected it was said that the attitude of the priests had been decisive. Bryce complained that he had been assured all along that the priests would not pose any threat.  

For all that, Dougherty was never an influential adviser. Even when, in 1905, he was Acting Under Secretary in the absence of MacDonnell, he was not relied upon by the Chief Secretary. Dougherty's reputation, insofar as he had one at all, was as a man who was all the things which Antony MacDonnell was not. Lord Aberdeen recommended him as 'a man of much good sense and caution'. These or similar epithets were the ones always used to describe Dougherty. Henry Robinson thought him 'a quiet, patient man, inimical to none'. Maurice Headlam, who met him for the first time in 1912, recorded in his diary that he was 'dignified' and 'quiet' with a 'reputation of being safe'. He thought that he was not a 'strong man' but 'kindly and, apparently, honest'.

Birrell had been long enough Chief Secretary to be well aware of Dougherty's strengths and weaknesses and it seems safe to assume that it was partly because rather than in spite of his unspectacular qualities that he was chosen. He could be relied on to run the Chief Secretary's Office efficiently. In normal times, little else would be demanded of him. Birrell had his own ideas as to policy and if he needed advice he was as likely to look to the Cabinet or to his contacts in the Irish Parliamentary Party as to his unassuming Under Secretary. Within these limits, Birrell and Dougherty

2. Dougherty to Bryce, 9 Nov. 1906, Bodl., Uncatalogued Bryce Papers 46; Bryce to Alice Stopford Green, 23 May 1907, M.L.I., MS 15070 (3). For Dougherty and the University Question, see, for example, Dougherty to Bryce, 31 Jan. 1907, Bodl., Uncatalogued Bryce Papers 44.


4. Aberdeen to Campbell Bannerman, 1 Sept. 1907, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, ff 118-21. Headlam, Reminiscences, p.34. Antony MacDonnell thought that after him Birrell would prefer an Under Secretary 'more of his way of thinking, and more plastic in his mind...'. MacDonnell to Ripon, 4 June 1907, Ripon Papers, B.L., Add. MS 43524, ff 193-4.
worked reasonably well together, especially in the early years which saw the passing of the University Act (Ireland) and the Evicted Tenants Act, both in 1908, and the Land Act of 1909. All three owed something to Dougherty's work behind the scenes.

Dougherty also had some success in dealing with the labour troubles in Dublin at the time. A small Carters' strike in 1908 and a more serious shipping strike in 1911 were settled after the direct intervention of the Under Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant. The 1913 tramways strike was less susceptible to negotiation but again Aberdeen and Dougherty were active. Both displayed a good deal of common sense, a commodity noticeably lacking in some quarters. Applications to employ the military in aid of the police were 'steadfastly refused', except on one occasion when great care was taken to ensure that the use of the troops did not act as an incendiary. Whether Dougherty's attitude sprang from a conscious commitment to avoiding the use of the power of the State in support of the employers or whether it was simply a product of his renowned caution, the Castle acted more as an arbiter than as a patron of one side or the other in these disputes. For its pains it was attacked by both. The role of the police on the streets (which was not subject to any real control by the Castle) tended to confirm the strikers' inbuilt suspicions; and the fact that the Under Secretary received deputations led by the strikers' leader, James Larkin, and negotiated directly with them, was enough to have Dougherty and the whole Executive branded as Larkin sympathisers. This accusation was strengthened by the Castle's refusal to use the troops, by its release of Larkin when he was sentenced to six months jail for sedition, and, most of all, by its setting up an inquiry in January 1914 into the behaviour of the police in disturbances the previous September. The inquiry, which was agreed to under pressure from Dublin Corporation and the British Labour Party, exonerated the police as a whole, but the affair was cited as evidence of the Castle's
Dougherty's 'quietness' and 'caution' may have had something to do with his age. Of the nine Under Secretaries in my period, he was easily the oldest. At sixty four, he was within one year of retiring age when he was appointed, which makes Birrell's choice of him and his retention until 1914, when he was seventy, all the more strange. He was lucky enough to have retired before the growth of Sinn Fein culminated in the 1916 Rising. Nevertheless, in the volatile atmosphere of 1912-14 there was something to be said for a more active Under Secretary.

The Under Secretary did not play a very large role in the history of these three years. The main work of drawing up the Home Rule Bill was done, as I have mentioned, by a Cabinet committee under the supervision of Asquith rather than Birrell. The main contribution of the Castle was to report on the state of the country, Ulster in particular. All the police reports flowed through the Under Secretary, of course, and he was periodically called on to give his opinion of the likelihood of trouble in Ulster. As an Ulster Presbyterian, added weight may have been given to his views, which were consistently reassuring. He firmly believed that if the Government persisted the opposition of Ulster would come to little or nothing. Initially this view was shared by David Harrel, his fellow Ulsterman and ex-Under Secretary, who was also consulted, but whereas Harrel became gradually convinced of the seriousness of the Ulster Volunteers, Dougherty remained optimistic. His confidence must

5. Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Evidence, pp 87-8, 93, and 103-5. [Cd 8311] H.C. 1916, XI. The inquiry found that a small number of policemen had used 'excessive violence' and had caused 'wilful damage' to tenement buildings. As a result of the finding a large amount of compensation was paid to the Corporation.

6. The average age on appointment was fifty three. Ridgeway was forty three when appointed; Harrel was fifty two; MacDonnell was fifty eight; Nathan was fifty two; Chalmers was fifty eight; Byrne was fifty seven; MacMahon was fifty three; and Anderson was thirty eight.

have influenced Birrell for a time at least, but he too came round to Harrel's view. Even a tour of Ulster with Birrell failed to persuade Dougherty to change his opinion.  

Apart from Dougherty's complacency concerning Ulster, the last months of his Under Secretaryship were marred by the events which followed the Howth gun-running. While the broad outline of what happened is well known, there is still some controversy as to where, if anywhere, the blame lay. On Sunday 26 July, following the landing of guns and ammunition at Howth, a large number of Irish Volunteers marched back into Dublin with their newly acquired weapons. They dispersed when challenged by a force of police and military led by the Assistant Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, W.V. Harrel.  

On their way back to barracks, the soldiers were confronted by a stone-throwing crowd. In the confusion which followed, some of the soldiers opened fire killing three and wounding thirty eight.

Birrell, who was in London, on ascertaining from Dougherty and Harrel that the latter had requisitioned the troops on his own responsibility, immediately suspended him. Harrel had telephoned Dougherty at the Under Secretary's Lodge on the Sunday morning telling him of the landing and saying that he would contact the R.I.C. and the military authorities. Dougherty told the subsequent Commission of Inquiry that he had informed Harrel that he would go into Dublin Castle to take control but Harrel had no recollection of this. When he could not make contact with R.I.C. headquarters, Harrel decided to requisition military assistance. At the Castle, Dougherty, having discovered

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8. O'Broin, *The Chief Secretary*, p.68; Birrell to Asquith, 28 Oct. 1913, MS Asq. 38, f.243; Draft Memorandum on Ulster resistance written by Dougherty, J. Christopher Medley Deposit (Birrell Papers), Bodl., c. 300, ff 33-6.


10. The R.I.C. were, of course, armed whereas the D.M.P. were not.
that the military had been called out, consulted the Lord Lieutenant and some
time later sent a message to Harrel advising against any attempt to forcibly
disarm the Volunteers and suggesting that the names of those carrying arms
should be taken instead.\textsuperscript{11}

The Royal Commission exonerated Dougherty from all blame and censured
Harrel. It found that the troops had been illegally requisitioned and that, in
any case, they should not have been called out. As a result of these findings,
Harrel was forced to resign from the civil service.\textsuperscript{12}

On the face of it, it was an open and shut case. However, it was widely
believed in Tory circles that Harrel was being made a scapegoat to protect
James Dougherty and to appease the Irish Party whose cooperation was required
for the Government's Home Rule Amending Bill. The suspicion increased when
Harrel's superior, Sir John Ross of Bladensburg, the Chief Commissioner of
the Dublin Metropolitan Police, resigned in support of his colleague. Ross
strongly approved of Harrel's actions and was particularly annoyed that Harrel
had been suspended before Birrell had even received his report on the affair.\textsuperscript{13}
This, he argued, meant that Harrel could not get a fair hearing at the inquiry,
as the matter had been prejudged.

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{11}] This latter suggestion was used to ridicule Dougherty because of the
obvious impossibility of taking the names of almost a thousand armed men.
\item[\textsuperscript{12}] This account is taken from the evidence at the Royal Commission and the
evidence to the Commission on the Rising. [Cd 8311] H.C. 1916, XI, pp 87-
96.
\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Birrell told the House of Commons on the Monday evening that he had
communicated with Ross to see if he approved Harrel's action, but this
had only been done half an hour previously and the first Ross heard about
it was in the papers on Tuesday. Harrel had been suspended that after-
noon. As it happened, Ross had already sent a minute with Harrel's
detailed report which indicated his support of Harrel's actions. Birrell
claimed it did not convey that impression to him but if it did not, it
should have. It was a rather important point as Ross interpreted
Birrell's statement in the House as an attempt to emphasise the isolation
of Harrel and to insinuate that Ross did not know or approve of what he
did. Birrell should have known by that time that the opposite was the
case. Ibid., and Ross to Birrell, 15 and 19 Aug. 1914 and Ross to
Dougherty (Ross's Minute) 27 July 1914, Balfour Papers, Bodl., Add. MS
49821, ff 71-2, and 75-78.
\end{itemize}
Harrel always maintained, and Ross agreed, that he had in fact power to requisition troops on his own initiative. The Royal Commission found however that the requisition had been illegal. Harrel and Ross replied that the Commission had been a political commission. Lord Shaw, the chairman, was a prominent Liberal and a friend of Dougherty. He led the witnesses who were 'on the side of the Executive' and at one point stopped Dougherty when he seemed about to 'make an admission apparently favourable to Harrel'.

The accusations went on and on and most of them were clearly groundless. Nonetheless, it was true that the political situation at the time, with the negotiations for a compromise over Home Rule poised at a delicate stage and nationalist opinion incensed at the soldiers' actions, seemed to demand one particular verdict. Harrel's suspension had to an extent prejudged the case, or at least set the lines it would take. The role of the Irish Executive was not seriously considered by the Commission beyond establishing the sequence of events. Also, there was in fact some doubt as to whether some of the findings of the Commission had been right in law. The matter was of some importance for, if the actions of the police and military were fundamentally illegal, as the Commission found, those injured in the two clashes were liable to compensation. Some Treasury officials, and, it seems, even some Dublin Castle officials, thought that the matter should be challenged before the courts. There were very good political reasons why this should not be done, and another was added by the outbreak of the War. It was decided that, in the circumstances, it was better if the matter was allowed to drop quietly.


15. Treasury Remembrancer (Headlam) to Treasury, n.d., P.R.O., T 143/3/173-4 & 304. Headlam claimed that Nathan agreed with him that the matter should be reopened as it left the Government open to a spate of compensation claims. Eventually Headlam advised that for the sake of convenience they should pay the 'blackmail'. 
There it rested until after the 1916 Rising when the Royal Commission into that disturbance reopened the affair by taking evidence from both Ross and Harrel. This was their revenge. They argued, convincingly enough to persuade the commissioners, that Harrel's treatment had undermined the position of the police and discouraged action against disorder as it seemed to show that the Government would not support it. This opinion was then incorporated in the report of the commission.  

This may or may not be true. The affair does however point to two weaknesses in Dublin Castle both of which might be blamed partly on the Under Secretary. It is certain that if Dougherty had been consulted by Harrel about calling out the military, as he should have been, he would not have agreed. His handling of the various labour disputes shows this. But when he was informed by Harrel of the landing, he did not give him any instructions one way or the other. Later in the day, when he was informed that the military had been called out, he still did not act immediately or decisively. Instead, he consulted the Lord Lieutenant and only some time later did he send any specific instructions to Harrel. By the time Harrel received them, everything was over. A more forceful Under Secretary might have dominated proceedings from the outset, whether by calling out military assistance or by giving clear instructions as to how the affair was to be handled. In his own uninhibited and extreme way, Maurice Headlam, in a report to the Treasury, put his finger on one of Dougherty's failings:

If he [Harrel] had waited for Sir James' authority he would have saved his position. But he would have had to wait for a long period for any decision, owing to Sir James' constitutional inability to make up his mind...In other words, he took the responsibility on himself - though the Under Secretary, his

superior officer, was present - because his superior officer, from age and other reasons, was incapable of giving a decision.¹⁷

Doubtless Harrel knew that Dougherty would be reluctant to call out the military. So he went ahead on his own initiative. What seems very strange about this is that he should not have had any general directions how to deal with such a situation as arose. After all, clashes with the Volunteers, north and south, were not unknown and, in the atmosphere of the day, were always a possibility. In addition the Government had, at the end of 1913, issued a proclamation prohibiting the importation of firearms. This was an attempt to deal with a growing problem. Yet, no detailed written instructions were ever given to the police on how they were to be enforced. Even the procedure and grounds for requisitioning the aid of the military were not spelled out. In the volatile state of the country at the time, and with the experience of the problems created by the 1913 strike behind them, it is puzzling that neither Dougherty nor Birrell attempted to ensure that they had tighter control of the police; nor was this done later, as Warren Fisher discovered in 1920.¹⁸

Whatever the reason, and despite the official exoneration of Dougherty, the

¹⁷. This gem of wisdom was contained in, of all things, a report on the position regarding Harrel's pension. Legally, Harrel was entitled to a pension only if he resigned or was removed in consequence of the abolition of his office or to facilitate a reorganisation leading to greater economy and efficiency. Clearly none of these applied to him. This did not deter Headlam. He reported that the Commission of Inquiry had been partisan and that though Harrel had committed a 'technical irregularity' he was considered by 'a large proportion of competent people' to have taken the only course open to him to preserve the peace, on information reaching him that 3,000 armed men were marching on Dublin. [The figure mentioned everywhere else was 800-1200!] To facilitate the granting of a pension to Harrel, Headlam proposed a slight reorganisation of the duties of his office to achieve a saving. Harrel probably deserved the pension he was given as he had twenty eight years service. Treasury Rememberancer to Treasury, n.d., P.R.O., T 143/2/665-70. Birrell was in favour of a pension for Harrel.

¹⁸. See p.195.
events of the 26 July convinced many people that the control exercised by Dublin Castle left something to be desired. Not the least of such people was Asquith who commented shortly afterwards:

I am tempted to regret that I did not make a 'clean cut' six months ago, and insist upon the booting out of Aberdeen ... and the whole crew. A weaker and more incompetent lot were never in charge of a leaky ship in stormy weather; the poor old Birrell's occasional and fitful appearances at the wheel do not greatly improve matters. 19

The outbreak of the war made a drastic overhaul of the Irish Administration unlikely. However, Asquith was intent that some changes should be made. Along with the forced removal of Aberdeen, it was decided that Dougherty, having reached the maximum extension of the retirement age, should bow out gracefully.

Dougherty's successor was Sir Matthew Nathan. 20 As Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue Nathan had favourably impressed Lloyd George but his 'promotion' to Ireland probably had more to do with the fact that he was a close friend of Violet Asquith and a frequenter of Downing Street dinner parties. In fact, it was after two such dinner parties that Asquith had personally offered him first the Chairmanship of the Board of Inland Revenue and then the Irish Under Secretaryship. 21

20. More than most other Under Secretaries, Nathan has attracted the attention of historians - probably because of the 1916 Rising. Leon O'Broin's Dublin Castle and the 1916 Rising (1970) - hereafter cited as O'Broin, Dublin Castle - provides a fascinating account of the Irish Administration, and Nathan in particular, at work, based as it is on the Nathan Papers. This, however, is the book's strength and its weakness. As it slavishly follows the papers, the book is almost a primary source. As a secondary source it is rather uncritical. Anthony Haydon's Sir Matthew Nathan: British Colonial Governor and Civil Servant (St Lucia, Queensland, 1976) - hereafter Haydon, Sir Matthew Nathan - and his 'Sir Matthew Nathan: Ireland and Before', Studia Hibernica, XV, 1975, 162-76 are useful correctives especially as they are not concerned solely with his Irish career.
21. Haydon, 'Nathan: Ireland and Before', 171; Haydon, Sir Matthew Nathan,
Though Nathan had just spent five years in English departments, and earlier in his career, ten years in the War Office in London, he was at heart a soldier and a colonial administrator. As an officer in the Royal Engineers, he designed the fortifications at Sierra Leone and did similar work in India and Burma. He was in Egypt at the time of the first struggle with the Mahdi and, after his spell at the War Office, where he acted for a time as Secretary to the Colonial Defence Committee, he became in turn Acting Governor of Sierra Leone and then the Gold Coast, and Governor of Hong Kong and finally Natal.  

There was a tendency at the time and it has been followed by some historians, to exaggerate the distinguished nature of Nathan's previous career and to characterise it as wildly successful. Overall his career was fairly distinguished. To begin as a junior military officer and to rise to become a Colonial Governor was no mean achievement, especially for a Jew. Nevertheless his time at the War Office was undistinguished; in Sierra Leone he acted merely as a caretaker; he was 'shunted aside' from his position in Hong Kong to make way for someone else; and in Natal he managed to offend both the Colonial Office in London and the local colonial ministers. When Natal was to enter the Union of South Africa and no longer needed a Governor, there was a clear indication of precisely how Nathan was viewed by the Colonial Office. He sought and was refused the Governorship of Madras. He was politely told that there was a 'surplus of military governors' and was finally offered a

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pp. 178-9; O'Broin, *Dublin Castle*, p.12. O'Broin hints misleadingly that Lloyd George might have had something to do with Nathan's appointment.


23. The *Irish Times* at the time of his appointment described him as the 'very best administrator that could be found' and spoke of his 'meteoric achievements' elsewhere. *Irish Times*, 5 Oct. 1914; O'Broin (*Dublin Castle*, p.12) speaks of 'his spectacular series of appointments' and describes him as having 'unlimited initiative and drive and an unequalled capacity for working hard'.
'second class post' in Nigeria, which he refused. He was advised to return to the Home Service where he would be able to make more contacts which might further his career. This he did, returning to take a job in the Post Office on a lower salary than the Governorship of Natal.

On the face of it Nathan would appear to have been something of a specialist in dealing with rebellious colonies. His assignment to the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Natal followed anti-British outbreaks in each place. Though his arrival in Ireland may, in this light, be deemed to have been premature, he was, on paper at least, an apt choice for the Ireland of 1914. Apart from the existence of rival forces of para-military Volunteers, the war with Germany had begun so that the Under Secretaryship was liable to involve much more police and military work than before. Nathan's record as a soldier, colonial administrator and all-round troubleshooter was thought to qualify him well for the Irish position.

Two aphorisms attributed to Nathan provide a key to the understanding of his Under Secretaryship. When he was Acting Governor of the Gold Coast, he advised a colleague always to act loyally to his seniors and juniors and thus prove his soundness and become a good public servant. In 1912, he confided to Maurice Headlam that he had held seven different appointments in ten years. He had, he said, adopted the old rule of never asking for anything and always accepting what was offered. These two aphorisms sum up Nathan's philosophy. Loyalty and obedience were the prime virtues. Nathan was a careerist who

25. The Freeman's Journal commented that his record made him a suitable choice for Ireland. Freeman's Journal, 5 Oct. 1914. In fact, as I have mentioned (and Haydon has shown), Nathan's record as a 'trouble-shooter' was not all that impressive.
27. Headlam, Reminiscences, p.37. Nathan was exaggerating when he told Headlam that he never asked for anything. He asked for the Governorship of Madras.
owed much of his advancement to patronage. However he had a strong belief that having secured advancement the civil servant should vindicate the trust shown in him. *Pace Leon O'Broin* 28, Nathan rarely showed any inclination to do this by exercising 'unlimited initiative'. Where he used his initiative as in Natal, he had landed himself in hot water. He was somewhat reluctant to repeat this mistake.

The Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland found that Nathan carried out with the 'utmost loyalty' the policy of the Government and of his immediate superior, the Chief Secretary, but considered that he did not 'sufficiently impress upon the Chief Secretary during the latter's prolonged absences from Dublin the necessity for more active measures to remedy the situation in Ireland which on December 18th last in a letter to the Chief Secretary he described as "most serious and menacing"'. 29 Anthony Haydon has correctly pointed out that the commissioners used Nathan's comment completely out of context. Nathan did not describe the situation as 'most serious and menacing' but warned that it might become such, especially if conscription were introduced. 30 Nevertheless the basic criticism of Nathan's behaviour still stands. As the man on the spot through whom all the police and intelligence reports were channeled, he was uniquely placed to sound the alarm but he did not do so. Instead he accepted Birrell's argument that strong action against the Irish Volunteers was not necessary, and, in any case, was likely to be counter-productive as it might precipitate the outbreak which it was designed to prevent.

28. See note 23.
The policy of the Government had been shaped well before Nathan was appointed. With Home Rule in cold storage because of the War, the main function of the Irish Executive was to preserve order. This, it was decided, could best be achieved by avoiding confrontation. However, Nathan had not always been so acquiescent. He was a soldier and had come to Ireland with a reputation, justified or not, for being a firm and resolute administrator. His appointment was welcomed for that reason, not just by Unionists. His resoluteness would, it was thought, be a good balance for what was seen as Birrell's 'vacillation and lack of guidance'. What is more, his political connections meant that he was well placed to fight his corner had he chosen to do so. For a time it looked as if he might do just that. Probably because of his military background, Nathan was quick to establish a good working relationship with the military in Ireland. He made similar efforts with the police. Previously relations with both had been far from good. In November 1914, Birrell confessed to Nathan that he 'had no sort of confidence in N.C. [Neville Chamberlain, Inspector General of the R.I.C.] - his judgement is nil'. In the same month he confided that he thought the military were 'great blunderers ... and our own policemen are not Wizards'. Early in 1915, he returned to the same theme, telling the Under Secretary that he had a 'complete lack of confidence in General Friend's [the General-Officer-in-Command in Ireland] or Neville Chamberlain's capacity to avoid tumbling into every ditch, dry or wet, that lies in their way'. For these reasons, Birrell was the first to welcome Nathan's efforts to improve matters in this regard. As to Nathan's intention to ensure the promotion of more able personnel within the ranks of the R.I.C., he accepted some blame for his own inaction.

31. Irish Times, 5 Oct. 1914; Manchester Guardian, 7 Oct. 1914; Nathan was after all Asquith's appointment and he was also a friend of Walter Long.

in this area and once again impressed upon Nathan the need for 'careful coaching and assistance' of both police and military if they were to avoid trouble.  

One early result of Nathan's initiative was the adoption of a firmer policy against seditious newspapers, such as the military had been demanding and Birrell had been refusing to authorise. Nathan and General Friend recommended the suppression of the more extreme of the newspapers. After some debate, Birrell agreed to a compromise proposal that seven newspapers be warned and, if they did not moderate their tone, suppressed. Later, some of these were in fact suppressed and, when one of them reappeared under a new title, it too was suppressed, though only after some hesitation from Birrell and further prodding from Nathan.

The decision to suppress the newspapers owed much to the new Under Secretary. He had been immediately struck by the virulence and seditious nature of the mosquito press and concluded that action was desirable. However, it may be wrong to over-estimate the decisiveness of Nathan and the reluctance of Birrell to act. Left to himself, Birrell would probably not have ordered suppression but he did value the opinion of a fresh mind. He told Nathan

I have got so into the habit of letting the Pig cut its own throat and have so deep rooted a contempt for this kind (and indeed most kinds) of the Press that my judgement is warped and I am very glad now that I have you to aid me.

Furthermore, in this case Nathan was as aware as Birrell of the political considerations that had to be borne in mind. He favoured action only if it would

33. Ibid.
35. Haydon is guilty of doing this. See Sir Matthew Nathan, p.187.
36. Birrell to Nathan, 4 Nov. 1914, MS Nathan 449, ff 21-5.
not harm the Irish Parliamentary Party and took some pains to ascertain the Party's views. When he got them, they were not unanimous: Redmond favoured action but Dillon and Joseph Devlin disagreed. Strangely enough it was Birrell who counselled that they should ignore this division and make up their own minds.37

The Birrell/Nathan partnership was at its most effective in the last months of 1914 and the early months of 1915. Besides the action against the seditious press, Nathan recommended and Birrell strongly approved of action against the importation of arms. Birrell told the Cabinet that some of the 'seditious orators' should be tried by Court Martial but Lord Kitchener preferred that the police should do the job. And when the disloyalty of some Irish civil servants was drawn to his attention, Birrell expressed the desire that 'these cowardly parasites in the Public Offices and the Post Office' should be 'kicked out of their smug berths'. Some limited action followed.38

This surge of activity is partly attributable to the arrival of Nathan. It is also attributable to the fact that both Nathan and Birrell were more conscious then than at any other time of the possibility of an outbreak in Ireland.39 When time passed without real trouble, Birrell reverted to his old policy of doing nothing and Nathan gradually became inured to the dangers of his new environment. Within two months of his arrival in Ireland, Nathan impatiently complained to Birrell about the tendency to see the Sinn Fein Volunteers as 'an insignificant minority'. They were not insignificant and they were not without influence. Only two months later, he was assuring Lord

38. Birrell to Nathan, 6 and 26 Nov. 1914, MS Nathan 499, ff 27-32.
39. See, for example, Birrell to Nathan, 10 and 29 Nov. 1914, MS Nathan 449, ff 27-8 and 33-5.
Midleton, the leader of the Southern Unionists, that the Volunteers were 'insignificant and decreasing in number although vocal out of all proportion to their strength'. Nathan had come around to Birrell's view that the best policy might be to do nothing unless absolutely necessary. He had second thoughts even on the value of suppressing seditious newspapers, though he was inclined to let the War Office proceed as it thought necessary.

Nathan was not completely blind to the way things were developing during the latter part of 1915 and the early part of 1916 but he remained reluctant to agree to drastic action. With increasing reports of militancy on the part of the Volunteers, the Government, at the end of March 1916, agreed to the deportation of a small number of their leaders and the cases of some others were to be considered. The military favoured sterner action but as late as 10 April Nathan was insisting that

Though the Irish Volunteers element has been active of late, especially in Dublin, I do not believe that its leaders mean insurrection or that the Volunteers have sufficient arms if the leaders meant it.

This particular piece of certitude may well have sealed Nathan's fate. When, after the Rising, the letter concerned was passed on to Asquith, he underlined this passage. Even at the last minute, decisive action by Nathan or the Irish Executive might have prevented the Rising. On Wednesday and Thursday, 19 and 20 April, Nathan was informed of rumours that there was to be a rebellion.

41. Nathan to Birrell, 18 March 1916, MS Nathan 466.
42. See, for example, 'Notes of an interview with Lord Midleton', 29 Feb. 1916, MS Nathan 469; O'Brien, *Dublin Castle*, p.44.
43. Ernest Blythe, Liam Mellows and Alfred Monaghan were ordered to leave Ireland. Those for investigation included Tom Clarke. Nathan to Birrell, 25 March 1916, MS Nathan 466; Nathan Notebook, MS Nathan 475.
44. Quoted in O'Brien, *Dublin Castle*, pp 72-3. O'Brien gives a marvellous day to day account of the Castle in the months and weeks before the Rising. I do not propose to cover the same ground here.
45. Ibid.
On the Saturday, he learned of the attempt to land German arms in Kerry. He had been aware that a mobilisation of the Volunteers was planned for Easter Sunday, but with the failure of the attempt to land arms and the cancellation of the mobilisation he thought that an outbreak was unlikely. Wimbourne, as we have seen, still urged immediate action against the Volunteers but Nathan was not inclined to rush things now that the danger seemed to have receded. Although he agreed that widespread arrests were necessary, he insisted that the sanction of the Chief Secretary should be got and that the action be carefully planned. However, before this could be done, the rebellion had already occurred. When it was quelled, it was intimated to Nathan that Asquith felt that he must share Birrell's fate. Nathan immediately placed his resignation in the hands of the Prime Minister along with an expression of regret that he had not been 'better able to serve His Majesty's Government at this critical time'.

Nathan might have been forgiven for blaming simple misfortune for the outcome of events. He accepted the Government's policy of avoiding large-scale action against the Volunteers unless there was a clear proof that a rebellion was impending. When that proof was forthcoming, the cancellation of the mobilisation order and the failure of the attempt to land arms made it seem safe to assume that, while action was imperative, there was no reason why they should not follow the proper channels and plan their response carefully. The Lord Lieutenant, the police and the military all favoured an immediate response and a more independent Under Secretary might have agreed.

On the other hand, in such cases the advice of the military was, and is generally, liable to be for positive action whereas it is the proper function of the civil servant (and the politician) to weigh the other considerations.

46. Birrell to Nathan, 3 May 1916, MS Nathan, 477; Nathan to Asquith, 3 May 1916, MS Asq. 36. ff 148-9.
Giving the military their head was now ultimately unavoidable. At the same time, it must be remembered that the policy of the Irish Executive in the previous three years was based at least in part on the assumption that to allow this could be dangerous. Nathan could not but be well aware of what had happened to W.V. Harrel in 1914 when he had chosen to act without proper consultation. This and his dependance on Birrell shaped Nathan's response in 1916.

Nathan's relationship with three people had a profound effect on the course of his Under Secretaryship up to and including the Rising. These were Birrell, Wimbourne, and John Dillon, one of the leading members of the Irish Parliamentary Party. It was to Birrell, his immediate superior, that Nathan saw himself owing loyalty. As we have seen, there were some signs early on that Nathan might not prove quite so submissive. Even Birrell was impressed by the new Under Secretary's reputation for resoluteness. Indeed he was somewhat uncomfortable about it, sarcastically commenting at one stage that Nathan was 'known to be so masterful, and I so weak ... nobody can believe I ever do anything on my own account'. The impression of the masterful Nathan and the weak Birrell was widespread at the time. Even after, and in spite of, the Rising there was a tendency on the part of Unionists especially to draw a picture of a conscientious Under Secretary being overruled by his political superior. While this view had a little truth in it, neither the Dublin Castle records of the time nor the private papers reveal any serious division between the Chief and the Under Secretary.


48. See, for example, Manchester Guardian, 7 Oct. 1914 and Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Evidence, pp 29-36, [Cd 8279], H.C. 1916, XI.
Nathan's initial burst of activity was facilitated by the fact that Birrell, because of the illness and subsequent death of his wife early in 1915, was more remote than ever from the day-to-day administration of Ireland. Once Birrell had regained his spirits somewhat and the prospect of his resignation receded, this scope was much reduced. It was not simply a question of a re-invigorated Birrell but also of a more settled Nathan.

The relationship between Nathan and Birrell was close but never intimate or completely comfortable. When Birrell was not in Dublin or Nathan was not in London, they were in almost daily communication by letter and telegram. Birrell, with his literary mind, caustic wit and long experience of Ireland was undoubtedly an intimidating figure. Nathan reacted with a certain amount of awe and deference. This made an independent stance on his part rather unlikely. 49

When Nathan was appointed, he freely admitted to knowing very little about Ireland. He was thus reliant to a large extent on the advice of others. The formal structures through which he might have gained this advice were not well developed or promising. Lack of promotion prospects within the Chief Secretary's Office had led to stagnation. Years of patronage and political jobbery meant that the advice of many senior civil servants could not be relied upon in the same way as similar advice in Whitehall. Even the advice of the police and, after the formation of the Coalition Government resulted in an influx of Unionists, the law officers could not be completely relied upon for an unbiased opinion.

One person the Under Secretary might have turned to during Birrell's long absences was the Lord Lieutenant. I have already examined the ambitions of Lord Aberdeen and Lord Wimbourne to play more than a ceremonial role in the

administration of Ireland. Though in theory this might have been anomalous, in practice it might have proved beneficial to the Under Secretary. Be that as it may, Nathan consistently rebuffed both Aberdeen and Wimbourne. In doing this, he was influenced by Birrell and by his own narrow conception of where his loyalties lay.

Nathan's poor relations with Wimbourne were particularly important. Wimbourne originally asked only to be briefed by the Under Secretary through 'periodic conversations' but as the general situation deteriorated he became increasingly critical of the fact that he was kept in the dark and sought daily reports. Wimbourne was, of course, even newer to Ireland than Nathan but this freshness might have been an advantage. Wimbourne was certainly more alive to the dangers than Birrell or Nathan, but Nathan, with Birrell's consent, excluded him as much as possible. Nathan told the Royal Commission on the Rebellion that the Lord Lieutenant, as head of the Irish Administration could, if he chose, exercise his authority. While this was strictly true, Wimbourne's comment to the Commission more accurately described the *de facto* situation: he complained that Nathan had held the doctrine of the 'Lord Lieutenant's total irresponsibility'.

In contrast to his relationship with Wimbourne, Nathan placed a great deal of reliance on the opinion of John Dillon. The amount of Dillon correspondence in the Nathan Papers reflects the closeness of their relationship. Besides

50. See Chapter 1.


52. *Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Evidence*, pp 11 and 14 [Cd 8311] H.C. 1916, XI. When Nathan resigned he submitted two resignations: one to Asquith who accepted it with regret, and one to the Lord Lieutenant who strictly speaking had appointed him. In reply, Wimbourne expressed his happiness that their differences on questions of policy had not found their way into their personal relations. Wimbourne to Nathan, 7 May 1916, MS Nathan 448, f.105.

53. MS Nathan 451, ff 218-327.
corresponding regularly, they met quite often, though never at Dublin Castle because, even with Home Rule on the Statute Book, Dillon felt that would compromise his or his party's position. Dillon had a house at North Great George's Street, in Dublin, not more than a brisk walk from the Castle, and they met there or at 'neutral venues' such as the offices of the Congested Districts Board, which were not in Dublin Castle, or the house of W.F. Bailey, who was an official in the Land Commission. They first met in November 1914 at Dillon's request to discuss the suppression of the seditious newspapers. In this case, Dillon's advice was disregarded. Despite this, with the approval of Birrell, the relationship developed. Birrell found the 'self-denying principle' which prevented Dillon and his colleagues from coming to the Castle troublesome but he confessed that he liked seeing them 'especially Dillon'. Needless to say, the relationship was not always amicable, especially after the formation of the Coalition Government. Nevertheless, as Birrell reported, Dillon was 'quite unusually fond' of Nathan.

Dillon was consulted on a wide range of issues, from the continuing question of the seditious press to appointments to major and minor positions. In January 1915, Dillon wanted to meet Nathan to discuss the contentious Clanricarde estate in the west of Ireland. In February, there was trouble on the Hyde estate. Dillon suggested that Nathan call for the police report on the estate before they met a few days later so that 'we can then consider what can be done to keep things quiet for the present at all events'. Nathan consulted him about the appointment of a new Chief Commissioner of the Dublin

54. See Dillon to Nathan, 15, 21 and 26 Mar. 1916, MS Nathan 451, ff 301-6
56. Birrell to Nathan, 2 Dec. 1914, MS Nathan 449, f.36. Birrell commented that Nathan was wise to correspond with Dillon, however tiresome he might find it.
57. O'Broin, Dublin Castle, p.46 and The Chief Secretary, p.136.
Metropolitan Police and new members for the Congested Districts and National Education Boards. In the latter case, Dillon replied that he did not 'care very much to interfere as to appointments to the National Board as I regard that body as hopeless'. Yet he went on to criticise strongly Nathan's proposed candidate and recommended one of his own instead. 58 Dillon's advice was not always followed, especially when the formation of the Coalition necessitated more sensitivity to Unionist opinion not least on the question of appointments. Nevertheless his views were always seriously considered.

Under the influence of Dillon, Nathan strongly pressed the Treasury not to interfere in Irish land purchase during the War and he urged Lloyd George not to proceed with his proposals to ban, or at least increase the taxation on, alcohol. He also took a strong stand against Irish conscription, under pressure from Dillon, even to the extent of going personally to see Asquith. 59

One practical result of this close contact between Dillon and Nathan was a series of meetings arranged by the latter, with the express permission of the Prime Minister, to familiarise the leaders of the Irish Parliamentary Party with the machinery of Irish government. Lists of the various departments and their powers were circulated and memoranda on their position under the Home Rule Act were prepared. In effect, this initiative was a way of reassuring the Nationalist leaders that Home Rule was not permanently postponed. It also had a very practical purpose. Nathan reported with amusement Redmond's admission of his 'entire ignorance of Irish government'. Birrell was equally amused. 'The dread secrets of the Castle', he said, 'when unfolded to the Founders of the Land League, will sound very flat, but it is a good thing to get people to


discuss even the *machinery* of civil government*. At the same time, Birrell was well aware that if news of these meetings leaked out there would inevitably be accusations of conspiracies, so he twice expressed his nervousness about the 'conferences' to Nathan.

With Home Rule on the Statute Book, these 'conferences' and the regular consultation of Dillon and his colleagues were probably sensible. Birrell's point about the possibility of a rumpus was valid. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that Nathan consulted only the Nationalist leaders. He avoided the Kildare Street Club but he met Lord Midleton on a number of occasions and he was in regular contact with Walter Long. Indeed, Nathan did not make a great secret of the fact that it was his practice to find out the views of the leaders of the Irish Parliamentary Party. He openly admitted as much to Midleton. Still Midleton and other Unionists continued to look upon Nathan sympathetically and preferred to save their abuse for Birrell. It is to Nathan's credit that he was able to retain their confidence while pursuing a policy which they disapproved of. Even Maurice Headlam, who was on the 'inside', ascribed the Rising to Nathan's 'loyalty to the policy imposed on you by the ineffable Birrell'.

Walter Long had warned Nathan before he came to Ireland, against attempting to reorganise the Dublin Castle Administration or reform the higher ranks of the civil service. Nathan heeded this advice. He took little interest in those matters of routine administration which so concerned Antony MacDonnell. This is hardly surprising as Home Rule was impending and the War did not

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62. Headlam expressed his regret that Nathan had not been allowed a free hand. O'Broin, *Dublin Castle*, pp 162-3.
63. O'Broin, *The Chief Secretary*, p.144. Ironically his only involvement in an attempt at major administrative reform came after the Rising when he
encourage innovation in such matters. W.L. Micks found him ignorant of the Congested Districts and their problems and he made little attempt to learn. Land purchase did not interest him except when it was raised by Dillon or Birrell; likewise the reform of education and the coordination of the disparate arms of government.

That is not to say that he was idle. He impressed all those who met him with his capacity for hard work. Joseph Brennan, who was one of the clerks in the Chief Secretary's Office and who acted as Nathan's Private Secretary, later recalled that he worked himself and his subordinates to the limit. Brennan also said that he had never known a higher civil servant who was easier to approach. However Nathan was never very friendly with the heads of the Irish boards and departments and the head of one of them detected in his attitude to Irish departments and Irish officials a 'fine Semitic scorn'.

Anthony Haydon concludes his article, 'Sir Matthew Nathan: Ireland and Before', with the opinion that the epithet usually applied to Nathan - Nathan the Unwise - should more accurately be Nathan the Clerk. It is an attractive alternative but it is not strictly accurate. It suggests a picture of Nathan immersed in routine work in Dublin Castle, unconcerned with the history being made around him. Closer to the mark is the assessment of A.H. Norway who was Secretary of the Irish Post Office from 1912 to 1916. He felt that Nathan was always more the obedient soldier than a civil servant who should correct his

helped Horace Plunkett formulate a scheme for the abolition of the Irish Executive and the administration of Ireland by a Council of Irishmen. O'Broin, Dublin Castle, p.132.

64. Micks, The Congested Districts Board, p.186.

65. O'Broin, Dublin Castle, p.60; Robinson, Memories, p.223. The apparent conflict between the assessments of Brennan and Robinson may be accounted for by the fact that Brennan and Nathan were on excellent terms. Nathan was also friendly with James MacMahon, Assistant Secretary of the Irish Post Office and future Under Secretary, and through him took an interest in two Dublin charities. O'Broin, op. cit., pp 60 and 165.
Chief when he was wrong. Nathan certainly believed that loyalty was the prime virtue of both the soldier and the civil servant. If an epithet be needed, then perhaps it should be Nathan the loyal. Loyal, with its positive and negative connotations of honour, correctness, blind allegiance and lack of initiative, would seem to aptly describe his career as Under Secretary.

The Final Years

Between 1916 and 1920 the Under Secretaryship was never more than a routine clerkship. Even so, it could be used for political purposes. Individual Under Secretaries did not wield very much power but, as in the past, in the matter of appointments administrative experience could be less of a factor than background or political experience.

In the immediate aftermath of the Rising, Sir Robert Chalmers was sent to Ireland as temporary Under Secretary to hold the fort. He held the position from May to September 1916. In the main his work was confined to matters of establishment and organisation. While martial law remained in operation, civil government was in practice, if not legally, in abeyance. However with the position of Chief Secretary unfilled and its duties theoretically being fulfilled by the Home Secretary and the Cabinet, for a short time Chalmers found himself the highest ranking government officer in Ireland. In practice this did not mean that he had any dominant say in shaping policy but he did, from time to time, advise on major issues.

66. Haydon, 'Nathan: Ireland and Before'; 176; O'Broin, Dublin Castle, p.15. It should be said that during the post mortem into the Rising Nathan's loyalty was still evident. He was an honest and forthright witness and made no attempt to avoid his share of the blame.

67. For the position of the Irish Executive after the Rising, see Chapter 1.

68. For instance, he strongly urged Asquith not to proceed with an amalgamation of the R.I.C. and D.M.P. which was being considered. Chalmers to Bonham Carter, 6 June 1916, Bodl., MS Asq. 37, ff 45-6.
A Gladstonian Liberal, Chalmers had spent thirty years in the Treasury. In 1913, disillusioned with what he saw as the extravagance of the Liberal Government, and, it was rumoured, unable to get along with Lloyd George, he went to Ceylon as Governor. This move did not prove very successful so he returned to the Treasury in 1916. As a Joint Secretary to the Treasury, Chalmers was probably the most senior person to serve as Under Secretary for Ireland, but, in the circumstances, he was not an unusual choice. 69

Chalmers accepted the Under Secretaryship on a strictly temporary basis and only at the personal request of Asquith. In Ireland, he does not seem to have gone out of his way to endear himself to his colleagues and succeeded in making himself fairly unpopular. He remained aloof from the senior officials at Dublin Castle and made no secret of the fact that he had no time for Irish squabbles. He told one official that he had been forced to take up the Under Secretaryship temporarily, that he knew nothing about and had no interest in the Irish Question; and he gave the impression that he wanted to get back to England as soon as possible. At the same time, even those who disliked him had to admit that he proved an able official in a very difficult position. 70

The widespread confusion as to who was actually governing Ireland quickly forced the Cabinet to make a more permanent arrangement about the Irish Executive. As we have seen, the idea of a major change in the machinery of government was postponed and it was decided to carry on for the moment with the existing system. It was all the more important therefore that the officers appointed should be the best available. In the case of the next two


70. Ibid.; Wimbourne to Asquith, 3 Sept. 1916, Bodl., MS Asq. 37, ff 119-26; [Robinson, Memories, pp 245-6;] W.L. Micks found Chalmers 'able and courteous' in his dealings with the Congested Districts Board. Micks, The Congested Districts Board, p.186.
Under Secretaries appointed, there is considerable evidence to suggest that this was not the case.

As I have previously mentioned, there were two strong local contenders for the Under Secretaryship when Chalmers returned to the Treasury. No-one could claim to know Ireland better than Sir Henry Robinson, but, though he was considered an 'attractive candidate', it was decided not to appoint him because, as the Lord Lieutenant put it, 'being a Kildare Street Unionist his appointment would have emphasised the "Unionist Rule" of which the Parliamentary Party are making a grievance'. Wimbourne was in favour of trying, at least temporarily, Sir Edward O'Farrell, then Assistant Under Secretary. Chalmers strongly recommended O'Farrell but he suffered from the disadvantage of having been Assistant Under Secretary at the time of the Rising. Chalmers was of the opinion that O'Farrell's 'personality' had not been allowed to emerge because Nathan had controlled everything and that he would do well as Under Secretary. However, Asquith was not convinced and preferred someone untainted by previous contact with Dublin Castle.

The appointment of Sir William Byrne as Under Secretary to succeed Chalmers came as something of a surprise in Ireland where it had been thought that either Robinson or O'Farrell would be chosen. Byrne had had a successful though hardly distinguished career in the Home Office rising from Private Secretary to the Under Secretary in 1891 to Assistant Under Secretary in 1908. In 1913 he became Chairman of the Board of Control (Lunacy and Mental Deficiency). He was best known as an inveterate member of commissions and committees, having represented the Home Office on well over a dozen major

inquiries, the most recent of which was the Committee of Inquiry in Dublin into the connection of certain civil servants with the Rising. It was his membership of this latter committee which led to his appointment as Under Secretary.  

A major factor in the appointment of Byrne was the fact that he was a Catholic. Asquith was keen not to offend the susceptibilities of the Irish Parliamentary Party and may have thought it wise to appoint a Catholic Under Secretary to balance the appointment of a Unionist, H.E. Duke, as Chief Secretary. Not surprisingly, it is difficult to document this, but it was widely accepted that such motives were decisive.

Whatever Asquith's motives, Byrne was not a success. His appointment did nothing to placate the Nationalists. More important, his relations with Duke were not good. Duke was an energetic and independent Chief Secretary who did a great deal of the work which might have normally been left to the senior officials of his office, and on important matters of policy he did not rely very heavily on Byrne. For instance, it is interesting that when the Cabinet was considering applying conscription to Ireland and Duke was trying to dissuade it, Byrne played only a minor role. A number of Irish officials were called to London to give their views to the Cabinet, including the head of the RIC, General Byrne, the Irish Lord Chief Justice, James Campbell, and the head of the army in Ireland, Bryan Mahon. The Irish Attorney General, James O'Connor, Lord Midleton and Edward Carson were also called on for their views. The major omission - apart from, for obvious reasons, the Nationalist leaders - was the Under Secretary. Most of those consulted were suggested by Lloyd George. It

73. Ibid.; Who Was Who, 1929-40, p.377. Byrne was born in Withington, England and was knighted in 1911.

74. See, for example, Robinson, Memories, p.257 and Headlam, Reminiscences, p.63.

is rather surprising that neither he nor Duke thought of Byrne. Duke, of course, would have known what Byrne's view was but he might still have been expected to put explicitly before the Cabinet the views of the most senior permanent civil servant in Ireland.\textsuperscript{76}

Byrne's failure to establish a good working relationship with his Chief and to shape policy might not have been so important had he been able to achieve more success in the administration of the Chief Secretary's Office. Yet here too he does not seem to have made much of a mark. With the country in a disturbed condition, it was more important than ever to have a smoothly operating machine at Dublin Castle, but, despite the chilling indictment of the Royal Commission into the Rising, the administration seems to have disimproved rather than improved after 1916. Before Byrne was appointed, Wimbourne complained that the administration was 'deplorably loose-jointed' and warned that 'nearly all the old public officials have an acquired propensity to act independently on their own discretion which is fatal to clear policy or concerted action'.\textsuperscript{77} Despite Wimbourne's avowed intention to do something about this, there is little evidence in the administrative records of Dublin Castle to suggest that anything was attempted, much less achieved, in this regard. Byrne proved very popular with his colleagues, including the 'old public officials', itself an indication that he made no serious attempt to curtail their independence or insist on closer control.\textsuperscript{78}

When Byrne came to Ireland, he had been three years away from anything like the sort of administration which he had to deal with in Ireland.\textsuperscript{79} At fifty-

\textsuperscript{76} W.C. 373, 26 Mar. and 376, 28 March 1918, P.R.O., Cab. 23/5.
\textsuperscript{77} Wimbourne to Asquith, 3 Sept. 1916, Bodl., MS Asq. 37, ff 119-26.
\textsuperscript{78} Robinson, Memories, p.257: Micks, The Congested Districts Board, p.186.
\textsuperscript{79} He ceased to be Assistant Under Secretary at the Home Office in 1913.
seven he was not too old to adapt himself to his new surroundings but he suffered from poor health which affected his usefulness. In addition, he was not sent to Ireland as a 'reformer' but to do the same job as Chalmers i.e. to hold the fort until a settlement could be worked out. The longer a settlement was delayed, the more of a disadvantage this would prove to be.  

When the Cabinet's insistence on going ahead with conscription against the advice of the Irish Executive led to the replacement of Duke and Wimbourne, it was decided that it was also time that Byrne returned to the Home Office. W.G.S. Adams, one of the Irish 'experts' on Lloyd George's staff, advised the Prime Minister that Byrne was 'not equal to his position'.

The Government's choice of successor showed yet again how low administrative reform was on the list of priorities. Adams suggested the appointment of James Byrne, the Inspector General of the RIC, who had favourably impressed the Cabinet when he was called in to give his views on conscription. Byrne was, on balance, opposed to the imposition of conscription, a fact which may have counted against him now. Almost inevitably, Henry Robinson was mentioned as a possible successor, as was Sir John Taylor who had almost forty years experience in Irish departments and who had succeeded Edward O'Farrell as Assistant Under Secretary. Another, but very remote possibility, was Maurice Headlam, the Treasury Remembrancer in Dublin. Headlam later claimed that Robert


81. Adams to Lloyd George, 7 March 1918, H.L.R.O., Lloyd George Papers, F/63/2/13. It was officially explained that Byrne was only on temporary loan from the Home Office. *Irish Times*, 5 July 1918.
Chalmers, his old Chief at the Treasury, had offered him the Assistant Under Secretaryship in 1916 with the understanding that he would be made Under Secretary when the next vacancy occurred. Headlam refused this offer and was hardly a likely candidate in 1918.  

On these, Taylor was the strongest candidate. He was a staunch Unionist which, ironically, in the changed circumstances of Ireland might have been expected to be an advantage rather than a disadvantage. The Government had, after all, embarked on a highly unpopular policy of extending conscription to Ireland. The 'appeasement' of earlier years was, it seemed, to be abandoned. Lord French, the foremost advocate of conscription, had come to Ireland breathing fire: on the 19 April he recommended that the country should at once be put under martial law and that 'a purely Military Governor' should rule under the 'guidance' of the War Cabinet. At the beginning of May, when he accepted the position of Lord Lieutenant, he defined his position as being that of a soldier at the head of a 'quasi-Military Government'. If there was to be such a drastic change of direction then Taylor, whose ability was undoubtedly, would have been an obvious choice.  

French, as on so many other matters, was inclined to blow hot and cold. Though he did not change his mind on the possibility and advisability of imposing conscription, within a few weeks of arriving in Ireland he concluded

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83. French to Lloyd George, 19 April and 5 May 1918, H.L.R.O., Lloyd George Papers, F/48/6/8 and 10. 
that some preliminaries would have to be taken care of first. In particular, he became convinced, as we have seen, that the 'Rebels' would have to be dealt with and that the Castle would have to secure the acquiescence, if not the support, of the Catholic Hierarchy. On 19 April, he reported that the bishops were preaching 'absolute rebellion', four days later he had decided that they were preaching 'passive resistance'; and by 13 May he had come round to the view that he should try to get into 'closer touch' with the Hierarchy as they were the 'best representatives of the really National aspirations of the Country'. Cardinal Logue was, he believed, as desirous of re-establishing law and order as the Government was. French's method of facilitating getting into 'closer touch' with the Hierarchy was, of course, to adopt a policy urged by his Chief Secretary of promoting Catholics to vacant legal and other positions within the Irish Administration. This policy culminated in the appointment of James MacMahon as Under Secretary to succeed Byrne.

The appointment of James MacMahon was certainly the most unusual of the period. It was not unlike the appointment of Antony MacDonnell but MacDonnell's Catholicism and his nationalist leanings were balanced by the fact that he had an unrivalled reputation as an administrator. MacMahon, on the other hand, was a relatively obscure Irish civil servant. He was Secretary to the Post Office in Ireland, a position to which he had been appointed in 1916 after three years as Assistant Secretary. The Irish Post Office was not, in fact, under the control of Dublin Castle but a branch of the English Post Office. MacMahon's predecessor as Secretary had previously been Assistant Secretary in London and it has been suggested that the promotion of MacMahon from within the Irish Post Office in 1916 was itself a political gesture. There is some substantial evidence to suggest that this is true.

85. French to Lloyd George, 19 and 23 April, 13 May and 6 July 1918, H.L.R.O., Lloyd George Papers, F/48/6/8,9,12 and 15.
86. Headlam, Reminiscences, p.63. Arthur Norway was appointed Secretary in 1912, having been previously one of the Assistant Secretaries in London.
As a member of an English Department MacMahon had little first hand knowledge of how the Dublin Castle system operated and his career in the Post Office would have been little help in this regard. However one overriding factor convinced both the Chief Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant that he was the man for the job. MacMahon was in close contact with various members of the Irish Hierarchy, especially Cardinal Logue. His contacts with leading churchmen dated from his schooldays: born in Belfast, he was educated at the Christian Brothers School, Armagh, St Patricks College, Armagh, and later at Blackrock College. He was an active member of the St Vincent de Paul society and he maintained his clerical contacts throughout his life. MacMahon was well aware of his relative inexperience and probably also because of his strong nationalist sympathies he was extremely reluctant to accept the offer of the Under Secretaryship.

Even before his appointment was officially announced, the new policy seemed to be paying dividends. Contact was established with the Hierarchy and a secret meeting was arranged between Cardinal Logue, the head of the Hierarchy, and the

It was however very much a 'sideways promotion' as the Dublin appointment carried the same salary and was not a sought-after post. O'Broin, Dublin Castle, p.15. In 1915, John Dillon complained to the then Under Secretary, Matthew Nathan, that the extension of term for the further two years was in breach of an understanding that the Irish Party had with Herbert Samuel, the Postmaster General, that MacMahon would be appointed. Charles Hobhouse, Samuel's successor, extended Norway's term and it was rumoured that he was going to appoint someone else permanently. Dillon asked Nathan to take the matter up with Hobhouse. Dillon to Nathan, 21 February 1915, MS Nathan 451, ff 236-40. Hobhouse who had already been approached by Redmond, Dillon and Devlin, told Nathan that Norway would remain Secretary until a Home Rule Government would be set up. He would give no assurance that MacMahon would succeed him. MacMahon was 'a very able man, but he is not above trying to pull wires on his own behalf'. Hobhouse thought he should be told that such wire pulling might damage his chances. O'Broin (Dublin Castle, p.48) quotes Dillon's approach and Hobhouse's reply but, I assume for reasons of tact, he omits MacMahon's name. The keen interest of the leaders of the Irish Parliamentary Party is explained by their desire to ensure that the head of the Irish Post Office under a Home Rule Government would be an Irishman.

87. Who Was Who 1951-60, p.715; Robinson, Memories, pp 264-5; Irish Times, 2 July 1918. The Irish Times states that MacMahon was a native of Armagh.
88. Robinson, Memories, pp 264-5.
Lord Lieutenant. Given the role of the Church in resisting conscription, even
the fact that such a meeting could take place was significant. But French's
expectations of what might be achieved were completely unrealistic. He was
right in thinking that the Hierarchy was desirous of restoring order. The
difference was that while French saw this as a prelude to introducing con­
scription, the Hierarchy thought it could only be achieved by abandoning
conscription; and while Logue was not opposed to the Government's new volun­
tary recruiting drive, he would do nothing to aid it.

Almost as quickly as he had come round to the 'appeasement' policy, French
became disillusioned with it. Shortt was less impatient and thought that they
should perservere. Unlike French, he did not think that conscription was
possible and in this view he was supported by MacMahon who, for the first time
in the crisis gave the Castle access to the nationalist side. Unknown to
French, Shortt advised the Cabinet not to go ahead with conscription. When in­
formed of this by Walter Long, French immediately submitted a counter memorandum,
backed up by one from Long, in which he strongly argued in favour of going ahead
with conscription and questioned Shortt's competence to judge. In reply,
Shortt requested MacMahon to telegraph his views to the Cabinet. MacMahon,
Shortt told the Cabinet, had 'exceptional personal knowledge of Ireland' and
'exceptional means of obtaining information'. MacMahon, as Shortt knew he
would, counselled strongly against going ahead with conscription. French's
response was to try to impeach MacMahon's reliability as an adviser. Despite
having written three months previously that he had 'no doubt as to the wisdom

89. Tomas O'Fiaich, 'The Irish Bishops and the Conscription Issue. 1918'.
Capuchin Annual, 1968, 365; P. Travers, The Irish Conscription Crisis,

90. Ibid.; 'Report on the present state of Ireland especially with reference
to conscription' by the Duke of Atholl, 29 April 1918, H.L.R.O. Lloyd

91. 'Results of any endeavour to Enforce Conscription in Ireland', memorandum
by Shortt, 7 Oct. 1918; 'Application of Military Service Acts to Ireland',
memorandum by French, 8 Oct. 1918; 'Ireland', memorandum by Long, 9 Oct.
of appointing MacMahon', he now told Lloyd George that he was 'a rigid Catholic, in close touch with the Catholic Hierarchy and is simply a mouth-piece for the most rabid of the Irish priests. And this I may add is the kind of person the Chief Secretary thinks should influence His Majesty's government on a matter such as this'.

The hostility of French put MacMahon in an awkward position, especially after Shortt was replaced as Chief Secretary. His discomfort was increased by his isolated position in the Chief Secretary's Office. This isolation was due partly to his own inability to impose his will and partly to the hostility of the Unionist lobby within Dublin Castle, notably the Assistant Under Secretary, Sir John Taylor, who resented his appointment for political and personal reasons.

Probably the best assessment of MacMahon's abilities is that contained in Warren Fisher's report on the Dublin Castle Administration in 1920. Though critical, the assessment is fair. Fisher found MacMahon to be 'not devoid of brains' but thought that he lacked 'initiative, force, and driving power. Neither by temperament nor by training is he ready for responsibility; his conception of his functions conforms to the traditional Irish limits; and he has had no experience of running a big show or of shaping policy'. Fisher's two colleagues in the investigation, Alfred Cope and B.G. Harwood shared his view of MacMahon. They reported to Fisher that the Under Secretary in our opinion he falls considerably short of the requirements now generally demanded of a permanent Head of an important Department. His failure to assert his authority over his immediate subordinates shows him to be lacking in strength of character, and we do not consider that his general ability is outstanding.

1918; memorandum by Shortt, forwarding MacMahon's telegram, 9 Oct. 1918, P.R.O., Cab. 24/66, G.T.'s 5918,9,26 and 29 respectively.


MacMahon's failure to assert his authority over his immediate subordinates was not simply a question of his weakness. The circumstances of his appointment created a suspicion in some quarters in Dublin Castle which he never managed to overcome. Sir John Taylor, though subordinate to MacMahon, concentrated a great deal of the work of the Office into his own hands and ignored the Under Secretary even on matters of policy. Cope and Harwood found that there was an 'undue concentration of both important and unimportant work in the hands of Taylor and the Principal Clerk, W.P.J. Connolly'. However Connolly was, they thought, merely a 'conduit pipe' for transmitting the work to Taylor. Taylor, according to G.C. Duggan the First Class Clerk who worked for him, virtually ran the Office, and he was 'hand in glove' with the Treasury Remembrancer, Maurice Headlam. Both Taylor and Headlam were agreed that MacMahon was not to be trusted.  

These divisions between the top civil servant in Ireland and the Lord Lieutenant and within the ranks of the civil service itself were particularly serious at a time when Dublin Castle was faced with the increasing rebelliousness of the nationalist population. It is ironic that at the time that the Irish Administration was faced with its greatest threat, it was at its most divided and, if one is to judge from the Fisher report, its most inefficient.

'The Castle Administration does not administer': these were strong words, but they were words which were fully justified by the ensuing report. Fisher, Cope and Harwood found that in the sphere of routine administration, in the

95. Ibid., p.2 and p.3; George Chester Duggan, 'The Life of a Civil Servant' (unpublished memoir in the possession of Leon O'Broin). Chapter VIII of this memoir is entitled 'Chief Secretary's Office, Dublin 1919-21: The Last Days of Dublin Castle'. Henry Robinson also comments that Taylor was bitter about having been passed over in favour of MacMahon, Robinson, Memories, p.265.
sphere of dealing with disorder and in the sphere of informing and advising the Government as to policy, the whole system had broken down. The Cope/Harwood report on which Fisher partly based his recommendations concluded that the Chief Secretary's Office had lost its grip on the civil government of the country. It appears to have become, to a large extent, merely a transmitting body which passes on important administrative matters to other Departments, and both on its advisory and its executive sides it fails to fulfil its function as the chief governmental organ of the country.\(^6\)

One suspects that if a similar team of British civil servants had come to Ireland at any stage since at least 1890 they would have had similarly harsh things to say about the Irish Administration. Certainly the roots of the problem had been identified by more than one Under Secretary without anything being done. The big difference now was the fact that the inherent weaknesses of the structure, having been exacerbated by neglect and indeed by political manipulation, had developed to such a stage that the Administration just could not cope with the crisis caused by the rebelliousness of Sinn Fein.

As in the aftermath of 1916, there was widespread confusion within the Castle as to who precisely was in control. Matters which should have been dealt with by the civil executive were referred to the military authorities or the law officers. Though the military were theoretically only assisting the civil power, they were increasingly, in default of instructions from the Chief Secretary's Office, acting on their own initiative. Searches were being carried out and arrests being made at the discretion of the military, and the police were acting in support of the military rather than vice versa. When arrests were made, decisions on whether charges would be laid before civilian or military courts were likewise being made by the military in consultation with the police and law officers rather than by the Executive in consultation

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96. Cope/Harwood Memorandum, pp 4-5.
with these groups. Cope and Harwood unearthed one case of a man who had been in custody for six weeks without being charged. It had been hoped that evidence would be found on which to charge him: but even when none was forthcoming he was not released. In another case, a man was arrested by the military despite the protests of the Inspector of police. The Inspector pointed out that there was no evidence that the man was involved in disorder: in fact the district had been comparatively quiet previously. When the man was arrested, it gave rise to 'keen resentment' and caused trouble.97

Fisher, Cope and Harwood made several recommendations on how the situation could be remedied. These involved a complete reorganisation of the Chief Secretary's Office and a shake-up of its staff. On the organisational side, they recommended the revival of the judicial branch of the Office which had been absorbed into the administrative branch. The judicial branch was the section which had dealt with all police and law and order matters and it had been progressively run down since the time of Antony MacDonnell. In addition the staff of the Office was to be increased to take account of the increased volume of work which would have to be dealt with by the revived judicial branch.98

As regards the existing staff, the recommendations were blunt and to the point. John Taylor had 'an exceptional working capacity' but he insisted on doing too much himself and was 'highly unpopular', reported Cope and Harwood. He was on holidays at the time, so Fisher recommended that he should not return to the Castle.99 Connolly, the Principal Clerk merely passed papers on without

97. Cope/Harwood Memorandum, pp 5 & 7-9. It should be said that Cope, Harwood and Fisher were all careful to point out that the military were not to blame for the fact that they were forced to act on their own initiative.
98. Ibid., pp 1-2; Fisher Report, pp 4-5.
99. Fisher Report, p.3; Cope/Harwood Memorandum, p.4. Taylor had forty-three years service, so retirement was not unusual.
comment to Taylor or the law officers: he made no contribution to the settlement of most issues. He had a salary of £1000 but would be adequately remunerated by a salary of £300 to £400. He impressed Cope and Harwood as being 'hopelessly out of date and inefficient' and they thought that his retirement would be a 'necessary preliminary to any successful reorganisation of the Department'. G.C. Duggan and Joseph Brennan impress the visitors but they did not think that either or the other First Class Clerk, Martin Jones, should be promoted.

What to do with MacMahon presented the biggest problem. Because of the publicity which surrounded his appointment he could not be quietly dismissed. They tried to placate the Hierarchy by appointing him. It would have the opposite effect if he were dismissed. In addition, MacMahon was undoubtedly a popular official with many of his colleagues and with the public. Henry Robinson refers to him as 'a popular kindly soul, pleasant to everyone'. W.L. Micks was less condescending, probably because he shared MacMahon's political views. He found MacMahon to be a man of 'great natural ability and sympathy' who made a 'model' Vice-Chairman of the Congested Districts Board.

Cope and Harwood were more impressed by his popularity outside the Castle. They commented somewhat sarcastically that while he was 'a weak official', he was 'a man of strong political opinions' and that he had 'escaped all share in the disfavour with which the Castle administration is regarded'. MacMahon himself attributed this immunity to his well known nationalist sympathies. He frankly admitted to having 'numerous friends' who were Sinn Feiners, but Cope and Harwood dismissed the accusation that he was in any way

100. Cope/Harwood Memorandum, p.3. He too had completed forty years service.
101. Ibid., p.4. The other two First Class Clerks were attached to the Irish Office in London.
disloyal in carrying out his work as a civil servant. They concluded that his popularity was an asset to the Irish Administration and that it would be 'impolitic' to dismiss him even though his nationalist contacts had, in other respects, impaired his usefulness.  

The new Commander-in-Chief of the army in Ireland agreed with Cope and Harwood that MacMahon should be kept because his appointment was 'a source of satisfaction' to the Hierarchy. Fisher was inclined to agree because he felt that, for all his weaknesses, MacMahon holds views more in keeping with 20th century sentiment than those expressed by the ascendency party and the supporters of indiscriminate coercion, and, so far as it counts, his advice would be on the side of judicious moderation.

In a supplementary report, Fisher expanded on these comments. The Dublin Castle Administration struck him as 'almost woodenly stupid and quite devoid of imagination. It listens solely to the ascendency party and ... it never seemed to think of the utility of keeping in close touch with opinion of all kinds'. 'Sinn Fein' and 'outrage' were treated as synonyms despite the fact that two thirds of the people were Sinn Feiners.

Fisher felt that the continued presence of MacMahon in the Castle would be a useful antidote to this type of attitude. At the same time, he was strongly against retaining him and allowing his subordinates to 'short-circuit' him and his superiors to treat him as untrustworthy. This, in effect, was the existing position. Fisher's solution was to retain MacMahon but to appoint a Joint Under Secretary who would have the 'necessary tact to use and manage him'.

104. Fisher Report, p.3.
106. Fisher Report, p.3.
For this position, Fisher recommended Sir John Anderson, Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about the Fisher Report is that virtually all of its specific recommendations were agreed to by the Cabinet and implemented. (The one major exception was the suggestion that, because of the negative connotations of Dublin Castle for the majority of the population, the Irish Administration should be removed from the Castle.) Within six months of Fisher's visit to Ireland, the numbers of staff in the Chief Secretary's Office had doubled.\textsuperscript{107} Many of the new staff were temporarily assigned from English departments and served in the judicial branch which was preoccupied with law and order. The branch was headed by Alfred Cope himself who, on the recommendation of Fisher was seconded from the Ministry of Pensions, where he was Assistant Secretary. He became Assistant Under Secretary. He was assisted by two of the hand-picked team of civil servants who were brought over from England: N.G. Loughnane, a colleague in the Ministry of Pensions and Geoffrey Whiskard from the Home Office.\textsuperscript{108}

Nor were the changes confined to the judicial branch. Fisher had been impressed by the inefficiency of the office even in routine matters. As a remedy he successfully proposed a change which successive Under Secretaries - apart from MacDonnell - would not have dared to ask for: the formation of an Irish branch of the Treasury. John Anderson was made in effect an additional Secretary of the Treasury, based in Ireland, a position he held at the

\textsuperscript{107} The numbers went from 62 to 125. H.C. Debates, 5th series, vol. 135, 2460.

\textsuperscript{108} Duggan, 'The Life of a Civil Servant'. The other members of the team to accompany Anderson and Cope from England were: Mark Sturgis from the Treasury but who previously had been Assistant Private Secretary to Asquith (Sturgis became, in effect, a second Assistant Under Secretary, though he was not immediately gazetted as such, and he acted as Anderson's deputy during his many absences); A.P. Waterfield, Bernard Gilbert and B.W. Matthews also from the Treasury; L.N. Blake Odgers from the Home Office; T.P. Fairgrieve of the Privy Council Office;
same time as being Under Secretary. The Treasury Remembrancer, Maurice Headlam, was replaced by A.P. Waterfield who had been an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury before leaving the civil service at the end of the war. Though officially Treasury Remembrancer and thus completely independent of the Chief Secretary's Office, Waterfield in practice acted as part of the financial branch of that office. Thus there was a double increase in efficiency: Treasury approval could be given on the spot by Anderson and the investigation of proposals from the boards and departments did not have to be done twice (once by the Chief Secretary's Office and once by the Treasury Remembrancer).

This innovation greatly increased the efficiency of the whole of the Irish Administration. Proposals from boards and departments which previously were insufficiently considered because of the difficulty of investigating them were now quickly examined and accepted or rejected. Being on the spot, the decision makers were more aware of the merits of some proposals and the defects of others. One example will suffice. Since 1909 the Congested Districts Board had been conducting a running battle with the Treasury on the question of a pension scheme for those of their staff who were not civil servants. When Anderson was called in, the matter was quickly settled. As it is the only word of even faint praise about a Treasury official in his whole book on the Congested Districts Board, it is worth quoting the comment of W.L. Micks, one of the Permanent Members of the Board:

Between Mr. MacMahon for the Irish Government and Sir John Anderson for the Treasury a conference of a few hours with representatives of the Board was sufficient to settle on fairly satisfactory lines a

and Basil Clark, a journalist, who became 'Director of Information'.


109. Waterfield was assisted by his Treasury colleagues, Gilbert and Matthews and by Duggan, who now had the status of Principal Clerk, and Brennan, the two First Class Clerks who were praised by Cope and Harwood.
scheme that had been battled over by the Treasury for more than ten years and the Board's first proposed scheme was practically sanctioned after years of delay, irritation and loss to the officials concerned. 110

The most significant of all the changes was, of course, the appointment of Sir John Anderson as joint Under Secretary. 111 Henry Robinson's testimonial, though often quoted, is worth repeating, not least because it was unusual for someone to win unqualified praise from the rather critical head of the Local Government Board:

Anderson was beyond all doubt a really great administrator. Once in a blue moon the open competitive examination for the Civil Service brings to light a man of his exceptional type whom no power on earth can prevent from sprinting like a flash to the top of the ladder. I doubt very much, however, whether in the whole history of the British Civil Service of these supermen ever had a heavier responsibility than Anderson... But he stood it with courage and infinite patience; he saw passing events, appalling as they were, in their true proportion to the whole problem, and he never appeared to be unduly cast down or uplifted over the day's work. His presence was so constantly required in London that he had to give Waterfield a very free hand in Treasury matters, and to leave the normal work of administration to MacMahon, Cope and Mark Sturgis. But all the same he was captain of the ship in more than name, and his final word on any subject went, and when the vessel was having a bad time among the shoals and breakers he was always to be found on the bridge with his hand on the engine-room telegraph.112

It is interesting that Robinson should have, consciously or unconsciously, echoed Barry O'Brien's metaphor of Dublin Castle as a ship. Even more interesting is the fact that whereas O'Brien saw the Chief Secretary as the captain,


111. It was clear to everyone that it was Anderson, though only Joint Under Secretary, who was in control. MacMahon continued to occupy the Under Secretary's residence at the Phoenix Park. Anderson continued to receive the equivalent of his salary as Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue plus a house allowance and War bonus which added up to £3800. MacMahon received £2500. Wheeler Bennett, *John Anderson*, p.58, n.4.

112. Robinson, *Memories*, pp 292-3. Quoted in Wheeler Bennett, *John Anderson*, p.62 and Fanning, *The Irish Department of Finance*, p.11. Robinson's view of Anderson was shared by almost all those who met him: G.C. Duggan found him the 'outstanding figure in the new regime...He bore no ill-will, he would apologise frankly, and turn his attention to the next comer'. 'Periscope' [G.C. Duggan], 'The Last Days of Dublin Castle', *Blackwood's Magazine*, MCCLXXXII, Aug. 1922, pp 150-2; Winston Churchill later described Anderson as 'of singular capacity and firmness of character,
the Lord Lieutenant as the man who signed the log and the Under Secretary as
the man at the helm, Robinson saw the Under Secretary as captain, the man on
the bridge. Robinson was well aware that the powers possessed by Anderson
were greater than those of any of his predecessors. As G.C. Duggan remarked,
he possessed power such as 'no Chief Secretary has ever wielded, or is ever
again likely to wield'. Partly this was due to his position as a Secretary
to the Treasury, but it was not only that. The Chief Secretary only
occasionally came to Ireland: instead Anderson frequently went to England to
brief him and the rest of the Cabinet. He became, what no other Under
Secretary of the period had succeeded in becoming, the most trusted adviser
of the Government. Often his advice was not accepted but he never lost the
confidence of the Cabinet. And in the day to day administration of Dublin
Castle he was allowed a completely free hand.

G.C. Duggan who had two spells at Dublin Castle as well as some experi­
ence of working in various English departments, commented at the time and in
his unpublished memoirs on the exhilaration of working in the Chief Secretary's
Office under Anderson. Exhilaration is hardly a word which might have been
used of the atmosphere in the Castle at any other time and it is probably
accurate enough in this case. Nearly all of Anderson's team were rising young
civil servants. Anderson himself was only thirty eight when he was posted to
Ireland. Also they all came to Ireland to do a specific job. They did not
expect to remain there permanently. There was thus no time for them to get
into a rut. Very few of them had any social connections in Ireland and, given
the state of the country at the time, they were not likely to develop any active

sagacious and imperturable amid gathering peril and confusion'. Churchill
The Aftermath, (1929), p.322, quoted in Wheeler Bennett, John Anderson,
p.74; Wheeler Bennett described his subject as 'the greatest public
servant of his day... the apotheosis of the Civil Service'. Ibid., p.vii.

113. 'Periscope' [G.C. Duggan], 'The Last Days of Dublin Castle', Blackwood's
Magazine, MCCLXXXII, August 1922, p.149.
114. Ibid., and 'The Life of a Civil Servant'.
social life. Their own safety apart, their attitude to the Ascendancy was such that they would not have desired visits to the Kildare St. Club, even had they been welcomed there. Their work was their first and only preoccupation, and of none was this more true than Anderson himself.115

The skill and efficiency of Anderson's team ensured that a quick end was brought to the stagnation in Dublin Castle. However, all was not plain sailing. They did have their problems: the machinery of government was improved but not perfected and mistakes continued to be made. Whatever their skill and enthusiasm, they were faced with a form of administration which was unlike anything any of them had previously experienced and which had for some time fallen into disarray. It is impossible to examine the administrative records of the period without being struck by the new dynamism and at the same time by the initial ignorance of the new Administration. They brought fresh ideas and energy: efficiency came only in time after trial and error. Whether they would be there long enough to master their new environment was a question which must have occurred to some of them. In the meantime, the best they could do was follow Anderson's example: 'apologise frankly and turn...[their] attention to the next comer'.116

Of course Fisher's team were not a superhuman breed of Dei ex Machina without any prejudices of their own. It would have been surprising if they did not have some sense of their own importance and a feeling of disdain for the 'old guard' at Dublin Castle. Not all of the 'old guard' were as impressed as Duggan by the new arrivals. Though the new Treasury arrangements foreshadowed an increase in many items of expenditure, the new arrivals were criticised for

115. Wheeler Bennett, John Anderson, pp 58-82. Anderson's wife, to whom he was devoted, died of cancer just before he was offered the job. In his grief, he threw himself into his work.
116. Duggan, 'The Life of a Civil Servant'.

their lack of sympathy in some matters, not least their treatment of retiring civil servants.\textsuperscript{117} In his diary of his time in Dublin, which is of immense value for historians, Mark Sturgis remarked contemptuously on the 'Sticky old Irish officials with cold feet and nowt in their heads but jealousy of their colleagues and care for their salaries'. But the context of the remark was his praise of the way Anderson handled them.\textsuperscript{118}

In assessing Anderson's Under Secretaryship and comparing it with those of his predecessors, it has to be remembered that Anderson's regime was not intended to be permanent. It is doubtful whether some of the innovations could have been successful over a longer period. Enthusiasm must surely have waned and independence would have become increasingly hard to maintain. Also, it is unlikely that the Treasury would have accepted the new Irish branch of the Treasury as a permanent arrangement. Anderson's powers as a Secretary to the Treasury were personal to himself. It was not intended that they would be given to the Irish Under Secretary automatically.\textsuperscript{119} This was because his position was so anomalous. As Under Secretary, it was his function to propose expenditure and as Secretary to the Treasury it was his function to allow or disallow it. So, proposals which were put forward by his department with his approval could be rejected, again with his approval, by the Irish branch of the Treasury over which he also presided.\textsuperscript{120}

Another factor militating against a completely smoothly run administrative machine was the state of the country. Sinn Fein had set up a rival administration which claimed the allegiance of an increasingly large part of the

\textsuperscript{117} Robinson, \textit{Memories}, pp 293-4.

\textsuperscript{118} Sturgis Diary, 22 August 1920, vol. 1, p.32, P.R.O. 30/57.

\textsuperscript{119} Treasury Circular Letter, 25 May 1920, P.R.O., T. 14/109.

\textsuperscript{120} Fanning, \textit{The Irish Department of Finance}, p.11; Wheeler Bennett, \textit{John Anderson}, p.59.
country: it was correspondingly more difficult for the Castle to exercise its control. Its moral and indeed physical authority was more precarious than at any time since 1800. This was emphasised by the fact that not only was Fisher's recommendation that the Administration be removed from the environs of the Castle thought to be unwise but the safety of the top civil servants could only be guaranteed by moving them all into the Castle to live. In 1919, some of those thought to be at risk moved into the Castle. Anderson tried to reverse this and his team lodged in a hotel in Kingstown and in various houses and rooms in Dublin, but it soon proved necessary to take up residence within the Castle. The gates of the Castle were permanently guarded and instruction in the use of small arms became a routine exercise. It is hard to doubt Fisher's view that such isolation could only be damaging to morale and intelligence, and there is ample evidence to support this view.  

In the circumstances, the wonder is that the Administration was able to carry on as successfully as it did. As Fisher remarked, 'ultimate efficiency must...depend on the attitude of the general population'. It was therefore, for the moment, impossible. In the meantime, a great deal was achieved. G.C. Duggan speaks of 1920-1 at Dublin Castle as years of 'almost autocratic power in the hands of Civil Servants' with only the 'bare outline' of policy being sketched by the Cabinet. The picture was filled in by a number of civil servants of 'outstanding personality': they decided 'its foreground and its background' and brought matters to the 'appointed end'. Duggan probably

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122. Supplementary Report by Fisher, p.5.

123. Duggan, 'The Life of a Civil Servant'.

overestimates the control of the civil servants and the phrase 'appointed end' may be questionable. Government policy was not completely consistent in these years and Cabinet and Castle were, as we have seen, often at cross purposes. It is true, however, that the Castle had more say in the shaping of policy and that the Under Secretary and his assistants had more power than hitherto. The Fisher report was a watershed: with Anderson and his team installed in Dublin Castle, it was certain that the Administration of Ireland would no longer continue to drift. A firm policy in favour of a political solution or a military victory or both became possible. The arrangements for the implementation of the Government of Ireland Act proceeded alongside a harsh 'security' and efforts to reach a compromise with Sinn Fein. When the Truce finally came, it owed a great deal to Fisher, Anderson and Cope.

The final task of Anderson's team was to arrange for the orderly transfer of power to the new regimes in Dublin and Belfast. This was accomplished without serious trouble (at least in the administrative sense).\(^{124}\) Their mission accomplished, they returned to their various departments.\(^{125}\)

In the title of this section I posed the question whether the Under Secretary for Ireland was the principal permanent adviser to the Irish Government, or whether in practice he was a politician or even a mere routine

\(^{124}\) For the transfer of power, see John MacColgan, 'The Irish Administration in Transition: British Administrative Policies in Ireland, 1920-22', Ph.D., University College Dublin, 1977.

\(^{125}\) In 1921 Sir Ernest Clark of the Board of Inland Revenue had been appointed Assistant Under Secretary with an Office in Belfast. In the 1923 New Year Honours List Anderson became a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of Bath; Waterfield and Whiskard became C.B.'s and Sturgis a K.C.B. Cope received a K.C.B. in 1922. Wheeler Bennett, *John Anderson*, p.82.
clerk. This title, as will have been evident, was suggested by Warren Fisher's report. The answer to the question should also have been evident. The Under Secretaryship was each of these three things at different times. If one of these predominated, it was the third.

Fisher blamed the stagnation of the Chief Secretary's Office on the personality of some of the occupants of the post of Under Secretary. This is, no doubt, partly true. David Harrel, James Dougherty and James MacMahon were loyal and able civil servants but without the drive or initiative or any of the other qualities which Fisher judged to be essential for the efficient working of the Irish Administration. However it was partly because they were considered unlikely to rock the boat that all three were considered suitable appointments. From a political point of view, drive and initiative were often seen as less desirable than 'soundness' and loyalty. If blame has to be apportioned, then it might more fairly be placed at the doors of those politicians who considered it better to risk stagnation than controversy, or to blame the system which attached so much importance to the position of Under Secretary when reasons of practical politics prevented so many incumbents from adequately meeting the challenge.

One very good reason for Under Secretaries behaving as routine clerks was that there was so much routine work to be done and so little staff to do it. It says something about the way the government of Ireland was carried on that while millions of pounds could be spent on land reforms, relief of congestion, development and so on, the Treasury begrudged a few thousands a year which might have ensured that the millions were properly spent. The Treasury could not very well stand in the way of policies initiated by the Irish Executive and supported by the Cabinet, but it could, and did, exercise a crippling control over matters of departmental establishment. Ironically this was felt more by the Chief Secretary's Office than by the other Irish
departments, because, while other departments might claim to be uniquely Irish, the Chief Secretary's Office was treated as little different from the office of any British Secretary of State. In the absence of the often requested increases of staff, the Under Secretary was forced to help fill the gap. The routine work, though it was tedious, was important. Nothing proved this better than the 1916 Rising: MacDonnell initiated a down-grading of the police work in the Chief Secretary's Office which helped free himself and his staff for other things, but the necessity for such work was dramatically proved in 1916.

Another very good reason for Under Secretaries to behave as routine clerks was the fate of those of their predecessors who did aspire to something more. MacDonnell was subjected to persistent and intensive vilification such as few, if any, British public servants ever experienced. In the words of George Wyndham, who might have been forgiven for being less sympathetic, MacDonnell was 'subjected to continuous attacks which, in the case of any public servant, except perhaps Milner, are without parallel; and, in the case of MacDonnell, are without foundation, justification, or even excuse...'. Matthew Nathan was more fortunate, but he did have to resign his position and accept responsibility for a policy, whose formulation he had nothing to do with.

At the same time, the cases of MacDonnell and Nathan do show that the Under Secretaryship was not always a routine clerkship. Some Under Secretaries behaved or tried to behave as heads of department who had a role to play in advising the Government. The fact that they failed shows something else: that the traditions of the permanent civil service which by the turn of the century could almost be taken for granted in England, did not apply so well in

Ireland. Both on the question of the people appointed and the role they played, the experience of Ireland was different than that of England. Again MacDonnell is the best example. The reservations expressed at the appointment of the person who was, after all, in other respects, the best qualified man for the job, are significant, as is the fact that MacDonnell felt the necessity of, and was later attacked for, attaching conditions which would have been taken for granted in England.

The blame for this is often very conveniently attached to the peculiar circumstances of Ireland. However the short-sightedness of Government policy was equally responsible as it only perpetuated the crippling effect of these peculiar circumstances. Though the need for a reorganisation of Irish government was pressed by almost every Under Secretary from Ridgeway onwards, very little was done.

Ridgeway found the system 'chaotic and effete'. David Harrel found it 'cumbrous in its action and prejudicial to departmental discipline and efficiency'. Anthony MacDonnell found it defective and completely uncoordinated. More specifically, he considered that the Under Secretary lacked initiative and for all matters outside the police was nothing more than 'a conduit pipe leading to the Chief Secretary's Private Secretary'. He fought long and hard for major administrative reforms but failed because administrative reform was seen as indistinguishable from political reform. With a scheme such as devolution, the failure to act may be understandable. But remarkably little was done in the way of other much less ambitious yet still important changes. The Chief Secretary's Office's lack of control was recognised but instead of being remedied, it increased, not decreased, during the period. MacDonnell thought that a great deal could be achieved within the law

as it existed. It simply required a commitment and a single mindedness. Neither were forthcoming.

He thought the office was 'badly manned' both in terms of quality and quantity. The quality of the staff could not be improved overnight but their numbers could. Yet the Chief Secretary's Office was one of the few areas of Irish government not to have experienced significant growth in the period. Only when Fisher was appointed did things begin to happen in this regard. Fisher's comments on Dublin Castle were not much different from MacDonnell's. What was different was the response to them.

Not alone was little done in the way of reform but successive Governments continued to treat the Under Secretaryship as a political appointment. It may be that the only way to administer Ireland was to follow Machiavelli's advice and 'attach' the Government to one side or the other. This would explain why the Liberals got rid of Ridgeway and why Balfour doubted the wisdom of appointing MacDonnell. Indeed, more often than not, this is the way the government of Ireland was carried on. However, such a practice could only weaken the position of the higher civil service. Until John Anderson came to Ireland, there was no sustained effort made to ensure a completely independent civil service in Ireland.

Antony MacDonnell complained of being between the devil and the deep blue sea. As a civil servant, that is precisely where he should have been. As one Lord Lieutenant put it, for an Irish administration to gain general dissatisfaction was the limit of favourable estimation to which it could aspire.

128. Ibid.
West Ridgeway's claim that Ireland was ruled by a 'congeries' of semi-independent boards and by the Treasury in London was neither surprising nor new. As the permanent head of the department held directly responsible for the government of Ireland, no-one was more aware than the Under Secretary of just how disparate and complicated the whole system was. Almost all the Under Secretaries between 1890 and 1920 echoed Ridgeway's complaint. Their function was to ensure that the centripetal force - the Chief Secretary - could exercise sufficient control to prevent the various boards flying off in their own 'aimless worn out grooves'. It was a frustrating task. Phrases such as 'chaotic and effete', 'cumbrous... and prejudicial to ..discipline and efficiency', and 'completely uncoordinated' were used repeatedly to describe the defects of the board system. Despite Ridgeway's recommendation that it be scrapped, the system continued to operate and new boards were added. In this chapter I shall assess the operation of some of the more important boards already in existence in 1890 and examine the growth of the system in the next thirty years. My main concentration will be on the crucial areas of law and order, education, and agriculture.1

1. The vital question of the financial control of the boards is examined in Chapter 8.
Administration by boards was not uniquely Irish. In England and, even more so in Scotland, there were a number of semi-independent boards and commissions. For instance, Scotland had its own Congested Districts Board, Fishery Board, Local Government Board and Lunacy Board. However only in Ireland did boards proliferate to such an extent that they formed the primary mode of government. In the case of Scotland, the Royal Commission on the Civil Service found that the board system was not particularly effective in 'securing responsibility for official action and advice'. In Ireland, it noted the existence of an even more... complex system of Boards and Commissions whose members, paid and unpaid, share between them much of the higher administrative work, exhibiting a variety and intricacy of relations *inter se* and with the Irish Government.

The conclusion concerning Scotland therefore applied with even greater force to Ireland.

Nothing better typifies the confusion created by the proliferation of boards, offices, commissions and departments in Ireland than the fact that no two estimates of their number agree. Augustine Birrell told the House of Commons in 1907 that there were forty five such agencies engaged in the administration of public business in Ireland. He excluded the Admiralty and the War Office although both were, by any sensible criteria, engaged in public business in Ireland. Between them they employed almost 1000 officials who were based in Ireland or engaged solely on Irish business. In discussing Irish government in his book *The Outlook in...*
Ireland (published in the year of Birrell's speech), Lord Dunraven notes the existence of sixty-seven Irish boards and departments. A return of Public Departments in Scotland and Ireland in 1911 prepared for the House of Commons put the number at thirty-nine and two years later another return, prepared for the Royal Commission on the Civil Service, put it at forty-five. The discrepancy is largely accounted for by different definitions of what constituted a separate office or department. For instance the Supreme Court of Judicature was composed of a number of 'departments' such as the Registry of Deeds and the Land Registry which were sometimes listed separately and sometimes together. Similarly, Birrell included the Office of Lunatic Inspectors which was part of the Chief Secretary's Office. If we include the Chief Secretary's Office, the Admiralty and the War Office, in his list, the total number of 'departments' operating in Ireland in 1907 may be taken to be approximately forty-eight. (After 1908, the Royal University and the Queen's Colleges were no longer included but in 1911-12 the two Insurance Departments were added). This compares with about twenty-five in existence at the time of the Act of Union.

In fact the exact number of 'departments' is not particularly significant. Some of them were virtually obsolete and many of them played

5. Dunraven, The Outlook in Ireland (1907), p.154; Public Departments (Scotland and Ireland), pp 2-3, H.C. 1912-13 (104), LVI; Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, p.79, Evidence, pp 181-3, [Cds 7338 and 7340] H.C. 1914, XVI. MacDowell lists forty boards and departments existing in 1914 but omits a number including Lord Lieutenants Household, and the Land Registry. He groups two others together as one. McDowell, pp 297-9. The National Health Insurance Commission (Ireland) and the National Insurance Audit Department were set up after the 1911 return. McDowell's includes the first but not the second. See 'Blue Notes' 1920-21, Class VII, 6 and 8, P.R.O., T 165/47.

only a minor role in the government of the country. The inclusion of the Royal University, the Queen's Colleges and the National Gallery was anomalous. The National Debt Commissioners never met. The Quit Rent Office which was a branch of the English 'department', Woods and Forests, had an established staff of only eight. The Friendly Societies Registry had only one employee and the Endowed Schools Commission had two, yet they counted as separate departments. More important than the total number of departments was the autonomy and overlapping functions of some of the more important ones.

Of the forty-eight in existence in 1907, eleven came under the direct control of the Irish Government, namely the R.I.C., the Dublin Metropolitan Police, the General Prisons Board, Reformatory and Industrial Schools, Inspectors of Lunatics, General Registry Office, Registry of Petty Sessions Clerks, Resident Magistrates, Crown Solicitors and Clerks of the Crown and Peace and, of course, the Chief Secretary's Office itself. The Lord Commission, the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests, and the Public Record Office were 'not so fully controlled' by the Irish Government. Five only came under its control as regards appointments and the framing of rules - the Boards of National and Intermediate Education, the Commissioners of Endowed Schools, the National Gallery, and the Royal Hibernian Academy. The Chief Secretary was President ex officio of the Local Government Board, the Department of Agriculture and the Congested Districts Board but exercised no control other than what was possible through personal influence. The Public Loan Fund Board, the Commissioners of Irish Lights, the Supreme Court of Judicature and nine other Irish

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7. J.H. Morgan, 'How Ireland is Governed', Nineteenth Century, LXXIV (Sept. 1913), 579.

8. The returns of 1911 and 1913 do not class the Royal Hibernian Academy as a department of government.
departments were completely independent of the Irish Government. Finally, twelve English departments operated in Ireland.9

The English departments with branches in Ireland or with officials employed solely on Irish business were the Admiralty, Customs and Excise, Exchequer and Audit, Registry of Friendly Societies, Home Office, Inland Revenue, Ordinance Survey, Post Office, Stationary Office, Stationary Office, Board of Trade, War Office and Woods and Forests.10

They employed almost six-sevenths of all the civil servants engaged on Irish work11 and operated almost completely without reference to Dublin Castle. The Irish Inspector of Mines was attached to the Manchester District; Factory Inspectors were controlled by the Home Office; Labour Exchanges, when they were set up, were controlled by the Board of Trade which also had offices at the main Irish ports; and the Irish Post Office was a sub-branch of the English Post Office. The Irish Government had no official knowledge of their proceedings.12

Rural Development

Because Ireland was predominantly rural, those departments which dealt with the 'land question' were of vital importance to the population at large and to the successful administration of the country. The land question, in its various manifestations, plagued the administrators of Ireland throughout the nineteenth century but only in response to the Land

9. H.C. Debs, 4th series, CLXII, 83. See also Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, Evidence, pp 181-4, [Cd 7340], H.C. 1914, XUI. For the Irish departments controlled by the Treasury, see Chapter 8.

10. Public Departments (Ireland and Scotland), p.3., H.C. 1912-1913 (104), LVI.


War in the 1880’s was a serious attempt made to come to terms with it. The history of that response does not concern me directly here. What does concern me is the administrative innovation which was involved. The Land Commission, the Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture all represented different responses to solve the problems of Irish agriculture. All three were unusual because administrative innovation was not particularly common anywhere in the United Kingdom; and they were all the more so because the innovation tended in a direction opposite to that in which English administration was moving.

Significantly two of these three innovations were the direct fruits of 'Constructive Unionism'. That policy was a reaction to the growth of Nationalism and in particular to the argument which attributed the ills of Ireland to the Act of Union. It was initiated by Arthur Balfour who, as we have seen, promised to be as firm as Cromwell and 'as radical as any reformer', though it was left to his brother to coin the phrase 'killing Home Rule with kindness'. Gerald Balfour explained the philosophy:

Apply suitable remedial measures... to the social and economic conditions of the country, and it is not unreasonable to hope that political discontent - or, in other words, the demand for Home Rule - will gradually die away of itself.

The fear of Home Rule certainly led many Unionists to endorse further diversity in the administration of Ireland. Though the Land Acts of 1870 and 1881 were Liberal measures, the policy of land purchase was brought to fruition by the Tories in the Acts of 1885, 1891 and 1903.

The endorsement of peasant proprietorship by what was traditionally the party of the landlords and the interference of the State in the realms of property relationships were only possible because they seemed to be the price of political stability. That also explains the democratisation of Local Government in 1898. It is in this light too that the institutional innovations in the field of agriculture and rural development must be seen.

The Land Commission was set up in 1881 under the Land Law (Ireland) Act (Gladstone's second Land Act). It was originally composed of a Judicial Commissioner and two other Commissioners whose main functions were to fix 'fair rents' under the terms of the Act and to make loans to tenants who wished to purchase their holdings. The Judicial Commissioner had to be a practising barrister at the Irish bar of not less than ten years standing. He was a puisne judge of the High Court and had the same salary and tenure of office as other judges of that Court. The two additional Commissioners, who had the status of Country Court Judges, were appointed initially for seven years at salaries of £3000 each. Two further Commissioners were appointed under the terms of 1885 Act and a second Judicial Commissioner was appointed under the terms of the 1903 Act.

15. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class III, 17 (The Irish Land Commission), P.R.O., T 165/47. The first Judicial Commissioner was Mr. Justice O'Hagan. He was succeeded, on his resignation in 1889, by E.F. Litton Q.C., who died shortly afterwards. E.T. Bewley Q.C. served from 1890 to 1898 and was succeeded by R.E. Meredith Q.C. who resigned in 1906 to become Master of the Rolls in Ireland. J.O. Wylie, K.C. was appointed in his place. Like other judgeships, the position carried a salary of £3,500.

16. Ibid. E.F. Litton and J.E. Vernon were the two original Commissioners. F.S. Wrench replaced Vernon who died in 1887 and Gerald Fitzgerald replaced Litton when he became Judicial Commissioner. Fitzgerald himself was appointed the Judicial Commissioner in 1903. S.J. Lynch and J.G. McCarthy were appointed Commissioners under the 1885 Act. Murrough O'Brien was appointed on Lynch's death in 1892. When he and Lynch died in 1904 and 1915 respectively their positions were not filled as the 1903 Act had made them superfluous.
The Land Commission rapidly became one of the largest Irish Government departments. Originally it was intended to be only a temporary Commission, but in 1891 it was made permanent. It was bound by law to present an annual report to Parliament but otherwise it was virtually independent of Government control. Indeed its judicial decisions sometimes embarrassed the Irish Government. For instance, Judicial Commissioner Meredith gave judgement that the Commission enjoyed certain powers relating to the purchase of land to provide for evicted tenants. The Treasury denied that it had any such powers and the Chief Secretary, Walter Long, gave notice of appeal. On the change of Government, it was decided, under considerable pressure from the Irish Parliamentary Party, to drop the appeal and to withdraw those Treasury regulations which restricted the Commission's powers in the matter.

The Land Act of 1903 revised the functions and the composition of the Commission. The implementation of that Act was placed in the hands of a new body called the Estates Commissioners. One of these was to be a Land Commissioner—F.S. Wrench was nominated—and the other two were to be appointed by the Irish Government. They also were given the same tenure as County Court Judges. Like the Land Commissioners, the Estates Commissioners were required to report periodically. Their duties were mainly related to the sale by landlords of whole estates and the purchase of such estates by the Commissioners themselves for resale. As with the Land Commissioners, all matters of law were referred to the Judicial Commissioners and much of the preparatory work was done by Assistant

17. See Chapter 7.
19. M. Finucane and W.F. Bailey were appointed in 1903. On Finucane's death in 1911, W.H. Stuart was appointed. Bailey died in 1917 and was replaced more than a year later by Edward O'Farrell. 'Blue Notes', Class III, 17 (Irish Land Commission), loc.cit.
complete panacea for Irish agricultural problems that some of its proponents hoped. In the west of Ireland there were many holdings which were incapable of providing a living for the occupier, whether he was a peasant proprietor or a tenant. Along the western seaboard, the inhabitants eked out a precarious living on farms that were not only too small but were often not much more than marsh and rock. After visiting the region in 1891, Arthur Balfour decided to include in the Land Act of that year provision for the setting up of a Congested Districts Board which would be invested with wide powers of a paternal character to devise schemes for the amelioration of the social and economic conditions of the poverty stricken inhabitants. The operations of the Board were limited to electoral divisions with a rateable valuation of less than 30 shillings per head situated in a county, twenty per cent of whose inhabitants lived in divisions of such a rateable valuation. By these criteria, the Congested Districts in 1891 comprised one-sixth of the area and one-ninth of the population of the country. Under the relaxed criteria laid down by the Land Act of 1909, they expanded to include the entire counties of Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Mayo, Galway and Kerry, and six rural districts in Clare and four in Cork. This represented over one-third the area of the country and a population of over a million.

Balfour was well aware that for the Board to be successful it would have to be popularly acceptable and have considerable discretion in the framing and implementing of its policies. He set out specifically to

20. For a breakdown of the work of the Commission, see ibid.
22. 'Blue Notes', 1910-11, Class II, 85 (Department of Agriculture), p.25, P.R.O. T 165/36.
create a board which would be free from 'red tape' and the 'rules and precedents which are very proper limitations to the action of a great department'. When his successor as Chief Secretary, William Jackson, attempted to bring the Board under the control of the Chief Secretary's Office, Balfour defined its position in a memorandum which, as W.L. Micks, secretary of the Board, put it, amounted to a charter of freedom. It was clearly laid down that the Board was 'not in the ordinary sense a Government Department, nor is it subordinate either to the Chief Secretary's Office or the Ministry of the day'. It seems likely that without such independence the Board would not have been able to achieve the success it did. However, handing over such a large area of the country over to be administered by a virtually independent Board was guaranteed to give rise to considerable problems. It was only to be expected that the Chief Secretary's Office and the Treasury would continue throughout the period to challenge the autonomy of the Board.

The Board was empowered to take such steps as it 'thought proper' to promote agricultural development, forestry, the breeding of livestock and poultry, the sale of seed potatoes and oats, migration and emigration, the enlargement and amalgamation of small holdings and improvement of estates, fishing, weaving and spinning and any other suitable industries. It rapidly involved itself in all these areas, with the exception of emigration, with remarkable results. However its most important activity proved to be the purchase of estates for improvement and resale to tenants.

23. See above, p.112.
25. See Section II and Chapter 8.
27. The best and fullest account of the work of the Board is Micks, The Congested Districts Board.
Between 1891 and 1921, well over 1100 estates (and farms) were purchased at a total cost of almost £11 million. To begin with, the Board had to purchase land through the Land Commission but the procedure proved so laborious and complicated that an Amending Act was introduced in 1893 to allow it to act independently. It could buy and sell and be treated as a landlord in its own right for the purposes of the provision of finance under the Land Purchase Acts.

The actual income of the Board was small. It received £41,240 as interest on an endowment fund of £1,500,000 which was part of the Church Surplus Fund. It received a parliamentary grant of £25,000 under the Congested Districts Board Act, 1899, and £20,000 from the Irish Development Fund, under the Land Act of 1903, and a further parliamentary grant of £144,750 under the Land Act of 1909 giving it a total income, after 1909, of £231,000. It also had two Reproductive Loan Funds which were for use in the development of the fishing industry. Partly because of this limited income, the Board concentrated mainly on land purchase work and work which could be financed by loans. It was entitled to borrow money from the Board of Works, with Treasury sanction, for various specified purposes. As most of the loans were made on the security of the Board's annual income, the amount of borrowing it could do was also limited. This led to constant bickering with the Treasury.

Under the Land Law (Ireland) Act of 1896, the Board was empowered to obtain advances of land stock from the Land Commission, for the purchase of land, to the extent of twenty five times its income from the Church Surplus Fund. The amount that could be borrowed was increased in 1901. Because of the fluctuating price of

28. Ibid., p.150.
30. Previously the Land Commission refused to advance money on the resale of an estate as the Board was not a landlord and thus did not come under the terms of the Land Purchase Acts.
stock the Board actually managed to make a small profit on some of its early land purchase operations but it was not until 1903 that it was allowed to receive back in cash from the Land Commission the difference between the purchase price and the selling price of an estate which, because of the Board's improvements, had an 'enhanced value'.

Much of the success of the Board was due to its composition. The Chief Secretary was, of course, an *ex officio* member and acted as chairman when he was present but only with the agreement of his colleagues. Frederick Wrench, the Land Commissioner, was also an *ex officio* member of the original Board, as was the Under Secretary, West Ridgeway. The eight nominated members were a motley crew of clergymen, businessmen, landlords and professional men. The clerical element was always well represented. After the Board was reconstituted in 1909 and the number of members was increased to fourteen, it included two bishops and three parish priests. A conscious attempt was made to include members from all parts of the Congested Districts and to appoint representatives of the nationalist population. Though it was regarded with mixed feelings by many Nationalists, it was the only board that they actually dominated. Alone of the Irish boards, the Congested Districts Board managed to win popular acceptance. That not only made its work in the Irish countryside easier, it also made it more difficult for politicians and administrators to curb its activities. The most convincing response to the criticisms made of the Board's unorthodox approach was its undoubted success.


34. See, for example, MacDonnell to Secretary of the Treasury, 11 May 1906, Government Correspondence Books, S.P.O., VIII B/6/22/798-801.
The success of the Congested Districts Board inevitably led to suggestions that its area of operations be extended to include the whole country, but this was never seriously considered.\textsuperscript{35} The extreme poverty of the Congested Districts\textsuperscript{36} was deemed to justify dispensing with normal procedure to indulge in what both Balfours considered State paternalism but what Michael Davitt preferred to see as 'enlightened State socialism.'\textsuperscript{37} The extension of State paternalism or socialism to the whole country would have been seen as a dangerous precedent. As Gerald Balfour put it, 'the traditional policy of \textit{laisser faire} had still a powerful hold over men's minds, and to abandon it, even in the case of rural Ireland, was a veritable new departure in statesmanship'.\textsuperscript{38}

In fact, the emphasis on State involvement by Davitt and the Balfours is misleading. The Congested Districts Board was a State-conceived and financed initiative. However its most significant features were its independence from the Government and its virtually 'amateur' status. It was an unpaid Board whose members assembled monthly to decide where and how to spend its funds. Not until 1909 did any of its permanent staff become members. Under the Land Act of that year the joint-Secretaries were added to the Board. Significantly, this was one of the changes strongly favoured by Antony MacDonnell.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{35} Plunkett, \textit{Ireland in the New Century} (1904).

\textsuperscript{36} Of the 98,000 families resident in the Congested Districts in 1891, more than 17,000 were defined by the Board as 'approaching the borderline of poverty'. 28,500 families lived on holdings of less than \pounds2 rateable valuation; 26,600 lived on holdings between \pounds2 and \pounds4 valuation; and almost 43,000 lived on holdings with a valuation of over \pounds4, or did not have any land. The average poor law valuation was \pounds1-0-2 as against \pounds2-19-8 for the country as a whole. \textit{Royal Commission on the Financial Relations between Great Britain and Ireland, First Report, Evidence}, p.129, [Cd 7720-I], H.C. 1895, XXXVI.

\textsuperscript{37} Davitt, \textit{The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland} (1904), p.663; Rosenbaum, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 227-8; Plunkett, \textit{op.cit.}, p.244.

\textsuperscript{38} Rosenbaum, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 227-8.
So, while the Board was popular, it was neither democratic nor integrated into the normal structure of government. Horace Plunkett's proposals for the establishment of a Department of Agriculture promised to meet both of these apparently conflicting criteria. That they did not succeed fully with the first is attributable more to personality factors than to any inherent defects in his scheme, which deserves to rank as the most creative piece of administrative innovation in the period.

Plunkett, the father of Irish agricultural cooperation (in the shape of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society) was a firm believer in self-help and, though he was a member of the Congested Districts Board from 1891 until 1918, disapproved of its paternalistic approach. His own ideas found expression in the report of the Recess Committee, a gathering of prominent Irishmen which assembled in 1895, in response to his public invitation, to discuss how the development of the agricultural and industrial resources of Ireland might be best promoted. Remarkably, not only did the Committee meet, but it produced a unanimous report recommending that

> a Department of Government should be specially created, with a Minister directly responsible to Parliament as its head. The central body was to be assisted by a Consulative Council representative of the interests concerned. The Department was to be adequately endowed from the Imperial Treasury, and was to administer State aid to agriculture and industries in Ireland...

The Government had already been considering the creation of such a department and readily accepted the proposals of the Recess Committee. A bill was introduced in 1897 but it was withdrawn in favour of the Irish Local Government Act creating the popularly elected local authorities.

40. For a detailed account of the setting up of the Department of Agriculture, see Plunkett, *op.cit.*, pp 210-56.
which were to play an important part in the new department. The bill setting up the department was finally passed in 1899.\textsuperscript{42}

The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction owed something to the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, something to the practice of English administration and something to continental European countries.\textsuperscript{43} It took over the functions of six existing boards. Though the Chief Secretary was President, the real head of the Department was to be the Vice President who, it was understood, would be a Member of Parliament. This was a new departure and placed the Department on a similar footing to many English departments. Equally significant was the introduction of an element of popular control by the creation of a consultative council and advisory boards to assist the Department in its work.

The list of powers and duties transferred to the Department at its foundation or shortly afterwards gives a good impression both of the variety of its duties and of the complicated and confused network which it replaced. By Order of the Lord Lieutenant, the following powers and duties were transferred to the department: those of the Veterinary Department of the Irish Privy Council under the Diseases and Animals Acts of 1894 and 1896, the Destructive Insects Act, 1877, and the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act, 1893; those of the Registrar-General for Ireland and the Land Commission in connection with the preparation of agricultural statistics and the Markets and Fairs Acts, 1887 and 1891; those of the Commissioners of National Education in connection with the Albert and Munster Institutions;\textsuperscript{44} and those of the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.224; Rosenbaum, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 234-5.
\item \textsuperscript{43} For the latter, see \textit{ibid.}, p.235 and Plunkett, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 220-1.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Both of these were involved in teaching practical agricultural methods.
\end{itemize}
The administration of the grants for Science and Art and for Technical Instruction was transferred from the English Board of Education in 1901; in 1904 the powers of the Commissioners of Public Works in connection with the various Reproductive Loan Fund Acts and the Sea and Coast Fisheries Fund Act were transferred as were the powers of the English Board of Education in respect of the Geological Survey of Ireland in 1905. The National Museum and the National Library were also placed under the supervision of the Department.

Entrusting all these powers to a single department was an attempt to bring 'order and simplicity' to an area which had previously been characterised by disorder and confusion. The Department was also entrusted with new powers in relation to the development of Irish agriculture. The expenses of its departmental establishment and the cost of the transferred services were defrayed out of an annual parliamentary vote. For its new functions, it was given an 'Endowment Fund' derived from Irish and Imperial sources which yielded an annual income of £166,000.

To 'assist' the Department in carrying out its operations, a Council of Agriculture, an Agricultural Board and a Board of Technical Instruction were established. The President and Vice-President of the Department were ex officio members of each but were not normally entitled to vote. The Council of Agriculture consisted of 104 members, 68 appointed by the newly created County Councils and 34 by the Department. The Agricultural Board had 14 members - 8 appointed by Provincial Committees of the Council of

45. These powers were operative only outside the Congested Districts Board. 'Technical Instruction' meant instruction in the principles of science and art applicable to industry.

46. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class II, 35 (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction) pp 1-2, P.R.O., T 165/46.

47. Ibid; Plunkett, op.cit., pp 230-1.
Agriculture and 4 by the Department - while the Board of Technical Instruction had 23 - 15 appointed by local authorities, 4 by the Department, 1 by the Commissioners of National Education and 1 by the Commissioners of Intermediate Education. The Council of Agriculture which had to meet at least once a year discussed matters of public interest in connection with the Act and the two Boards were required to advise the Department on all matters submitted to them by the Department. They had no specific administrative powers but had a right of veto over all expenditure from the Endowment Fund. Surprisingly, this did not lead to any prolonged disputes between the Boards and the Department, perhaps because, as Birrell put it, in practice the Council discussed, the Board advised and the Department did what it thought best. 48

The Department was also empowered to cooperate with County Committees of Agriculture in local projects. It was bound, however, to demand a local contribution for such projects, with the result that it was less popular than the Congested Districts Board. Even so, it achieved notable success in this and the other areas under its control. 49

Despite its achievements the Department did not completely fulfil the expectations of the Recess Committee. Partly this was because of the overwhelming difficulties which any such department would have had to face in Ireland. However it was also related to the controversy which surrounded its first Vice President, Horace Plunkett. 'Killing Home Rule with kindness' and the whole philosophy of 'Constructive Unionism' was identified with him more than with any other politician, with the exception of the Balfours. His 'more business, less politics' prescription for Irish ills was poorly received by those who attributed all the economic problems of

48. Ibid., pp 234-5; 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class II, 35 (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction), p.3, P.R.O. T 165/46.
49. Plunkett, op.cit., pp 239-41. For the internal organisation of the Department, and an account of its work, see Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland), Report of the Committee of Inquiry, [OL 3573] II C. 1927. XVII.
Ireland to the Act of Union. His forthrightness in criticising the debilitating influence of the clergy and of Irish politicians on the Irish character only served to alienate both. 50

Plunkett was a Unionist M.P. In his open letter to the press suggesting the Recess Committee he frankly admitted his opposition to Home Rule and expressed the opinion that if Ireland was developed industrially and agriculturally, the demand for Home Rule would cease. On the other hand, he argued that, if it did not cease, Home Rule was more likely to be granted if Ireland was developed. The Nationalist Party was still divided into Parnellite and anti-Parnellite factions at this time. Justin McCarthy, of the majority faction, refused to take part in the Committee on the grounds that it was seeking to substitute administrative reform for Home Rule. John Redmond, from the other faction, agreed to attend because he was 'unwilling to take the responsibility of declining to aid in any effort to promote useful legislation in Ireland'. However, when the Party re-united, it took a less compromising attitude to the 'Constructive Unionist' movement, despite the best efforts of William O'Brien. 51

Plunkett's administration of his new department left few grounds for complaint. Despite the opposition of both Gerald Balfour and Lord Cadogan he insisted on appointing T.P. Gill, a Nationalist M.P. who had acted as secretary of the Recess Committee, to the secretaryship of the Department. He also made it clear to both Unionists and Nationalists that political patronage would be eschewed in the making of appointments. 52

50. Plunkett, op.cit., pp 61-121. The fact that he criticised Unionist politicians as well as Nationalist was ignored, except perhaps by Unionists.

51. Ibid., pp 214-71. For Redmond's attitude to Plunkett in 1904, see Rosenbaum, op.cit., p.242.

Neither of these gestures did anything to mollify the opposition to Plunkett. Indeed they helped to facilitate his downfall. In the general election of 1900 he was opposed by another Unionist and the seat fell to the Nationalists. Nevertheless he retained his position. This created a delicate problem for the Liberals in 1905. When the Tories fell Plunkett resigned. Like most observers, he understood that, as the position had ministerial status, this was a matter of course. However, Antony MacDonnell made strong representations to Bryce and Aberdeen to the effect that there was no-one in Ireland of sufficient calibre to replace Plunkett. It was agreed that he should stay on at least until the Liberals completed their planned re-organisation of the Irish Administration.  

53. Dillon, Sexton and O'Connor immediately approached Bryce to protest against this 'intolerable outrage'. Plunkett, they claimed, sought to 'break-up their party and debosh [?] the farmers'.  

54. When the Nationalists raised the matter in Parliament in 1907, Birrell explained that Plunkett had been asked to stay on to facilitate an inquiry into the Department.  

55. John Dillon dismissed the inquiry as an attempt to keep Plunkett in office and moved a reduction in the Department's Vote. The Nationalists also successfully moved that the ministerial status of the Vice Presidency be confirmed which amounted to proposing that Plunkett be sacked. Though the departmental committee of inquiry recommended that the Vice President should not have a seat in Parliament, Plunkett was forced to resign. He was replaced by T.W. Russell, for whom the

54. Ibid., 17 Dec. 1905, loc. cit., ff 326.  
55. H.C. Debs, 4th series, CLXXIII, 162 and 171-2.  
56. Ibid., CLXX, 876-83.
The Nationalist M.Ps were generally concerned about the emphasis Plunkett placed on educational programmes and thought the Department should involve itself more in practical work. However other, more personal, motives, were at work. Their suspicion of Plunkett also led them to oppose the subsidisation of the I.O.A.S. by the Department. Many traders had complained about subsidies being given to that body. Under pressure from the Nationalists, Russell withdrew the Society's grant but, after a long fight by Plunkett, it was restored in 1911.

The inter-departmental inquiry into the Department of Agriculture and the Report of the Royal Commission on Congestion provoked an important debate on the respective positions and powers of the Land Commission, the Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture. They represented three different approaches to the problems of rural Ireland and there was a considerable overlap in their activities. It was pointed out that, from an administrative point of view, the Congested Districts Board was not the most suitable body to carry out the policies recommended by the Royal Commission on Congestion. A body which met only once a month could hardly cope successfully with the continuous day-to-day administration involved. It was strongly argued at the Commission that this would 'perpetuate dual administration and make for administrative waste'. As we have seen, Antony MacDonnell believed that the Board should be abolished and its duties divided between the Department of Agriculture and the Estates Commissioners. That view was shared by Conor O'Kelly, one of the Nationalist members of the Commission. However the majority

57. Ibid., Bryce to Campbell Bannerman, 15 Dec. 1905, Campbell Bannerman Papers, B.L., Add. MS 41210, ff 322-4; Erskine Childers, The Framework of Home Rule (1911), p.159. Russell was an Ulster Liberal M.P. Despite being out of Parliament in 1910-11, he held the position until 1919 when he was replaced by H.T. Barrie, an Ulster Unionist M.P.

58. H.C. Debs, 4th series, CLXXIX, 160-83; McDowell, op.cit., p.229.

59. See above p.155.
of the Commissioners took the view that the popularity of the Board outweighed any element of administrative inefficiency. They accepted the argument that the Board's success sprung from the very fact that it was not an 'ordinary Government department'. Ordinary Government departments were not trusted. To substitute for the Board a central department, no matter how efficient, would risk losing public confidence. It would

gravely imperil the carrying out of the work that was to be done to transfer to any department of Government, the functions of the Congested Districts Board, so long as the Constitution of the Irish Government remains as it is.  

This was the view taken by Birrell too. The settlement which he imposed in the Land Act of 1909 was a compromise which consolidated the position of the Congested Districts Board and at the same time tried to reduce the amount of overlap between the three bodies.  

The duties of the Board in relation to the provision of seeds, agricultural instruction, the breeding of live-stock and poultry and the development of forestry were transferred to the Department of Agriculture, although the cost continued to be borne by the Board. A consultative committee, representative of both the Board and the Department, was appointed to supervise the development of fishing. The powers of the Board to purchase land outside the Congested Districts were revoked but it was given exclusive powers of purchase within that area. Even direct sales between landlord and tenant required its approval. Though it lost its agricultural functions

60. R.B. O'Brien, Dublin Castle and the Irish People, p.305.
61. Ibid., pp 305-6; Plunkett, op.cit., pp 244-5; see above, pp 153-5.
63. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class II, 37 (Congested Districts Board), p.5, P.R.O., T165/46. In 1919, the duties of the Department of Agriculture in connection with forestry were transferred to the Forestry Commission which was set up in that year.
and came rather more closely under the control of the Chief Secretary's Office, the 1909 Act represented a victory for the Congested Districts Board and a loss for those who argued that sound administration and the well-being of the country might be better served in the long run by choosing the less popular course.

Education

The story of the Land Commission, the Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture emphasises the ad hoc way in which the Irish Administration developed. No consistent philosophy lay behind its growth. However the very fact that there were innovations - contradictory though they may have been - is significant. Most other parts of the Irish Administration were characterised by stagnation rather than innovation. No doubt the difference was due to the superior capacity of those involved in the agrarian question to exert pressure on the Government. As one anonymous Nationalist put it, there was no use approaching an English Minister 'unless you go to him with the head of a landlord in one hand, and the tail of a cow in the other'. The proponents of educational reform in Ireland discovered this to their cost. Despite widespread agreement that the educational system was in need of fundamental reform little progress was made in that direction.

Though hardly as pressing as land reform, the education question was of particular importance in Ireland. Indeed Lord Dunraven claimed that, after the land question, the 'educational chaos' which existed was 'the chief remaining obstacle to progress in Ireland'. The system was, he said

an anomalous botch. No semblance of real co-ordination exists, with the result that in no part of the British Empire is the machinery for education so ill-adjusted to the needs of the community, and so barren in results. 65

This was by no means an unrepresentative view. It was confirmed implicitly by the Royal Commission on the Civil Service in 1914 and explicitly by James Bryce who took a close interest in education. He told the House of Commons in 1906 that

there was no branch of Irish education which could be considered satisfactory... Successive British Governments seemed to have been occupied for sixty years in tying a series of knots which it was almost impossible to unravel, and nothing short of a prolonged inquiry would clear up those relations. 66

Elementary education in Ireland was supervised by the Board of National Education which was founded in 1831 (and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1845) to administer a fund placed at the disposal of the Lord Lieutenant for the education of the poor. It was composed of twenty Commissioners, half of whom were Catholic and half Protestant. They were appointed for life by the Lord Lieutenant. All except the Resident Commissioner were unpaid. 67 The Board had no endowment fund but received a substantial Parliamentary grant which grew from £30,000 in 1831 to almost £870,000 in 1890-91, £1,400,000 in 1905-6 and approximately £3,400,000 in 1920-21. As there was no education rate, this was the complete annual expenditure on primary education in Ireland. 68

The Irish Government had little control over the Commissioners of National Education except what was entailed by their estimates being presented to the Treasury through the Chief Secretary's office. 69 The

Board generally met only fortnightly but the fact that, unlike the Congested Districts Board, it had a permanent head (the Resident Commissioner) meant that routine administration was not neglected. In practice the Resident Commissioner dominated the Board. Until 1902, its main duties were performed by three sub-committees which were dominated by the Resident Commissioner. That fact was recognised in 1902 when, on the initiative of the then Resident Commissioner, William Starkie, all important matters were referred directly to the Resident Commissioner for decision subject to later confirmation by the Board.  

Given the potential for division on religious grounds, the relations of the Commissioners were remarkably good. In 1895 a major split did arise on the issue of recognition of some denominational schools, but the dispute is as interesting for what it shows of the Board's relations with the Irish Government as for what it shows about the Commissioners. John Morley suggested that the Board amend its rules to facilitate the recognition of a small number of denominational schools so that the Schools Attendance Act could be enforced in relation to them. A majority of the Commissioners took advantage of Morley's request to extend recognition to all denominational schools and refused to revise their scheme despite pressure from the Chief Secretary. The matter was only settled when Gerald Balfour, who succeeded Morley, refused to sanction the new rules.  

The Board had over 8000 'national schools' under its control throughout the period 1890-1921. These were classed as 'Ordinary Schools' or 'Convent and Monastery Schools'. It was also responsible for a number of

67. H.C. Debs, 4th series, CLXXII, 88; 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class IV, 13, (Public Education, Ireland), P.R.O., T165/47.  
68. Ibid., p.20 and 1910-11, p.17, T165/37 and 1900-1, p.20, T165/18. They also received some funds from the Irish Development Grant established in 1903.  
69. See Chapter 8.  
70. Viceroyal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), Second Report, Appendix, pp 259-60 and 314-15, [Cd 7229], H.C. 1914, XXVIII.
Evening Schools, Workhouse Schools, Industrial Schools and about thirty Model Schools. The average number of pupils in daily attendance at all these schools was something less than 400,000. None of the schools was under the control of a local authority. Generally they were managed by the local clergyman who employed the teachers. The Board's only function was to pay their salaries. In 1918 there were 13,360 principal and assistant teachers and 2,400 junior assistant mistresses.

The teachers' pay and conditions were a constant source of complaint. From 1872 until 1900 they were paid on the basis of the 'Results system' whereby a teacher received a basic allowance and, in addition, a sum calculated on the performance of his pupils in an examination conducted by the Board's Inspectors. Not surprisingly this resulted in an emphasis on cramming and created considerable dissatisfaction. The system was replaced by an equally controversial mechanism. Teachers were grouped into three grades (roughly equivalent to those emerging in the civil service) and paid accordingly. Promotion depended on the numbers of pupils taught and the reports of Inspectors who rated schools and teachers as 'excellent', 'very good', 'good', 'fair', 'middling' or 'bad'. Because there was a strict quota for each grade, promotion did not always carry with it an immediate increase in salary. Inevitably there were a great many complaints from teachers and managers about the assessment of the Inspectors. Because of the volume of such complaints, the Board's staff did not have sufficient time to investigate them properly. In 1901, Archbishop Walsh,

71. National Education (Ireland) : Conscience Clause...Copies of Correspondence between the Irish Government and the Commissioners of National Education for Ireland, with Extracts from the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commissioners, H.C. 1895 (324), LXXVII; Arthur Correspondence... H.C. 1896 (89), LXVI.

72. The number was 8710 in 1905, 8255 in 1913 and 8002 in 1918. Dunraven, op.cit., p.112; McDowell, op.cit., p.251; 'Blue Notes' 1920-21, Class IV, 13, (Public Education, Ireland) p.6, P.R.O., T165/47.

73. Model Schools were 'designed to promote united secular education to exhibit the most improved methods of instruction and to educate candidates for the office of teacher'. Ibid.
one of the Commissioners, resigned in protest against the Board's handling of the matter. The system continued to cause friction and was responsible for resentment of the Board among teachers. Though a Viceregal Committee of Inquiry in 1913 recommended that the system be changed this was not done until 1917.

The Board had an Inspection staff of about eighty. It also managed its own Teacher Training College and financed six other religious Training Colleges which it 'recognised' at various stages between 1883 and 1901. As we have seen, until the foundation of the Department of Agriculture, it was also responsible for the Albert and Munster institutions. Some schools were completely independent of the Board. A small number of endowed, diocesan and Royal schools were controlled by the Endowed Schools Commissioners, and Christian Brothers Schools also remained outside the National school system.

Secondary education in Ireland was controlled by the Intermediate Education Board. Set up in 1878, the Board consisted of seven members appointed by the Lord Lieutenant; the number was increased to twelve in 1900. Its duties, as defined by the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1900, were to promote intermediate secular education in Ireland.

(a) by instituting and carrying on a system of public examinations of students; (b) by providing for the

74. Ibid., pp 7-8.

75. Viceregal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), Summary of Evidence, pp 35-9, [Cd 60] H.C. 1919, XXI.


77. They were also known as the Commissioners of Education in Ireland. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class IV, 15, (Endowed Schools Commissioners), P.R.O., T165/47, Dunraven, op.cit., p.114.
payment of prizes and exhibitions, and the giving of
certificates to students; (c) by providing for the
payment to managers of schools, complying with the
prescribed conditions, of fees dependent on the results
of public examinations of students; (d) generally, by
applying the funds placed at their disposal for the
purposes of the Act... 78

Despite being entrusted with such important duties, the Board was not
placed on the parliamentary Estimates until 1918. 79 To begin with it
had to subsist on the interest on £1 million from the Irish Church
Fund, which amounted to about £30,000 per annum. In 1890 a further
endowment was provided by the Local Taxation Act which provided that the
Irish share of Customs and Excise duties paid to the Local Taxation
Account should be used for the purposes of education. The amount available
from this source varied from £71,400 (in 1900) to £17,000 (in 1910). In
1911, the Board's share was fixed at £46,600.

In 1898, the members of the Board, in a highly unusual move, passed
a resolution drawing the attention of the Lord Lieutenant to the 'many
defects' in the system which, they were powerless to deal with, and asking
him to appoint the Board to be a Commission of Inquiry. This was duly
done. The Inquiry led directly to the passing of an Act in 1900 empowering
the make grants on the basis of capitation and efficiency. The previous
system, by which grants were based on the performance of each school's
pupils in examinations conducted by the Board, had been widely criticised.
Curiously the Board had no Inspectors. It could therefore only encourage,
and to a small extent subsidise, secondary education: it could not
supervise it. Inspectors were the sine qua non of the new system proposed
by the Inquiry, but, although provision was made in the Act for their

78. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class IV, 14, (Intermediate Education, Ireland),
p.1, P.R.O., T165/47.

79. Ibid. In that year Parliament approved a Vote of £50,000. The
Board also got an annual fixed grant of £40,000 from 1914 on.
appointment, neither the Irish Government nor the Treasury would sanction them. The Irish Government was reluctant to do anything which might pre­empt the fundamental reform of Irish education which it was considering and the Treasury was reluctant to agree to the cost of the services of the Board being thrown on the Estimates. In 1901 and 1902, the schools were inspected by temporary Inspectors supported by the Board with the approval of the Lord Lieutenant. The Board submitted a scheme for permanent inspection in 1902 but it was rejected. After a further abortive attempt to introduce it, the Commissioners gave the Government a virtual ultimatum. They unanimously resolved that, a system of inspection was not agreed to, it would have to seriously consider whether it was 'possible for them, in the interests of true education, to continue the administration of the funds entrusted to them'. The following year the appointment of six permanent inspectors was sanctioned. 80

Theoretically the provision that the Government had to sanction all rules of the Commissioners of Primary and Intermediate Education restricted the independence of these bodies. However, as John Morley discovered when he tried to arrange a small alternation in the rules governing denominational schools, it was not always easy for the Chief Secretary to impose his will. James Bryce had a similar experience in 1906. The Irish Nationalists successfully moved in the House of Commons that the rules of the Intermediate Education Commissioners be disallowed because inter alia they insisted that where a school taught only one language, besides English, it should teach Latin, French or German. This was a set-back for the rapidly-growing Irish language revival movement. Bryce supported the Nationalist motion and expressed his regret that there was little he could do.

80. Ibid.
The Board protested at what it saw as its betrayal by Bryce, pointing out that he had seen and approved the rules. Bryce replied that he had not been fully informed about what he was sanctioning. The Board then dug its heels in and refused to produce the minutes of its discussion about the rules so that they could be laid before Parliament. It argued that the Government could only veto its rules by dismissing the Commissioners, and obtained opinion of counsel to that effect. The Irish law officers supported the Government's view. However, the controversy fizzled out when, in 1908, the Commissioners bowed to the Nationalist pressure. 81

I have already discussed the events leading up to the solution of the Irish University Question. 82 The creation of the National University and of Queen's University Belfast represented a satisfactory conclusion to a problem which had defeated the efforts of more than one British statesman.

The story of the University Question in the previous century gives a deceptive impression of energetic Government. The State was directly responsible for the foundation of four Universities in less than sixty-years. However, each renewed entry of the State into the field was more a reflection of the certainty that its previous efforts had failed than of any spontaneous enthusiasm for higher education.

The failure of the original Queen's University and of the Queen's Colleges to win the support of the Catholic Church meant that only the Royal University, founded in 1880, catered for the needs of Catholics. It was not a teaching University, only conducting examinations. Its Fellows were appointed from among the Professors and Fellows of the Queen's Colleges, Magee College, Derry and the Catholic 'University' College,

81. H.C. Debs, 4th series, CLVII 1060-72, CLXXIII, 886-7; Intermediate Education (Ireland): Copy of the Correspondence between the Irish Government and the Commissioners of Intermediate Education for Ireland, [Cd 3213], H.C. 1906, XCI.

82. See above, pp 147-50.
Dublin. Their salaries were paid by the State. This arrangement, in effect, amounted to an indirect endowment of University College, Dublin. Of the twenty-seven Fellows, fifteen were from University College. They received £400 per annum for conducting the University examinations. This indirect endowment, and the obvious Catholic influence in the University which the predominance of the fellows of University College guaranteed, relieved some of the immediate pressure for a Catholic University and gave the Government time to clear the ground for a final situation in the way described in Chapter 4.

The solution of the University Question served no purpose unless it was accompanied by the reform of primary and secondary education. That fact was widely acknowledged but little was done about it. Antony MacDonnell's intention to create a Department of Education was subsumed in his Irish Council proposals and was lost in the debacle of 1907. That part of the Irish Council Bill met with little enthusiasm in Catholic or Nationalist circles. Probably as a result the Liberals were content to leave the whole question over until after Home Rule. Issues such as popular versus clerical control and the whole question of denominationalism were too thorny to invite immediate consideration. Instead politicians and administrators concentrated on the less political problems of Irish education.

Law and Order

No duty of the Irish Government was more controversial than the maintenance of law and order. In Chapter 2, I discussed some political aspects of this question. I will now briefly examine the machinery by which order was maintained and law enforced.

For the most part, the military, who were controlled by the War Office, played no part in the civil administration of the country. Only at times

83. 'University Education in Ireland', memorandum by Birrell, 19 Nov. 1917, P.R.O., Cab. 37/90/99; Dunraven, op.cit., p.124.
of particular disturbance were their services called for and then generally only as an aid to the civil power. Between 1880 and 1883, troops were placed at the disposal of the civil authorities for patrolling purposes in disturbed parts of the west of Ireland. They were used in joint-patrols with the police. At the same time a detachment of 300 Royal Marines assisted the Dublin Metropolitan Police on plain-clothes patrols and on protection duty. Such cases were exceptional. The next significant use of troops was in Autumn 1911, during the railway strike, when they guarded important sections of the track. During the 1913 strike, they were used to protect tramway depots and power-houses, and to deliver coal to various public institutions. The Irish Executive was extremely reluctant to sanction this use of troops and their reluctance can only have been strengthened by the incident which followed the Howth gun-running. 85

The 1916 rising marked the beginning of a change in the role of the military. Though General Maxwell quickly tired of his role as Military Governor after 1916, the dependance on, and frequency of resort to, the military increased. 86 This was due simply to the inability of the police force to cope with the situation. However it is clear that in its use of the military the Executive either abdicated or was deprived of much of its overall control. Instead of being used in aid of the civil power, the

84. Problems such as teachers salaries, the proliferation of small schools and the disrepair of school buildings. For instance, in 1918, a Viceregal Committee of Inquiry into Intermediate Education concentrated almost exclusively on the undoubted problems of finance. Viceregal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland) 1918, Report and Appendices, [Cds 60 and 178], H.C. 1919, XXI.


86. Maxwell to Asquith, 17 July 1917, Bodl., MS Asq. 37, ff 95-7.
Police duties in Ireland were carried out by the Royal Irish Constabulary, except in Dublin where there was a separate Metropolitan Police Force, and Belfast where a small force of dock police operated under the jurisdiction of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners. To the R.I.C. was entrusted the important task of maintaining order in Ireland. Its failure is all the more significant for the fact that it had been specially designed to deal with such situations. It was a para-military body which emerged originally in response to the disturbed state of the country. Unlike the police forces in England, it was centralised, country-wide and armed. Entry requirements were physically demanding and discipline was strict. Constables were forced to live in barracks. They had to seek permission to marry and could not do so within ten years of joining the force. Officers were recruited directly and trained as cadets. They came predominantly from strong farming backgrounds.

The size of the force varied from time to time, depending on the state of the country and the policy of the Government. It was at its largest (14,277 constables) in 1883-4 and at its smallest in 1906-8 (9,500) and 1918-19 (9,436)!

Size of the R.I.C. at Five Year Intervals between 1890 and 1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>County Inspectors</th>
<th>District Inspectors</th>
<th>Head Constables</th>
<th>Sergeants and Constables</th>
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<tr>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>12,250</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895-6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>224</td>
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<td>1905-6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>9,896</td>
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<td>1910-11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>10,250</td>
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<td>1920-1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>10,166</td>
</tr>
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Table V

As part of the savings promised in return for Treasury agreement to the Irish Land Act of 1903, MacDonnell initiated a reduction in the R.I.C. In 1905, Long reversed this policy and ordered an increase. Bryce countermanded this but, in response to the agrarian trouble in 1907, Birrell ordered yet another about turn.¹¹

The Dublin Metropolitan Police was a little over 1000 strong. Unlike

⁹⁰ Conflated from 'Blue Notes', 1920-21 and 1910-11, Class III, 20 (R.I.C.), P.R.O., T165/37 and 47.

¹¹ 'Unrest in Ireland', memorandum by MacDonnell, 18 June 1907, P.R.O., Cab. 37/89/70.
the R.I.C., it was not armed. Its officers were, by and large, recruited from within the ranks. Suggestions were made from time to time, especially during the War, that the two forces be amalgamated but their different character made this unlikely.\textsuperscript{92}

The Headquarters of both the R.I.C. and the Dublin Metropolitan Police were in Dublin Castle as if to emphasise their relationship with the Executive. The Inspector General of the R.I.C. and the Chief Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police worked under the close supervision of the Chief Secretary's Office. This facilitated the effective prosecution of a firm government policy when this was decided upon.

Given the closeness of this contact, why had the R.I.C. become such an ineffectual force by 1918? That it was ineffectual no one doubted. Neville Macready, for instance, commented on the deterioration of 'this once magnificent body of men .... into .... supine lethargy'.\textsuperscript{93} The Inspector General admitted in 1918 that many younger recruits could not be depended on to enforce conscription.\textsuperscript{94} Obviously the changed state of public opinion and the isolation of the police was important. But equally important was the inconsistency of the Irish Executive itself. The Royal Commission on the Rebellion attached particular significance to the Executive's failure to implement the ordinary law since about 1914.\textsuperscript{95} The general decline of the police was probably related to the increasing difficulty, for Liberals if not Tories, in justifying their use as a paramilitary force. In 1900 the Irish Government finalised a plan for the use of the R.I.C. in time of war or 'grave public emergency'. Crack squads of police were to be concentrated at various locations throughout the

\textsuperscript{92} Royal Irish Constabulary and Dublin Metropolitan Police: Appendix to Report of the Committee of Inquiry, [Cd 7637] H.C. 1914-15, XXXII.
\textsuperscript{93} Macready, Annals of an Active Life (1924), p.179.
\textsuperscript{94} Inspector General's Report on the State of Ireland, April 1918, G.T. 4326, Cab. 24/49.
\textsuperscript{95} Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Report, p.6, [Cd 8279], H.C. 1916, XI.
country to deal with any threat. An extended military role for the R.I.C. was envisaged. Twelve years later when the military authorities in Ireland were updating their own defence scheme, they consulted the Inspector General of the R.I.C. on the role of the police. Their conclusion was that the R.I.C. would not be of any military value in the event of an emergency. That was a conclusion not lost on the Irish Executive.  

Because of the importance of the whole matter of law and order, the law officers of the Irish Government also occupied an important and often controversial position. The Castles of chief legal advisers were the Attorney General and the Solicitor General. Unlike England, there were no County Police prosecutions in Ireland. Almost all criminal prosecutions, and thus the enforcement of the Criminal Law, were undertaken on the directions of the Attorney General. Since the enforcement (or non-enforcement) of the criminal law was in Ireland often a matter of political policy, it is hardly surprising that there was little pretence that the law offices were anything other than political positions. The Attorney General was often, though not always, a Member of Parliament and both he and the Solicitor General served only for the life of the Government.

All files relating to criminal offices were normally referred to the law officers for comment and/or decision. Because of the array of special legislation available for use in dealing with disorder, an equally important part of their task was to advise the Executive on the legislation to be invoked and the methods to be used. An assertive Attorney General could thus play an important part in the administration

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96. 'Co-operation with the Civil Authorities', (Chapter IV of Irish Command Defence Scheme), October 1912, P.R.O., C.O., 904/174/1; Minute by Harrel, 20 Oct. 1895, P.R.O., C.O., 904/174/1.

97. Prior to 1889 there was also a Law Adviser whose function was to assist the Attorney General in advising on 'political' matters. The position was revived in 1919. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class III, 15 (Law Charges and Criminal Prosecutions, Ireland), p.1, P.R.O., TL65/47. Royal Commission on the Rebellion, Evidence, p.170 [Cd 8311] H.C. 1916, XI.
of Ireland. John Atkinson, Attorney General from 1845 to 1905, was such a man. His condemnation of the devolution scheme produced by Lord Dunraven and Antony MacDonnell, the Irish Under Secretary, helped to precipitate the crisis which followed. When Long took over as Chief Secretary, his policy of maintaining order depended to a large extent on Atkinson.\(^{99}\)

The influence the Attorney General could exercise depended on the Chief Secretary. There was no case in the period where the Attorney General was in \textit{de facto} control of Dublin Castle as was the case (or so it was claimed) earlier.\(^{100}\) The resolute government policies of Balfour and Long had been determined before they came to Ireland. In the dispute between Wyndham and Cadogan on how best to deal with agrarian disturbances in 1902, Wyndham accused Cadogan of trying to 'capture' various officials including the law officers who had been under his close control. These officials 'unduly exercised by a section of the press' were pressing for action.\(^{101}\) With the help of Balfour he managed to reassert his control.

When Antony MacDonnell was appointed Under Secretary, he proposed that, in cases of 'political crime', it might not be expedient to refer the files to the law officers. Atkinson and the Solicitor General, James Campbell, strongly opposed this suggestion and the matter was dropped. Campbell later claimed that the practice was adopted by Birrell. Campbell became Attorney General some weeks before the rising yet no official files were referred to him. This is hardly surprising as he had,

\(^{98}\) As if to emphasise their dual political and legal role, they had offices at Dublin Castle and the Law Courts. O'Brien, \textit{op.cit.}, pp 105-6. The Solicitor General was occasionally an M.P.

\(^{99}\) See above, p. 108.

\(^{100}\) O'Brien, \textit{op.cit.}, p.106.

\(^{101}\) Wyndham to Balfour, 3 and 9 March 1902, Balfour Papers, B.L., Add MS 49804, ff 5-11.
as we have seen, been foisted upon an unwilling Birrell by the Conservative partners in the Coalition. Birrell and Nathan would have been in no doubt as to what his advice was likely to be. There is no evidence to suggest that Birrell ignored the law officers appointed by himself. 102

The implementation of the legal decisions of the Irish Executive and of the law officers was in the hands of Crown and Sessional Solicitors. 103 They prosecuted for the Crown at Assizes and Quarter Sessions. Prosecutions at Petty Sessions were normally handled by the police. 104

Theoretically both the local and central courts were independent in their operation. Such independence was not always evident. Given the division of society, that is not surprising. A 'resolute government' policy required - and usually could rely on - a dependable magistracy. A return prepared for the House of Commons in 1886 shows that only 1200 of the 5000 Justices of the Peace were Catholics. Largely due to the efforts of Morley and Birrell, by 1912 there were 2,400 out of 6,000. 105

The Justices of the Peace were unpaid amateurs. At the lowest level of the full-time magistracy were the Resident Magistrates. These were created originally to restore order in disturbed areas and most of them continued to be ex-police and army officers. By 1890 they existed throughout the country except Dublin. Their numbers fell from seventy at the beginning of the period to sixty-three at the end. 106 There were also twenty-one County Court Judges who acted as Chairmen of the Quarter Sessions. 107

103. These offices were gradually amalgamated from 1889 onwards.
104. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class III, 15 (Law Charges and Criminal Prosecutions) pp 1-4, P.R.O., T165/47.
105. Commission of the Peace (Ireland), Return..., p.132, H.C. 1886 (174) LIII; Return of the Resident Magistrates in Ireland on the 1st day of November, 1912, p.27, H.C. 1912-13 (396), LXIX. See above, p.72.
106. 'Blue Notes' 1920-21, Class III, 18 (County Court Officers, Ireland), pp 16-17, P.R.O., T165/47.
The intensity of political feelings in Ireland created particular problems in connection with the administration of justice. Apart from the political considerations involved in deciding whether to instigate prosecutions, it was notoriously difficult to get Irish juries to convict. It was often necessary to use the Executive's power to transfer serious cases to other localities and there were constant allegations of jury-packing.

The Judges too could cause headaches for the Irish Executive. For example, in 1914 a judge in County Offaly sentenced a number of men accused of cattle-driving to six months hard labour. He displayed his own political leanings by making a sneering reference to the fact that one of the men had once been a Nationalist candidate for Parliament. John Redmond immediately protested to the Irish Government. Birrell had no doubt that the man deserved his sentence but questioned its wisdom 'in the peculiar circumstances'. The Irish law officers advised that the sentences were too severe given that the men had pleaded guilty and undertaken not to repeat the offence. Like Birrell they were worried lest the incident dampen the enthusiasm of the Irish Party for recruiting. Birrell favoured reducing the sentences but the law officers pointed out that this would be commented on as much as remission. The sentences were duly remitted by authority of the Lord Lieutenant.

The Supreme Court of Judicature (Ireland) Act completely reorganised the superior courts in Ireland along English lines. The various superior courts then existing were organised into one supreme court consisting of the High Court and the Court of Appeal. This led eventually to a

107. Ibid., p.1. Technically there were only sixteen County Court Judges. The other five were classed as Recorders.
108. See pp 80-4.
109. See, for example, H.C. Debs, 4th series, CLII, 356 and O'Brien, op.cit., pp 162-9; Morley, Recollections, p.305.
reduction in the number of judges and a reduction in the administrative staff employed. Between 1897 and 1912 alone, six judgeships were abolished. However the cost of the Supreme Court and of the legal system generally remained unusually high. In 1912, the court was constituted as follows: the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls, the Lord Chief Baron of Exchequer, two Lords Justices of Appeal, two Judges of the Chancery Division and six Puisne Judges of the Kings Bench Division. 112

The Supreme Court was independent of the Irish Executive even in the matters of its administrative staff. However, as we have seen its composition was indelibly affected by political appointments. In addition, the Lord Chancellor often worked in close co-operation with Dublin Castle. Generally the Lord Chancellor confined himself to his judicial duties as head of the Court of Appeal, and the supervision of the local Justices. He was not normally consulted on executive or administrative matters. But there were exceptions. Lord Ashbourne who was Lord Chancellor almost continuously from 1885 to 1905 was an influential member of the Cabinet during most of that time. James Campbell's appointment in 1918 owed much to the fact that the Government expected serious resistance to conscription and wanted to have a firm Lord Chancellor in charge of the judiciary. 114

111. McDowell, op.cit., p.73.
112. T.F. Molony, 'The Judiciary, the Police and the Maintenance of Law Order, p.157, in J.H. Morgan (ed.), The New Irish Constitution (1912); 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class III, 16 (Supreme Court of Judicature, Ireland), P.R.O., T165/47.
113. See above pp 74-5.
114. James Arthur Samuels to Bonar Law, 2 May 1918, Campbell to Bonar Law, 6 May 1918, H.L.R.O., Bonar Law Papers; 83/3/6 and 10. See also Morley, op.cit., pp 308-9.
The complicated system of administration by boards undoubtedly made efficient government more difficult. The functions of the boards overlapped and there was clear need for co-ordination and simplification. Many of the other organs of government were less subject to central control than in England. The one area where central control was not lacking was law and order. Recurrence of disorder had necessitated the assumption of control by the Executive at an early stage. Police and, to a lesser extent, judiciary were less clearly separated from the Executive than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The inability of the coercive power of the State to deal effectively with disorder in the later part of the period cannot be explained by any mechanical lack of control over the machinery through which that power was exercised.
'Politics' in Ireland were obviously something very different from politics in England. For one thing, they touched me closely. As a civil servant in London I might see Governments come and go, with fresh Ministers; 'transient and embarrassed phantoms' as Mr Asquith called them....All that it meant to me, whatever my private opinions on their politics and personalities, was that I should have fresh men for whom to write minutes, and from whom to take orders or, if they wished, to advise. In Dublin, however, I was under the shadow of Home Rule.

Maurice Headlam.  

Warren Fisher's recommendation that the Irish Administration be removed from Dublin Castle was prompted by the unpleasant associations of that location. Fisher thought that its military and colonial connotations were harmful to the civil government of the country. The term Dublin Castle itself had become a synonym for all agencies of government, even those which were avowedly non-political. As head of the civil service, Fisher was particularly concerned with the role of the Irish civil servant. Many of his recommendations reflected this concern and reveal his dissatisfaction with the position and personnel of the civil service in Ireland.

Unlike India, Ireland did not have a separate civil service. Irish civil servants were part of the Home Civil Service. They were recruited and served under the same general regulations as their colleagues in England. However, reasons of geography and politics determined that the position of civil servants in the two countries would vary considerably. For that reason, it is worth examining briefly the composition of the civil service

in Ireland, its role in the administration of the country and the ways in which the circumstances of Ireland caused divergence from the English 'norm'.

The Composition and Structure of the Irish Civil Service

The term 'Irish civil servant' is vague and ambiguous. It can refer to all those in the employ of the State (even politicians) or, more simply, to the 'permanent civil service'. Though the latter definition is closer to the way in which I wish to use it in this chapter, it is still not satisfactory. In its final report, the 1912-14 Royal Commission on the Civil Service declared that the civil service was

...a clearly defined entity, being the subject of a definition both precise and authoritative. It is declared by statute to consist of those officers who serve under conditions which qualify for pension under the Superannuation Acts.³

Despite their precise and authoritative definition, the Commissioners immediately confessed that it was impossible to confine their inquiry to the 'pensionable civil service'. They included the large number of temporary officers who, in departments such as the Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and the Land Commission, constituted a large proportion of the working staff. On the other hand, they excluded Judges, though they were 'in a sense permanent civil officers'. It seems sensible to concentrate in this discussion on the categories included by the Commissioners.

At the time of the Royal Commission the boards and departments which were responsible for the administration of Ireland employed some 27,000 persons. The vast majority of these worked for branches of United Kingdom

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³ Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, p.1 [Cd 7338] H.C. 1914, XVI. For the sake of clarity, in this chapter I have departed from the convention of using words for numbers up to ninety-nine, except where they open or close a sentence.
departments. The Post Office alone accounted for approximately 20,000 of this group and was thus easily the largest employer of civil servants in the country. The Irish departments employed only 4042 of the total. Roughly one-eighth of these were maintenance and service staff, about a quarter were permanent or temporary professional officials and the remainder were administrative and clerical staff.

Of the Irish Government departments, the Local Government Board and the legal and agricultural departments were the main employers. In 1914, the Local Government Board had a staff of 274, the various offices attached to the Supreme Court of Judicature 231, the Department of Agriculture, which had grown rapidly since it was set up, 720 and the Land Commission 686.

At the other end of the scale were a large number of small and medium size offices. The National Gallery had a staff of 16; the Lord Lieutenant's Household 19, and the Chief Secretary's Office only forty-nine. Despite the increasingly disturbed state of the country there was no appreciable growth in the complement of the Chief Secretary's Office until 1920.

Whatever the truth of the claim that the first competitive examination for public office was held in Ireland, the Irish civil service was never an...

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4. Public Departments (Scotland and Ireland), pp 2-3, H.C. 1912-13 (104) LVI. For the distribution of the Post Office employees and their rates of pay, see Estimates of Civil Services for the Year Ending 31 March 1915, pp 53-132, H.C. 1914 (132), LV. These figures include established and unestablished staff. For established staff only see McDowell, op. cit., p.34.


6. See above, p.199.

7. The examination, authorised by the Grand Jury Act of 1833, was for County Surveyors. McDowell, p.35.
exemplar of the principles of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report. Patronage survived longer than in England and the division between administrative and routine work was never firmly established. The failure is, in both cases, attributable to the political circumstances of Ireland. In England there was little progress on the implementation of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report until after the passing of the Second Reform Act in 1867. One was, in a sense, a corollary of the other. It is not surprising that in Ireland, where democratisation was more difficult and took longer, the creation of a 'modern civil service' was delayed correspondingly.

The general framework in both countries was the same. Competition and the central control which inevitably came with it were introduced gradually and only for the less senior positions at first. The Civil Service Commission was set up in 1855 to conduct examinations for junior positions but competition was not compulsory. An Order-in-Council of 4 June 1870 made competitive tests obligatory, subject to a number of exceptions. The Civil Service Commission was permitted to waive examination in the case of appointments made by the Crown, certain 'professional offices', those normally filled from within the department and specified menial posts. Further Orders-in-Council between 1889 and 1912, most notably that of 10 January 1910, changed the list of exempted offices but only slightly. Thus throughout my period competitive examination was the general rule for appointment but with important exemptions. The exemptions were filled by nomination, with or without a qualifying examination.

Access to 20,000 of the 60,000 positions, with which the Royal Commission on the Civil Service was concerned, was by open competition. Many of the

others were filled by promotion from within the department. Those filled by nomination usually demanded qualifications or experience. However there remained at least a limited scope for the exercise of patronage and for political bias in the making of appointments. Where competition prevailed, appointment had to be made in accordance with the Rules of the Civil Service Commission but, where nomination applied, the appointment was generally made on the authority of the Minister in charge of the department concerned. The discretion allowed to the Minister led inevitably in Ireland to accusations of jobbery and a widespread belief that nominated positions were political appointments.\(^\text{10}\)

The frequency with which the Irish Members in the House of Commons called for returns listing the number of vacancies filled without examination is itself a reflection of the public concern.\(^\text{11}\) In 1906 there were 1400 officials working in Irish departments who had been appointed by nomination. Approximately 600 of these had undergone a qualifying examination and about 200 had entered by limited competition.\(^\text{12}\) Limited competition was restricted to those nominated to compete by the authority controlling the department in which the vacancy existed.\(^\text{13}\) In the Chief Secretary's Office the Principal Clerk, F.J. Cullinan and T.A. Odell, one of the First Class Clerks, had been appointed by this method. Between them they had exactly eighty years service.\(^\text{14}\) The Local Government Board contained no such officials, the Department of Agriculture\(^\text{12}\), the Congested Districts Board\(^\text{15}\), the General Prisons Board none, the Board of National Education

\(^{10}\) See above, pp 71-7.

\(^{11}\) See, for example, Government Departments (Ireland) : A Return Setting Forth the Name, Age, Length of Service and Official Position, of all Salaried Officials ... in Ireland who have been Appointed (a) by Nomination without Examination; (b) by Nomination with Limited Competition; (c) by nomination with qualifying examination, H.C. 1907 (8), LXVIII; ...Appointments since 12 July 1906, H.C. 1909 (326), LXXI. See also H.C. 1912 (454-5) LVI.

\(^{12}\) Government Departments (Ireland) ... H.C. 1907 (8), LXVIII.
According to the Royal Commission on the Civil Service nomination with qualifying examination applied to those positions requiring 'physical strength, integrity, intelligence but not a high degree of education'. Prison Warders, Office Keepers, Messengers and such like were appointed in this way. However, in Ireland some senior positions were often similarly filled. For positions which were held to be 'professional' the Civil Service Commissioners could dispense with examination in whole or in part. L.C. Dowdall, the other Principal Clerk in the Chief Secretary's Office and M. Hynes the Librarian were thus appointed, as were 17 Auditors in the Local Government Board, 34 officers in the Department of Agriculture, 3 Assistant Clerks in the Congested Districts Board, almost 500 Prison Officers, and one Housekeeper in the Board of National Education. Sixty-five positions in the Land Commission were also filled in this way, including a number of First and Second Class clerkships, which was rather unusual.

Nomination without examination was used for positions appointed directly by the Crown, and many professional and temporary positions which required

14. *Government Departments (Ireland)*, p.3, H.C. 1906 (8), LXVIII. Both were promoted to their present positions from within the service.
15. Including four Geologists and five Lady Typists.
17. Almost all School Inspectors.
18. Mostly Assistant Clerks (Abstractors).
20. Attendants, Assistant Clerks and a few Inspectors.
Treasury sanction. In Ireland, the following officers were appointed directly by the Crown or via the Lord Lieutenant: the Under Secretary and the Assistant Under Secretary, the Dean of the Royal Chapel, the two permanent paid Secretaries of the Congested Districts Board, the Commissioners of Public Works, the two Estates Commissioners and all Crown Solicitors. In addition, 5 Temporary Clerks and the Draftsman of Bills were appointed to the Chief Secretary's Office without examination, as were the President and the Inspectors in the Local Government Board, the Vice-President, Secretary, senior staff and almost all the Inspectors in the Department of Agriculture, 36 indoor and 87 outdoor staff in the Congested Districts Board, almost 100 officials of the General Prisons Board, the Resident Commissioner, Secretary and 30 outdoor officials of the Board of National Education and the Irish Land Commissioners and about 160 of their staff.

There is no evidence to suggest that there was any widespread abuse of the power to appointment by nomination, with or without examination. The large number of such appointments in Ireland is partly explained by the nature of many of the Irish departments. The Department of Agriculture, the Congested Districts Board and the Land Commission were all involved in extensive outdoor activities which required specialised staff of a type not normally available within the civil service. It was unavoidable that these should be appointed by nomination. Even the Treasury departments in Ireland, which were

22. Mostly Temporary Clerks but including one First Class Clerk.
23. Mostly Valuers and Inspectors and Teachers.
24. Chaplains, Medical Officers, First Class Warders and Governors.
25. Organisers of Kindergartens, Cookery, Laundry and Needlework.
26. Including Inspectors, Assistant Commissioners and First, Second and Temporary Clerks.
less likely to be subject to local pressures to indulge in patronage, used nomination rather than open competition for many positions. Nomination with limited or qualifying examination was the general rule in Inland Revenue and Customs while the Board of Works appointed most of its Inspectors and Engineers by nomination without examination. The total number of nominated appointments in Ireland was not disproportionately large compared to England and the available evidence suggests that it was not greatly affected by the Government in power. However, what is clear is that there was some inconsistency and incoherence in the way the system operated. Inspectors in one department were appointed following qualifying examination while in another and occasionally even in the same department similar Inspectors were appointed without examination.

The definition of a 'professional' office was also not always consistent, some positions being sometimes so defined and sometimes not. Also, in the new departments such as Agriculture, there was a noticeable reliance on nomination even for higher clerical positions. Virtually all the administrative positions in the Department, including that of Secretary, were filled by nomination from outside the civil service. This was probably unavoidable if such an ambitious innovation was not to be hampered by lack of staff; and, despite complaints to the contrary, the Royal Commission was satisfied that

27. Government Departments (Ireland), pp 31-7, H.C. 1906 (8), LXVIII.
28. See Return...From the 29th day of June 1895 to the 5th day of December 1905 and ...From the 5th day of December 1905 to the 27th day of February 1912, H.C. 1912-13 (454-5), LVI. In 1914 there were 40,000 nominated officials in the United Kingdom as a whole.
29. Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, p.26 [Cd 7338] H.C. 1914, XVI. Officers designated 'professional' included the Under-Secretary, Resident Magistrates, Inspectors of various descriptions, the Registrar of Deeds, the Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, the Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture and of the Charitable Donations and Bequests Board and the permanent Assistant Commissioners in the Land Commission. There were over fifty such offices in all. See ibid., Appendix IV(a), pp 139-40.
the selections were made 'with scrupulous care, and solely with an eye to efficiency'. However it was convinced that the practice of recruiting from outside the service and the failure to integrate the administrative class with the rest of the Department was a 'serious defect'.

Inspectors and Surveyors and outdoor staff generally constituted a large proportion of the total staff of the Local Government Board, the Department of Agriculture, the Land Commission and the Congested Districts Board. The Department of Agriculture alone had well over a hundred Inspectors. Because their work involved dealing with local authorities, or landlords and tenants, such appointments were carefully scrutinised by Nationalists and Unionists for any evidence of political bias. The Commission strongly recommended that the list of professional offices should be revised with as many positions as possible being filled by competitive examination. Where this was impractical, it suggested that the positions be publicly advertised and that a departmental committee select the best candidates for referral to the Civil Service Commissioners. Such a system would probably not have removed all suspicion of favouritism but it would certainly have been an improvement. Whether it would have met with the approval of the heads of the Irish departments is another matter. Horace Plunkett, head of the Department of Agriculture until 1907, was certainly committed to the principle of appointment on the grounds of merit alone and opposed to political jobbery. He had little sympathy with the practice of filling Inspectorships by personal contact and recommendation. On the other hand,

30. Ibid., pp 79-80.
Henry Robinson of the Local Government Board thought the practice had its advantages. He took a rather jaundiced view of competitive examinations and their likelihood of producing candidates with the qualities demanded of Inspectors or Auditors. Tact, experience or good judgement were not qualities easily tested in a written examination. They could only be gauged from meeting and getting to know the candidates. The practice of aspiring candidates going in person to the offices of the Board, even before there was a vacancy, was one he encouraged and approved of. The offices of Irish departments were constantly deluged with young men seeking positions. In England this would have been seen as a disqualification but he was 'glad of the opportunity of seeing them'. Local Government Board Inspectors were chosen from the large stock of Temporary Inspectors - in effect a 'probationary' system which, Robinson, claimed, was the best way of assessing the suitability of candidates.\(^\text{34}\)

The Commission disagreed and recommended that the system be replaced by competitive examination. It also recommended that the number of offices held directly from the Crown should be reduced, with those which were 'professional' - such as Crown Solicitors - excluded. Where appointment was by patronage, the Minister, it was suggested, should lay a statement before Parliament stating the qualifications and experience of the person to be appointed. This was intended to remove all taint of jobbery but, in the Irish case, it might simply have provided a new battle-front. In the event the proposal was not implemented and the number of such appointments in Ireland was not reduced.

\(^\text{34}\) Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, Evidence, pp 206-7, [Cd 7340] and Fourth Report, pp 180-90, [Cd 7338], H.C. 1914, XVI.
Apart from the professional offices, the civil service consisted at the time of an administrative class - officers recruited between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-four by Class 1 examination and other first division officers however recruited - staff clerks, a second division recruited between the ages of seventeen and twenty by a lower examination, and a class to perform mechanical functions such as copying. The 1914 Royal Commission's most persistent criticism was of the weakness of the administrative class and the stagnation of the second division because of the inadequate opportunities for promotion or transfer to other departments. The administrative class as conceived by the Northcote-Trevelyan Report should have played a vital role in non-routine administration. However in Ireland the number of that class was tiny and more than half of these had not been recruited by the Class 1 examination. Ireland was unlike England in this but apparently quite similar to Scotland. In both countries, the Commission found that the want of Officers recruited by Class 1 Examination is the great defect of office organisation...; just as in both countries, the great defect in staffing the higher administrative posts is the use of patronage. The correction of the former defect is, it might be said, a condition precedent to the correction of the latter.

Of all the Irish departments only the Chief Secretary's Office, the Local Government Board, the Public Record Office and the National Health Insurance Commission were organised on a first division basis and from these departments there were complaints about the lack of top-quality clerks. We have already seen how the work of the Chief Secretary's Office was seriously hampered in this regard. There were three Principal Clerks in the Office,

36. Ibid., p.18.
37. Ibid., p.80.
38. See above, pp 97-8.
one of whom had been promoted from the second division, one 'nominated' in 1874 to the Church Temporalities Fund and later transferred, and one appointed by Class 1 examination. As regards the five First Class Clerks, one of the two in the upper section was promoted from the lower division and the other entered by Class 1 examination. The three in the lower section had entered the civil service by Class 1 examination and been transferred from the Local Government Board, the Admiralty and Customs and Excise respectively. James Dougherty told the Commission that the restriction on the number of First Class Clerks had 'very serious' consequences. With two of the First Class Clerks having to be at the Irish Office in London during the Parliamentary session, the Assistant Under Secretary himself was sometimes forced to take on the duties of a Principal Clerk, an arrangement which the Treasury repeatedly urged should be made permanent.39

The 11 offices for which the Chief Secretary's Office did most of the administrative work were staffed by Second Class Clerks, which the Royal Commission thought was a suitable arrangement. Nine of the 19 officers of the administrative class in the Local Government Board entered by Class 1 examination. The rest began in the second division and were subsequently promoted.40 This high proportion of promotions from the second division was unusual and tended to defeat the whole purpose of separate examinations for the administrative and second divisions.

The Local Government Board was only organised on a first division basis since 1898 when its new permanent head, Henry Robinson, introduced the reform in order to balance the mostly Irish second division clerks with more recruits

39. Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, Evidence, p.185, [Cd 7340], H.C. 1914, XVI.
40. Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, pp 79-80, [Cd 7338], H.C. 1914, XVI.
from England and Scotland. William Starkie, the Resident Commissioner of National Education, would have dearly loved to follow suit. He told the Commission:

The second division are very hardworking men, and I have no complaint to make of them....But I do feel - and I have heard many other heads of departments in Ireland say the same - that there is a lack of men who are able to write satisfactory letters on important subjects. One does miss that class of man.

Until 1891, all the staff of the Land Commission were temporary employees. Then the clerical establishment was organised into three classes which were 'altogether unconnected into the ordinary Civil Service' but with extensive use continuing to be made of temporary clerks paid 'on the lump sum principle'. In 1896, open competitive examination was introduced for the permanent clerks. When the Land Act of 1903 necessitated a large addition to the clerical staff, it was organised on ordinary civil service lines but without any First Class officers. The new clerks worked alongside the classes created in 1891 but, as the latter died out, they were not replaced. Unlike the staff of the Land Commission which quickly gained acceptance as an integral part of the civil service, those employed by the Congested Districts Board were treated for many years as if they were not civil servants. That was the attitude of the Treasury until 1920 and it was followed by the Commission which declared that the Board was 'not strictly speaking a Government Department' and felt precluded from commenting on its clerical establishment as it was paid for from its Endowment Fund and not by parliamentary Vote. Though not originally, by 1914 both its indoor and

41. Ibid., Evidence, pp 201-2, [Cd 7340], H.C. 1914, XVI.
42. Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, p.80, [Cd 7338], H.C. 1914, XVI.
outdoor staff were recruited by open competition. Ironically in view of its independence from the civil service structure and of its waywardness in other respects, it already conducted the type of special examinations for professional positions which were being recommended by the Royal Commission. 43

Despite the recommendation of the Ridley Commission of 1886-1890 that transfers between departments should be encouraged throughout the service, nothing was done in this regard. 44 In Ireland this helped to depress still further the promotion prospects of both first and second division clerks. Transfers between departments, though not unknown, were exceptional. Indeed even single departments could be rigidly divided into water-tight compartments, so much so that clerks had little opportunity of gaining the variety of experience which might have earned them promotion. G.C. Duggan, the First Class Clerk who had transferred to the Chief Secretary's Office from the Admiralty, never met or, he thought, even saw Sir Frederick Cullinan, Principal Clerk in a different section. 45

Duggan also testifies to the stagnation of the Chief Secretary's Office. The practice of bringing in outsiders to fill the Under Secretaryship and sometimes the Assistant Under Secretaryship closed an important avenue of promotion. After many 'heart-burnings' over promotions, the principal officers had grown disillusioned and relations between them and with their juniors seem to have deteriorated. The prospects of the First Class Clerks were also diminished correspondingly. Access to other perquisites became more important but these too were limited. Duggan was slightly bitter about the fact that during all his time in the Chief Secretary's Office (1910-14 and 1919-21) he was never made Private Secretary to the Chief Secretary or

43. Ibid., pp 79-82.
44. Ibid., p.15.
45. Duggan, 'The Life of a Civil Servant'.
the Under Secretary. Some Chief Secretaries brought their own Secretaries with them from London, much to the chagrin of men like Duggan. Gerald Balfour and Morley appointed Secretaries from within the Office. Wyndham and Bryce brought theirs from England and Arthur Balfour used both methods. Birrell, Duke and Shortt selected A.P. Magill from the Land Commission and Ian Macpherson selected Samuel Watt of the Local Government Board. The appointment of someone from another Irish department was seen as even a greater slur on the officials of the Chief Secretary's Office than the appointment of a complete outsider. Duggan, whether rightly or not, attributed Watt's appointment to the influence of Henry Robinson and the desire not to appoint a Nationalist.

Apart from the monetary reward involved, appointment to a Private Secretaryship was a first step towards a major promotion so the disappointment at not being chosen was all the more deeply felt. When Lawrence Dowdall, one of the Principal Clerks, retired in 1913, further reason for disappointment was added. Under pressure from the Treasury it was agreed not to fill the vacancy. Instead the Assistant Under Secretary, Edward O'Farrell, was given an extra allowance for taking over Dowdall's responsibilities. In practice, however, the work was done by Duggan, Dowdall's assistant who, not unreasonably, had hoped for the promotion.

One reason for the stagnation in the Chief Secretary's Office from 1914 was the retrenchment forced by the War. However, the Office always tended towards stagnation. People such as Dowdall and Cullinan did manage to work their way up but they were exceptional. James Dougherty was inclined to blame the Treasury which blocked increases in the size of the Office. Young

46. He was 'loaned' to the Admiralty and the Ministry of Shipping during the War. Ibid.
47. Ibid. He was acting Private Secretary to the Under Secretary for a short time in 1914. Joseph Brennan, his colleague, acted as Secretary to John Anderson in 1921.
men came into the office with energy and enthusiasm but found themselves 'hung up like Mahomet's coffin between earth and heaven' in a way which was 'very prejudicial' to efficiency. Despite his graphic testimony the position did not improve after 1914 but, as Warren Fisher discovered, deteriorated. With promotion barred, it is little wonder that the administrative staff had, by 1920, abdicated all responsibility for advising on policy or even taking decisions on departmental papers. The complete breakdown attested to by Fisher is partly explained by the stagnation in the departmental establishment. As early as 1914 there had been warnings about the ill-effects which must inevitably spring from this.  

Though it was the most important, the Chief Secretary's Office was not the only department in which the clerical establishment felt frustrated. The complaint about lack of opportunities for promotion was widespread especially among second division clerks. However unlike the Chief Secretary's Office, departments such as the Land Commission and the Department of Agriculture were expanding rapidly and this reduced the likelihood of stagnation.

In one way, the second division clerks were more fortunate than their senior colleagues. The administrative class was not yet officially recognised as a group whereas the second division had been so named and had its own uniform salary scale from 1890. In that year a salary of £70 per annum rising by increments of £5 to £100 was prescribed for lower grade clerks within the second division, with higher grade clerks getting £250 rising to a maximum of £350. In 1908 the maximum of the lower grade was raised to £130.

48. Ibid., and Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Evidence, p.186, [Cd 7340] H.C. 1914, XVI.
49. Ibid., p.185.
and that of the higher grade reduced to £300 but with more frequent increments. This scale applied to all second division clerks throughout the service. In 1889 a seven hour day had been made compulsory but as one Irish witness put it to the Royal Commission, the second division salary was 'not to be sneezed at'.

No uniform salary was laid down for first division clerks. In practice the Treasury tried to enforce uniformity or at least 'comparability' but salaries varied from department to department and sometimes from individual to individual. In 1912 when he had been two years in the Chief Secretary's Office, Duggan's salary as a Class 1 clerk (lower grade) was only £200. In 1919, when he was promoted to the upper grade, his salary was £600 but this included a special allowance for taking charge of the finance division of the Office, under the supervision of the Assistant Under Secretary. Normally the division was headed by a Principal Clerk whose salary scale went from £700 to £900. By way of comparison, the Assistant Under Secretary's salary was £1000 rising to £1200 (the same as that of the Inspectors of Lunatic Asylums). The Under Secretary was, of course, paid £2000. The Resident Commissioner of Education was paid £1500, and the salaries of the Land and Estate Commissioners ranged from £2000 to £3000.


53. Ibid., Evidence, p.214, [Cd 7340] H.C. 1914, XVI.

54. Return Setting forth the Name, Age, Date of Appointment and Salary .... of Each Person Appointed without Competitive Examination .... from 5th day of December 1905, p.268, H.C. 1912-13 (455) LVI; 'Blue Notes' 1920-1921, p.3, Class II, 34 (Chief Secretary's Office), P.R.O., T 165/46.

55. Ibid., Class IV, 13 (Public Education, Ireland) and Class III, 17. (Irish Land Commission), P.R.O., T 165/17 and 47. Inspectors' salaries ranged from £500 upwards.
Perhaps the most unfortunate class of Irish civil servants was the large group of Temporary Clerks. Though there were over 25,000 such officers throughout the service in 1914, they were strictly speaking not civil servants as they did not come under the provisions of the Superannuation Act, 1859. A large number of these clerks were engaged by the Land Commission on work which by its very nature was temporary and their use was therefore fully justified. Other departments however used temporary clerical workers on a completely unjustifiable scale. The 1914 Royal Commission strongly condemned the unnecessary use of such labour and commented that safeguards against abuse were more essential in Ireland than in England because temporary clerical labour was 'an outstanding and a demoralising feature in the [Irish] departmental organisation'.

Though Temporary Clerks were only supposed to be employed in an emergency and for a short time, many Temporary Clerks had served in the same departments for years. An Irish Temporary Clerks Association had over 200 members. Its spokesman at the Commission had been a Temporary Clerk in the Department of Agriculture for twelve years. He left a £150 per annum position in London to go to Dublin in the hope of being able to get a permanent position eventually. He received 30s. per week when he started. Twelve years later he was receiving 36s. per week which he said was not a living wage for a man with a family. At the same time there was always a steady demand for temporary work as it was generally believed, and not conspicuously denied by the departments, that once into the 'outer circle' it would be possible to be taken on permanently.

57. Ibid., p.81.
58. Ibid., p.81; Evidence, pp 336-41, [Cd 7340] H.C. 1914, XVI.
One of the most interesting of the recommendations of the 1914 Royal Commission was one which urged that greater facilities be provided especially in Ireland and England \(^59\) for 'the progress from the Primary to the Secondary Schools, and thence to the Universities, of pupils capable of benefitting by Secondary and University training respectively'. \(^60\) Clearly this was something which was crucial in determining the composition of the civil service in Ireland. Without access to secondary education competitive examination for the second division was a useless innovation; and without access to University education, the Class 1 examination was beyond the reach of most Irishmen. To rectify the existing deficiencies would take a long time. In the meantime, the deficiencies would inevitably continue.

Of the 1557 candidates who entered the service by Class 1 examination between 1896 and 1911, 98 were educated at schools in Ireland with Clongowes Wood College being the single most productive school. Almost all of the successful candidates also attended University for a time at least. Between 1906 and 1910, for example, all but 9 of the 473 candidates had been to University. 247 of these had been to Oxford, 142 had been to Cambridge, 23 had been to Trinity College Dublin and 14 had been to the Royal or National University of Ireland. \(^61\) In the examination for junior appointments, 260 candidates were successful between 1906 and 1910, 28 of whom were educated at Irish schools while in the competition for second division clerkships in 1911, 5 out of 100 were educated in Ireland. It is noticeable that the list

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59. Scotland was relatively well off for scholarships and endowment funds to enable bright students to continue their education.


61. Of the latter, two had been to Queens College Belfast, one to Queens College Cork, four to Queens College Galway, six to University College Dublin and one had been to Blackrock College. No graduate of Queens University Belfast had yet been successful.
of schools concerned is not dominated by the elite establishments, as in the case of the class 1 examination, but contains many schools run by the Christian Brothers and other less exclusive establishments. Not surprisingly candidates with middle-class backgrounds dominated in the class 1 section while the backgrounds of those in the second division were more mixed with the sons of solicitors and civil servants and schoolmasters vying with the sons of shopkeepers.

The evidence available on the religious, social and educational background of Irish civil servants is rather sketchy. It is surprising that some enterprising Irish Member of Parliament did not call for a return giving this information. It would certainly be interesting to compile such a return for the Irish civil service as a whole. However it would be a massive task. Fortunately, MacDowell has done a survey of the group which is of most relevance to this study - the higher echelons of the civil service. It is worth summarising his findings briefly.

McDowell examined the top end of the administrative class including the heads of all Irish departments or branches of English departments functioning in Ireland and their immediate subordinates, which in 1914 totalled 48 officials. Probably the most significant characteristic of the group was that it was predominantly Irish. Only 10 of the most senior officials in Ireland came from Britain. Twenty-nine of them had been to University: with Trinity College Dublin being the most frequently attended Irish University. Their backgrounds were almost identical to those of the successful candidates

63. Ibid., Appendix III, pp 134-5.
64. McDowell, The Irish Administration 1801-1914, pp 47-50.
65. Twelve went to Trinity and 10 went elsewhere in Ireland.
in the Class 1 examination. Twenty of the group were Catholics and 28 Protestants. Only 6 had entered the service by Class 1 examination; 6 more had taken lesser examinations; 19 entered by nomination without qualifying examination and won promotion, and 15 had been brought in specifically to fill the posts they then occupied. The latter group included T.P. Gill, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, and William Starkie.

Clearly the group was heterogenous. They did not represent the Ascendancy class but neither did they reflect the constitution of Irish society as a whole. It would have been surprising if they did. Still the predominance of Protestants and graduates of Trinity College Dublin is striking and significant.

'In the shadow of Home Rule'

The composition of the civil service in Ireland was of more than simply academic importance. As Maurice Headlam, one of the elite group just examined, put it, 'politics' in Ireland were different. Political divisions were more fundamental and as a result aroused deeper passions and generated greater controversy than in England. Home Rule - however defined - was at the centre of the political debate throughout the period but the polarisation in society was not confined to that question. Politics permeated Irish life and touched even apparently trivial aspects of government. The rigid tribal identification and loyalty made the role of the civil service extraordinarily difficult, not least because most civil servants were themselves part of the society in which they lived. Civil servants working in non-controversial areas were fortunate. Those working in sensitive areas - and there were many - were faced with a difficult dilemma. Where did the tradition of the independence and impartiality of the civil service end, if it applied at all? Many Irish civil servants may have been unconscious of their dilemma. Indeed the existence of such a tradition would probably have
been news to some. However the question is no less important for that reason.

Headlam, the representative of the Treasury in Dublin, had no doubt as to how the dilemma should be resolved. Before coming to Ireland he had believed that politics were outside the province of the civil servant, who was bound to serve loyally whatever Party was in power. In Ireland he began to doubt whether that duty applied, and finally rejected it completely. His own political views seriously influenced his performance of his duties as Treasury Remembrancer and after 1916 he became actively involved in lobbying Unionist M.P.'s to persuade them to oppose Home Rule. He rationalised his actions by arguing that politics in Ireland were not 'ordinary politics' and that therefore the duty of loyalty did not apply. He decided that

the ordinary Civil Service rules about taking part in politics did not apply in the Irish case, which was not politics but flagrant disloyalty to the Crown whose servant I was...

Because of this conviction, he could, as he put it, 'enter into the feelings' of those army officers whose own crisis of loyalty provoked the 'Curragh Mutiny' in 1914.

Headlam was not Irish and he had little connection with Ireland before being transferred there. How much more acute must have been the dilemma of those Irish Unionists working in Dublin Castle in 1912-1914 and in 1921 or of

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66. Headlam, Reminiscences, pp 118 and 139.
67. See below, Chapter 8.
69. Ibid., p.196.
70. Ibid., p.139.
those Irish Nationalists - fewer in number though they may have been - in 1916 or indeed in 1919-21? Headlam's sympathy for the Curragh mutineers would have been shared by many of his colleagues but not all of them would have approved of his views on the duty of the civil servant. G.C. Duggan was one who did not. In his unpublished memoirs, he replied specifically to the Headlam case. The statement that the ordinary rules did not apply was, he thought, a 'most dangerous dictum'. It could only

breed distrust between Ministers and their senior officials. Moreover it leaves a Civil Servant free to choose his loyalties, to determine for himself the point at which it is open to him to use official knowledge to thwart the Government of the day. If Headlam's views are accepted, then they can be equally used to justify the action of those Civil Service colleagues of Mr. Headlam who conveyed secret official information to their friends in the Sinn Fein party. Maurice Headlam was an English Conservative and a Treasury watchdog opposed to any change in Ireland and prepared to go to any lengths to retain the status quo. His book leaves a bad taste in the mouth of any ex-British Civil Servant, especially as it has been written not while his heart burned within him but in the dispassionate backward glance of twenty-seven years later.71

Like Headlam, Duggan was writing with the advantage of hindsight but his comments do not seem to have been unduly coloured by his being an ex-Unionist, living in the Republic of Ireland. His recollections of his own response are frank and honest. In England it was easy to talk of loyalty to the Government in power because 'revolutionary problems do not arise' but Irishmen were moved 'by different kinds of loyalties'. It was

unthinkable that a Scottish Civil Servant should be shaken in his allegiance because of Bannockburn or Flodden Field, a Welshman by memories of Owen Glendower, or an Englishman by the theological bitternesses of Henry VIII or Queen Mary. But events comparable to these are live issues in Ireland and the kindled ashes of the hidden fires burnt into fierce flame from 1919-1922. How could their effect not be keenly felt in the circles of officials and police when their

71. This and the following quotations are taken from the unpublished 'The Life of a Civil Servant', loc. cit. Duggan's father and wife came from County Fermanagh.
own relatives were likely to be involved on one side or the other, when upbringing inevitably caused a bias and a cold impartiality seemed the attribute of some passionless being?

For Duggan, the dilemma was most acute during the Home Rule crisis of 1912-1914. For part of that time he was acting Private Secretary to the Under Secretary and all the most important papers relating to the situation in Ulster passed through his hands. He was opposed to Home Rule but felt that a decision on what course he should take could justifiably be postponed until the bill had actually been passed, as the two previous Home Rule bills had never reached that stage. With the Curragh Mutiny, however, it was 'necessary for a Civil Servant at the Castle to do some hard thinking'. Duggan believed that if the Government persisted with Home Rule it could lead to civil war. He also believed that any attempt to impose Home Rule by force would be immoral. So, according to himself, he decided that if it came to that, he would resign. The alternative - to seek a transfer - did not occur to him.

Headlam and Duggan were both Unionists. The dilemma for Nationalists was equally acute. As we have seen, Antony MacDonnell and James MacMahon both had serious reservations about accepting the most senior civil service position in Ireland because of the divided loyalties that might be entailed. Events proved that their reservations were justified but not for the reasons they expected. They found themselves hampered in their work by the suspicion among Unionists that a Nationalist per se was not to be trusted. In briefing the Opposition in his own defence and, later, in lobbying the members of the Cabinet behind his Minister's back, MacDonnell transgressed normal civil service practice. Likewise in his association with Dunraven, but this involved no deceit or disloyalty. He was an honest and loyal civil servant

72. See pp 118 and 191.
but that was not always sufficient for an Irish civil servant.

MacMahon too was honest and loyal but he too found himself to be subject to persistent accusations of disloyalty and even conspiracy. Though Cope and Harwood rejected the allegations made against him, he was never fully trusted. The unusual step of appointing a joint-Under Secretary was taken more because of the inefficiency of Dublin Castle than because of any disloyalty on MacMahon's part. But one reason for the inefficiency was the fact that he was mistrusted. John Taylor, the Assistant Under Secretary, a 'strong Conservative and an advocate of "firm" rule', resolved his own loyalty dilemma by treating MacMahon, his immediate superior, as 'suspect, a person to be disregarded where questions of policy arose and policy affected not only the criminal law but matters of finance'. This accusation, made by Duggan, was confirmed by Cope and Harwood who found that he insisted on retaining much of the work of the Office in his own hands. Even when Taylor was forced to retire, MacMahon remained isolated, all the important work being done by Anderson. In October 1920, when Sir Ernest Clark was assigned to Belfast to handle the 'political business of the Chief Secretary's Office' in the Six Counties, the Chief Secretary agreed to the demand of the Ulster Unionists that he be allowed to report to Anderson and not to MacMahon.

The abuse of the traditions of the Civil Service was not confined to civil servants. Loyalty to the Government in power carried with it a corresponding obligation on the part of the Government, which was not always fulfilled. Successive Governments adopted the Headlam view that politics in Ireland were indeed different and the 'normal' rules did not necessarily

apply. The replacement of West Ridgeway at the behest of the Nationalists, and of Nathan, are classic examples. Indeed the consistent treatment of the Under Secretaryship as outside the ordinary framework of the Irish civil service was a departure from established procedure which could only be damaging to morale.

John Taylor's disenchantment with the Government's political policy was probably exacerbated by his personal dissatisfaction at not being appointed Under Secretary. His spleen was directed not only at MacMahon but at the other officials in the Office as well. Duggan, who was his second-in-command, hated to have to even speak to him and regarded him with 'nervous dread'. The year he spent working for Taylor was the most unhappy in his career in the civil service. It is hard to question his judgment that apart from

the more efficient work that is done in a "happy" office, it is not easy to estimate what harm may be done permanently to the morale of a suppressed and intimidated official, turning a cheerful and keen man or woman into a dispirited and routine robot.75

Taylor also made life unpleasant for Duggan's assistant, Joseph Brennan, but for political reasons. He objected to his sharing a room with Duggan because he was a Nationalist, and sought to divide the Office into pro-MacMahon and pro-Taylor camps.76 Brennan's dilemma in Dublin Castle neatly parallels Duggan's though their political views were opposite. A product of Clongowes, University College Dublin and Cambridge - the first and last of which (but not the second) were fertile breeding grounds for civil servants - he was transferred to the Chief Secretary's Office from the Board of Customs in London at about the same time as Duggan joined it. Both were successful

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75. Duggan, 'The Life of a Civil Servant'.
76. Ibid.
in the Class 1 examination and began as lower grade, First Class Clerks. They were the only members of the Office to favourably impress Fisher, Cope and Harwood. Duggan's discomfort in the years 1912-14 was hardly shared by Brennan but in 1919-21 he found himself in a similar situation. He was promoted to principal officer by John Anderson but he felt some qualms about Government policy which he, as a senior civil servant, was identified with. On one occasion he forthrightly complained about the behaviour of General Tudor who was Commander of the Auxiliaries, and on another he protested strongly to the Irish Office in London about the misbehaviour of soldiers in his home town, Bandon. When the Government of Ireland (Act) 1920 gave civil servants the right to opt for certification as British or Irish civil servants he quickly chose the latter. It has only recently been revealed that at a crucial stage in the Treaty negotiations Brennan, though still working in the finance division of the Chief Secretary’s Office, secretly prepared ten detailed memoranda for use by Michael Collins. These enabled the Sinn Fein delegation to counter the original British financial claims and to have the matter postponed until after the establishment of the Free State. Little wonder, then, that he was made Secretary of the Department of Finance by the Free State Government. 77

Divisions of loyalty were not confined to the Chief Secretary's Office. On a major or minor scale heads of departments or humble clerks had to face similar problems. Their responses were equally diverse. 78 Birrell was forced

77. Ibid.; Fanning, The Irish Department of Finance 1922-58, pp 6 and 40-1; Leon O'Broin, 'Joseph Brennan, Civil Servant Extraordinary', Studies, LXV, No. 259 (1977), 25-37. Duggan, who was inclined to opt for certification as a British civil servant, was persuaded by Anderson to go to help Clark in Belfast. For the details of the transfer of power and the fate of the 'old guard' see McCollan, 'The Irish Administration in Transition', Ph.D., University College, Dublin, 1977.

78. Henry Robinson, for instance, was constantly attacked by Nationalists because of his Unionist sympathies. Despite this, he was on equally good terms with Liberal and Tory Chief Secretaries.
to take some limited action against those 'cowardly parasites in the Public Offices and the Post Office' who were involved in sedition.\(^{79}\) It was only a gesture. No doubt there were others occupying 'smug berths' whose sedition was less overt and less subversive. The Headlam view had many exponents. Fortunately, so did Duggan's and Brennan's. Both were men of definite political persuasions and, in the last analysis, neither was willing to subordinate their principles to blind loyalty. But it was only in the last analysis. In the meantime they were willing to accept the responsibilities of their office and help to administer policies they strongly disapproved of. It is a tribute to their tolerance that in the process they became and remained good friends.

\(^{79}\) See above, p.173.
By exercising the power of the purse, it [the Treasury] claims a voice in all the decisions of administrative authority and policy ... Many doubtful resolutions have been the result of the peculiar position which, through many generations, the Treasury has occupied ... the exercise of its powers in governing every Department of the Government is not for the public benefit.

- The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, 30 January 1900

The finding of the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland that the government of Ireland was 'anomalous in quiet times and almost unworkable in times of crisis' was not new. It merely confirmed a long and widely held view. As we have seen, successive Under Secretaries made the same point and they found a sympathetic audience in their political masters.

There was much less agreement as to how the situation could be remedied. Predictably enough, Irish Nationalists argued that there could be no solution unless and until the Irish governed themselves; and the Liberals were willing to accept that at the very least some sort of responsiveness to popular opinion, if not popular control itself, was necessary. Equally predictably, the Tories were strongly opposed to any proposals which smacked of constitutional change.

Even when the debate was confined to administrative questions, diagnoses, and therefore prescriptions, varied. One diagnosis which gained a good deal

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of currency attributed all the ills of Ireland to a heartless Treasury. This explanation became popular with the Irish Parliamentary Party when they were forced to explain why, despite their alliance with the governing Liberal Party, there was no great improvement in the condition of Ireland. It was also popular with Irish officials who tended to resent the Treasury's interference. Birrell expressed the general sense of frustration when he likened the Chief Secretary to a beggar knocking loudly and repeatedly at the Treasury door.

Salisbury's outburst against the Treasury would have found an approving audience among Irish officialdom. The maintenance of a separate Irish Executive after the Act of Union and the abolition of the separate Irish Treasury in 1817 meant that Irish departments remained on a different footing from their English counterparts. Whatever the political implications of this, it involved a number of advantages and disadvantages from a financial point of view which I will examine in the present chapter.

The large extension of the apparatus of government in Ireland in the period necessarily involved a large increase in expenditure. This in turn prompted closer scrutiny by the Treasury. For officials trained in the administrative consistency of the Treasury, Ireland was something of a nightmare; for officials trying to cope with the peculiar problems of Ireland, the attentions of the Treasury were irritating and frustrating. One side complained of unnecessary waste, the other of unnecessary interference.

These were more than just the normal squabbles between Treasury and spending departments. They were exacerbated by the Irish 'system' of government with its separate Executive and proliferation of boards; and they help

to highlight many of its inherent weaknesses. An examination of the relationship between the Treasury and Ireland is a useful way of exploring these weaknesses.

The Treasury

As Salisbury's attack on it shows, the feeling that the Treasury exercised undue control over all aspects of government was not unique to Ireland. Given the Treasury's basic function, and the need for Ministers to excuse their own failures, such accusations are inevitable. However, the fact that a serving Prime Minister could make such comments indicates a need to examine very carefully the influence of the Treasury and to outline, in some detail, its precise powers.

The Treasury itself was horrified by Salisbury's remarks especially as he had specifically made a distinction between the departmental Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was, as E.W. Hamilton, Assistant Financial, and later Permanent, Secretary of the Treasury, pointed out, the first time on record that a Minister had cast reflections on a department as such, as against its serving Minister. Hamilton rejected the remarks as 'entirely erroneous and misleading'. It was important, he said, that those in positions of power 'should not be misled as to the constitutional working of the State machinery'. Hamilton denied that the Treasury, apart from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had any power to 'govern' every department of State; it never reached any decisions affecting 'administrative authority and policy' of any importance without reference to the responsible Minister; only the Chancellor of the Exchequer could put a drag or check on expenditure, and

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3. The parsimony of the Treasury is a much-used explanation for failures in government, even when the blame lies somewhere else. See, for example, G.C. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury* (New York, 1979).
even then, he had no greater powers than any other Minister in the Cabinet 'beyond what his own personality commands with his colleagues'.

What Hamilton said about the power of the Treasury was strictly true. But he does understate the influence that it could exercise especially in matters of routine administration. If a dispute came before the Cabinet, then the Treasury might be overruled if strong political reasons could be urged to justify such a course. Needless to say, most disputes never found their way to Cabinet. Most would not even have come to the notice of the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the relevant Minister. The discretion exercised by the top level civil servants at the Treasury was much greater than Hamilton would have admitted.

According to a memorandum on the duties and organisation of the Treasury written by Lord Welby, the Treasury possessed 'the supreme financial control' over the departments of State. Though, in practice, departments might be allowed some discretion in spending funds, such discretion was revocable. No department could adopt any measure which increased or might increase public expenditure, no new clerk could be added, no gratuity given, nor any change made in conditions of service without prior Treasury consent.

The main focus of these powers of financial superintendence was the annual Estimates. Expenditure expected for 'Consolidated Fund Services' was not supposed to be liable to much fluctuation and it was charged once and for

4. Hamilton to Sidney Greville (Private Secretary to Salisbury), 31 Jan. 1900, Hamilton Papers, P.R.O., T 168/47, vol. IX. Apparently, the letter was not in fact sent.

5. 'Duties and Organisation of the Treasury of the United Kingdom', 21 Nov. 1879, Hamilton Papers, P.R.O., T 168/7. See also 'Financial Procedure before the 1st of April', Memorandum by Hamilton, 3 Apr. 1875; his 'Memorandum on the English Financial System', 15 Oct. 1904 (which is an updated version of a memorandum by Welby); and Sidney Smith's 'Memorandum on the Duties of the Treasury and, in particular its Financial and Administrative Control', 30 Apr. 1913, Hamilton Papers, T 168/7 and Bradbury Papers, T 170/11.
all on the Consolidated Fund by statutory authority. Expenditure expected for 'Supply Services' was submitted to the House of Commons annually in the form of Estimates. The power of the Treasury in the formulation of these Estimates lay in the constitutional practice that only the Chancellor of the Exchequer or rather the Financial Secretary to the Treasury could present them to Parliament. Thus if a department could not justify and win Treasury approval for each proposed item of expenditure, its proposals would never come before Parliament.

Once the Estimates were approved by Parliament, the Treasury did not interfere with expenditure within the limits of the sums specified in each sub-head of the Estimate. It did demand that sanction be sought for any increase of establishment or salary, or cost of a service, or for any additional works or new services, which were not specified in the original Estimate. Any savings on a sub-head could only be applied to other purposes with the express permission of the Treasury. In deciding such cases reference was made to 'a complicated body of case law and precedent'. Abuse of the system by the departments concerned was prevented by the Exchequer and Audit Act of 1866 which provided that all persons entrusted with public money should render an annual account of its disposal to the Comptroller and Auditor General. Any unauthorised expenditure was disallowed by the Treasury and the matter referred to the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons.

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6. In 1904-5, Irish charges on the Consolidated Fund amounted to £1,225,000. Of this, £1,059,000 was paid to the Local Taxation Account in relief of rates etc., £20,000 was the Lord Lieutenant's salary and most of the rest was for Judges' salaries. 'The Irish Outline', memorandum by Hamilton, 24 Apr. 1906, Hamilton Papers, P.R.O., T 168/68.


In considering how these duties and powers of the Treasury operated in relation to Ireland, it is helpful to be aware of the structure of the Treasury as much as of the Irish departments. Surprisingly enough, the Treasury was amongst the smallest of government departments. It had a permanent senior staff of only 24 during most of this period - 10 less than in the mid-nineteenth century. Its Vote decreased by £1,000 to £51,500 between 1864 and 1904 while total civil service Estimates increased by 350 per cent. A confidential report prepared for the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1904 concluded that because of serious under-staffing work 'could hardly be done satisfactorily at the best of times' and that the inevitable dislocations caused by sickness or the appointment of men to novel work involved 'serious risk of scandalous breakdown'. The Report also complained of a lack of staff 'able to give time and trained consideration' to various 'great measures'. Among the measures cited as having been 'hurried through without sufficient examination' were the Irish Land Bill of 1903 and the budget of the same year. While they were being considered Hamilton, the Permanent Secretary, was compelled to take a rest cure, Mowatt, one of the Principal Clerks, was down with gout and another senior person was also absent. The pressure of work was such that some members of the staff broke down while 'comparatively young men'. The examination of large but not immediately pressing matters such as the financial relations of England, Scotland and Ireland, and financial problems generally, was 'scarcely attempted'.

The departmental Treasury was divided into six divisions (or areas of work), under the control of a Permanent Secretary or joint Permanent Secretary. At the head of each division was a Principal Clerk who was

9. Memorandum on Organisation of the Treasury, n.d. (1904), Chancellor of the Exchequer's Office, Miscellaneous Papers, P.R.O., T 172/956. The memorandum is unsigned but is probably by George Murray or Hamilton.

10. Ibid. George Murray was appointed joint Permanent Secretary with Hamilton in 1903, due to Hamilton's illness. When Hamilton retired, his position was not filled. Later, however, Robert Chalmers became Joint Secretary.
assisted by one First Class and one or two Second Class Clerks. Of most importance to Ireland were the first, which dealt with the Estimates and finance generally, and the third, which dealt with the Home Office, the India Office, Ireland, Scotland, Agriculture, Civil Service, Isle of Man and some other matters. The 1904 report argued that 'any scientific allocation of work among the divisions, if it ever existed, has been lost sight of during the progressive increase of State activity, and the consequent need for increased financial supervision'. As a result a small reorganisation took place which eased the work-load of the third division by transferring some of its duties and assigned more staff to the general matters of policy.11

It is difficult to say who actually made the decisions. Treasury letters were usually signed by the Principal Clerk, and though important matters were often dealt with personally by the Permanent Secretary, most of his decisions were based on minutes from the Principal Clerks. Much of the actual work was done by the First Class Clerks but, unlike the Principal Clerks, they had little real discretion. Some matters which were particularly troublesome were dealt with by the Principal Clerks to begin with; and many of the Irish departments were 'troublesome' to deal with.12 They demanded closer attention than many of the English not least because the issues involved could be quite complicated. Irish land purchase, for instance, was always dealt with by the Principal Clerk of the third division. It was suggested that an additional First Class Clerk be added to this division to relieve some of the pressure but it was pointed out that this would not necessarily help because some matters demanded the Principal Clerk's personal attention.13

11. Two new clerks were employed and a new division was set up. Ibid., and Smith's memorandum, loc. cit., pp 4-5.
The staff were invariably men of exceptional ability, the cream of the civil service. Of the twenty-five higher administrative staff in the Treasury in 1909, all but one had been to Oxford or Cambridge. The exception was the only Irishman, J.H. Craig (later Sir John) who was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. All later occupied top civil service positions.  

The Irish Executive and the Irish Departments

The relationship of Ireland with the Treasury was complicated by the existence of a separate Irish Executive and of so many boards and departments whose duties varied from case to case. Administration by board was not, as we have seen, unique to Ireland but nowhere else was the system so widespread or so complicated.

Of the forty or so Irish boards and departments, approximately one third were branches of English departments, and presented no great problems. Of the twenty-seven specifically Irish departments noted by the return of 1912, less than a third were officially responsible to the Treasury and only three were controlled by it. The extent of the Treasury's control varied considerably. The Supreme Court of Judicature which had a large vote was, as we have seen, a law unto itself. The normal rules of the Civil Service did not apply to it though its staffing arrangements required Treasury sanction. Despite suggestions for a major reform, including David Harrel's that responsibility for it be turned over to the Chief Secretary, it remained poorly organised and administered. The Irish Nationalists and the Treasury agreed that the cost of the Judiciary in Ireland was too high but little was done about it. During

14. 'List of Principal Officers of the Treasury in 1909' (compiled by the P.R.O. from the Imperial Calendar 1909 and Who's Who), P.R.O. Reference Room Calendar. At 24, Craig was also the youngest of the group. He ended his career in 1949 as Deputy Master and Controller of the Mint.

15. Public Departments (Scotland and Ireland), H.C. 1912-13 (104), LVI; See Chapter 6.

the First World War, the Treasury Remembrancer attempted to have the number of judges reduced because he felt that most of them had very little to do, but in vain: this would have required legislation.\textsuperscript{17} In 1897 there had been such legislation to abolish two judgeships in the High Court. But it was only agreed to by the Irish Government when a clause was inserted directing that all the savings should be applied to such Irish purposes as Parliament would direct. They were subsequently applied towards the maintenance of the Department of Agriculture. The Treasury was extremely reluctant to accept such an arrangement and only consented because of the political pressure which followed the report of the Financial Relations Commission.\textsuperscript{18} Such an arrangement was out of the question in 1914.

The Remembrancer had more success with the staff of some of the legal offices but it was difficult to enforce retrenchment because the Supreme Court of Judicature Act of 1877, the last major reorganisation of the offices concerned, had left control largely in the hands of the Lord Chancellor.\textsuperscript{19} He and the Lord Chief Justice retained most of their patronage, and did not respond very favourably to suggestions that they curtail its exercise. One marvellous example was the allowance to some judges of £300 each for a train-bearer. At the best of times it was a liberal allowance, but during the war, when there were no ceremonial occasions, it was seen by the Treasury as an outright extravagance. When a vacancy occurred, the Remembrancer suggested that it need not be filled, only to be informed by the judge concerned that he had already appointed his sixteen year old son. This, he claimed, was normal

\textsuperscript{17} Headlam, op. cit., pp 69 and 162.
\textsuperscript{18} 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Civil Services, Class III, 16 (Supreme Court of Judicature, Etc., Ireland), p.1.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. and MacDowell, The Irish Administration, pp 131-2.
practice. The money was to be spent on the boy's education at Trinity College. After some discussion it was agreed that the boy should waive the salary but only until after the War. A similar compromise was reached in the case of a legal office under the control of Judge Ross, later to become the last Irish Lord Chancellor. Four of his staff were over eighty, but as the normal civil service age limit did not apply to the legal offices they could not be forced to retire. Ross refused to dispense with their services but agreed to a rearrangement of work which resulted in some savings.20

The Supreme Court of Judicature and the law departments generally were unusual because they were protected by the principle that the administration of justice should be independent of the Executive. The three departments under direct control of the Treasury were more in the nature of sub-branches and it had little difficulty in regulating them. The Teachers' Pension Office which was administered by the Remembrancer did cause some controversy when, in the early 1890's, the fund, which it administered and from which the pensions of Irish school-teachers were paid, became insolvent. Amid accusations of financial mismanagement, the Treasury was forced to agree to a large provision being made by Parliament to restore solvency.21 Even with an annual grant-in-aid of £18,000 the fund continued to find itself in a precarious position from time to time.

The most controversial of the Treasury's Irish departments was the Board of Works. Though its importance in Ireland was not as great as in earlier years, its control of the granting of loans meant that it was still a significant force. As one Treasury Committee of Inquiry reported, the Board had 'more

20. Headlam, op. cit., pp 67-8. Headlam does not name the Judge in his reminiscences but it was Justice Molony. His report at the time condemned the 'ridiculous sinecures' which flourished but he felt that unless they intended to change the law to abolish unnecessary posts, the compromise suggested was the best they could do. Headlam to Treasury, 20 Feb. and 20 June 1916, P.R.O., T 143/4/60 and 204.

or less conflicting interests to deal with; it has to consult the special
interests of localities and persons, and at the same time to protect the
general interests of the public'. In practice, this conflict was generally
resolved in favour of the latter. The rates of interest at which the Board
could grant loans were determined by Treasury regulations and the question of the
eligibility of the local agency was determined by the Board in close consult­
ation with the Treasury. Occasionally, the Board was attacked by the Treasury
for its laxity or generosity but generally the source of the attacks was the
Irish authority which was refused a loan which was already recommended by,
for instance, the Local Government Board. The Board of Works had no power
to even entertain an application from a local authority for a loan without the
statutory 'recommendation' of the Local Government Board. As a result the
Local Government Board's 'recommendation' often signified no more than that it
was willing to put the case before the Board of Works. But 'recommendation' of
a loan by the Local Government Board was often taken by the local authority
as final approval and when, as often happened, the Board of Works refused to
sanction a loan, the resentment in the locality was even greater.

The liberality with which the Local Government Board recommended loans
led to Treasury complaints. In 1901, for instance, the Local Government Board
recommended a scheme for the erection of artisans' dwellings by the Ennis Urban
District Council. When the loan was refused, the Urban District Council pro­
tested to the Treasury, pointing out that the Local Government Board had
encouraged it to incur considerable expenditure in connection with the scheme.

22. Report of Treasury Committee of Inquiry of 1878, quoted in 'Blue Notes',
1920-21, Civil Services, Class II, 39 (Public Works Office, Ireland),
p.3, P.R.O., T 165/46.

23. See, for example, E.W. Hamilton to Commissioners of Public Works, 17 Nov.
1894, P.R.O., T 14/73/707. T14 (Treasury Outletters, Ireland) includes
the correspondence between the Treasury and the Commissioners.

24. James Dougherty to Secretary of the Treasury, 27 Dec. 1901, S.P.O.,
Government Correspondence Books, VIIIB/6/18/668-70.
The Treasury in turn protested to the Irish Government that the Local Government Board recommended the loan although it was well aware that the local rates, from which it would be repaid, were already so high that further borrowing was unlikely to be sanctioned. In such cases, the scheme itself required the approval of the Local Government Board and the loan to carry it out required the approval of the Board of Works. The Treasury urged on the Irish Government 'the inexpediency of allowing any divergence of views between these two departments of Government' and recommended that the Local Government Board ascertain the views of the Board of Works before giving its approval. However, the Local Government Board argued that it had no power to reject schemes except on grounds of unsuitability or if they involved borrowing more than the authority concerned was entitled to. Its only concession to the Treasury was to initiate a practice by which all authorities would be reminded that Local Government Board recommendation of a loan did not constitute final approval.  

The Treasury had even greater difficulty in dealing with the other Irish departments not under its immediate supervision. Most of these submitted their Estimates through the Chief Secretary's Office, the exceptions being the Department of Agriculture which dealt with the Treasury directly and the Loan Fund Board which was supported by fees. Of course, submission of estimates through the Chief Secretary's Office did not mean that that office exercised close control. Of the major departments, those dealing with police, prisons, crown prosecutions and the legal departments, except those under the

25. Ibid.; Austen Chamberlain to David Harrel, 11 Dec. 1901, P.R.O. T 14/81/193. In the Ennis case, the Treasury felt obliged to sanction the loan.

26. The Registry of Petty Sessions Clerks which was not included in the 1912 return was also supported by fees, as was the Intermediate Education Commission until 1912.
Supreme Court and High Court, were, as we have seen, administered under the direct supervision of the Chief Secretary's Office. Among those which were semi-independent in status were the Congested Districts Board, the Commissioners of National Education and the Local Government Board.

It was the function of the finance divisions of the Chief Secretary's Office to examine the applications for new or increased expenditure and later the completed Estimates for each of the votes under its control. Before forwarding the Estimates to the Treasury, the recommendations of the Irish Executive on any proposals for increased expenditure were appended. Unless these recommendations were favourable, the Treasury usually rejected them without any further consideration. The recommendations of the Executive on those Estimates in which the Chief Secretary's Office had a final say when they were being drawn up were invariably favourable. Those on the Estimates of the semi-independent boards were not always favourable even though the Chief Secretary's Office would have discussed the Estimates with the board concerned.

This relationship, which was not unlike that between Ennis Urban District Council, the Local Government Board and the Board of Works, revealed a similar potential for inconsistency and lack of unity between the various organs of government. The Chief Secretary had to defend the Estimates in Parliament though his department might not have drawn them up. He would, however, have recommended them or forwarded them without comment. Otherwise they would not have been accepted by the Treasury. Failure to comment favourably on an important new proposal was tantamount to rejecting it. Favourable comment was

27. In rejecting some Congested Districts Board proposals in 1895, Francis Mowatt remarked that, in ordinary circumstances, in the absence of any recommendation from the Irish Executive, the Treasury felt it unnecessary even to explain the grounds for refusing to sanction them. Mowatt to the Chief Secretary, 25 Jan. 1895, P.R.O., T 14/73/903.
almost prerequisite for serious consideration by the Treasury, but no more
than that. It did not imply that Treasury sanction would be forthcoming.
Indeed, the Chief Secretary's Office sometimes recommended proposals which it
thought unlikely to be sanctioned. In forwarding the 1917-18 National Educa-
tion Estimates the new Under Secretary, Sir William Byrne, recommended for
'favourable consideration' all the proposals for new expenditure although his
predecessors had opposed them year after year. When this was queried by the
Treasury, Byrne explained that the Chief Secretary had instructed him to
indicate his approval of all the proposals. He expected that the Treasury
would reject them on financial grounds but wanted it to be understood that he
was not blind to their merits. 28

The Board of National Education is a good example of the system at its
worst. Its one paid Resident and nineteen unpaid Commissioners met fortnightly
and administered a vote which increased from approximately £0.9 million in
1890-91 to £1.4 million in 1905-6 and £3.3 million in 1920-21. 29 The yearly
Estimates were drawn up by the Resident Commissioner and ratified by his col-
ejues before being forwarded to the Chief Secretary's Office where they were
supposed to be examined. But no one there had the necessary expertise to
examine them properly so they tended not to be examined on their merits.
Birrell compared his role in connection with these Estimates to a 'mere
gramophone'. Though he was answerable for the Board in Parliament, he was not
a member of it and could not attend its meetings. Of the Estimates he said
that the Board annually

presents through the Treasury demands for more money and is perfectly
justified in making these demands. It puts them under eighteen or
nineteen ancient heads - very ancient and some of them almost hoary.

28. Headlam to Treasury, 10 Jan. 1917, P.R.O., T 143/5/16.
29. 'Blue Notes', 1890-91, 1900-01, 1910-11 and 1920-21, Civil Services,
Class IV, 13 (Public Education, Ireland), P.R.O., T 165/9, 18, 37 and
47 respectively.
The only person to whom they are a novelty is the Chief Secretary who as a rule does not last more than two years and therefore comes fresh to them every time. He selects as best he can those that appeal most to his own idiosyncrasy or appeal to the idiosyncrasy of the guardian of the public purse, his Right Honourable Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. That is the way it is done. It is not done by discussion or by pressure brought to bear on the Government. It is done by the work and sense of activity and conscience of the Chief Secretary operating upon the more or less willing or reluctant Treasury.

The Chief Secretary was indeed often forced to rely on his own or his Under Secretary's subjective preference. While proposals for new or increased expenditure had to be made separately and a case made to justify them, only the board concerned was conversant with all the relevant facts. There was no specific machinery in existence by which the Chief or Under Secretary could investigate independently. Sometimes the finance division was relied on; sometimes the Chief Secretary or Under Secretary consulted the board; occasionally the Treasury Remembrancer or the Board of Works were used but this was a slightly irregular procedure as both were responsible to the Treasury and not to the Irish Executive; but very often, no investigation took place at all. The Chief Secretary's Office would simply transmit the proposals without comment and leave it to the Treasury to investigate. This could lead to considerable confusion and waste of time, with proposals being referred back for clarification, deferred or rejected.

The Estimates for the year 1908-9 were as good an example as any of the idiosyncratic way proposals could be treated. The Chief Secretary's Office singled out two of the education proposals for particular recommendation. One was for an increase in teachers' salaries which would cost £133,000 and the other was for £24,000 to provide fires in country schools during the winter months. However, it did not recommend other proposals which it had

described in previous years as essential. In 1907-8, for instance, the finance division had made a detailed review of all the Commissioner's proposals, and recommended many of them but without success. Among the proposals rejected was one to increase teachers' salaries. This was a more modest scheme than the one put forward in 1908 but the Treasury rejected the 1907 proposals out of hand whereas it promised to consider the 1908 proposal if some changes were made and if there were savings elsewhere. This was done but not in time to be implemented in 1908-9. Money for fires in country schools was rejected on the grounds that it was a service which should be paid for by the localities, not by the State. 31

Why the Treasury should have been more generous in 1908 than 1907 is a mystery which may or may not be explained by discreet political pressure having been applied. There is no direct evidence of such pressure. Why the Irish Executive, or the finance division of the Chief Secretary's Office, should have chosen to champion the two proposals they did and ignore the others is another mystery.

The Board of National Education found itself continually involved in disputes both with the Irish Executive and with the Treasury. Two of the most important are worth noting for what they show of the relationship between the three bodies. The first, in the 1890s, concerned the practice of giving 'Equivalent Grants' to Ireland and Scotland to compensate them for expenditure in England on purely English services. The Elementary Education Act, 1891 fixed the school grant for England and Wales at 10 shillings per head on the average attendance. The Irish grant, like the Scottish, was not fixed on a capitation

basis but was to bear a fixed proportion to the English grant. The Irish Education Act of 1892 declared that the Irish grant should be £210,000 'or such amount as Parliament may determine having regard to the amount of the [English] Fee Grant ...'. It was clearly intended that if the size of the English grant increased, the Scottish and Irish grants should increase proportionately. From the outset, the Scottish Education Department worked on that supposition: in submitting its Estimates for 1893-4, it left the amount of the fee grant blank, to be filled in by the Treasury on the basis of the English grant. At first the Treasury demurred but eventually it was agreed that 11/80 of the English estimate for that year would be paid, and that was the principle adopted in subsequent years.  

The Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, on the other hand, for some time received only the £210,000 originally specified. This, the Treasury later explained, was because 'the National Education Commissioners, less wide awake than the Scotch Office, neglected to ask for more'. Interestingly, either the Treasury too was not wide awake or else it chose not to enlighten the Commissioners. In November 1894, the Commissioners saw their mistake and they asked that 9/80 of the English grant of 1894-5 be given them in 1895-6. Shortly afterwards they asked for 9/80 of the English estimate for 1895-6 which was the basis used by the Scottish department. The Irish Executive supported the first but not the later request, nor did it support the request for arrears to be paid. Having investigated the matter the Treasury concluded that the whole arrangement was illogical and troublesome but

32. 'School Grants, Ireland and Scotland', Treasury memorandum printed for Cabinet, June 1896, pp 1-3, P.R.O., Cab. 37/42/29. See also Mowatt to Chief Secretary, 1 Feb. 1895, 22 Feb., 5 Mar. and to Under Secretary, 23 Apr. 1896, P.R.O., T 14/73/938-9 and T 14/75/157, 182, 211 and 376 respectively; David Harrel to Secretary of the Treasury, 12 Jan., 5 Feb., 8 Mar. 1895 and 20 Feb. 1896, S.P.O., Government Correspondence Books, VIIIIB/6/11/312-3, 418-9 and 550-1, VIIIIB/6/12/599-600.
that they would have to make the best bargain they could with Ireland. Accordingly, it granted only the request supported by the Irish Executive and it made it a condition that some of the increase would go to the Irish Teachers' Pension Fund.  

The Commissioners of National Education strongly objected to this. But when the Treasury formulated a completely new scheme which involved genuine capitation in Scotland and Ireland at the same rate as in England - 10 shillings per pupil - it made it a condition that some of the excess that would accrue to Ireland under the scheme should also go to the Pension Fund. Again the Irish Government eventually agreed and the Commissioners vehemently disagreed. They argued, correctly as it turned out, that application of the money to the Pension Fund would be illegal as the original Act had specified the purposes for which it could be used. The Treasury response was not to use all the money for increasing teachers' salaries but to change the law. By this stage the Irish Government had realised that the Commissioners had been correct in claiming that the 1895-6 grant should be based on that year's and not the previous year's English grant. This was then granted by the Treasury as a quid pro quo for cooperation with regard to the new scheme and the Pension Fund.

The whole affair is revealing. The 'equivalent' principle was illogical as it meant that the Irish grant was increasing because of increased numbers of pupils in England, and despite a decrease in Ireland. However, given that the law existed, it might have been expected that it would be enforced and that the Treasury would impose uniformity. Instead it neglected to enlighten the Commissioners of National Education as to their entitlement. In fact, in the first year of its operation, the Scottish department was given a full

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33. Treasury Memorandum, loc. cit., pp 4-7.
34. Ibid., pp 8-18.
year's grant whereas the Irish department was given only two thirds because that is all they asked for.

The Treasury blamed the Commissioners for what had happened. It allowed that they could not communicate with Whitehall except through the Irish Government. But, in practice, it automatically rejected all the Commissioners' proposals unless they were recommended by the Irish Government. When, late in 1893, the Commissioners questioned their original interpretation of the Act, the Treasury replied misleadingly and the matter was dropped. A year later when the matter was again raised, the Treasury only granted the proposal supported by the Irish Government though it was clear that Ireland was entitled to more. Only when the Irish Government pushed the matter did the Treasury take it seriously. The Irish Government was only half-hearted in pursuing the matter, probably through ignorance. So, while the National Education Commissioners were not 'wide awake' to begin with, when they realised their mistake they found that their efforts to rectify it were hampered by their own status and by the attitude of the Treasury and the Irish Government.

There were good reasons for the Treasury and the Irish Government to be wary about the semi-independent boards. They had a reputation for irresponsibility especially where public money was concerned. However, as the second dispute will show, this uneasy relationship could delay much needed improvements. The dispute which dragged through three Chief Secretaryships and led to considerable public controversy concerned the rates and conditions of school-building grants. The attitude of the Treasury was that if at all possible some of the cost should be borne by the local ratepayers. The attitude of the Irish Executive ranged from all-out support of the Commissioners

35. Ibid., pp 23-8.
36. See, for example, MacDonnell to Secretary of the Treasury, 4 July 1906, S.P.O., Government Correspondence Books, VIIIB/6/22/912A.
of National Education to agreement with the Treasury. At one stage, they even washed their hands of the whole issue until the Treasury complained of the lack of guidance. The one thing everybody was agreed upon was that a great many Irish school buildings were in a deplorable condition and needed to be replaced.

In 1902, when the dispute had dragged on for some time, the Treasury suggested that the matter be referred to a small committee composed of the Treasury Remembrancer, the Resident Commissioner of National Education, a representative of the Board of Works and an Inspector of Schools in Scotland. The Report of this committee was not to the Treasury's liking so it was withheld for some years from the Commissioners of National Education. The matter would probably have come to a head then were it not for the fact that Antony MacDonnell chose to begin recommending a complete reorganisation of the administration of education. A reorganisation such as MacDonnell envisaged was thought likely to result in a rationalisation of the number of schools and eventually, if a full-scale department was set up, a local contribution from the rates towards the cost. The promise of a local contribution and rationalisation was enough to persuade the Treasury to be generous. It agreed to give £140,000, spread over five years, as an interim measure to enable the worst of the schools to be dealt with. Once this was exhausted, the cost of new buildings, the Treasury insisted, would have to be met from the rates or from the newly created Irish Development Grant. The existing system whereby two thirds of the cost of erection of vested schools was met by

When MacDonnell's plans for a Department of Education were shelved and the money granted by the Treasury was beginning to run out, the dispute flared again. Apart from who was to bear the cost, the points at issue were the size of the grant for each school and the size of the schools themselves. Both were calculated on the average number of pupils in daily attendance. The Commissioners of National Education argued that as average attendance tended to vary in Ireland because of seasonal work in rural areas, a higher floor space per pupil in average attendance would have to be allowed; similarly, with the capitation grant. The Treasury, for its part, insisted that the English standard apply. Early in 1905, the Treasury expressed its disappointment at the fact that the Irish Government was 'offering no assistance towards a settlement of the question' and threatened to go ahead and arrange a scheme with the Board of Works. Not long afterwards, Walter Long, the Chief Secretary, reached an agreement with the Treasury but the Commissioners were unhappy with it and it was rejected by the incoming Irish Government in 1906.

In July 1906 MacDonnell suggested that the only way to solve the problem was to have a conference between representatives of the Commissioners of National Education and the Treasury. The Treasury replied sharply that the Commissioners were a 'subordinate department' and that it would deal only with the Irish Government. It also complained once again of a lack of guidance by that Government. In turn, the Irish Government denied the allegations of lack of guidance and counter-charged that if the Chief Secretary's Office had

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41. Ibid.: Cavendish to MacDonnell, 14 Mar. 1905, P.R.O., T 14/84/847-8; Reginald McKenna to MacDonnell, 24 May 1906, P.R.O., T 14/86/30.
42. MacDonnell to Secretary of the Treasury, 4 July 1906, Government Correspondence Books, VIIIIB/6/22/912A.
forwarded letters from the Commissioners without comment it was because 'its recommendations had not received the consideration which they believed they merited'. 44

Negotiations continued in this spirit until the end of the year by which time the Treasury had come round to the idea that only a conference could settle the outstanding matters; and it 'willingly agreed' that some of the Commissioners should attend with the Irish Government. 45 By then, the 'political' question of local contribution had in effect been settled. The Chief Secretary agreed that the principle was desirable and should be implemented 'at an early opportunity' but in the meantime an interim solution was essential. 46

In March 1907, the Treasury agreed to provide grants of £40,000 per annum for three years for the building and improvement of vested schools, any unspent portion to be re-voted the following year. The Commissioners accepted this on condition that at least £25,000 per annum would also be provided from the Development Grant. In 1910, the Treasury grant was extended for another three years. However, the funds were committed years in advance and a further round of negotiations began. Further annual grants were agreed to in 1911, and these were increased in 1912. In January 1915, the Treasury, because of the War, directed the suspension of the grants except those which were urgent. They were resumed in 1919. 47

44. Cullinan to Secretary of the Treasury, 15 Aug. 1906, P.R.O., Government Correspondence Books, VIIIB/6/23/25-7. Both MacDonnell and Bryce had visited the Treasury on the subject.
45. Murray to MacDonnell, 23 Jan. 1907, P.R.O., T 14/87/266.
46. Dougherty to Secretary of Treasury, 5 Apr., MacDonnell to Secretary of Treasury, 4 July 1906, and Cullinan to Secretary of Treasury, 15 Aug. 1906, S.P.O., Government Correspondence Books, VIIIB/6/22/709, 912A and 6/23/25-7 respectively.
47. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Civil Services, Class IV, 13 (Public Education, Ireland), pp 15-16. Only £30,000 was paid out of the Development Grant as it was depleted in 1908.
This dispute was on the surface merely an insignificant wrangle about money. However, it also involved some of the most significant elements in the Treasury's relationship with Ireland. Central to it was the local contribution question. It also shows that the Treasury conception of the Commissioners of National Education had not changed much since the 1890's. It still insisted on dealing only with the Chief Secretary's Office even though the Commissioners were better informed than anyone in the Office could have been. The dispute was prolonged because each time the Irish Government reached agreement with one side, the other rejected it. The Treasury persisted in the notion that it could solve the dispute with a little help from the Board of Works and the Chief Secretary's Office whereas any 'solution' reached without the agreement of the Commissioners of National Education was likely to prove unworkable.

From the Treasury point of view, the problem with the National Education and most of the other Irish boards was that they had power without responsibility. Board members were appointed for political reasons, or religious reasons, or even sometimes because of their expertise in the area which the particular board dealt with. The paid permanent element on the boards was small and it was difficult for them, even when they were so inclined, to inculcate a sense of collective responsibility or identification with the other branches of government. Indeed there was a tendency on the part of the Congested Districts Board and the National Education Board to emphasise their independence from Dublin Castle. The problems of education or congestion or whatever were ever-present to the board in question.

Even at times of general financial stringency, they were not inclined to trim their sails. In the short term this might be to their advantage but in the long term it was not as it convinced the Treasury of their untrustworthiness. The Chief Secretary was more likely to be aware of this point. During the First World War when a vacancy occurred on the Congested Districts
Board, Birrell found himself with a choice between a bishop and a baronet when what was most needed was, he said,

\[\text{a man who understands England and British sentiment. We need this not in the vain hope or even wish to turn Ireland into an English Province but to get the use for a little longer of English or British Credit.}^{48}\]

Birrell's objection to the bishop was that 'Prelates don't like having their mouths shut by laymen' and that he would 'never ... be got to see the English or Treasury point of view about anything ...', so he agreed to the appointment of the baronet. At the time Birrell was fighting hard to persuade the Cabinet that the Congested Districts Board's operations should not be stopped completely during the War but unlike some of the members of the Board he felt that 'a man must be a God who does not recognize the Treasury point of view...'.^{49}

Of course, the problems experienced by the Treasury in dealing with Irish boards were less in some cases than in others. The boards and offices which were under the more immediate supervision of the Chief Secretary's Office were easier to deal with. The Constabulary Estimates, for instance, and those of the Dublin Metropolitan Police were prepared in consultation with the Chief Secretary's Office and were generally forwarded with a favourable recommendation. However, because of the relatively large numbers and high cost of police in Ireland, the Treasury was not inclined to be generous in its treatment of the claims of the Irish Constabulary. It repeatedly pointed to the almost complete lack of local contribution, to the large numbers of police relative to England, especially in isolated areas, and to a high proportion of

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sergeants and higher officers to constables. In quiet times it could with
some justification call for reductions in numbers or reorganisation and it
occasionally made some progress, but it was never permanent. In 1903, for
instance, it extracted from the Irish Government promises that, as part of
the price for Treasury agreement to the Land Purchase Act, the numbers of
police would be reduced. This was in fact done but with the revival of cattle
driving in 1907 the numbers were increased again. While the departmental
Treasury might have been able to make good a case for reduction or reorganis­
ation, once the maintenance of law and order was in question, the matter was
out of their hands and was for decision by the Cabinet.

Perhaps because of the importance of the police in maintaining order, the
question of their remuneration was often taken out of the hands of the
departmental Treasury. After some discontent over conditions during 1900 and
1901, a Viceregal Commission was set up to examine the question; and in 1903,
on the advice of the Irish Government, the Treasury accepted some of its
recommendations involving limited increases in allowances. But it was not
until 1908 that its recommendation for an improved salary scale, which required
legislation, was implemented. Again in 1914, agitation in the R.I.C. and
Dublin Metropolitan Police resulted in the setting up of a Viceregal Commission.
They recommended substantial increases in pay which were agreed to by the
Treasury. Further increases were agreed to in 1916 and 1918 and 'War Bonuses'
were granted in 1916 and 1918.

50. See for example, Headlam to Treasury, 8 July 1914, P.R.O., T 143/2/557-61.
51. See above, p.243. See also p.139. For the promised reduction in police
numbers, see MacDonnell to Secretary of the Treasury, 21 Sept. 1903,
26 Jan. 1906, and 26 July 1907, Government Correspondence Books, S.P.O.,
VIII/6/20/202A, VIII/6/22/532 and 562-3.
52. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Civil Services, Class III, 20 (Royal Irish Con­
stabulary); p.3., P.R.O., T 165/47.
53. The Commission consisted of David Harrel, Maurice Headlam and R.F. Starkie,
the Resident Commissioner of National Education. Ibid.
54. The D.M.P., though better paid than the R.I.C., also benefitted. The 1918
increase followed increases given to the London Metropolitan Police. See
Most of these increases, including the War Bonuses, were opposed by the Treasury but it was forced to acquiesce under pressure from the Irish Government. It accepted the report of the 1914 Commission only on the understanding that a committee would be set up to consider the reorganisation of both the R.I.C. and the Dublin Metropolitan Police. However, when the matter was raised the Irish Government refused to agree to the appointment of such a committee because it was 'not the time for considering or suggesting reforms of an unsettling character'. That remained the position of the Irish Government.

In 1917, it forced the acceptance of demands for 'cost-of-living' increases made by the Dublin Metropolitan Police and rejected the suggestion of an amalgamation of the R.I.C. and Dublin Metropolitan Police.  

Despite the fact that it did not always get its own way, especially in unsettled times such as 1907-8 and 1914-18, the Treasury would probably not have been too unhappy with its dealings with the Irish police. Even after all the political interventions, the cost of the R.I.C. remained relatively stable during the period only increasing dramatically in 1920-21. It would also have been fairly satisfied with its control over the Local Government Board. Even though the Board had a semi-independent status, it maintained, as we have seen, a good working relationship with the Irish Executive by virtue of the fact that Henry Robinson, its Vice-President for most of this period, became friendly with almost all of the Chief Secretaries of his day. The Board was allowed a considerable degree of independence but Robinson's contacts with the

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55. Ibid.; Headlam to Treasury, 8 and 23 July 1914, 27 July 1916 and 26 Apr. 1917, P.R.O., T 143/2/557 and 557, T 143/4/241-3 and T 143/5/125 respectively.

56. See pp 240-44. Both the R.I.C. and D.M.P. were less well paid than police in England. Headlam to Treasury, 18 Oct. 1916, P.R.O., T 143/4/322.
Chief Secretary and the fact that it functioned more like a department than a board facilitated a smooth working relationship. Robinson was too sensible to provoke serious disputes.

That is not to say that disputes did not occur. The Treasury more than once turned down proposals for increased staff or better conditions in the establishment of the Board. Also it was in the nature of the work it did that there should be differences of opinion with the Treasury or with the Board of Works. I have already alluded to one such dispute over the sanctioning of loans. That was a fairly typical case. The Board's staff was inclined to take a more sympathetic view of similar schemes than the Treasury could.

Dealing with local authorities both before and after the Local Government Act of 1898 was potentially explosive. However, that is not of direct relevance to the relationship between the Treasury and the Local Government Board except for what it shows about the problems encountered by the Treasury in dealing with Ireland. For example, when in 1920 an increasing number of Irish local authorities, under orders from Dail Eireann, began to refuse to submit accounts to the Local Government Board, there was no real difference in the reactions of the Board and the Treasury. After some hesitation, it was decided that, rather than withhold grants, which would penalise all ratepayers rather than just the disloyal, legal action should be taken against the authorities to force them to submit their accounts. Proceedings were initiated against eighty local authorities but the Truce was declared before any of them was forced to conform.58

In this case, the problem was really outside the control of the Local Government Board. Similar, though less dramatic, was the situation which arose

57. It is worth noting, however, that the Board's staff more than trebled between 1898 and 1920. See 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Class VII, 5 (Local Government Board), P.R.O., T 165/47.
when the Old Age Pension was first introduced in Ireland. The administration of the scheme was placed in the hands of the Local Government Board. In the early years of the scheme, the Treasury noticed that the percentage of people in receipt of the pension in Ireland was higher than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Further, judging from the 1901 census, there seemed to be a large number of people in Ireland who mysteriously discovered between 1901 and 1909 that they were older than they thought. The Treasury was somewhat alarmed by the fact that by 1912 the expenditure on the pension in Ireland was £2,500,000 annually, with 203,644 recipients. This could in no way be attributed to the Local Government Board, however. The problem arose because there had been no compulsory registration of births in Ireland before the 1860's. A Treasury committee on the subject decided that census returns should be accepted as evidence of age or failing this, a clergyman's certificate of the applicant's age. This latter arrangement led to the acceptance of a large number of dubious cases and was later dropped. The Local Government Inspectors may have been over generous in accepting claims of having 'eaten a potato out of my hand in the year of the Big Wind' but when stricter criteria were agreed on, they were faithfully applied.

The most fortunate departments of all were those which could deal with Treasury directly. The Department of Agriculture had a relatively good working relationship with the Treasury especially in its early years. Apart from its consultative council and advisory board, and its various endowment funds, the Department was otherwise similar to a normal English department. Moreover, the

59. 'Amount Payable for Old Age Pensions in Ireland', Memorandum by R.G. Hawtrey (1912), Bradbury Papers, P.R.O., T 170/5.
60. Being mature enough to eat out of his hand on that night was taken as proof that the applicant was over seventy. Robinson, Memories, pp 206-10; Birrell, Things Past Redress, pp 210-11.
fact that its head had ministerial status meant that it was directly responsible both to the Treasury and Parliament. For this reason, the Treasury was inclined to trust the Department more than most of the other agencies of Irish Government. In spite of the wide range of its activities, it had a relatively small income to begin with. It received £166,000 annually from its various endowment funds and a voted income of slightly more than that. By 1921, its voted income had more than trebled.  

**The Treasury Remembrancer**

Dealing with the Irish boards and departments posed particular problems for the Treasury. When proposals were not accompanied by a favourable recommendation from the Irish Executive, they could be promptly rejected. Other proposals could be rejected on the basis of the information supplied by the department or already in the possession of the Treasury. Each division in the Treasury kept an up-to-date history of the departments with which it dealt. This was comprised of an account of the steps, legislative or otherwise, by which the duties of the department had increased, decreased or altered and of the steps by which the department's establishment reached its existing condition. But where questions of policy were concerned or where a novel claim was made, it was necessary to enter into a long correspondence and to investigate the claims in detail. It was to expedite this cumbersome procedure that the Office of the Treasury Remembrancer was established in 1870.

The function of the Treasury Remembrancer, who was to be resident in Ireland, was to supply the Treasury with 'local information and confidential

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61. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Civil Service Estimates, Class II, 35 (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Ireland), p.19, P.R.O., T 165/46.


63. Headlam, *Irish Reminiscences*, p.27. The Remembrancer was also head of the Teachers' Pension Fund Office and was also Deputy Paymaster.
advice on Irish matters'. Between 1870 and 1920, when the post became obsolete, there were four Remembrancers. Three of them, Herbert Murray (1870-1882), L.H. Hewby (1909-12) and Maurice Headlam (1912-20), had previously been Treasury officials and they returned later to senior positions in England. The fourth, R.W. Holmes (1883-1908) was an Irish landowner who had previously been a legal official in Dublin. 64

Because of the looseness of the Irish administrative system, the Remembrancer assumed an importance which may not have been envisaged when the post was created. Contentious proposals were referred to him for investigation and advice. He would then proceed from his office in Dublin Castle to the board or department concerned to clarify points and assess the case. His report would then be sent back to Whitehall and the Treasury would communicate with the Chief Secretary's Office.

Despite the undoubted aura of efficiency which attached itself to the Remembrancer's Office, the procedure was unsatisfactory. It took much to-ing and fro-ing to settle even relatively minor matters which in Whitehall would have been settled in minutes. Headlam says in his reminiscences that he secured permission to settle some minor points without reference to London. 65 I suspect that this just regularised what had been common practice even before his time. In any event, these powers of discretion were very small. On most matters, an Irish department with an office within walking distance of the Remembrancer, in some cases in the same building, still had to approach the Treasury (through the Chief Secretary's Office) which in turn contacted the Remembrancer; and the circle had to be reversed before a reply was given.

64. Ibid., p.28.
65. Ibid., pp 57-8. G.C. Duggan's 'The Life of a Civil Servant' includes a first-hand account of the system at work. Duggan, who worked in the finance division of the Chief Secretary's Office, expresses his surprise at the lack of an investigative function within the division.
The Remembrancer’s reports were semi-formal but frank and often very critical of the Irish Government. In 1911, for example, when the Chief Secretary proposed to hire a steamer to enable the collection of arrears of rates on some islands off the west coast, Hewby described the proposal as ‘wasteful and ill-timed’ as the hire cost would exceed the yield from the arrears. He recommended that the Treasury try to get the Chief Secretary to reconsider the question of policy. Two years later, the rates still had not been collected on the islands off Donegal so the Local Government Board, before deciding to write them off as irrecoverable, asked the Chief Secretary’s Office whether the R.I.C. would protect the rate-collectors who ‘apprehended violence’ if they attempted to distrain the goods of the islanders. The Office agreed but only on the understanding that the R.I.C. would accept no responsibility for transporting or loading the seizures. The collectors refused to go on these conditions but by then a steamer had been chartered.

When the Treasury was asked to sanction the cost of the abortive expedition, Headlam was directed to investigate. He recommended that the Treasury should ‘comment severely’ on the conditions of the Irish Government, on the action of the police and on the inaction of the Local Government Board. He continued in his usual colourful way:

It may be assumed as probable that if the expedition had sailed, if the seizures had been made, and if the police had protected the seizures, the next event (after the fighting) would have been a famine on the islands; and the next outlay of H.M.G. would have been upon a famine relief ship loaded with food. Hence it may be said that we shall get off cheaply with the present payment — but I cannot help thinking that, if the R.I.C. had been in less of a hurry, or if there had been more coordination between the Chief Secretary’s Office and the L.G.B. even this might have been avoided.

66. Hewby to Treasury, 16 June 1911, P.R.O., T 143/1/85.
67. Headlam to Treasury, 5 and 25 Oct. 1913, P.R.O., T 14/143/2/254-5 and 304. The islanders objected to paying rates for services that were only provided on the mainland.
The reports of the Remembrancer reflect the Treasury's preoccupation with economy and administrative conformity. Many Treasury replies to departmental proposals for expenditure were all but written by the Remembrancer. The Principal Clerk involved would, in replying, simply paraphrase the Remembrancer's Report.

Because of his position, the Remembrancer was subject to constant criticism. In the case of Holmes and Headlam who between them occupied the office for all but three of the years in my period, the criticism was exacerbated by their strong Unionist sympathies. Headlam, in particular, made no secret of his views. He questioned the whole drift of Liberal policy in Ireland on both political and financial grounds in language which was often imprudent, to say the least.

He described the findings of the Royal Commission into the shootings after the Howth gun-running as 'ridiculous' and 'frankly partisan' and dismissed the proposed compensation to some of those injured as 'blackmail' and a means to 'secure the peace of the Irish Executive'. He took a genuine interest in the reform of the R.I.C. and the Dublin Metropolitan Police and repeatedly condemned the failure of the Government to go ahead with reorganisation. 'It will always be "not time for considering or suggesting reforms of an unsettling character"', he said. He tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Treasury that the only way to force reorganisation was to block the increases in salary until the Irish Government agreed. 'If you always grant the demands of the Irish Government', he argued, 'and merely ask them to do what you want, you will never get anything done ... The only way to influence them is to hang up their demands till they comply with ours'. When the police demanded cost-

68. He was an active member of the Kildare Street Club. He justified his membership on the grounds that it allowed him to discuss business with the heads of the Irish Departments. Irish Reminiscences, p.58. Irish Reminiscences is dedicated 'To those who have loved Ireland and do not care much for Eire'.
of-living increases in the Summer of 1916, he denounced it as blackmail 'as the Police know that public opinion, in the present state of the country, would not allow anything in the nature of a police strike'. But Headlam was not unsympathetic to the police themselves: he blamed the Irish Government for demoralising them by failing to use them to suppress disorder, and he blamed the Treasury for allowing the Chief Secretary to get the increases he asked for without committing himself to reorganisation. He rejected the argument that, given the state of the country, interfering with the police was undesirable. In the month before the Rising he wrote:

> If the Police were employed to check sedition, there would be a colourable pretext for not reducing their number. But as long as the Police are not so employed, there is none, and even if the policy were altered the number of officers is grossly in excess of requirements.\(^*)

Clearly, Headlam's reports were coloured by his political sympathies. However, his overriding concern was always economy and retrenchment. He believed that the Irish Administration was extravagant at the best of times and that during the war there was no justification for not imposing the same severe economies which were in operation in England. He did have some success in this regard. It was accepted in practice that no increases of salary should be granted during the war except in exceptional circumstances and then only to offset the steep rise in the cost of living.\(^\text{70}\) Despite Irish objections, most of the land purchase operations of the Congested Districts Board were suspended in 1915 as were the loan operations of the Local Government Board, the provision of building grants for schools and so on.\(^\text{71}\)


\(^\text{70}\) Headlam to Treasury, 8 Sept. 1916, P.R.O., T 143/4/288.

\(^\text{71}\) Micks, *The Congested Districts Board*, p.151.
But Headlam was bitterly disappointed in the results of his efforts. In 1917 he complained that there had been 'little or no retrenchment' in Ireland. His most cherished 'success' turned out to be a white elephant. War Retrenchment Committees were set up in 1914 in England and Scotland to oversee reductions in the staff and general expenditure of government departments. But an Irish Retrenchment Committee was not set up until after the formation of the Coalition Government and only then after pressure by Headlam. The Committee proved an empty gesture as the Irish Government opposed reductions in staff. Headlam pressed for legislation to abolish some of the wasteful legal positions but to no avail. It was agreed that vacancies should not be filled but even this was not always abided by. He pressed for a drastic reduction in the number of Resident Magistrates most of whom sat on less than fifteen days a month. They were 'much under-worked' and their numbers might be halved without overworking them. Again however the Irish Government refused to agree and all that was achieved was an informal agreement not to fill vacancies. Headlam even went to the extent of proposing a reduction in the salary and allowances of the Lord Lieutenant on the grounds that they were excessive because all ceremonial functions had been cancelled due to the War, but he met with no success.

Many of the reductions pressed for by Headlam were clearly necessary. Nevertheless, in some cases, they amounted to needless cheese-paring. One small but important example illustrates this point well. For many years it


73. Ibid.; Headlam to Treasury, 9 Sept. 1915 and 13 June 1916, P.R.O., T 143/3/301-3 and T 143/4/195-6. The members of the Retrenchment Committee included Birrell, who was chairman and John Redmond.

74. G.C. Duggan accuses Headlam of having been a cheese-parer in 'The Life of a Civil Servant'.
had been the practice of the Crimes Branch of the Chief Secretary's Office
to buy copies of about thirty local newspapers and all the daily newspapers
and to file cuttings from them under headings such as 'Sinn Fein', 'Cattle
driving', etc. These were then available for use by the Chief Secretary and
the Attorney-General who occasionally called for them. The system was
abolished by Nathan but was revived in 1917, and a constable was employed to
deal with the backlog.\textsuperscript{75} When in 1918 permission was applied for to continue
the arrangement, Headlam asked whether it was

really necessary to continue this absurd waste of time? Nathan
very properly abolished it, and it was only restored because the
late Attorney-General was a fussy person who preferred reading
newspaper extracts to doing his proper legal work while the late
Chief Secretary had a passion for reading everything.

You have now a new Attorney-General who has plenty of purely
legal work to occupy him, and a new Chief Secretary who is
apparently not so meticulous as his predecessor; and I am sure
His Excellency does not want to read the Skibbereen Eagle. Can't
you quietly drop the thing again?

The Under Secretary sent the head of the crimes branch, W.P. Connolly, to see
Headlam but the Remembrancer was unconvinced. It was not a question of
whether the work was 'economically done', he wrote, but whether it was
necessary:

\begin{quote}
Can you tell me also what you pay for the papers? You must
consume an enormous amount of paper on which you paste the
extracts: all this apart from the waste of time in doing
the work.
\end{quote}

Connolly replied on behalf of the Under Secretary that the Chief Secretary
and the Lord Lieutenant had directed that the work be continued. There the
matter ended. What is interesting about the incident is that the yearly cost
of the papers was only £52 and it required the attention of only one constable.

\textsuperscript{75} Headlam to Treasury, 19 Dec. 1917, P.R.O., T 143/5/472-3.
In return the Irish Government was provided with an invaluable source of information. Given the small amount of money involved, Headlam's views were short-sighted in the extreme. What is more, in questioning matters of policy (which he regularly did) he was overstepping the functions of the departmental Treasury.  

The Limits of Treasury Control

In dealing with Ireland, the Treasury consistently tried to make the Irish departments conform to the standards of their British counterparts. It would be wrong to assume that it failed totally. A great deal was achieved in the way of standardising salaries, conditions of service and procedure. But again and again the 'peculiarities' of the Irish situation limited the scope for enforcing uniformity. The 'peculiarities' of Ireland lay in a number of directions: political unrest, poverty, religion, population structure and so on.

To begin with Headlam's preoccupation, the police: In Ireland the cost of the police per head of population was greater than in any other part of the United Kingdom. This was due largely to the higher numbers of police and to the fact that it was relatively more costly to police isolated rural districts than densely populated districts. In settled times some of the police might have been dispensed with, but as we have seen the efforts of the Treasury to effect reductions all failed because the demands of economy were seen as less important than other demands. Headlam argued forcibly that the Dublin Metropolitan Police should be abolished as it was a 'very unsatisfactory and

76. Headlam to Byrne, 22 and 24 May 1918; Connolly to Headlam, 5 June 1918, S.P.O., Dublin Castle Registered Papers 15250 (5 June 1918).
77. See, for example, its treatment of proposals for the reorganisation of Irish prisons. Headlam to Treasury, 30 Mar. and 8 Sept. 1916, P.R.O., T 143/4/135 and 286-7.
78. Headlam to Treasury, 25 Aug. and 16 Oct. 1916, T 143/4/3276 and 322. Even in Dublin, however, the number of police was much larger than most English cities.
useless force' and that the R.I.C. should be reduced in numbers and reorganised. The Treasury shared Headlam's views but the argument that in the political climate of the time it was essential to revive the morale of the police won the day. It could hardly have been otherwise. The unsettled state of Ireland necessitated a relatively large, well-equipped, police force. Even when the country was quiet the Irish Executive was forced to take a more long term view than the Treasury.

What irritated the Treasury particularly was the fact that in Ireland, unlike England, there was virtually no local contribution outside Dublin and Belfast. The extreme centralisation which made the R.I.C. such an efficient arm of the administration militated against any reversion to the English tradition of local contributions and control. By the 1890's the popular attitude to the R.I.C. had been long enough settled to make local acceptance of their being partly supported out of the rates highly unlikely. In fact the trend, if anything, was the other way with both Dublin and Belfast arguing that the burden on their ratepayers should be lifted.

The resentment against the police tax in Dublin came to a head in 1905. The tax was leviable at a rate not exceeding 8d. in the pound on the annual rateable value of property in the Dublin Metropolitan Police District. Along with two other small local appropriations-in-aid the police tax accounted throughout most of the period for one-third of the total cost of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. In 1905 Dublin Corporation, having failed to convince the Treasury that it was unfair to levy the rate at its maximum (8d. in the pound), decided not to pay it. The Attorney-General advised the Government to proceed by mandamus against the Corporation, but, before this was done, the

79. From 1918-19 on, it amounted to a much smaller proportion. In that year it realised £51,631. 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Civil Services, Class III, 19 (D.M.P.), pp 9-10, P.R.O., T 165/47.
Government changed. The new Irish Executive decided that it would be easiest simply to deduct the money from grants payable to the Corporation. That procedure was adopted in 1906 and subsequent years.  

Apart from the Dublin police tax and a small rate for harbour police in Belfast, the only local contribution to the cost of police was in the form of payments for 'extra forces'. When extra police had to be drafted into an area to deal with disturbances, the cost was chargeable to the local rates. If, as sometimes happened, the local authority refused to pay, then the procedure adopted was the same as in the Dublin case. As well as paying for extra police used in disturbed times, the locality was liable for a moiety of the cost of all police normally in the area over and above its 'free quota'. The 'extra force' for all Ireland only amounted to 530 officers and men in 1897 but 420 of these were based in Belfast. Twenty years later, Belfast had an extra force of 733 and a free quota of only 500. Not surprisingly Belfast Corporation objected strongly to this, and following an increase in the extra force quartered in the city in 1912-13, it refused to pay towards their cost. The Irish Government responded by taking the money out of the annual grants to the Corporation.  

In all these cases, the Treasury had a means of redress but the very fact that it was forced to use it is indicative of the Irish reluctance to support government services through the rates. In England where the tradition was stronger, the Treasury had much less difficulty. It failed to recognise how entrenched 'centralism' was in Ireland. With a little more perspection it might have seen that rather than England being the norm and Ireland the deviant, ironically their positions were vice versa.

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81. Ibid.; 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, p.4.

This pattern of little or no contribution to the cost of services ran through all areas of Irish government. The abominable state of primary education was largely attributable to this. The Treasury consistently opposed granting increased expenditure to services which in England were not paid for by central Government. In 1897 the Treasury rejected an 'important recommendation' regarding assistant teachers for this reason. The Irish Government protested that if this criterion continued to be used by the Treasury it would be 'a serious hindrance to educational progress in Ireland'. Nevertheless it was the criterion which the Treasury continued to apply throughout the period. That is what dogged the protracted negotiations over building grants. The situation was made worse rather than improved by the expectation that a Department of Education would be set up sooner or later. Such a development would have been accompanied by the introduction of a measure of local control and, its corollary, local responsibility for some of the cost. In calling for more of the burden to be carried by the localities, the Treasury probably felt that it could rely on the support of the Liberals who were strongly attached to the principle of popular control of education. The Liberals did include the principle in the Irish Council bill of 1907 but the bill's failure meant the end of Treasury hopes in this regard.

The lack of a local contribution to government services was not simply a question of tradition. The rural nature of the country and its poverty were also factors. It was more expensive to provide services in small scattered communities. The high cost of education in Ireland was partly


84. See above pp 139-45. In April 1907, the Irish Government told the Treasury that while it favoured local contributions 'the difficulties in the way of carrying the theory into practice are, under present circumstances, very serious indeed, and this Government cannot undertake to overcome them so long as existing conditions of administration in Ireland continue to be what they are'. Dougherty to Secretary of the Treasury, 5 Apr. 1906, Government Correspondence Books, S.P.O., VIIIIB/6/22/709-10.
explained by the proliferation of small schools. And the more expensive the service, the less likely the poorer regions were to be able to pay. The poverty which prevailed is illustrated by the number of emergency relief measures which were required in the period. In the 1890s alone there were three Seed Supply Acts. These were the inevitable sequel of crop failures. The effect of potato failure was prolonged by the fact that there were no seed potatoes to plant the following year. The Seed Supply Acts provided loans to the local Boards of Guardians to purchase and distribute seed. It is worth noting that of the £415,445 advanced under the three Acts all but £596 had been repaid by 1903. All the outstanding money was owed by the Belmullet Board of Guardians. This was one of the poorest regions in Ireland but the Assistant Under Secretary noted that

in spite of the poverty of the rate-payers, the Guardians have shown praiseworthy and successful efforts to discharge their obligations in the face of great difficulty. 85

The local authorities did not therefore wilfully shirk their responsibilities. The question of a tradition of local contributions and local initiative is therefore all-important. The Treasury would have said that the Irish tradition amounted to complete dependence. It could not understand why a quay built in Ardwest, County Galway, as a relief work in 1880-81 had been allowed to get into a state of 'threatened collapse' by 1898 even though the local authority had had its attention drawn to the matter on two occasions. There was a small fishing fleet in the area and the legal obligation clearly rested with the locality. However, as the Grand Jury had not built the pier, it could see no reason why it should maintain it. This was a problem which was repeated throughout the west of Ireland. Eventually, the Congested District

85. James Dougherty to Secretary of the Treasury, 9 Apr. 1903, Government Correspondence Books, S.P.O., VIIIB/6/19/815-16.
Board and the Treasury had to make specific arrangements to ensure that piers and quays were not allowed to collapse and to encourage County Councils to maintain them. 86

Perhaps the most important of the Irish 'peculiarities' with which the Treasury had to contend was the way in which politics seemed to pervade all areas of administration. Headlam warned the Treasury that the practice of allowing administrative inefficiency would eventually rebound on them. He certainly had a point when he talked about administrative inefficiency being tolerated because of political expediency. That was one of the ever-present facts of life for Irish administrators. Headlam blamed the influence of the Irish Parliamentary Party over the Liberals, but it was equally a Tory phenomenon. Their avowed policy of 'killing Home Rule with kindness' improved conditions in Ireland but it also created its fair share of administrative inefficiency and extravagance.

The classic example was the Congested Districts Board. No one knew the weaknesses of the Board system better than Arthur Balfour. Yet he set out deliberately to create a Board which was not bound by the normal rules and was not subject either to the Chief Secretary or the Government. He gave the Board virtually complete freedom in spending the funds voted to it. In so doing, he produced a Board which from an Irish point of view was an outstanding success. At the same time he saddled the Treasury with an administrative nightmare. 87

From its foundation in 1891 until 1921, the Board and the Treasury were at daggers drawn. Almost from its inception, the Treasury tried to restrict

86. Ibid.; 2 July 1898 and 8 Feb. 1904, VIIB/6/15/317-9 and VIIB/2/20/628-30.
87. See above, Chapter 6.
its operations. It insisted that the Board's outdoor staff be paid from its endowment fund rather than its vote. The Board protested that this was contrary to the intention of the Act which set it up. The Board's interpretation was confirmed by an eminent counsel but it was advised that there was nothing it could do to force the Treasury to change its mind. So it was compelled to pay its outdoor staff out of its small endowment fund.

The 1909 Act fixed a definite sum for payment of the salaries of Board employees. This proved a satisfactory arrangement until during the First World War. Then the Board applied to the Treasury to have the war bonus paid to its staff met from a special vote, as was the case with other civil servants. The Treasury refused and the Board was forced to meet the cost out of money designed for land improvement. Over $150,000 was ultimately diverted to this purpose. The Treasury also blocked the attempts of the Board to have the position of its employees regularised by the implementation of a pension scheme. The Board wanted to use some money from one of its endowment grants to set up a pension fund whereas the Treasury insisted that it come from the Board's annual income. The dispute was not settled until 1920 when Anderson came to Ireland as Joint Under Secretary.

In all these disputes over the establishment of the Board, the Treasury seems to have been trying to emphasise the fact that the Congested Districts Board was not a regular part of the civil service. On other matters, it tried to bring the Board firmly under the control of the civil service. I have already dealt with the efforts made to reduce the independence of the Board by placing it under the wing of the Chief Secretary's Office. Having earlier won the right to deal with the Treasury directly, under MacDonnell it lost that

88. Micks, The Congested Districts Board, p.156.
89. Ibid.; pp 164-5.
90. Ibid., p.167. See above, pp 200-1.
privilege. The Treasury tried to entrench the new arrangement by having the Board's Estimates included with those of the Chief Secretary's Office, but the Irish Government refused. Instead they were linked with the Department of Agriculture's.

The Treasury's main objection to the Congested Districts Board was its tendency to extend its operations in many areas without much regard to the availability of funds. Almost yearly there was danger that it might be unable to meet its commitments. The Treasury lodged complaint after complaint but the brinkmanship of the Board always resulted in political intervention to remedy the situation. Under the Land Act of 1903 the Board was entitled to buy estates and, using some of its own money and money borrowed from the Board of Works, improve them for resale. Between 1903 and 1909 there was a constant series of confrontations and crises. In May 1905, James Dougherty explained to the Treasury that the Board had felt it their duty to buy every suitable estate offered for sale at a reasonable price. The Treasury was horrified by this admission and pointed out that the Board's funds were limited. Once the estates were purchased, further money would be needed to improve them, so the Treasury feared more trouble. It introduced a regulation forcing the Board to provide at least one third of the money needed for improvements from its own resources.

The pace of the Board's purchasing was such that it was quickly forced to request increased borrowing powers. The Treasury's response was a long assault.

91. See above, p. 113.
92. In 1912, the Congested Districts Board once again submitted its Estimates direct to the Treasury but they were returned with a request to submit them through the Chief Secretary's Office. Royal Commission on the Civil Service, Fourth Report, Second Appendix, p.182, [Cd 7312], H.C. 1914, XVI.
93. The Board was always adept in the use of political pressure. See Headlam to the Treasury, 23 Jan. 1915, P.R.O., T 143/3/33-5.
94. G.H. Murray to the Under Secretary, 8 Aug. 1905, P.R.O., T 14/85/318.
on the Board's financial operations. The Irish Government replied, interestingly enough, that all that needed to be said was that the Board's administration had been successful. It then went on the offensive arguing that the Board's powers should be doubled: otherwise, it should be abolished. It admitted that 'as at present constituted', the Board 'is not an entirely efficient organ for the purposes of the Act creating it' but that, it was felt, could be remedied.

Not long afterwards, the Dudley Commission on Congestion was appointed, in effect to decide the future of the Congested Districts Board. While it was sitting, the Treasury lost no opportunity of giving its view on the activities of the Board. It denied that it was restricting the operations of the Board; it was merely ensuring that it did not exceed the income available. When the Board did not heed this advice, the Treasury warned that the responsibility for defending its actions before the Public Accounts Committee would 'rest exclusively upon the Irish Government and the Board'. In the event, the Board did incur a deficit but the Treasury refused a request for a temporary loan of £25,000. The Board claimed that their deficit was due to the fact that they understood that this loan would be granted but, as the Treasury pointed out, they had been given clear warning. Ultimately the loan was in fact granted but only after the Board promised not to buy any more estates until the new Land Act was passed.

Even after the 1909 Act, the relations between the Board and the Treasury continued to be strained, so bad in fact that the Board actually took the Treasury to court. The point at issue was the Treasury's determination to pay

96. MacDonnell to Secretary of the Treasury, 11 May 1906, Government Correspondence Books, S.P.O., VIIIIB/6/22/798-801.
99. Ibid.; 5 and 18 Mar. and 10 Nov. 1908, T 14/88/950-1, and 1014-5, and T 14/89 respectively.
certain monies owing to the Board for the sale of estates in stock rather than in cash. Acceptance of the depreciated stock would have involved a serious loss of income to the Board. The case went all the way to the House of Lords where the decision was in favour of the Board. 100 Nothing better sums up the troubled relations of the Treasury with some of the Irish boards than the spectacle of two branches of the same Government fighting each other in court.

**Treasury Regulations**

In trying to impose its will on the Congested Districts Board, the Treasury used one weapon very effectively: its power to make regulations under various statutes. This had enabled it to limit the borrowing capacity of the Board. In the same way, this Treasury power to frame or approve rules of a financial nature enabled it to disallow rules affecting the R.I.C., the conditions of service of teachers and so on.

The most devastating use of this power was in connection with the Land Act of 1903. The Treasury had opposed the financial provisions of this Act originally but the Government went ahead because of the political pressure for such an Act. The Act substituted cash payment for payment in stock and included an inducement bonus. The measure proved so popular that by 1909 sales worth over £50,000,000 had been agreed to but remained to be paid for. This huge backlog reflected the popularity of the Act. But also it meant the complete breakdown of its financial machinery. A new Land Act had to be passed which reintroduced payment in stock. 101

The breakdown of the 1903 Act has often been blamed on the Treasury and it is clear that the Treasury was the immediate cause of the backlog. 102 It

100. Micks, op. cit., pp 162-3.
101. Ibid., pp 157-9; 'Blue Notes', 1920-21, Civil Services, Class III, 17, (Irish Land Commission) pp 9-10, P.R.O., T 165/47.
102. See, for example, Micks, op. cit., pp 157-9.
restricted funds available for land purchase each year to £5,000,000. This was nowhere near enough to cope with the demand. In doing so, the Treasury claimed that it was simply following the principles of sound finance. Their views were confirmed by the fact that the land stock which was floated to raise the cash for payment to the vendors was soon having to be sold below par. 103 Under the terms of the Act, losses on the stock were to be met from a 'guarantee fund' and when that was exhausted, by the Irish ratepayers. By 1907, the losses were such that they threatened to impose a large burden on the taxpayer and on the ratepayers. When the grants to some local authorities were reduced to meet the loss, the Irish Party protested strongly. John Dillon claimed that the losses would 'bankrupt and destroy the whole community'. Altogether £64,000 had been taken from grants to Irish local authorities and £116,308 from the Irish Development Grant which was soon completely exhausted. So it was decided not to issue any stock in 1907 and to introduce remedial legislation as soon as possible.

The limits imposed on the issue of stock in 1904 and 1905 were not in keeping with the spirit of the Act. However, events proved that the caution of the Treasury was more than justified. 104 That did not lessen the outcry against it. The Land Commissioners challenged the legality of some of its regulations, and the judicial cases were still pending when the Liberals returned to power. The new Chief Secretary ordered that those cases which the Treasury was likely to win should be dropped, while those it was likely to lose should be proceeded with. 105

103. Thus to raise £100 cash, £105 in stock and even more was having to be floated.
105. See above, p.218.
The Cost of Irish Government

The poor relations between the Treasury and the Irish departments were made inevitable by the high cost of Irish Government. It would be difficult to calculate accurately the total expenditure on Irish services because of the impossibility of distinguishing between purely Irish and Imperial expenditure. This problem bedevilled the preparation of the financial schemes of the three Home bills. All expenditure was met out of the common purse and some items were not readily divisible into Irish and Imperial categories. The obvious example is the cost of the military establishment in Ireland which was expended both on local and Imperial business. Any estimate of the cost of the government of Ireland is bound to be at best tentative. What is certain, however, is that in 1890 it was disproportionately high and that during the next thirty years the disproportion grew.

The Treasury prepared statements of Irish revenue and expenditure for the Royal Commission on the Financial Relations of Great Britain and Ireland in 1895 and for the Primrose Committee on Irish Finance in 1911. Taken together they illustrate graphically the escalating cost of governing Ireland, as the following table shows:


Expenditure on Civil Government Charges in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total in £</th>
<th>Per Head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1893-4</td>
<td>4,544,000</td>
<td>0-19-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-11</td>
<td>9,799,500</td>
<td>2-4-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table V. 108

By way of comparison, though expenditure in Britain increased considerably in the same period, the increase was less than in Ireland. The cost of British administration per head of population was 11s-5d in 1893-4 and 19s-4d in 1910-11. So the cost of Irish administration was almost double that of Britain. In 1893-4, if the cost per head had been the same in both countries, there would have been a saving of £2 million. This was made more serious by the fact that, while in 1893-4 revenue raised in Ireland nearly balanced the expenditure on local services, by 1910 there was an annual deficit of almost £2 million. 109 In 1893-4, the cost of the Local Government Board, Registrar General, the Veterinary Department and the Public Record Office totalled £415,311. If the cost had equalled fifteen per cent of the cost of the same services in England (the proportion of the Irish population to the English), it would have been £197,388 less. 110

The expenditure on Ireland out of the common purse was further increased by loans and grants. E.W. Hamilton told the Financial Relations Commission that of £111 million advanced by the State for public works, £52 million had been gone to Ireland. More than one-fifth of this was

108. These figures do not include the cost of Customs and Excise or Revenue Departments. Final Report of the Royal Commissions Appointed to Inquire into the Financial Relations of Great Britain and Ireland (hereafter Financial Relations Commission), pp 47-9, [Cd 8262], 1896, XXXIII; Primrose Committee, pp 3-5; Return Relating to Imperial Revenue...for the Year Ending the 31st day of March 1913, H.C. 1913 (199), XLI.
written off or remitted and was therefore a free-grant, while only one-fifty eighth of the amount advanced in Britain had been so treated.\textsuperscript{111}

The large increase in Irish expenditure between 1893 and 1911 was accounted for almost totally by the Department of Agriculture, the Congested Districts Board, the Land Commission, the Educational Votes and the introduction of Old Age Pensions.\textsuperscript{112} During the War, Irish expenditure grew much less rapidly (while the revenue increased significantly because of increased taxation), but during 1919-21 it again increased dramatically, largely due to the disturbed state of the country.\textsuperscript{113}

Part of the increase in Irish expenditure between 1890 and 1921 was due to the increase of State involvement in the care of the sick and the old throughout the United Kingdom. However a sizeable proportion is attributable directly to factors unique to Ireland. The 'Constructive Unionism' policy involved the outlay of considerable amounts of money. The Financial Relations Commission itself, by finding that Ireland was overtaxed in relation to its resources, gave a considerable boost to that policy. H.C.E. Childers, chairman of the Commission, recommended that the overtaxation of Ireland be compensated for by increasing Irish expenditure; and Sir David Barbour, though he denied that Ireland was overtaxed, argued

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Ibid.}, To forstall the criticism that it was unfair to compare Britain and Ireland, E.H. Hamilton compared Ireland with Belgium which had a similar style of centralised government with extended administrative functions. The cost per head of civil government in Belgium in 1893 was 10 sh. The yearly salaries of the fifteen judges of Belgium's superior courts totalled only £6,000. The Lord Chancellor of Ireland alone was paid £8,000.
\item\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Financial Relations Commission}, p.49
\item\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Ibid.}
\item\textsuperscript{112} Primrose Committee, p.49.
\item\textsuperscript{113} See 'Blue Notes 1920-21', P.R.O., T165/47.
\end{itemize}
that expenditure could be used as a set-off. The Government also rejected
the finding that Ireland was overtaxed, but in practice there seems to
have been an effort to redress the grievance by taking the advice of Childers
and Barbour. Even E.W. Hamilton of the Treasury accepted that there
was a strong case for treating Ireland as a separate financial entity.
This position was officially repudiated by the Government but administrative
practice in the following years belied the repudiation.

Within a year of the publication of the report the Judicial Reductions
Act was passed. This allowed all savings achieved by reorganisation of
the Judiciary to be applied to the benefit of Ireland. The application
of the English Agricultural Rates Act to Ireland shortly afterwards
might, on the surface, seem to disprove the separate entity argument,
but significantly whereas the English Act relieved the landowner of his
half-share of the poor-law rate on agricultural land, in Ireland the
equivalent measure remitted half the tenants share of the county cess.
The result was a disproportionately large grant to Ireland.\textsuperscript{114}

The interests of Ireland were clearly not the interests of the
Treasury. Nor was the system of administration by boards likely to help
the quest for a modus vivendi. Quite the opposite, in fact, it generated
a mutual suspicion and even hostility which were more than simply the
normal tiffs between Treasury and spending departments. W.L. Micks, the
Secretary of the Congested Districts Board, was not a neutral witness,
but it is interesting that in his history of the Congested Districts Board he should, in speaking about the Treasury echo the comments of Lord Salisbury with which I began this chapter. He wrote

The House of Commons gained its power because it had the real control of expenditure. Now real power of the purse seems to be exercised by the permanent Treasury officials, and the House of Commons exercised little more real power than the House of Lords.\textsuperscript{115}

Micks, like Salisbury, was careful to distinguish between the departmental Treasury, and its political head. Decisions were made, he said, not by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but by the permanent officials, whose 'dogmatic opinions, delivered with an air of sublime omniscience, have an undue weight with Ministers'. Micks attributed many of the ills of Ireland to the pennywise officials of the Treasury whose ruling principle was to say no.\textsuperscript{116}

Micks certainly had a point. Especially on intricate financial questions such as land purchase finance or 'equivalent grants' the senior permanent officials at the Treasury could have their own way. It was also true that the Treasury through its powers to make regulations and to control departmental establishments could seriously curtail the activities of some departments and, thereby, frustrate the spirit of Acts of Parliament. Finally, in a whole range of small routine matters, the Treasury could restrict or obstruct Irish departments.

\textsuperscript{115} Micks, \textit{op.cit.}, p.167. 
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid.}, pp 169 and 161.
The Congested Districts Board suffered in all these directions. But the Board is also a good indication of the limits to the Treasury's power. In spite of all the restrictions, the Board managed to work successfully. It achieved that success, in many cases, in spite of strong Treasury opposition. It was enabled to do this because of its semi-independent status, because of popular support and because of political pressure.

Though Micks did not admit it, the continued activity of the Board was made possible only by the active support of successive Chief Secretaries. That was another limiting factor on the power of the Treasury. Headlam fought long and hard for reorganisation of the police, for retrenchments in the public departments and so on. For all his efforts, he was singularly unsuccessful. On all matters concerning large questions of policy, the Treasury could not have its way without the consent of the Irish Executive, though obviously the Chief Secretary could not intervene in all disputes. As Henry Robinson pointed out,

If he [the Chief Secretary] stuck to it he generally gained his point in the long run, but he would probably have had to make it a personal matter with the Parliamentary Secretary or the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He might do this once in a while, but he could not go on doing it. He could not waste his influence upon small things and make himself a nuisance by worrying the Parliamentary Secretary over every decision of the Treasury officials. He had to reserve his heavy artillery for really important matters of policy. The result was that the average Chief Secretary found himself hampered by the Treasury in a number of small things which really ought to have been done for the good of the country ... 117

It is interesting that this is the only major reference to the Treasury in Robinson's memoirs. This emphasises the fact that not all departments found the Treasury a sinister influence. A great deal of administration was carried on efficiently and to the requirements of the Treasury. Given the 'peculiarities' of Ireland, that was something of an achievement.

117. Robinson, Memories, p.95.
The peculiarities of Ireland included such factors as the lack of a local contribution and religious division. But the greatest peculiarity of Ireland was the system of administration itself. The looseness and diversity of that system and its nominal control by the Irish Executive imposed strong demands upon both the Irish Executive and the Treasury. The machinery that they had at their disposal to meet those demands was inadequate. Not until the creation of an Irish Treasury in 1920 did the Treasury really come to terms with the problems posed in administering Ireland. That development did not happen overnight but reflected the experience of a generation of administrators in Dublin Castle and Whitehall. One man who proposed such an arrangement sixteen years earlier was Antony MacDonnell. His view on the Treasury and Ireland is worth recording:

I doubt whether in any country in the civilised world such a chaotic system of administration exists as we have today in Ireland. The dominating influence is that of the Treasury in Whitehall, over which the Irish Government has no sort of control; which is irresponsible to Irish opinion and antipathetic to Irish feeling; which is at once niggardly and profuse in its management of Irish finance; which interferes at will in every department of Irish administration.

Individual Treasury officials are among the ablest I have met, but the machine works with the spirit engendered by a century of arbitrariness and mistrust, and it now exercises a demoralising influence on Irish public services and on Irish public life.119

118. See above pp 199-201.
CONCLUSION

'The execution of political measures is in reality the essence of them'. So wrote Sir Henry Taylor in 1836.¹ It is an obvious point but one which has not much influenced historians in their thinking and writing. As late as 1968, Roy MacLeod lamented the fact that 'the importance of administration as a factor in the formation of law and public opinion' had 'only recently received critical recognition' and that few studies had 'as yet attempted to analyse the manner in which civil servants and ministers were influenced by the machinery of government they themselves had created'.² Since then the debate on the growth and interpretation of nineteenth century English government has waxed and waned and waxed again.³ Ireland has rated an occasional mention but generally only to throw light on the larger question.⁴ With the exception of R.B. McDowell, most Irish historians have been too concerned with the cut and thrust of 'political'history, in its narrowest sense, to take up and refine the terms of the debate for Ireland.⁵ This is rather unfortunate. The general conclusion of this thesis is the extent to which 'civil servants and ministers', 'law and public opinion', and indeed the shape of political events themselves, were influenced by the machinery of government.

Pressures of time and space have made it impossible to examine in any detail some important aspects of the question. My main concern was with political events. Social and economic matters were considered only insofar as they related to that concern. The whole area of local

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government and the relationship of the population at large to the organs of government, local and central, would repay more attention than it was possible to give them here. So too would a detailed comparison of the machinery of government in England, Scotland and Ireland, and a study which would place the administration of Ireland in its colonial context.

The most significant feature of the administration of Ireland after the Act of Union was the survival of a separate Irish Executive. Despite the abolition of the Irish Parliament and the union of the two Exchequers, the administration of Ireland remained on a different footing from that of the rest of the United Kingdom. The continued existence of the Irish Executive was a barrier to closer union. Indeed, it sometimes promoted greater divergence. Though this fact was well known, not many Unionists were sufficiently bold to propose the abolition of the Executive. The truth was that Ireland was a troublesome partner whom few English politicians were willing to clasp too closely to their bosoms.

Complete integration - assuming that it was possible - would have made the task of those who sought to break the connection with England more difficult. Clearly it was easier to repeal an incomplete union. More than that, the incoherence and inconsistency of the existing structure allowed the development of, and prevented an effective response to, the separatist movement. Given the emphasis on constitutional issues throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it is extraordinary that there was no authoritative definition of the relative powers of the main officers to whom the government of Ireland was entrusted. During most of the period 1890-1922, the Chief Secretary was in the ascendancy, but not always. His supremacy was never unchallenged. Almost all Chief Secretaries in the period found themselves embroiled in power struggles with their respective Lord
Lieutenants which absorbed much of their time and energy. The uneasy relationships between Wyndham and Cadogan, Wyndham and Dudley, Long and Dudley, Birrell and Aberdeen, Birrell and Wimbourne, Duke and Wimbourne, Shortt and French, and Macpherson and French, all hampered the effective administration of the country. The isolation of Dudley and Wimbourne were particularly important.

By virtue of its very existence, the Irish Executive possessed considerable independence in the day-to-day administration of Ireland. However that independence was not so great as was often supposed. The Executive's internal divisions mitigated the effective control it could exercise. The constant review of its performance by the Irish Members of Parliament made its success or failure a matter of collective Cabinet concern. On the whole, the Cabinet was willing to allow the Irish Executive to carry on independently, but important questions of policy or administration were matters for Cabinet discussion and decision. In these discussions, the views of the Chief Secretary carried a certain amount of weight but they were not necessarily decisive. The formulation of the Home Rule bills was the best example of this.

The Chief Secretary was usually not a very senior member of the Government. Most Cabinets had at least one member with a superior knowledge and experience of Ireland. Gladstone, Arthur Balfour, Morley and Long at one time or another all played a major part in shaping Irish policy, though they were not the responsible Minister. The importance of the Irish Question in British politics made such intervention inevitable.

The isolation of Dublin Castle in Ireland and the ties of the Irish Members with the English Parties made it inevitable that some accommodation would be reached with them. It was never as simple as the perpetual claims of Irish Unionist or Nationalist domination of the Castle would have us believe. Some Chief Secretaries retained more
independence than others. Morley, Wyndham and Bryce are good examples of the former; Long and Birrell are good examples of the latter. The fates of Wyndham and Bryce are good indications of the perils of independence, while fate of Birrell emphasised the perils of dependence.

The control exercised by the Chief Secretary was also mitigated by the weakness of the permanent civil service structure in Ireland. The complicated nature of the Irish Administration and the wide variety of areas for which the Chief Secretary was responsible imposed a considerable strain on him. The extent of his parliamentary duties and the enforced isolation of most Lord Lieutenants made it all the more essential that the Chief Secretary have a reliable Under Secretary who, as Warren Fisher put it, would be a 'driving force'. This requirement was rarely met. Few Under Secretaries were 'driving forces'. Partly this was due to a weakness in personnel but more important was the conception of the position prevalent among Chief Secretaries. The fate of those Under Secretaries who aspired to being something more than a routine clerk was not encouraging. Most Under Secretaries were not appointed to take control of the Irish Administration. Instead they were expected to oversee day-to-day administration and to avoid trouble. Dependability and loyalty were seen as more important than drive or imagination. While in 'quiet times' that might have sufficed, in the crises which recurred with increasing regularity, it was completely inadequate.

Only one Under Secretary was promoted from within the Chief Secretary's Office. Most came from outside the Irish Administration and from outside Ireland. This was symptomatic of (as well as being partly responsible for) the weakness in the administrative class in the Irish civil service. In most departments, that class was non-existent. Even in the Chief Secretary's Office it was small and ineffective. Lack of promotion prospects had left many senior officers frustrated.
and dispirited. Transfers to other Irish or English departments were rare. The restricted access to secondary and tertiary education limited the number and type of recruits. The progress of the reformed civil service was slower in Ireland, largely for political reasons. Those same reasons ensured that the experience of Irish civil servants differed markedly from their cross channel colleagues.

Nothing better describes the haphazard growth of the organs of Irish government than G.M. Young's comment about the government of the United Kingdom as a whole. It was, he said, 'made by administrators throwing out their lines until they met and formed a system. In the fustian stage, which exasperated clear-headed Radicals, it was not made, it grew'. The final result of that growth in Ireland was something less than coherent. It would be misleading to call it a 'system'. Of the 'congeries of boards' and departments existing in Ireland in 1890, some were directly or indirectly controlled by the Irish Executive, some were controlled by the Treasury or branches of English departments and some were semi-independent. The structure of these boards varied considerably. The division of functions between them followed no rational pattern and in many cases their work overlapped.

All this was pointed out by Ridgeway and by others before him. The period 1890-1921 was a period of innovation and growth in government but not only did the incoherence persist, it was added to. The functions of a number of boards were amalgamated but in the process further inconsistency was created. Despite Ridgeway's strictures, Arthur Balfour created the Congested Districts Board which embodied all that Ridgeway thought was wrong in the board system. Later Balfour and his brother sanctioned the creation of the Department of Agriculture

which represented a move in a different but still unconventional direction. Both the Congested Districts Board and the Department of Agriculture reduced rather than increased the control of the Irish Executive and of central government. Though this may have been politically necessary, it was not administratively sound unless one was to concede the impossibility of integration. They were also given responsibilities which overlapped with each other and with those of the Land Commission. This was partly rectified by Birrell in 1909 but, for political reasons, he stopped short of imposing administrative consistency. Similar motives may have been behind the failure to grasp the nettle of Irish education to create the Department of Education it was widely agreed was necessary.

The large extension in the apparatus of government in Ireland in the period necessarily involved a large increase in expenditure which in turn prompted closer scrutiny by the Treasury. Ridgeway's accusation that the Treasury was the real Government of Ireland was repeated frequently by Irish officials. In practice, however, Treasury control could be as limited as the Irish Executive's. The best evidence of this is the huge growth in Irish expenditure between 1890 and 1921. To begin with this was due to the policy of 'killing Home Rule by kindness' adopted by the Tories. Later the disturbed state of the country necessitated massive outlays to preserve law and order. When proposals came before Cabinet for discussion the Treasury's power to over-rule them was limited. The Land Act of 1903, for instance, was agreed to despite the opposition of the permanent officials of the Treasury.

On matters that did not come before Cabinet, the Treasury's control was much greater. It did manage to exercise a crippling control over matters of departmental establishment which, in the case of the
Chief Secretary's Office, was particularly important. And its power to frame rules under various Acts of Parliament enabled it to put a check on expenditure in many areas of Irish government. The rules it framed under the Land Act of 1903 severely limited the operation of that Act and eventually forced the introduction of amending legislation to remedy its defects.

To an extent Irish suspicions of the Treasury were justified. The departmental Treasury disliked Ireland because it did not conform to normal practice. Expenditure was often decided on for political rather than sound economic or administrative reasons; the cost of Irish government was disproportionately high; there was little or no local contribution to the cost of services; and, above all, money was handed over to be administered by boards and departments, some of which were virtually independent of parliamentary control. In response, the Treasury fought a rear-guard action, trying to enforce conformity and to hinder the work of bodies such as the Congested Districts Board as much as possible.

The government of Ireland was anomalous in quiet times and unworkable in times of crisis. The virtual breakdown in 1916 (and in 1920) might have been predicted. It was not a great surprise to those who knew anything about the Irish administration. Successive Under Secretaries warned of the need for fundamental reform. Liberals and Tories alike agreed that the system was inherently defective. Why, then, was something not done about it? Home Rule overshadowed everything else but it should not necessarily have precluded modest but important administrative reform, either by the Liberals or the Tories. Yet the most obvious reforms were not attempted. Why? Perhaps it had something
to do with the conservatism, inherent in all institutions, referred to by F.M. Cornford, in 1908, in his *Microcosmographia Academica*:

'Nothing is ever done until everyone is convinced that it ought to be done, and has been convinced for so long that it is now time to do something else'. 7 This might well serve as a *lief-motif* for the last years of Dublin Castle.

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APPENDIX I

The Principal Officers of the Irish Government 1890-1922

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chief Secretaries</th>
<th>Date of Appointment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Balfour</td>
<td>7 Mar. 1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Lawies Jackson</td>
<td>9 Dec. 1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Morley</td>
<td>28 Aug. 1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerald Balfour</td>
<td>4 July 1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Wyndham</td>
<td>9 Dec. 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Long</td>
<td>12 Mar. 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Bryce</td>
<td>14 Dec. 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustine Birrell</td>
<td>29 Jan. 1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Duke</td>
<td>3 Aug. 1916</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edward Shortt</td>
<td>11 May 1918</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Ian Macpherson</td>
<td>13 Jan. 1919</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hamar Greenwood</td>
<td>12 Apr. 1920</td>
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<tr>
<th>Lord Lieutenants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laurence, earl of Zetland</td>
<td>5 Oct. 1899</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert, Baron Houghton</td>
<td>22 Aug. 1892</td>
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<tr>
<td>George, Earl Cadogan</td>
<td>8 July 1895</td>
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<tr>
<td>William, Earl Dudley</td>
<td>16 Aug. 1902</td>
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<tr>
<td>John, earl of Aberdeen</td>
<td>14 Dec. 1905</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ivor, Baron Wimbourne</td>
<td>19 Feb. 1905</td>
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<tr>
<td>John, Viscount French</td>
<td>11 May 1905</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edmund, Viscount Fitzalan</td>
<td>2 May 1921</td>
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<tr>
<th>Under Secretaries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph West Ridgeway (1887-92)</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Harrel (1893-1902)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Antony MacDonnell (1902-08)</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Dougherty (1908-14)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matthew Nathan (1914-16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Chalmers (May to Sept. 1916)</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Bryne (1916-18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>James MacMahon (1918-22)</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Anderson (1920-22)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Synopsis

A. Sources

1 Manuscript Material
   (a) Official Papers
   (b) Private Papers

2 Printed Material
   (a) Parliamentary Debates and Papers
   (b) Biographical Dictionaries, Directories and Gazettes
   (c) Newspapers
   (d) Articles from Contemporary Journals
   (e) Published Diaries, Collections of Letters, Memoirs and Autobiographies
   (f) Pamphlets, Speeches and other Contemporary Publications

B. Secondary Works

1 General Histories

2 Special Studies
   (a) Biographies
   (b) Articles
   (c) Other Secondary Works

3 Theses

A. Sources

1 Manuscript Material
   (a) Official Papers

Public Record Office, London
Cabinet Office Papers

All the Cabinet minutes, memoranda and letters to the Monarch for the period were consulted. For a description of this material see P.R.O. Handbooks 4, 9 and 11.
Colonial Office Papers
C.O. 903 Confidential Print
C.O. 904 Dublin Castle Records
C.O. 905 Claims for Compensation
C.O. 906 Irish Office Records

Home Office Records
H.O. 184 R.I.C. Records

Treasury Papers

T 1,62 Treasury Board Papers
T 14 Out-Letters, Ireland
T 141 Treasury Solicitor
T 143 Treasury Remembrancer
T 160 Finance (F Series)
T 161 Supply (S Series)
T 162 Establishment (E Series)
T 163 General (G Series)
T 164 Pension (P Series) (T 160-4 cover the period 1920-48. Only the files for the period 1920-22 were examined)
T 165 'Blue Notes'
T 168 Hamilton Papers
T 170 Bradbury Papers
T 171 Chancellor of the Exchequer's Office, Budget and Finance Papers
T 172 Chancellor of the Exchequer's Office, Miscellaneous Papers
T 176 Niemeyer Papers
T 188 Leith Ross Papers
T 192 Ireland Files (1920-22)
T 208 Financial Enquiries Branch (Hawtrey Papers)
T 243 Treasury Circulars and Minutes

State Paper Office, Dublin Castle
Chief Secretary's Office Letter Books. All the Government Correspondence Books for the period (59 volumes) were examined in detail. The Country Letter Books, Crown Solicitors Letter Books, Irish Departments Letter Books and the Sheriff's Correspondence Books were examined more selectively.
Registered Papers

Incoming Correspondence to the Chief Secretary's Office was 'registered' or entered in a book on the date of receipt. For the period 1890-1922 there are more than 1500 large cartons of such papers. For the year 1890 alone, there are 46 cartons containing a total of almost 21,000 papers. These papers are very inadequately indexed. It was practical to examine only a small cross-section.

(b) Private Papers

For an account of the location and contents of many of the following, see A Guide to the Papers of British Cabinet Ministers, 1900-51 compiled by Cameron Hazlehurst and Christine Woodland, 1974. Descriptions of the remainder can be found in the magnificent bibliography contained in David Fitzpatrick's, Politics and Irish Life (1977).

Bodleian Library, Oxford
- Asquith Papers
- Bryce Papers
- Sir Sidney Lee Correspondence
- A.P. Magill Papers
- MacDonnell Papers
- J. Christopher Medley Deposit (Birrell Papers)
- Nathan Papers
- Ponsonby Papers
- Strathcarron Papers

Nuffield College, Oxford
- Shortt Papers

British Museum
- Balfour Papers
- Campbell Bannerman Papers
- Dilke Papers
- Viscount Gladstone Papers
- Ernest Rhys Papers
- Ripon Papers
House of Lords Record Office
Bonar Law Papers
Lloyd George Papers

Imperial War Museum
Wilson Diaries (Microfilms)

Public Record Office
Anderson Papers (C.O. 904/188)
Hamilton Papers - See T 168
Bradbury Papers - See T 170
Niemeyer Papers - See T 176
Leith Ross Papers - See T 188

Liverpool University Library
Birrell Papers

National University of Ireland
Blake Papers (Microfilms - originals in Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa and Ontario Archives, Toronto)
A.S. Green Papers
Michael MacDonagh Papers
J.F.X. O'Brien Papers
Redmond Papers
John O'Donnell Papers
William O'Brien (Parliamentarian) Papers
Sigerson Family Papers

Trinity College Dublin
Dillon Papers

Dublin Diocesan Archives
Walsh Papers

University College Cork
William O'Brien Papers
Plunkett (American) Papers (Microfilms - originals in Plunkett Foundation for Cooperative Studies, London)
2  Printed Material

(a) Parliamentary Debates and Papers

(i) Hansard's Parliamentary Debates

3rd Series, CCCXLI - CCCLVI.
4th Series, I - CXCIX.
5th Series, Commons, I - CLIX; Lords, I - LII.

(ii) Departmental Reports

The reports of most of the Irish boards and departments were published annually as Parliamentary Papers. These were consulted selectively.

(iii) Other Parliamentary Papers


*Report of the Select Committee on Financial Relations (England, Scotland and Ireland): with the Proceedings,* H.C. 1890 (412), XIII.

*First and Second Reports of the Committee ... on Lunacy Administration (Ireland),* [Cd 6434] H.C. 1890-1, XXXVI.

*Final Report of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into Educational Endowments (Ireland),* [Cd 7517] H.C. 1894, XXX.


*National Education (Ireland): Conscience Clause...Copies of Correspondence between the Irish Government and the Commissioners of National Education for Ireland, with Extracts from the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commissioners,* H.C. 1895 (324) LXXVII; *Further Correspondence ...,* H.C. 1896 (89), LXVI.


*Extracts from the Minutes of Proceedings of the Commissioners of National Education (Ireland)...in Relation to Recent Action Undertaken by Most Rev. W.J. Walsh D.D., Archbishop of Dublin...,* H.C. 1901 (261), LVII.
Second Memorandum Considered at the Board of National Education, Ireland...in Connection with the Recent Resignation of Most Rev. Dr Walsh..., H.C. 1901 (366), LVII.

Royal Commission on Local Taxation: Report on Valuation in Ireland, [Cd 973] H.C. 1902, XXXIX.


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Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland), Report of the Departmental Committee of Inquiry, [Cds 3572 & 5] H.C. 1907, XVII; Evidence and Appendices, [Cds 3373-4], XVII.

Return Giving the Names of Government Departments or Authorities in England which now Exercise Powers in or in Relation to Ireland, either Directly or Indirectly, H.C. 1907 (191), LXVII.

Return Setting Forth the Position of all Salaried Officials...Appointed by (a) Nomination with Examination, (b) by Nomination with Limited Competition, (c) by Nomination with a Qualifying Examination, H.C. 1907 (8), LXVIII; Appointments since 12th July 1906, H.C. 1909 (326), LXXI.

Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, Final Report, [Cd 4097] H.C. 1908, XLII.


Return Setting forth the Name, Age, Date of Appointment, Salary and Address at the time of Appointment, and Occupation for the Five Years preceding the Appointment, of Each Person Appointed without Competitive Examination to any Position in the Public Service during the Period from the 29th day of June 1895 to the 5th day of December 1905, with an Annual Salary of 1001. and Upwards, Specifying separately the Appointments in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, H.C. 1912-13, (454), LVI; Return...from the 5th day of December 1905 to the 27th day of February 1912, H.C. 1912 (455), LVI.
Return Showing As Regards Public Civil Departments in Scotland and Ireland, and Departments Stationed in England which Deal Wholly with Scottish or Irish Affairs, the Number of Established and Unestablished Officials employed on the 31st day of March 1911, Together with the Number of Such Officials in Receipt of 160L per annum or more, with a Note Showing what Departments are Particularly Engaged in Scottish or Irish Affairs by Means of Having their Headquarters in England, H.C. 1912-13 (104), LVI.


Return Relating to Imperial Revenue...for the Year Ending the 31st day of March 1913, H.C. 1913 (199), XLI.

Viceregal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), 1913 First Report, [Cd 6828] H.C. 1913; Evidence and Appendices, [Cd 7229], XXII; Second Report, Evidence and Appendices [Cd 7228-9]; Third Report, Evidence and Appendices, [Cd 7479-80], Final Report, [Cd 7235] H.C. 1914, XXVIII.

Memorandum on the Estimated True Irish Contribution to the Revenue of the Year 1912-13 in Respect of the New and Additional Taxation imposed by the Finance (1909-10) Act, [Cd 6897] H.C. 1913, XLI.


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Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Royal Irish Constabulary and Dublin Metropolitan Police, [Cd 7421], Evidence and Appendices, [Cd 7367] H.C. 1914-15, XXXII.

Report of the Royal Commission on the Circumstances Connected with the Landing of Arms at Howth on 26th July 1914, [Cd 7631] H.C. 1914-5, XXIV.


Viceregal Committee of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland), 1918, Report and Evidence, [Cd 60 & 178] H.C. 1919, XXI.
(b) Biographical Dictionaries, Directories and Gazettes

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Dublin Gazette
Handbook of British Chronology (1961)
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(c) Newspapers

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The Times
Northern Whig

(d) Articles from Contemporary Journals


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2 Special Studies

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(b) Articles


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