
A STUDY OF THE UNITED IRISH LEAGUE
IN THE KING'S COUNTY, 1899-1918

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This work is dedicated to my parents and family,
for all their help, guidance, and encouragement
down through the years.

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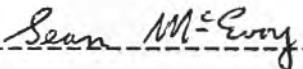
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ABBREVIATIONS IN TEXT

AOH	Ancient Order of Hibernians
CC	Catholic Curate
Dr	Doctor
Fr	Father (priest)
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
GPO	General Post Office
INF (before 1900)	Irish National Federation
INF (after 1900)	Irish National Foresters
INL	Irish National League
IPP	Irish Parliamentary Party
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
ITGWU	Irish Transport and General Workers Union
JP	Justice of the Peace
KCFA	King's County Farmers Association
LLA	Land and Labour Association
MFH	Master of Fox Hounds
MP	Member of Parliament
NS	National School
PP	Parish Priest
RDC	Rural District Council
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
TTA	Town Tenants Association
UC or UDC	Urban Council or Urban District Council
UIL	United Irish League

ABBREVIATIONS IN FOOTNOTES

CO	Colonial Office, Dublin Castle Records
CIMR	County Inspector's Monthly Reports
CSORP	Chief Secretary's Office, Registered Papers
<u>KCC</u>	<u>King's County Chronicle</u>
<u>KCI</u>	<u>King's County Independent</u>
IGMR	Inspector General's Monthly Report
<u>MT</u>	<u>Midland Tribune</u>
NLI	National Library of Ireland
SPO	State Papers Office, Dublin

INTRODUCTION

THE KING'S COUNTY IN 1900

When addressing the Quarter Sessions at Tullamore in March 1900, county court Judge Curran, referring to the tranquil state of the county, was moved to state that; 'I may say as I said on a former occasion, that the King's county is a model county...'¹ This was indeed praise not lightly given, coming from a man who had gained reputation for his strict advocacy of law and order throughout the whole midland region at this time. It was also a reflection of the fact that the county had indeed become quite peaceable during the 1890's, unlike the Land League days of the late 1870's and early 1880's, when the county could claim the highest number of agrarian outrages per head of population in the province of Leinster, and indeed third highest in Ireland after Kerry and Galway.²

The county in question, namely King's or Offaly as it is known today, dates from 1556 when during the reign of Queen Mary and her husband, Philip of Spain, the plantation of Leix and Offaly was undertaken. The territory of Firceall, which had belonged to the Kingdom of Meath, was joined to that of the O'Carrolls (Birr), Coughlans (Ferbane - Clonmacnoise), O'Connors (Killeigh - Edenderry) and to the Fox territory (Clara and Tubber parishes), to make a new shire or county, called King's county in honour of Mary's husband Philip.³ It was for this same reason that the new county town was called Philipstown. The plantation had been deemed necessary on the grounds that the native Irish, particularly the O'Connors, were constantly attacking loyal English settlers in the Pale. The boundaries of the ancient Gaelic principalities received but scant respect; old Uibh Fhaili in particular found itself partitioned three ways, a substantial portion falling to the new Queen's county and Kildare.⁴ Throughout the thesis, the use of the name King's county will be preferred to Offaly, as it was not until June 1920 that an official decision was taken by the County Council at their annual general meeting to revert to the latter title,⁵ although the GAA had adopted it since 1903. Incidentally it was at that same council meeting that the name Philipstown (which will also be used in the thesis) was changed to Daingean.⁶

An inland county in the province of Leinster, the King's county was bordered on the north by Westmeath, south by Tipperary and Queen's, east by Meath and Kildare, and west by Galway, Roscommon and Tipperary. Its greatest length east and west stood at 45 miles, and breadth north and south 39 miles.⁷ The county comprised an area of 493,985 acres of which in 1902, 239,612 were under grass, 109,963 were under crops including meadow and clover, 7,052 were woods and plantation, 98,240 were under bog, 10,124 comprised marshland, 7,093 barren mountain, 20,720 under roads and fences, with the remaining 1,181 acres under water.⁸ The geographical features of the county were for the most part irregular, although the surface of the county in general was flat, except in the south east where it rose into the Slieve Bloom mountains, which formed the natural boundary between King's

and Queen's counties. The other few elevations deserving of notice were Croghan Hill, standing 763 feet high to the north of Philipstown, and the hill of Cloghan between the River Brosna and the Slieve Blooms. The chief lake was Lough Pallis⁹ near Frankford, also known as Kilcormac.

The soil of the county for the most part could not be termed fertile or prolific, being either a deep moor or gravelly loam of mostly slight extent, though sometimes reaching good depth and resting on underlying limestone shale. However there were some good brown earth soils on the more upland areas adjacent to the Bog of Allen, and generally in the south of the county near Birr¹⁰ (also known as Parsonstown). The bog of Allen covered a large portion of the centre (85,047 acres), extending the whole length of the county, and providing farmers and labourers with a natural source of fuel. The 'soft winds from the blooming heather of the Bog of Allen were fragrant with honey and adrone with working bees,'¹¹ was how William Bulfin described the bog he beheld with such affection during his tour of Ireland in 1907.

Early attempts to use the bogs on a commercial scale had met with much frustration. C. W. Williams had endeavoured in the 1840's to produce a form of compressed peat and peat charcoal, neither proving a financial success, while pioneering efforts to produce briquettes also proved too difficult. A peat works operated by David Sherlock of Rahan lasted from the 1890's until closure in 1914, but the most ambitious project took place at Colonel Dopping's works at Turraun, where experiments in artificial methods of drying turf were carried out.¹² Alas however, none proved as successful as the more trusted method of air drying. Development of the bog on a large scale would have to wait until the 1930's and 1940's with the advent of the Turf Development Board and later, Bord na Mona. Nevertheless at the time in question, the sale of turf was an important source of income for farmers and merchants alike, and up to 400,000 tons were transported by canal to Dublin during the 1830's.¹³ This was to decline with the later importation of cheap coal, but nonetheless the bogs were still highly valued within the county.

As regards the drainage of the county, the Shannon skirted the western border with Galway, while the little Brosna traversed the south and the bigger Brosna the north of the county. The Grand Canal extended from Edenderry in the extreme east to Shannon Harbour in the west of the county and was used mainly to transport goods to and from Dublin. It had been started in 1756 after the Irish Government found itself with a surplus of money on its hands, and had been extended the 110 km journey to Shannon Harbour by 1804, at a cost of £800,000.¹⁴ The canal was to play a major part in the development of various industries within the county, an example being the extensive trade in bricks from the Pollagh (near Clara) and Tullamore areas, amounting to 40,000 tons in the 1840's, which sadly later

declined due to increased labour costs and the development of cement.¹⁵ It was the development of the railways in Ireland however during the 1830's and 1840's that was to signal the long slow decline in the importance of the canals. The canal companies did make a brave effort to protect their share of trade, but were always fighting a losing battle. In 1889 the Midland Great Western Railway Company offered Guinness's brewery a quotation of ten shillings per ton to dispatch porter to Ballinasloe and the canal company were forced to lower their freight from 12s 6d to ten shillings to retain the trade.¹⁶ Table one indicates the declining importance of the canals in the late nineteenth and first half of the present century.

TABLE 1: Tonnage carried on the Grand Canal, 1898 - 1956.

YEAR	TONNAGE
1898	309,288
1910	290,902
1920	226,648
1938	169,732
1956	98,415

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Despite the decline in trade, the role of the canal was still important to the county. Before its coming Shannon Harbour only possessed a few cottages, but when it became the terminus for the canal, a large hotel, an agent's house, two dry docks, a wooden ferrybridge, a road bridge, stores, stables, sheds and two locks were built making a complete new village.¹⁸ James Pope Hennessy, MP for the county from 1859 to 1865 gives a good insight into both the importance for the King's county and indeed the whole midland region of the canal and why it managed to withstand the competition of the railways longer than the canals did in England when he remarked in 1860:

A Grand Canal is better fitted for the transit of a certain class of goods than a Railway. Where time is not an important consideration, and where the goods are bulky, cheap and heavy, a Canal is a much better mode of conveyance than a railway. This class of goods exists in the King's county to a remarkable degree. Turf, the various forms of peat, building stones, marble, manure and many similar articles are more economically conveyed by the Canal boat than by any other means.¹⁹

The county was also well served by the railways. The Athlone extension of the Great Southern and Western Railway extended from the north east to the south west of the county passing through Tullamore and Clara; from the latter there was a separate line to Banagher in the south, worked by the Great Southern on a guarantee of the barony of Garrycastle, requiring

an extra levy on the ratepayers of 4d in the £1.²⁰ In the south of the county there also existed a branch railway from Ballybrophy via Roscrea to Birr, a Portumna to Birr line, and a line from Edenderry to the midland main line at Enfield in the north of the county also existed.

The aforementioned three lines in the south contained some fine architectural features, most notably Birr station and the viaduct over the River Brosna near Ferbane, built from cut stone. The Birr to Roscrea line was best remembered for the "Runaway train crash of 1910".²¹ A striking feature of this line was the long incline or slope between Brosna and Roscrea, the trains having to climb almost 50 metres over five kilometres. This was the main cause of the crash of 1910 when ten coaches were stopped at the platform in Roscrea station. The train had been disconnected to collect four extra carriages, when the ten coaches were jolted and slowly they moved out of the station and down the incline where they collided with an incoming train from Birr.²² It was regarded as a miracle that nobody was killed.

The Birr to Portumna line was better known as the "Stolen Railway."²³ Work started on this line in 1863 and was completed in 1868, proving difficult as the bog at Curraghglass was hard to drain. The line only remained in operation for ten years, failing to attract enough traffic and the company quickly built up debts. Some backers who were owed money stole property belonging to the railway to meet their cost, but when these were brought to court, nobody could be found to represent the company. This paved the way for a wholesale grab of company property and almost £20,000 worth of goods were looted.²⁴ The Banagher to Clara line proved more successful however and remained open until 1963.²⁵ The railways, most noted for carrying passengers and goods, can also be credited with the start of the midland tourist industry (however small); and from 1897 to 1914 the Great Southern and Western Railway Company offered what became known as the "Shannon Cruise", consisting of a railway journey from Dublin to Banagher, a steamer trip from Banagher to Killaloe (with lunch on board), and a return trip from Killaloe to Dublin by rail, at a cost of 13 shillings.²⁶

The county's roads were numerous with the main ones generally well maintained. English in his road book of 1908 described the main Tullamore to Birr road as 'excellent and almost level with the surface slightly bumpy, but quite above the average'.²⁷ He seemed quite content to place most of the county's roads in category two, an achievement the county surveyor could feel more than content with, given the high percentage of bogland in the county. As for Bulfin, his assessment was even more generous, claiming 'the roads through Offaly were generally speaking excellent'.²⁸ This latter claim might have something to do with the fact that Bulfin resided while in Ireland at Derrinlough outside Birr. We can safely assume however that the King's county was well linked to the

outside world and that her pockets of secondary industry had relatively easy access to outside markets. The most important of these industries were Captain Daly's distillery, and Egan's and William's malting establishments in Tullamore, Robinson's mineral waters near Cloghan, and Alesbury's furniture mills at Edenderry. However the biggest employers in the county were the Goodbodys firms at Clara. A Quaker family that had come to Ireland in the seventeenth century, they established a jute factory in 1864 and a spinning mill in 1873,²⁹ which employed over 600 people in the area at the turn of the century. While wages in the firm were low, averaging 10 to 11 shillings for males who underwent a 57 hour week, and 8 to 9 shillings for their female counterparts, the Goodbodys had introduced a series of welfare benefits in the 1870's such as sickness and maternity benefits as well as burial grants³⁰ which were undoubtedly ahead of their time.

The county was divided into twelve baronies, Ballyboy, Ballybrit, Ballycowan, Clonlisk, Coolestown, Eglisk, Garrycastle, Geashill, Kilcoursey, Lower Philipstown, Upper Philipstown and Warrenstown. It contained 51 civil parishes, including part of Portarlinton, with 1,181 townlands,³¹ having in 1901 a population of 60,187, a decrease of 5,376 from 1891 and 27,835 from 1861.³² This figure represented 12,377 families inhabiting 12,092 homes. Table two shows by classes the proportional percentage of the inhabited houses in the county and for Ireland as a whole, from which it can be seen that the King's county was pretty typical of the rest of the country, with a high percentage of families in relatively comfortable homes.

TABLE 2: Class of Houses inhabited and percentages of population allotted to, in Ireland and King's county for 1901.

	1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class	4th Class
Ireland	8.8	60.8	29.3	1.1
King's county	8.2	59.5	30.9	1.4 ³³

To the outside observer in 1901, the county presented many of the typical characteristics of southern Ireland at the time, yet in other respects it was quite different. When the counties of Ireland are arranged by the density of population in the rural districts to the total area, (towns of upwards of 2,000 inhabitants excluded), Wicklow was the least densely populated with an average of 58 persons per square mile, followed by the King's county with 67 per square mile. While a high proportion (89.4%) of the county's population were Roman Catholic, 9.2% were Protestant Episcopalian, a figure only bettered by five counties outside Ulster, namely Queen's at 10.4%, Carlow at 10.5%, Kildare at 11.6%, Dublin at 17.7% and Wicklow with 18.7%.³⁴

By 1901 a high percentage of the people (88.1%) were literate.³⁵ Their actions were well monitored by the local newspapers, numbering three in all. Two of these, The Midland Tribune and the Birr Vindication (a Land League paper

established in 1881), and The Tullamore and King's County Independent (established 1894) were Nationalist in tone and outlook, and were published weekly in Birr and Tullamore respectively. The third local newspaper, The King's County Chronicle, started operation in 1845 at Birr, and was conservative and Unionist in outlook. Of the three, the The Midland Tribune was the most popularly read, boasting in September 1908 that it had:

..... the largest circulation of any paper in the Midlands. It is read in 15,000 homes every week. It is appreciated because its reports are full, interesting and accurate.....³⁶

Of the persons enumerated in the county in 1901, 82.66% were born therein, a relatively high percentage, 15.35% were born elsewhere in Ireland with the remaining 1.99% having been born abroad. The marriage rate was low at 4.1 per 1,000 of population, compared with 4.8 for Ireland as a whole, and this figure reflected a lower birth rate than the national average. This fact was negatived however since the annual death rate of 16.9 per 1,000 was lower than the national average of 18.2 per thousand.³⁷

Of those engaged in full time employment, 56.64% were engaged in agriculture, 23.60% were engaged in manufacturing industry (domestic and factory), with the domestic, professional and commercial class making up the remaining 19.76%.³⁸ In regard to the size of farming enterprises, table three shows the great disparity between the different size of undertakings.

TABLE 3: Percentage of Various Sizes of Farms in the King's county in 1901.

All holdings less than and including one acre	6.2%	
All holdings less than and including 30 acres	63.6%	
All holdings above and including 100 acres	9.6%	
All holdings above and including 500 acres	1.0%	39

In a county where agriculture played an extremely important role in the lives of many, the leading landowners were Protestants and Unionists. The most notable of these in the north of the county were Lord Digby who owned 27,722 acres and the Earl of Charleville who owned 20,032 acres in the vicinity of Tullamore; while in the south the Earl of Rosse owned 22,513 acres and Captain Thomas Bernard of Kinnitty held 13,153 acres.⁴⁰ Only the latter two were active politically, Lord Rosse, who was a member of the House of Lords being the more prominent. Most Unionists in the county had ceased to be politically active after 1892 which was the last year that they fielded a candidate in the Parliamentary elections, and at that for the Birr division only.

The Unionists of the Tullamore division were more strikingly inactive, not even bothering to keep alive their Unionist association. The Local Government Act of 1898 was to remove their hold on local affairs, and from this date onwards, the county's Unionists, with a few exceptions merely contributed funds to the joint committee of the Irish Unionist Alliance to help bring what they regarded as the disastrous implications of Home Rule more clearly before the electors of Great Britain.

Before the Act of Union, the county and its boroughs sent six members to the Irish House of Commons, but after the latter act was passed in 1800, its representation was confined to two members.⁴¹ Under the electoral reform act of 1885, the county was divided into two divisions, north (Tullamore) and south (Birr), each returning one member. Local government before 1898 was vested in the control of a Grand Jury which comprised the thirteen largest landowners of the county. However the Local Government Act of that year paved the way for the emergence of the County Councils, which in the King's county, was made up of twenty-one elected councillors, five more who were ex-officio members as chairman of the rural district councils, while an additional number were co-opted.⁴² Tullamore and Birr each had an urban district council (UDC), while a number of rural district councils (RDCs) also existed, namely Birr No.1 RDC, Tullamore No.1 RDC, Edenderry No. 1 RDC, Cloneygowan RDC, while part of the county was encompassed by Roscrea No.2 RDC. In regard to poor law relief, the three main towns, Tullamore, Birr and Edenderry each had its own union and workhouse.

Because old Uibh Fhaili had been dismembered in 1556 on the formation of the King's county, many dioceses, including Kildare and Leighlin, Meath, Killaloe, Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, Ossory, and Clonfert all intruded on some part of the new county. In regard to law and order, the county lay within the Western Circuit, and Assizes were held at Birr and Tullamore,⁴³ which also contained the county gaol, still remembered for the tough treatment meted out to the prisoners there during the Plan of Campaign in the 1880's. The effective strength of the RIC in 1913 was 169, including district inspectors, sergeants and constables, this figure being joint fourth highest in Ireland as a proportion of population along with Roscommon and Waterford, and behind Galway, Mayo and Clare. The RIC occupied a total of 35 stations⁴⁴ throughout the county.

This overall picture of the county disguises some hidden differences between the Birr and Tullamore parliamentary division, a division that will be referred to throughout the thesis on occasions as the north and south of the county. Birr lay in the latter end, situated in the territory of the ancient Gaelic family of the O'Carrolls, who often flirted between loyalty and treason towards the English monarchy. In 1615 a royal claim was made good to their territory, and in 1620-21, under a Jacobite plantation order, Lawrence Parsons received a

grant of 1,000 acres at Birr,⁴⁵ (which was later extended), the existing castle and fort village becoming the manor of Parsonstown. Lawrence repaired the wall around the existing castle and built an additional tower, but at first the plantation was unsuccessful. However due to the persistence and energy of Sir William Parsons (Lawrence's brother) and his successors, Birr which became popularly known as Parsontown, long remained a strong centre of English influence,⁴⁶ and always prided itself in being loyal. Lord Rosse, a direct descendant of the older Parsons, was a leading light in the town at the time of study. The relatively strong Protestant population of the town had its origins in the same plantation, and table four compares Birr and Tullamore in 1901 in respect of religion, both being the only two towns in the county with a population over 2,000.

TABLE 4: Population of (1) Tullamore and (2) Birr and their respective religious professions in 1901.

Total Population	% Roman Catholic	% Protestant	% Other
(1) 4,639	91.61%	5.5%	2.89%
(2) 4,438	82.85%	14.39%	2.76% ⁴⁷

The clash of Unionists and Nationalists in the town of Birr was, as a result of the greater Protestant population, more evident and striking, particularly in relation to elections for the UDC. Birr possessed all the main characteristics of a garrison town, with Crinkle barracks just outside it capable of holding 1,100 men of the Leinster Regiment.⁴⁸ Interestingly it also contained what was then the world's biggest telescope, designed and erected by William Parsons in 1842, and now stored in the South Kensington Museum in London.⁴⁹

Other notable towns in the county included Clara, which was described in 1890 as 'a most thriving town more like in the north of Ireland, being a hive of industry',⁵⁰ and the home of the famous Goodbody family. Philipstown, still smarting from losing its county town status to Tullamore in 1833, possessed a striking courthouse designed by Gandon, while Banagher's magnificent seven arch bridge linking the King's county with Galway, was completed in 1843, under the engineer Thomas Rhodes, brother to Cecil the great British imperialist.⁵¹ It was also noted for its "Great September Fair", which lasted four consecutive days with horse, sheep, cattle and pig sales being held on consecutive days. The horse and pig fairs were regarded as the largest in Ireland at the beginning of this century, The Midland Tribune of September 1909 claiming those present included Senor Gelline of Milan, who came to purchase on behalf of the Italian Government, while Mr. Rodzanko bought for the Russian Government.⁵² Edenderry tucked away on the border next Kildare, was noted most for its big market square and town hall. Geashill village situated on the estate of Lord Digby reflected the improvements that he had made, estimated to have cost £100,000 for buildings, drainage, plantations and other works on

the whole estate between 1856-81.⁵³ In the former year, he had won first prize at an exhibition in Paris for models of the cottages on the estate.⁵⁴

The county also possessed some notable ecclesiastical ruins, the most noteworthy being the Seven Churches of Clonmacnoise where an Abbey was founded by Saint Kieran in 648, and the remains also included two round towers, crosses, inscribed stones and a castle.⁵⁵ Among the other famous religious houses was Durrow Abbey, founded by Saint Columba in 550,⁵⁶ and famous for the subsequent Book of Durrow. The county was also dotted with a considerable number of Rathes and Moats while its most famous castles were at Birr and Leap in the Slieve Bloom mountains.⁵⁷ Perhaps then, one would have been forgiven for thinking that maybe Judge Curran also had things other than law and order on his mind when he described the King's county as a 'model county' in 1900.

This thesis takes a look at the political development, actions and fortunes in the King's county of the leading Nationalist organisation in Ireland between 1898 and 1918, namely the United Irish League (UIL). This organisation carried out many functions for the Home Rule or Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) such as canvassing voters, organising party meetings, collecting party funds, registering voters and solving local disputes between Nationalists. The fortunes of the party at Westminster and the UIL in Ireland were intertwined; both depended on the other to survive. The Irish Party needed UIL support to keep winning electional contests, while the UIL in turn needed the Irish Party to win reforms at Westminster for its supporters in order to sustain the movement.

The years in question were ones of striking political, social and economic change in Ireland, which witnessed the Local Government Act of 1898, the re-unification of the IPP in 1900, the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, and to a lesser extent the Birrell counterpart of 1909, the passage of the third Home Rule Bill in 1912 and the subsequent Ulster crisis which followed; the Volunteer movements, 1916 rising, the effects of the Great War and the rise and victory of Sinn Fein in the 1918 General Election. The period in question saw conflicting fortunes for Home Rulers, northern and southern Unionists, Sinn Fein, Trade Unionists and Cultural Nationalists. While reference will be made throughout the thesis to these groups, it is the fortunes of United Irish Leagues and Home Rulers that will take up the greater part of this study.

The first chapter of the thesis will deal with the political background to the emergence of the UIL within the county. It will highlight the level of bitterness left over by the Parnellite split and the subsequent political apathy that prevailed among Nationalists up to 1900. The growth of the UIL

in this climate will be looked at and particular reference will be given to the 1900 General Election, the first electoral test for the new organisation. The chapter will conclude with a detailed look at the county's two new MPs after this election, Michael Reddy and Haviland Burke.

Chapter two focuses on an identity crisis facing the UIL between 1901 and 1902 ; who or what did the League stand for? Were its aims in contradiction? Central to this crisis is the whole discussion concerning the "grazing or eleven months" system of landholding which was widely practised in the county. The chapter will also explore in detail the events surrounding the Birr Sports of 1902, which are crucial to the development of the organisation in the county at this time.

The Wyndham Land Act of 1903 and its implications for the UIL are the focus of chapter three. Central to this discussion will be the divisions within the IPP during these years and other local events like the abandonment of the Tullamore Agricultural Show in 1905. In focusing on the implications of this act, which was regarded by many as the most important piece of legislation of its time, the line of thought argued will be that it created more problems in the long term than it solved for the UIL.

Chapter four deals with a colourful phase of agrarian troubles in the county, better termed the "Ranch War of 1906-1909". Ironically while it marks the height of the UIL's influence within the county on the one hand, on the other it witnessed the sowing of seeds of discontent within the movement and Nationalist politics for the years ahead. Central to the emergence of these divisions were the spleens over the grazing system and the stoppage of the Ormond Hunt.

From the scars of the Ranch War, the UIL's decline accelerated during the years 1910 to 1912, ironically the latter being the year the IPP had secured the passing of its most cherished goal, the Home Rule Act. To discuss if this drop of support for the UIL was a nation-wide phenomenon at this particular time would require a much wider study, as the part played by Michael Reddy in this decline is possibly unique. However some, albeit small observations can be made for a slide in the UIL's fortunes in Leinster during these said years, which are the subject of chapter five.

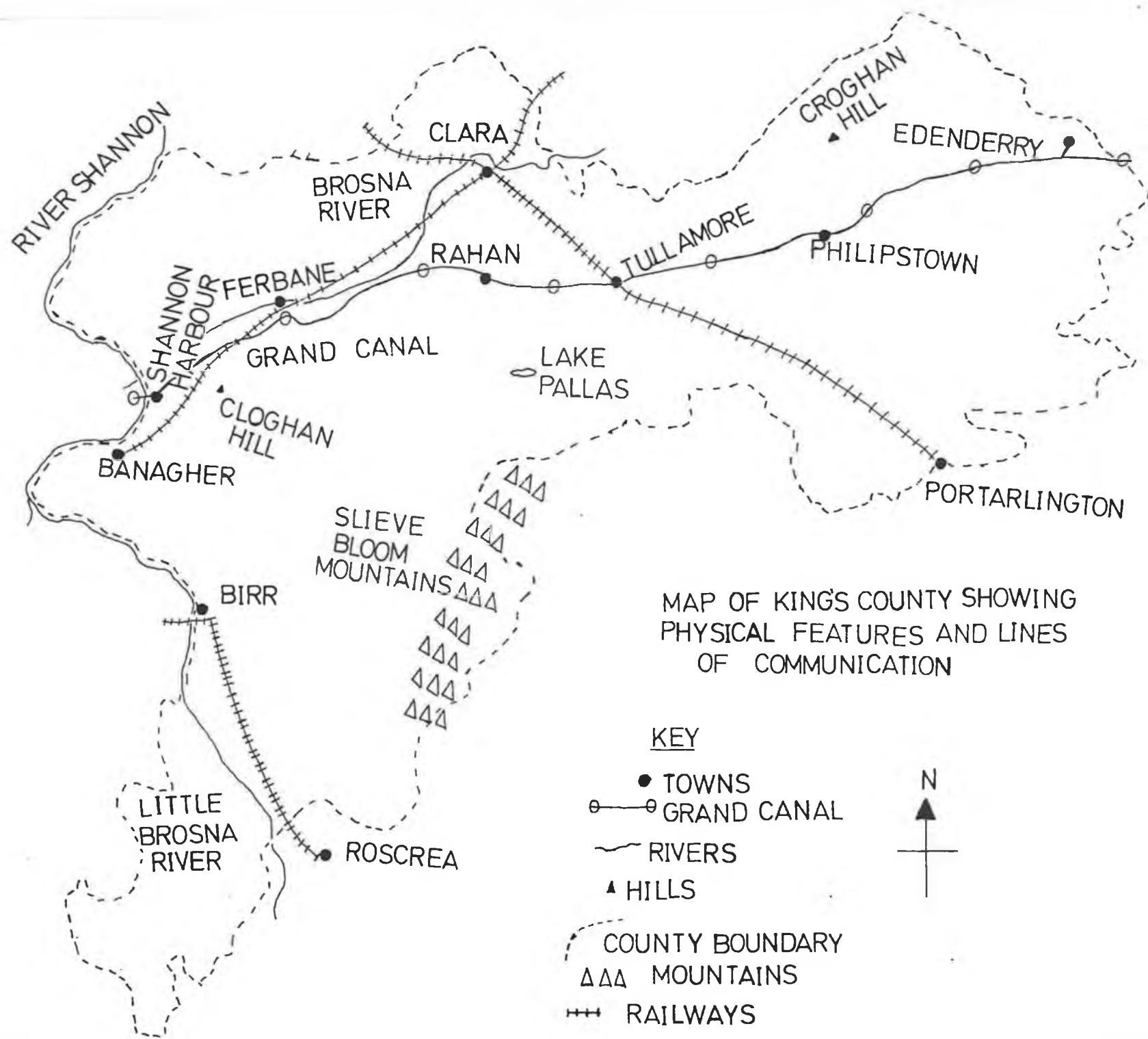
Chapter six details for the most part events in the northern or Tullamore parliamentary division concerning agitation on two estates, but more importantly the disastrous result (for the Irish party) in the by- election of that division in December 1914. The following year witnessed a desperate attempt by the UIL to revive its fortunes and block its slide in support, which is the subject of chapter seven. The final chapter in the thesis deals with the eventual demise of the UIL after the 1916 Rising

and the subsequent rise of Sinn Fein as the leading Nationalist organisation in the county.

The Irish Party had for the most part dominated Nationalist politics from 1873 to 1916 and its defeat at the hands of Sinn Fein in the 1918 General Election requires more study. Lyons(1975) is regarded by many as having been the leading authority on the history of the party during this period. His view concerning its fortunes after 1890 are very generally summed up by him in the preface to his book, The Irish Parliamentary Party 1890-1910, when he states:

....It is generally assumed that the party succumbed to the cumulative strain of the successive crises to which it was subjected from the time when opposition to the third Home Rule bill first became serious until the time when it suffered complete annihilation at the general election of 1918. While it is true that the pressure of events between 1912 and 1918 had a large share in bringing about the downfall of the party, it is important to realise that disintegration had begun to take place very much earlier....⁵⁸

The main aim of this thesis is to undertake a comprehensive study of this decline at local rather than the national level for one particular county. It clearly shows that the fortunes of the UIL were in decline as early as 1908, and that its organisation was in a chaotic state by 1914, thus opening the opportunity for another party (in this case Sinn Fein) not only to emerge, but by any standards quite easily to win the 1918 General Election. Whether this decline of the UIL, witnessed in the King's county was unique or not, requires much more local study, for as argued by K.T. Hoppen (1984), Irish politics is 'often profoundly localist in both content and style'⁵⁹ and only after 'the more detailed workings of individual political communities in Ireland are examined', will the 'gap between local realities and the rhetoric of national politics'⁶⁰ be bridged. This is certainly true in relation to any overall study of the UIL in Ireland from 1898 to 1918. This thesis also takes account and makes reference to Paul Bew's (1987) recent work, Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland 1890-1910; Parnellites and Radical Agrarians which examines the early development of the UIL to 1910, while the work of David Fitzpatrick (1977), Politics and Irish Life 1913-21, Provincial Experience of War and Revolution and to a lesser extent Oliver Coogan's (1983) Politics and War in Meath 1913-23, are also referred to in order to draw comparisons and similarities between counties and to make some conclusions. However much more work is required before an overall picture of the history of the UIL emerges and hopefully this thesis will go some way to filling that void.



RIVER SHANNON

BROSNA RIVER

CLARA

CROGHAN HILL

EDENDERRY

SHANNON HARBOUR

FERBANE

RAHAN

TULLAMORE

PHILIPSTOWN

GRAND CANAL

LAKE PALLAS

CLOGHAN HILL

BANAGHER

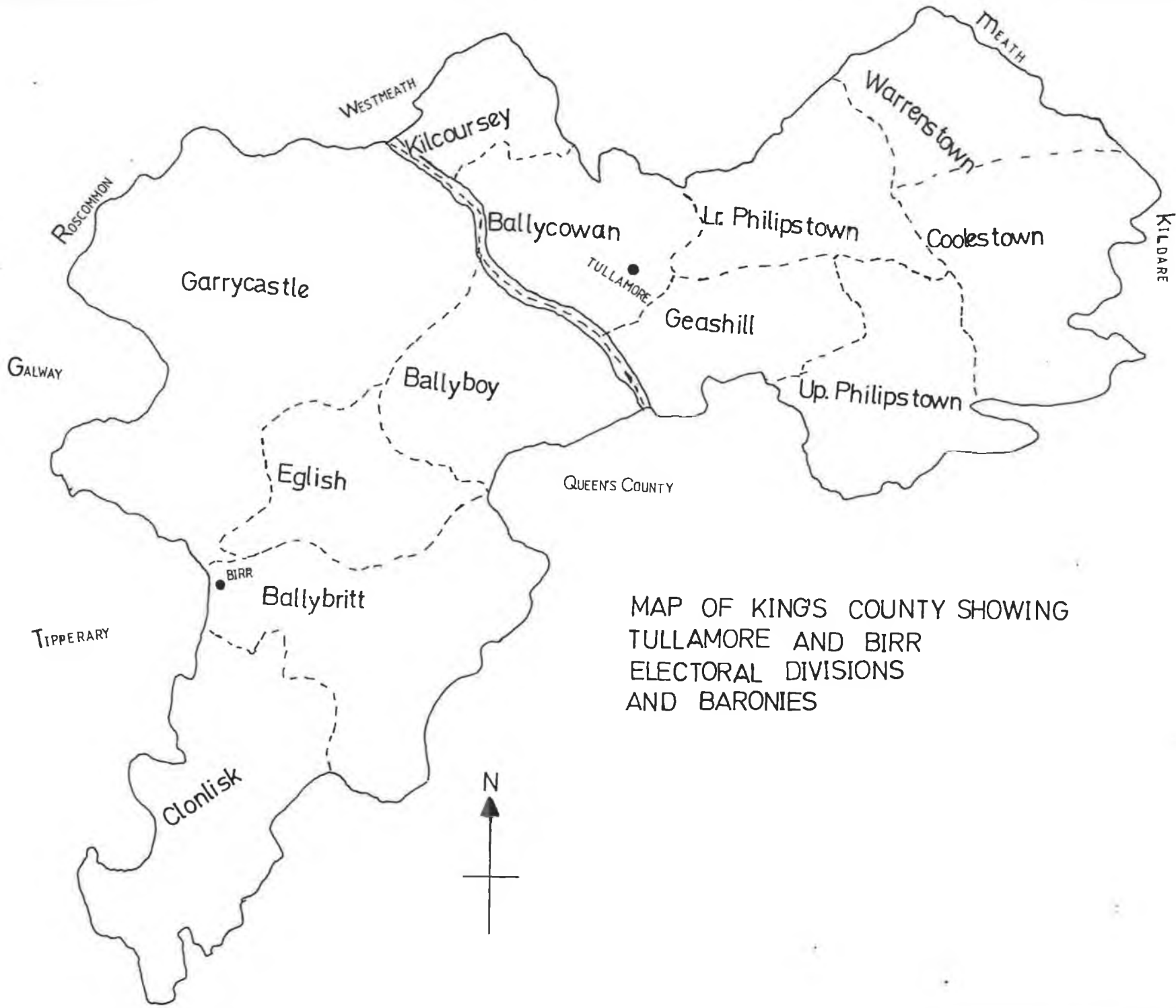
PORTARLINGTON

SLIEVE BLOOM MOUNTAINS

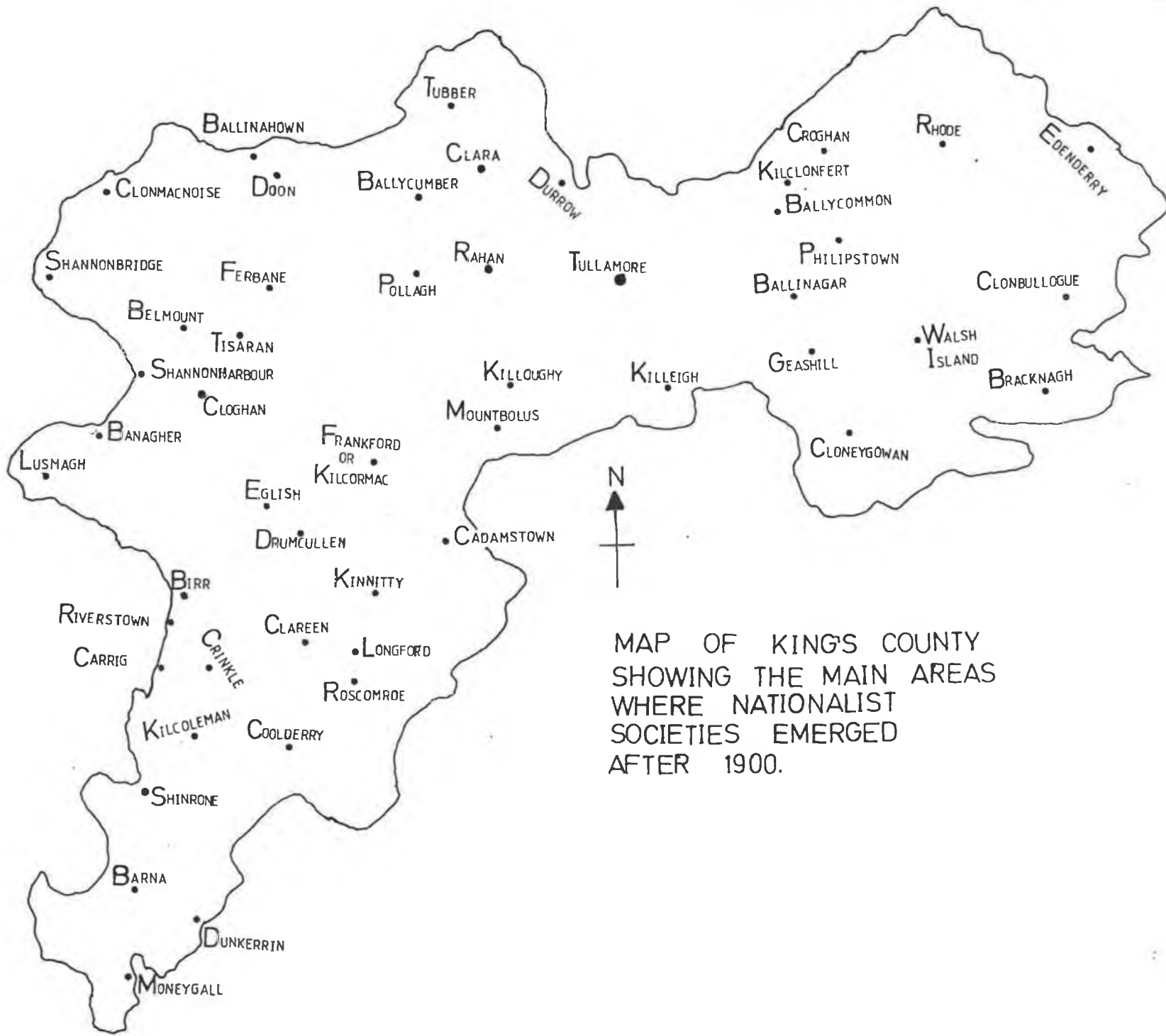
BIRR

LITTLE BROSNA RIVER

ROSCREA



MAP OF KING'S COUNTY SHOWING
TULLAMORE AND BIRR
ELECTORAL DIVISIONS
AND BARONIES



MAP OF KING'S COUNTY
 SHOWING THE MAIN AREAS
 WHERE NATIONALIST
 SOCIETIES EMERGED
 AFTER 1900.

CHAPTER 1

BORN INTO TURMOIL - THE EMERGENCE OF THE UIL
IN THE KING'S COUNTY, 1890-1901.

'Hunt the lot of them out of public life and begin anew...'¹

A suggestion by leading Tullamore Nationalist William Adams in relation to the Irish Party in January 1900 prior to the re-unification of the party.

The Parnellite split of 1890 had left Nationalist politics in Ireland in tatters and the King's county proved no exception. Unlike other parts of the country, there was little strong support for Parnell the deposed leader; yet even so, whatever differences of opinion there were, appeared to be so deeply felt that existing political and indeed other organisations like the GAA were the focus of rancour, splits, and division. Sadly moderate opinion was almost non-existent, a factor that apparently prevailed in all Ireland, and possible one of the main reasons why the IPP remained split for ten years. The influential Midland Tribune was solidly anti-Parnell, and most support that the deposed leader retained was confined to the towns of Tullamore, Birr and Clara. It would be wrong to deduce from this an urban/rural divide as such analysis would be erroneous and false. In late December 1890 a Parnellite paraded the streets of Birr with a large placard bearing Parnell's picture, but when he arrived at the market square, he was surrounded by a number of people who seized him and smashed the placard into pieces.² The Midland Tribune was inundated with letters concerning the political crisis and some writers even went to the bother to break into verse:

Ye Parnellites of Tullamore
You're very sore, you're very sore
There's better things for you in store
So keep your temper, we implore
Ye Parnellites of Tullamore.³

The old Irish National League (INL) organisation, which had been the basis of the party at local level, split into two groups, the main one supported by the Catholic clergy, namely the Irish National Federation (INF), and the remaining group which still supported Parnell and tried to maintain the INL. The latter group was to live a miserable existence for a brief period only, and could to all practical purposes be said to be dead by 1893, and its rival the INF was in little if any better shape. By November 1894 the editor of the Midland Tribune was calling on the King's county to 'awaken', blaming:

....the attitude of passive neutrality to the cause for Nationalism.... For a considerable time past no branch of the National Federation has existed in Birr. In Tullamore membership exists only of a few townspeople under the presidency of the esteemed parish priest who has been assiduous in keeping the fire alive....⁴

A year later the INL was still in a very poor state, as both MPs in the county, B.C. Molloy and Dr J.F. Fox (both anti-Parnellites) were unopposed for election that year. Later Fox, along with a number of other MPs was expelled from the National Federation, the reason being their conduct at a South Kerry by-election where they held an unofficial convention.⁵ Branches of the movement within the county split on this action taken by the Irish Party. In Philipstown the expelled MPs were strongly supported,⁶ the Frankford branch stood by the party,⁷ while at Edenderry the members decided to stay neutral⁸ on this issue. However, within these divisions, rumblings and demands for unity could be heard. At a meeting of Nationalists in Philipstown during January 1896, a resolution was unanimously passed supporting P.A. McHugh's demand for unity among all sections of Nationalists.⁹ These sentiments were however to fall on deaf ears for a few years at least. The county inspector could still delightedly note in February 1898 that:

The rural branches of the INL and INF which exist throughout the locality have shown little activity; their proceedings do not excite much interest and they have little influence with the people.¹⁰

The tone of his report regarding these societies did not change over the next year; in fact he could confidently (but monotonously) make the same statement in regard to their affairs each month. At times, one would have been forgiven for thinking that he had not bothered at all to change the contents of his text, such was the stale and stodgy impact made by the Nationalist societies on the life of the county at this time.

Neither rival organisation made any real attempt to lighten the burden of evicted tenants in the county at this time. The number of "evicted farms" stood at 42 in March 1898, 23 of which were derelict or unlet.¹¹ Some of these farms were being taken by new tenants as no vibrant organisation existed to oppose them. Generally speaking evictions were very low during these years, averaging only about one a month.¹² People receiving constant police protection rarely if ever rose above this figure also. Efforts to relieve the plight of evicted tenants were generally carried out on a parochial rather than at county level. For, example the editor of the Midland Tribune congratulated the people of Birr on the result of their collection for the evicted tenants in June 1897 but asked, 'Why is Tullamore so slow to fall into line with this movement?'¹³ It is doubtful if the apathy towards political affairs in the King's county was unique however, as the same conditions prevailed in the rest of Ireland, as is evident from the reports of the Inspector General for this time. In March 1898 for instance, he reported that the 'country was peaceful and the general condition of affairs satisfactory'.¹⁴ Lyons (1975), undoubtedly sums up the feelings of the country at large best of all for this time when pointing out that:

all that the people of the harassed and distracted country could see was that where there had been one party, now there were three, where there had been one national newspaper, now there were three, where there had been one national organisation now
.....¹⁵

The effects of the Parnellite split were not confined to the INL; another notable victim of the crisis was the GAA. When the annual county convention of the organisation was held on St. Stephen's day 1890, at Birr, a proposal against 'the continued leadership of Mr. Parnell' was passed unanimously, with not one voice being raised in protest.¹⁶ However, this stand was never going to protect the GAA from the effects of the split. At a game in Killeigh during April 1891, the correspondent of the Midland Tribune remarked during the course of his report on a match that:

However appropriate politics may be when practised in places set aside for their indulgences we must certainly condemn their introduction into sporting circles... Previous to the Gaelic tournament at Killeigh on Sunday last, a bystander frequently attempted to interrupt the progress of the day's amusements by tossing his hat in the air and calling for cheers for the ex - leader. His little game however was rightly ignored by the vast crowds ... At the completion of the matches both teams joined enthusiastically in cheering for William O'Brien and the other prominent members of the Irish Party...¹⁷

In view of the correspondent then, it was not in order to endeavour to whip up support for Parnell, but it was perfectly all right to do so for his opponents! More importantly the real loser in all of this was the GAA. Over the remaining months of 1891 the movement tore itself apart as players and officials took sides in the dispute. It was noticeable that during this period also no tournaments (which had been the mainstay of many of the clubs) were played. Championships were held in 1892 but only a handful of clubs took part and by the end of the year the GAA was considered dead in the eyes of the police.¹⁸

The decline in the fortunes of "open moderate" Nationalist societies during the 1890s and the prevailing apathy among the bulk of their followers may have been pleasing to the RIC; but a more worrying trend for them towards the end of the decade must have been the growth of "closed" and more extreme Nationalist movements. This development in the latter half of the decade may have been a reflection of the loss in confidence in the IPP and constitutional methods of politics at this time. The most dangerous of these societies was undoubtedly the IRB.

While it did not undergo a major revival throughout the county by any means, it certainly became stronger in some areas, most notably Cloghan.

In December 1898 an informant for the RIC stated that 30 of the finest fellows in the parish had enrolled in the Cloghan circle, the organisation of which was carried out by P.J. White,¹⁹ the head centre of the IRB in the county. In January the following year four new members joined, being directed to attend all meetings and procure new members,²⁰ while in February these were followed by 28 new recruits.²¹ By April 1900 the circle was reported to have 103 members, known as the 'burners' from their proneness to set fire to hay, while each member was also alleged to be subscribing four pence a week to purchase revolvers!²²

Undoubtedly the circle in Cloghan was strong, and very likely an exception in this regard. However more IRB activity was also noted in the county in January 1900 involving P.F.O' Loughlin described as an 'IRB man on the Dublin Metropolitan Police list', who had moved to Tullamore in 1898.²³ He made efforts to revive the movement also, and succeeded in enrolling 19 new members under a 'new oath binding to secrecy under the penalty of death,' involving 'if considered necessary the wife or and children of any member disclosing the secrets of the organisation'!²⁴ Such threats one suspects would have been more likely to drive away potential recruits, yet others including the chairman and secretary of the revived county committee of the GAA elected in 1899, were also both IRB suspects,²⁵ while the 12 affiliated GAA clubs in the county were described the following year as all 'having Fenian tendencies'.²⁶ Even eight of the county councillors, and 12 district councillors elected in 1899 were also regarded as IRB men.²⁷

The Centenary committees founded to celebrate the anniversary of the 1798 rebellion also had IRB involvement. The King's county had been remembered for a number of events during that rebellion; most notably the betrayal of the Shears brothers by Captain Armstrong who resided at Ballycumber and the execution of the martyrs Father Kearns and Colonel Perry near Edenderry. The Wolfe Tone demonstration at Edenderry in August 1899 was attended by 1,000 people, headed by men on horseback in uniforms and carrying green flags and French tricolours.²⁸ A Manchester Martyr demonstration a couple of months later was the scene of a fiery speech by O'Loughlin, broken on occasions with cheers for the Boers.²⁹

The apparent revival of the fortunes of the IRB was however to get a decided check in the early years of the new century for a number of reasons. The death of P.J. White in 1902³⁰ and the return of O'Loughlin to Dublin the following year removed the two leading lights of the movement just at the time when the revival was beginning to gather momentum. The main reason however, was the revival of moderate Nationalism with the re-emergence of a united IPP in 1900.

A number of events occurred at the end of the century which helped to heal the split in the Irish Party. For one, the centenary committees had helped to bring differing Nationalist factions together and acted as a unifying force especially in local politics. At one meeting held in Tullamore, the Midland Tribune reporter claimed 'it was certainly gladdening and a unique sight to see Parnellites, Healyites, and Dillonites — men who had not met on a political platform for years, exchanging mutual congratulations and uniting for the great object before the meeting'.³¹ The extent to which bitter feelings were beginning to fade was evident when a member of the clergy proposed a leading Parnellite for the chair, while another, Fr Murphy claimed the meeting was an indication that in the future, 'all their differences would be buried', that 'priests and people would again be seen in combination' and that centenary year would make them 'willing to forget the past and advance the cause of dear old Ireland'.³² No doubt he was a trifle optimistic, but his feelings are indicative of the new spirit of unity emerging nonetheless.

While the celebrations regarding 1798 can be credited with helping to unite Nationalists, the movement did little else, and was for the most part a failure as regards creating much excitement in celebrating the centenary of 1798. The following account of its activities compiled by the Inspector General in March 1898 shows clearly that:

...there is a total want of enthusiasm in connection with it [the '98 Celebrations]. No doubt very large meetings have been held, especially on St. Patrick's day; but these gatherings meant little as it is easy on holidays or Sundays to gather crowds of idle people who have nothing better to do; but there is no sign whatever of any general and certainly not of any spontaneous outburst of popular enthusiasm on the subject.³³

In regard to the King's county, it is apparent with the exception of Edenderry, that the movement created little interest and the county inspector rarely bothered to write more than two lines on the subject in his monthly reports throughout 1898. On one occasion he was moved to report that the 'celebrations have secured a decided check in the wake of the Spanish-American War'³⁴ while 'attempts to hold meetings at Lusmagh, Rhode and Tullamore may be looked on as failures'.³⁵ A number of meetings were held, lectures were given, there were even torchlight processions, yet the Nationalist Midland Tribune complained in August that 'the Birr people were not creditable in support of the movement'.³⁶ However it must be stressed that by bringing Nationalists together on the one platform again, the movement was more than worthwhile in itself.

In 1898 the Tories passed the Local Government of Ireland Act. This important piece of legislation paved the way for the setting up of county and rural district councils, and in some cases urban district councils. Elections for these bodies did not take place until January 1899. The Tories had hoped this measure along with their other spate of reforms, would kill Home Rule with kindness. The new councils differed from the much maligned grand juries in that they were elected by an electorate which for the first time included women.³⁷ These new bodies in turn undertook such tasks as the maintenance of roads, sewage, and public buildings down to the allotment of labourers plots and cottages.

At the time of the first election to these bodies, there was no Nationalist organisation, party or movement that could lay claim to the support of the bulk of Nationalists nation-wide. The UIL which had established strong roots in Connacht, or parts of it at least by this time, was for the most part unheard of in the King's county. It therefore did appear that at least some local Unionists could expect to win election onto the new councils, once there was no Nationalist organisation to appose them. But the political security that the Parnellite split had brought, coupled with the relatively long period of Conservative power in England, led to an over-confidence on their part; likewise their organisations were in no better or worse shape than their Nationalist counterparts. Lack of real Nationalist opposition, or an effective Nationalist organisation in the 1890's, lulled local and national Unionists into a false sense of security, which in turn led to an inevitable lack of vigour on the part of their own movements which were allowed to slide into a state of unpreparedness for tough electoral contests. From the point of view of Unionists themselves, this was dangerous, considering their minority position, particularly in southern Ireland. There was a void for political direction in 1899 in the King's county that needed filling, and the editor of the Midland Tribune, John Powell, went a long way to bridging it.

It would be wrong to assume that Powell was totally responsible for the way the election results transpired, but he played a leading part in ensuring that the new councils were totally dominated by Nationalists. It would be wrong also to assume that Nationalists faced no opposition, for at least 11 Unionists stood for election to the County Council alone.³⁸ A letter to the King's County Chronicle in June 1898 from an "Old Cromwellian" had urged Unionists to boycott the new councils in the hope that the 'shifty Celt may wish them back again, after sufficient experience of the new administrators'.³⁹ This appeal was to largely fall on deaf ears however, Unionists feeling, and rightly so that they had experience of local government to offer the new councils. Most also (like Lord Rosse in Birr) had a deep seated pride in their localities and wished to maintain a high social status by playing leading roles in communities which they had done for centuries.

However, their attempts to win seats on the new councils proved a dismal failure, and Powell played a leading role in ensuring this. Before the elections, he claimed that two sets of candidates were before the electors in the Birr urban district, 'one set pledged to better the condition of the artizan and labourers and ratepayers generally',⁴⁰ while the other was pledged to 'nothing better than their own glorification'.⁴¹ Meanwhile Unionists were depicted as being members of the 'Orange Ascendancy', 'Tories', and 'flunkeys'.⁴² Compiling a list of the candidates for election, Powell proposed the election of certain ones as distinct from others (ie Unionists), for he claimed that since the working class were not used to exercising the franchise on a complicated ballot paper, 'the chances of error were extremely great'.⁴³ For his efforts Powell also managed to get himself elected to the first County Council. In all twenty one councillors were elected in a likewise number of constituencies using the straight vote method, while in the elections for Tullamore and Birr urban councils, voters were faced with two different systems after the initial election in 1899. At Birr for instance a new council was elected every three years, while in Tullamore, one third of the council seats came up for election each year. For the rural councils, each district electoral division returned two or in some cases three members, who in turn were to act also as Poor Law Guardians. Provision was also made for the election of Guardians in Birr and Tullamore. A glance at table five and six shows that the campaign carried out by Powell to ensure the maximum return of Nationalists had proved successful.

TABLE 5: Constitution of County Councillors elected in 1899

	Nationalists			Labour	Undefined
Unionist	Dillonite	Healyite	Redmondite	Nationalist	
1	13	1	3	1	2 ⁴⁴

A further eight were co-opted which included a number of leading Unionists, most notably Lord Rosse and E.J. Beaumont-Nesbitt. The results of the local urban elections are even more striking, as is indicated by Table six which also gives the number of guardians (which in effect were also rural councillors).

TABLE 6: Return of Urban District Councillors and Guardians for 1899 and the previous election.

Candidates	BIRR URBAN COUNCIL		TULLAMORE URBAN COUNCIL		GUARDIANS	
	1899	Previous Body	1899	Previous Body	1899	Previous Body
Unionist	-	10	3	3	5	79
Nationalist						
Dillonite	17	11	2	3	137	71
Healyite	-	-	-	-	9	7
Redmondite	-	-	4	4	21	10
Total (Nationalist)	17	11	11*1	12*2	176*3	94*4
Labour Unionist	-	-	-	-	-	2
Labour Nationalist	4	-	-	-	8	-
Non Political	-	-	-	-	-	-
Neutral	-	-	1	-	-	-
<u>GRAND TOTAL</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>189</u>	<u>175</u>

*1 5 Nationalists undefined

*2 5 Nationalists undefined

*3 9 Nationalists undefined

*4 6 Nationalists undefined

45

The most striking aspect of these figures relate to the Birr Urban Council. Almost 15% of the town's population were Protestant, yet not one Unionist was elected in 1899; while in Tullamore on the other hand, three Unionists managed to hold their seats, despite the fact that only 5.5% of the population were Protestant. The Midland Tribune only had a small circulation in Tullamore compared to Birr where the paper was published, a fact which may go some way to explain this. Certainly the King's County Independent made no great attempt like Powell to influence the voters in the contests. Overall then, only eight Unionists managed to hold onto their seats in the bodies shown in Table six, compared with a huge 92 in the previous elections. Little wonder then that Powell could boast that 'Unionism in Ireland had been routed and annihilated'.⁴⁶ However this victory was not achieved under the auspices of any strong or vibrant Nationalist organisation. In fact no such organisation existed to canvass for candidates and those elected, had simply put themselves forward in the Nationalist interest, and were selected by the people on their previous credentials or record on matters concerning local affairs. It is more than a little ironic that such results would never be achieved again during the next 18 years, despite the presence of a new Nationalist organisation that was about to emerge, namely the UIL.

The more important developments were to take place after the election however. Despite the fact that Dillonites, Healyites, and Redmondites existed side by side, Nationalists for the most part buried old antagonisms and worked together to ensure that the councils were a success. Some petty rivalry may

have existed but not to the extent exaggerated by a King's County Chronicle reporter who claimed in April 1899 that:

There is abundant evidence that the mutual hatred of prominent self - dubbed "Nationalists" like Dillon, Healy, Redmond and others is spreading like contagion amongst the lower ranks... The ambitions and vanities of many of the new "Councillors" are coming to the surface now that the elections are over, and make it clear that a desire for self-glorification was the chief object of many who put themselves forward, and that the good of their country was quite a secondary, if even a secondary consideration.⁴⁷

This was unfair criticism for the reporter had not given the councils time to get established before making such critical comment, and it was only natural to expect some hitches in the workings of the new councils as they set out on their new roles. A special police report on the Local Government Act of 1898 claimed however that at the first meeting of the County Council, the 'utmost harmony and good feeling was displayed during the proceedings'.⁴⁸ with Dillonites being elected to the chair and vice-chairmanship, Henry Egan JP and Powell respectively.⁴⁹

Like the '98 celebrations however, the greatest impact of these elections was that they brought Nationalists together again where they had to work with one another. This was especially important as their tenure of office was short, with re-election to most councils taking place every three years in most instances. Co-operation of some sort was therefore imperative as the volatile electorate were tired of the splits and divisions of the previous ten years. Once the grass-roots were beginning to fall into line, it was only a matter of time before events would be speeded up at a national level for unity. Pressure was beginning to be exerted from the various councils in the form of strongly worded resolutions for an end to the split in the IPP, as evident from the following declaration which was passed at a meeting of the County Council in August 1899:

To arrange a line of action in Parliament for the Irish National members to pursue; to request their adhesion thereto by affixing their signatures to an undertaking binding them to constant attendance in the House, and to act and vote together upon all questions affecting Irish interests.⁵⁰

This kind of local pressure could not go unnoticed by the MPs at Westminster, but it was to be the foundation of the UIL which more than anything else would pave the way for the re-unification of the party.

This organisation had been started by William O'Brien in 1898 to agitate for the buying of large tracts of land (which he termed ranches), for redistribution among small holders. In the whole of Connacht the 6,000 largest farmers were estimated to hold the same amount of land as the 70,000 smallest.⁵¹ The new movement was centred at first in Mayo and one of its aims also included the desire to see an end to the split in the Irish party. Other Nationalist leaders, Dillon in particular, held aloof from the movement at first as he feared arrest, for as Bew (1987) points out, at this particular time, there was a large 'ambiguity about the League's ultimate objectives and a widespread uncertainty about its methods of operation'.⁵² There was also a genuine uncertainty as to who were the legitimate targets for disapproval of the new movement, as unlike the Land League days, the sole target of the land agent or landlord did not exist. Many prominent Nationalists and even some Catholic clergy were graziers who held ranch land. In fact James Daly whose brother Bernard was a leading rancher in many counties including King's, was a leading aide of O'Brien during the formative years of the UIL. Incidentally Bernard Daly, who also owned a distillery in Tullamore, had attempted to get elected onto the County Council as the town's representative in 1899, but lost out to William Adams in the most hotly contested seat in the county.⁵³

Because the new movement proved popular with small holders and tenants in Connacht, leading Nationalists like Redmond and Dillon soon found their supporters flocking to its ranks. Dillon hoped to see the party reunited, but wanted T.M. Healy's influence within it curtailed. O'Brien on the other hand felt he could control Redmond and therefore urged Dillon and Michael Davitt to back him for the leadership. As a result, Redmond secured the post without a contest and the UIL became the main support organisation for the party; both the INF and INL which were virtually dead by this stage were to play no part in future Irish affairs. This new unity was built on a shaky foundation, and was to be tested within a number of years after some members of the party like Redmond and O'Brien favoured a policy of conciliation with landlords, while others like Dillon and Lawrence Ginnell were to advocate a much more aggressive role for the UIL in agrarian matters. But in 1900, differences of the past ten years were suspended, temporarily at least, and open divisions within the party would not become public again until 1903 and thereafter.

The emergence of the UIL in the King's county was not by any means a smooth development either. Both the county's MPs in 1899 failed to throw their support behind it. Dr Fox, who represented the Tullamore division, remained a very firm supporter loyal to T.M. Healy and both stayed outside the League, failing to attend its convention in Dublin in June 1900. A resolution was passed by Edenderry Guardians condemning the action of Fox⁵⁴ who was never very popular in the county anyway because of his absences from the constituency. B.C. Molloy for his part also absented himself from the Convention, claiming it

was engineered in favour of one section of Nationalists for William O'Brien. Like Fox, he was not very popular with many of his constituents either for his absences and especially for his failure to visit Plan of Campaign prisoners when they were in Tullamore jail. While Fox was to retire in 1900, the failure by Molloy to join the UIL and support its establishment in the county was to prove the most costly mistake of his political career, as he lost out to its nominee in the subsequent General Election of 1900, when he was defeated in the Birr constituency by Michael Reddy from Shannonbridge.

The premise on which the UIL became established in the county was different to that of Mayo or the west of Ireland in general. There, such issues as untenanted land, grazierdom, the eleven months system and the relief of congestion were the burning issues of the time. As Bew (1987) points out:

The League in both Leinster and Munster may be practically described as a political body organised for the purpose of furthering nationalist aims generally. It is clear that as the UIL expanded across the country it made its way as an electoral and political organisation. It ceased to have any pretensions as an organisation of grass roots radical agrarianism. It was a pressure group for land reform and national independence. It was not a semi-revolutionary challenge to the British state in Ireland...⁵⁵

Such a generalisation is certainly true of the UIL in its early years up to 1905. Police records show that up to this date, the League seldom got involved in agrarian agitation in most of Leinster. For instance in 1902, it was estimated that only 159 acres of grass farms in the province were not rented due to its influence, while the corresponding figure for Connacht at the same time was 10,695 acres.⁵⁶ Having said this, the League was to become a focus for agrarian agitation in parts of Leinster, chiefly Longford, Westmeath, Queens and King's counties after 1905, especially where congestion was evident in those same counties. The areas in King's county which fell into this category were most notably Banagher, Shinrone, Kinnitty and Cadamstown. Bew's assertion then that the UIL was used more for political purposes (eg electioneering, collecting party funds etc) is certainly true, but only up to 1905.

Because both the county's MPs failed to join the UIL up to 1900, the organisation of the movement at first within the county was left to paid organisers like James Lynam. He generally approached existing boards in the county like the various Guardians and impressed to members present the need to throw their weight behind the movement. While Tullamore Guardians and urban council both pledged their support to UIL principles in December 1899 and May 1900, many Nationalists appeared apathetic towards it at first. Undoubtedly the apathy

regarding politics in general, which has already been pointed out at the start of the chapter, was not going to disappear easily overnight. The birth of the movement was first noted in the county in late December 1899 when branches of the League were started at Ballycumber and Ballinahown.⁵⁷ Yet this did not lead to a rush of activity in the new year as other areas were slow to follow suit, and by May 1900, the editor of the Midland Tribune (which solidly supported the UIL) complained that:

The need for a strong political organisation in the King's county has often been urged in these columns. It is a need that is more pressing today than ever.⁵⁸

However the latter half of 1900 saw the first real flush of enthusiasm for the UIL, and in June a branch was formed at Tullamore when William O'Brien visited the county. He made a strong plea for unity among Nationalists, claiming there 'should be no party sides any longer except on the side of Ireland'.⁵⁹ Soon afterwards meetings were held at Mount Bolus, Raheen and Ballinagar⁶⁰ to form branches, while in August a big UIL rally in Tullamore was attended by 2,000 people.⁶¹ There were still some setbacks for the movement however, especially Henry Egan's (a leading Nationalist in the county) refusal to run for MP for the Tullamore division despite strong public pressure and the backing of the King's County Independent. He cited failing health as his reason in a letter to the paper,⁶² and nobody could be found in the constituency who resided therein to allow their name go forward for the post. A Convention later in the month selected an outsider, Haviland Burke,⁶³ who also challenged Tim Healy in a very bitter election in Louth around the same time, but lost. Burke was to be returned unopposed in north King's county but the King's County Independent (which had earnestly hoped for a candidate from the division), rather sarcastically remarked in October that 'many of the electors in the Tullamore area are unaware that a candidate has been selected, and only a very few are aware of the existence of such a man as Mr Burke...'⁶⁴ James Lynam's attempts later in the month to form a branch of the League at Clara also came unstuck. Posters had been displayed for a meeting to take place on a Sunday, but when Lynam arrived in the town, there was no prominent Nationalist there to greet him, and the people reportedly 'filed out of the church without paying any attention to the organiser.'⁶⁵ In many respects the King's County Independent summed up the attitude prevalent in the county at the time when its editor remarked that:

...the people do not seem antagonistic to the League, but they will require a good deal of "stirring up" before they enroll themselves in the new organisation.⁶⁶

The most notable achievement of the UIL during this period was the election of Michael Reddy as MP for the southern

division of the county. Surprisingly the Midland Tribune supported B.C Molloy, the sitting member, who had lost the confidence of many constituents and failed to join the UIL, whose principles the paper, incidently, had expounded over the previous year. The decision is all the more surprising when one considers that the paper had solidly through the years since its foundation in 1881 supported the IPP, which by now had the backing and support of the UIL. The paper had predicted in September 1900 that there would be no contest in the division, 'despite the little breeze being raised in the corner of the division by the mercenaries of some unknown adventurer...',⁶⁷ but Reddy's decision to stand threw the contest wide open. John Powell found himself locked in a series of personal attacks with Reddy during electioneering meetings, claiming the latter had himself nominated 'by a combination of rack - renters, renegades and Tories',⁶⁸ strong language indeed but not enough to save Molloy whose unpopularity worked in Reddy's favour. The latter's own personal track record to date had been modest by any standards, yet it did include a period in jail for Land League activities with the Galway patriot Matt Harris,⁶⁹ and Reddy's victory by 1,451 votes to 1,181 gave the UIL a timely boost and turn in its fortunes throughout the county.

After his election, the UIL began to quickly establish itself in the county, but particularly in the southern division. A new branch was started in Frankford before the end of the year and in 1902 the movement really took off. By the end of July that year there were 12 branches of the League in the county,⁷⁰ and this had grown to 21 by December.⁷¹ The RIC were not unduly worried by this growth, claiming in October that the branches formed that month were of a 'bogus nature',⁷² while in November the county inspector noted that while several meetings of the UIL had been held with a view to establishing branches, and were 'nominally successful', they did not 'seem to have much influence with the people'.⁷³ Meanwhile in December, the League was reported as 'making little progress except on paper'.⁷⁴ The police cared little for its growth so long as the movement kept within the law and to the end of 1901 for the King's county, there was only one agrarian outrage committed attributable to the UIL, and it was of no consequence to the peace of the county.⁷⁵ More importantly, the police reported that there were no persons boycotted, no persons who surrendered their farms, no evicted farms unlet or eleven month farms surrendered, and no landlords influenced to sell their estates at the dictation of the UIL.⁷⁶ The formation of most branches in 1901 had been carried out at the instigation of paid organisers, most notably James Lynam, as the county's MPs spent most of their time in Parliament. The police were also careful not to suppress any meetings or to bring prosecutions against any speech maker at UIL meetings during this period (even though the latter was considered on a number of occasions) and by this prudent action, no martyrs as such were created and most UIL meetings passed off without incident. This action also robbed the League of much needed publicity which such action would have merited, which in turn meant that League organisers had to work hard to give the movement a decent public

profile.

One of the main reasons why the UIL was slow to get established in the county till 1901 can be related to the attitude of the Catholic clergy at this time. Many priests held aloof from the movement and the reasons for this are complex. Some at least may not have wished to get involved in politics again, with memories of the bitterness generated by the Parnellite split still smouldering. Fr Philip Callery, appointed Parish Priest of Tullamore in September 1899, was undoubtedly the best example here, as he had come from Trim in Meath where Parnell had retained alot of support. When transferred there from Drogheda in 1893, he took over a situation where a new church had been started in 1891, but was proving difficult to complete because of lack of funds arising out of the deep divisions caused by the Parnellite split.⁷⁷ He was also secretary to Bishop Nulty for a time, and despite being popular in Tullamore he never got involved in the UIL. He was to cause a little controversy in September 1901 when he insisted that the members of the local branch move their collection tables from the front of the church during a fund raising venture⁷⁸ on the grounds that Bishop Gaffrey had made a rule forbidding such collections outside churches. But it would be wrong to deduce from this that Callery was against the UIL in principle, as he was at pains to stress on this occasion that he was only carrying out diocesan rules imposed by his bishop.

Others like Father O'Beirne, PP, of Killeigh may have had different personal reasons for he claimed in February 1901 at a meeting in Killeigh to establish a branch of the UIL that while:

I approve of the main principles of the UIL, I distinctly decline taking part in the proceedings so long as it is directed and governed by Mr O'Brien and co..⁷⁹

The police also noted in December 1899 as the League struggled to be born in the country that local clergy in the Shannonbridge area refused to take part in the movement owing to the fact that Michael Reddy 'was a secret society many of ill repute',⁸⁰ a reference to his links with the IRB. It was also revealed in reports of five meetings at Raheen,⁸¹ Clonmacnoise,⁸² Ferbane,⁸³ Tullamore,⁸⁴ and Frankford⁸⁵ in 1900, that no member of the clergy was present.

This opposition, or probably better, reluctance, is even more surprising when one considers the part the clergy were playing and continued to play in other organisations at this time, most notably the Gaelic League. Priests here, not only helped to form branches, but acted as officers in many of them, and in some instances as teachers of Irish. In many respects they were the life and soul of the movement, and of the 17 branches formed up to 1907, 14 of them had clerical involvement of some degree.⁸⁶ This type of support was not forthcoming for

the UIL as quickly, and it took longer for the movement to be able to claim to have the support of the clergy on a similar scale to that of the Gaelic League.

Not all priests shunned the movement however at first. In August 1901 the county inspector noted that 'owing to the favour of some of the priests', a paid organiser had managed to establish three branches in the county.⁸⁷ Yet only two months later in October, he questioned their commitment to the movement when he remarked:

The clergy are opposed to the League which partly accounts for the apathy [of the people]. Four priests have encouraged the movement by presiding at branches of the League, but since the formation of the branches, they have done nothing to urge them on.⁸⁸

On the whole then, the UIL had a rather unimpressive, low-key, and shaky birth in the county. It certainly could not claim by the end of 1901 to be a vibrant organisation with the full support of the bulk of county's Nationalists. It is doubtful though if any organisation could have commanded this support however, given the level of apathy that prevailed in the county during the 1890s. It was clear that the organisation would have to deal with local issues as well as national ones if it was to catch the imagination and support of many who held aloof from it. However, there were signs towards the end of 1901 that this was about to happen, especially if we note the text of speeches delivered by MPs at this time.

In October at a meeting in Mount Bolus, Reddy and William Delaney (MP for Leix) strongly urged the boycotting of landlords and landgrabbers. It is of interest to note that on this occasion, they deprecated the use of violence, claiming 'such persons should be left alone'.⁸⁹ By December Reddy hardened his line of advice, for at a meeting in Cloghan attended by 800, he delivered a very violent speech in relation to a local land dispute and argued that 'a ring of fire should be put around all grabbers'.⁹⁰ He also referred to a grazier in Kilbeggan (Westmeath) as 'an infamous scoundrel' and told the crowd present to 'make it hot for him'.⁹¹ John Dillon who spoke and dealt with the ever growing agitation in the west at this time, also called on the crowd to support the people in that province in their struggle.⁹² The same month, the UIL branch at Tisaran passed a resolution that no rents should be paid until the local landlord's rent warner was dismissed,⁹³ an action which resulted in an attempted burning of a dwelling house in the locality.⁹⁴ While getting involved in local issues was certainly about to boost the League's membership, it also threw up other difficulties that will be the subject of the next three chapters.

Before ending this chapter, it is necessary to say a little more about the two MPs elected during 1900 in the interests of the UIL. Michael Reddy was a tenant farmer, only one of three in the Irish Party at this time.⁹⁵ He held a small holding on the Ashbrook Estate at Shannonbridge, which had been the scene of disputes during the Land League days of the early 1880s. He was to serve as chairman of Birr Rural District Council from 1901 to 1906, and also as a justice of the peace in the county. He lost the latter title for an inflammatory speech during the Ranch War, but regained it after a lapse of two years in April 1909.⁹⁶ A defaulting tenant on occasions, as a young man Reddy had joined the Fenian movement, but had no links with it after 1900.

After his election in 1900, Reddy was seldom out of the news up to 1914, and on occasions at least was a very controversial figure. Like Laurence Ginnell, he disliked the grazing system and actively campaigned against it. His main weakness to judge by his speeches, was that he seldom seems to have fully thought through his views, with the result that he occasionally made comments that were unpopular and for the most part short-sighted. While he undoubtedly threw a lot of energy behind building up the UIL in the county, he was ironically, a good deal responsible for its loss of support after 1908.

On the otherhand, Haviland Burke did not have the same aura of unpredictability about him, and was in most respects, an opposite of Reddy. He was the eldest son of Edmund Haviland Burke, MP of Buckinghamshire, who was the only son of the late Thomas Aston Haviland Burke, great grand-nephew and heir to the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke, patriot, orator and statesman.⁹⁷ Burke was educated privately and in continental schools, and became a war correspondent for The Manchester Guardian during the Turkish-Greco war of 1897.⁹⁸

His early political career cannot be termed successful, for having joined the Irish Party, he first contested Parliament for North Kerry as a staunch Parnellite in 1892, but was defeated, and a similar fate befell him in South Dublin in 1895 and North Louth in 1900.⁹⁹ However, this was the year he was to be successful in north King's county, after all efforts to get local candidates to go forward failed. Burke had served as editor of the Limerick Leader for a period after September 1892¹⁰⁰ and became known as a leading Protestant Home Ruler throughout the country. He served the north King's county constituency until his death in 1914, being returned unopposed on each occasion. While he was a friend of William O'Brien's, Burke was to remain loyal to Redmond even after O'Brien's two departures from the party in 1903 and 1909. Like Reddy, but for entirely different reasons, he can also be blamed for the decline of the UIL after 1908. Having been elected a party whip after his election in 1900, he only made a small number of visits to the constituency, a factor which did his popularity no favours with his constituents. It is probably a little unfair, but true nonetheless, to state that the flaws of the UIL within the county

at the end of 1901 were in many respects reflected in the limitations of its two MPs, limitations that were to be exposed over the next decade.

CHAPTER TWO
CRISIS OF IDENTITY, 1902-1903

I

Tell me, tell me Shaun O'Farrell
Where the meeting is to be?
"In the Men's Hall, down the Old Street,
Right well known to you and me."
One word - the hour of meeting?
"Sunday next, its none too soon?
And the men will be together
Just a little after noon."

II

"Tis for Ireland we are meeting
There, to plead the self same cause;
Davis, Emmett, Mitchell pleaded
Freedom from all foreign laws."
Think you Shaun, the men of Birr will
Join our brothers in the fray;
Think you they have souls of freedom?
Shaun: "I'll tell you on that day".¹

Shaun (depicted here as a Birr Nationalist) was unsure and sceptical that the meeting called to bolster the ranks of the local branch of the UIL would be successful; and he had very good reason. At the subsequent gathering the following Sunday, a noted Nationalist and member of the Urban Council spoke of the 'apathy of the people' and deemed it a 'disgrace' to see such a small attendance present.² In October 1904, the branch received a further setback when a number of its members left to form a branch of the Town Tenants Association (TTA),³ believing that their interests were not being served by the UIL.

Yet at the end of 1902 the RIC had estimated that the strength of the UIL organisation within the county stood at 25 branches, with a numerical strength of 2,225 members, and funds to the tune of £292 5s 0d.⁴ While these figures may seem impressive at face value, beneath the surface of the movement lay an identity crisis; and few really seemed to quite understand its main functions, role, or purpose of existence. Who or what did the League represent, or claim to represent? Were its aims in unison or in conflict, and what type of people did the movement attract to its ranks at first? In at least attempting to answer some of these questions, it is intended to show that within the League, there was contradiction of purpose and conflict of interest, which created tension for those within its ranks on the one hand, while at the same time on the other, generating apathy amongst those who were reluctant to join.

Among its many aims can be counted Home Rule, the abolition of landlordism (through a generous system of compulsory purchase), the reinstatement of evicted tenants, abolition of the 11-months and grazier system of land tenure, the establishment of a Catholic university, the providing of cottages and one-acre

allotments for agricultural labourers, abolition of ground rents in towns, the development of Irish industries and the preservation of the Irish language,⁵ all a very impressive list indeed. This in turn meant it was to draw the bulk of its support from old style Nationalists who had supported Parnell, tenant farmers, Irish Irelanders, labourers and town tenants. In the early years of the movement, the UIL was to act as an umbrella organisation for all these groups, but not always in total harmony since all their expectations could never be realised without conflict of interest.

This conflict of interest was most obvious in relation to the grazing system, which will be the subject of chapter four in much greater detail. A brief explanation of the workings of this system will suffice at this point to help answer some of the questions posed earlier. Many landlords held large tracts of untenanted land within the county, the most notable examples being Lord Rosse who held 6,000 acres and Lord Digby with 5,991 acres.⁶ They in turn were only too glad to rent it for 11 months each year, while farmers, shopkeepers and merchants in many instances were equally glad of the opportunity to avail of land at the right price to fatten store cattle which could be easily obtained in nearby Connacht. For landlords, this arrangement involved no complicated formal contracts, and since the land was almost always rented for grazing purposes, hence the term "grazier". However this method of land dealing often aroused the attention of small farmers, tenants, and especially landless men, labourers or people deemed to the holding uneconomic holdings. They wished in essence for a new land act that would enable the purchase of such lands through the Estates Commissioners or Congested District Board for division purposes amongst themselves. Agitation for this purpose, which was acute in the west of Ireland in 1901 and 1902, and later parts of the midlands, took various forms; namely intimidatory letters, boycotting, maiming of cattle, and cattle driving. Up to the end of March 1902 however, there was no UIL campaign against the grazier system in the King's county, and not one farm had been surrendered by any grazier during this period.⁷

To some members of the League at least, the division of grazier farms was not a desired objective; on the contrary, they had a distinct interest in maintaining the system. This open conflict of interest between the grazier and landless men or small tenants never became acute in the early years of the UIL within the county. For most League members at this stage, the main function of the movement was seen as bolstering the Irish Party at Westminster to help secure Home Rule — an issue that was often used to cloud out and blot over the emerging social divisions in the League. The following table helps to illustrate the problems facing the UIL — did it fight the cause of the landless man, or turn a blind eye to the grazier, many of whom no doubt contributed to the funds of the Irish Party.

TABLE 7: UIL officials holding Grazing and Evicted Farms on 1st Feb. 1903 in certain selected counties

County	Number of branches in which officials hold land on the 11 month system	Number of officials who hold Grazing farms	Number of branches in which officials hold Evicted Farms	Number of officials who hold Evicted Farms
Kildare	4	10	-	-
King's	5	8	2	2
Queen's	7	13	1	1
Westmeath	8	18	-	-
Galway	12	16	1	1
Roscommon	8	10	1	1 8

Unfortunately this table only refers to UIL officials, and it would have been interesting to know how many rank and file UIL members held grazing or evicted farms. Yet it indicates the dilemma about to face the League, for it could not hope to satisfy both the grazier and landless man, but up to 1905 at least, these divisions did not become manifestly clear, and when they did, they directly led to a decline in the influence and strength of the movement.

The words "evicted tenant" had aroused the sentiment of Irish Nationalists since the days of the Famine and Land League. Often referred to as the "wounded soldier", they in turn saw the League as a means of getting back their holdings; but as the above table shows, this would raise problems in some instances at least as some UIL members held evicted farms. Such ambiguity often led to inaction on the part of the League and a case of point refers to William McRedmond, an evicted tenant and member of the Frankford branch of the UIL. In April 1901 he stated his case to the League which resolved that 'if his statement be true, the grabber will not thrive in our district'.⁹ In May the branch decided to 'have no dealings with the grabber',¹⁰ while in June the Committee again agreed that 'the farm was grabbed',¹¹ but no concrete action was taken and McRedmond did not get it back. Meanwhile, in December of the same year, the Cloghan branch expelled their secretary because he had sent his horse to move furniture into an evicted house.¹²

While the case of the "wounded soldier" may have aroused passions and sentiment, his/her case was not always taken up with special interest by the League. In September 1902, a public meeting of the UIL was held at Cloneygowan in north King's county, and attended by about 400 persons including Haviland Burke and William Delaney MPs. During its proceedings, an evicted tenant in the locality, Mrs Deegan, gave a small speech during the course of which she named the grabber of her farm, Pat Donegan, and some of his associates who aided him, expressing the

hope that the people would 'boycott him, squeeze him and make him give it up'.¹³ Later a local member of the League went as far to say that 'if that man remains in possession of this woman's grabbed farm, you are cowards and traitors to the national cause'.¹⁴

The county inspector reported that Donegan had no intention of giving up the farm,¹⁵ but fearing that he would incur public displeasure, he attended the next meeting of the local branch for the purpose of being enrolled as a member and at the same time explaining how matters stood. The police reported that he offered £10 to Mrs Deegan as compensation or to give up the farm. This was not enough to satisfy Mrs Deegan however who wanted more compensation and on refusing the £10, she was informed that the branch would have nothing more to do with her case.¹⁶ In October 1904 Donegan had a change of heart however and again agreed to surrender the farm,¹⁷ but this was shortlived and in December 1906 Deegan was again seen to appear at a UIL meeting to state her case, which by now (from her point of view) was much more serious. Not only had Donegan again put grazing cattle on the land in question, what was of more concern to Mrs Deegan was the fact that the other tenants on the estate had just signed purchase agreements with the landlord for their holdings, completely omitting her case for reinstatement¹⁸ and in doing so, she stood to lose the farm for good to Donegan. The next chapter will deal with more similar cases in even greater detail, and show clearly the double standards indulged in by League leaders and members.

The apparent double standards of members of the UIL undoubtedly alienated potential supporters of the movement, who responded in most instances by refusing to join it. What the League required at this time to tap their support was a vague slogan or object of opposition, like one of its predecessors, the Land League had possessed. Its cry, "The land of Ireland for the people of Ireland" had managed to attract a wide range of support from all shades of Nationalists in the early 1880s, but would prove difficult to resurrect again given the present situation of League members holding grazing farms. Nevertheless, having proved so successful then, the temptation to revert to its use again by League leaders, organisers, and MP,s proved too great to resist. This time round though, their total emphasis was not on such slogans, but in concentrating attacks on that most popular of targets, the landlord.

This is best signified by speeches and resolutions of League leaders and branches at this time. Even William O'Brien, in his pre-conciliation days was to strike this chord when speaking at a meeting in Tullamore in May 1900, during the course of which he said:

If we of the UIL go in for striking down landlordism first of all, it is because landlordism happens to be the biggest head and the most wicked head within striking distance

(hear hear). If anybody can tell now in what practical way England can be hit harder, I should be more obliged to him. Landlordism is the head of English rule in Ireland; it is the source of all the misgovernment and misery which drained away the flower of our population...¹⁹

At a similar meeting in Mount Bolus in October 1901, Michael Reddy MP expressed somewhat similar sentiments when he said:

What is the UIL but the old Land League revived with the old cry _ the land for the people (cheers)...I say to you here today, make it hot for landlords this Winter, and make the Government of Ireland dangerous. (hear hear)...²⁰

A meeting at Kinnitty early in 1901 passed a resolution resolving to 'fight to finish the enemies of Ireland, who have robbed, starved and depopulated our land'.²¹ At Clonbullogue in August, Fr McCrea urged the people to join the League, as the only means of getting land and fighting 'unjust landlordism',²² while in Cadamstown the same month, the county organiser spoke of the need to overthrow the hellish system of landlordism that was devastating their country....²³ His mention of the grabber and grazier at the same meeting may have raised some eyebrows, but up to 1905 at least, their place in the movement was not threatened. These efforts at trying to single out landlords for special attention were an attempt to hide the emerging problems that the League faced and would face, and included an attempt to revive the old Land League style campaign of agitation where farmer, tenant, labourer, and grazier often spoke from the one platform.

As well as the identity crisis facing the League, it faced major problems getting established in the big towns in the county. Within urban areas, the issue of land did not have the same importance as in the countryside, and therefore, townsfolk had even less incentive to join than the tenants or labourers, many of whom it has been acknowledged did not bother to join either. This is indicated by the poor response for subscriptions to funds for taking on the Government in the west of Ireland prosecutions, at Clara in January 1902, which was referred to by a member of the local branch 'as the apathy of the great majority of Nationalists in the town',²⁴ who did not appear to have 'one spark of Nationality in their composition',²⁵ and who were accused by him of understanding 'Nationality only as a means of profit or popularity...'²⁶ Later at a League meeting in Tullamore that July, at which only 12 members bothered to attend, the chairman William Adams again referred to the apathy concerning the League. He had come to the meeting with the intention of resigning because the League had received such little practical support in the town. Another member meanwhile expressed anger that some of the local shopkeepers had even

refused to exhibit handbills in their windows concerning the meeting.²⁷ Similar sentiments were also expressed at a meeting of the Philipstown branch a week later when the peoples attitude to the national cause was described as 'lukewarm'.²⁸

The first attempt to establish a branch of the UIL in Birr during October 1901 was disrupted by a group who were supporters of the former MP, Bernard C. Molloy, and the meeting had to be abandoned.²⁹ At the next gathering convened for similar purposes, a prominent local Nationalist, William Lowry told a small and indifferent audience that the League 'was for the benefit of the shopkeeper, farmer, trader, artisan, and labourer...'³⁰, no doubt everybody's interests would be well served within the UIL! Fr Meagher was even less forthcoming and claimed it was 'not a farmers league alone, but whatever those who enter into it wish to make it (cheers)...'³¹ Even with these rallying calls the League always struggled to maintain much support in Birr except for a brief period after August 1902. Even when the local government elections were held there early that year, no branch of the movement existed to canvass support for the Nationalists.

Despite this, local men of influence (all Nationalists) held a meeting early in January and selected a panel of 21 candidates to go forward for election onto the urban council³², and all except two were successful.³³ Later in March however, when a branch of the League was established in the town, only five of the new urban councillors bothered to join it. Table 8 clearly illustrates that within the county, the fortunes of the League in the 1902 local elections were weighted decisively for the rural districts and against in the urban areas.

TABLE 8: Showing the number and percentage (in brackets) of members of the UIL elected in the Local Government Elections of 1902 for certain selected counties.

COUNTIES	COUNTY COUNCIL		RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL		URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL	
	L	N.L.	L	N.L.	L	N.L.*
Kildare	8 (38.0)	13	28 (25.9)	80	10 (40.0)	15
King's	6 (72.7)	6	126 (80.7)	30	17 (47.2)	19
Queen's	26 (89.6)	3	160 (75.8)	51	-- (--)	--
Westmeath	23 (74.1)	8	157 (75.8)	50	7 (38.8)	11
Galway E.	9 (81.8)	2	156 (76.8)	34	14 (93.3)	1
Galway W.	13 (61.9)	8	156 (60.9)	100	20 (83.3)	4
Roscommon	26 (86.6)	4	219 (88.6)	28	-- (--)	--

* L = LEAGUERS

* N.L. = NON-LEAGUERS

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This table shows that the League was weak all round in Kildare; Queen's, King's and Westmeath display a pattern of strength in rural areas, and a weakness in urban districts, as might be expected. The reverse patterns, evident in Galway are hard to explain and would require local study here.

The UIL received a further setback in Birr during May 1902 when it failed to secure the return of its candidates in the election of a county councillor on the death of Midland Tribune editor, John Powell, the sitting member for the town. On Powell's death in October 1907³⁵, the UIL had selected a leading local Nationalist, William Lowry, to run for the vacancy. He was chairman of the Birr Guardians and received the full backing of the Birr UIL Executive as well as the local branch and the Midland Tribune which also lent its support, confidently predicting a 'walkover' in the contest.³⁶ Letters were also published in the paper from John Redmond and John Dillion supporting his canvass.³⁷ Lowry's opponent, Patrick Cleary, was described as an 'independent' in the contest, and while he had been a member of the League for a short while previously and left it, it came as a great surprise when he defeated Lowry by 243 votes to 162.³⁸ The Midland Tribune was to claim that 'subtle influences and unholy alliances had succeeded in winning the day for the ascendancy party and castle hacks'³⁹, an obvious reference to the Unionist vote; but the truth was that the UIL had failed miserably in its first electoral test in Birr, and the defeat left such a mark on the local organisation that it did not enter another local contest again until 1914, which incidentally it lost as well.

So far in this chapter the identity crisis facing the League and the apathy of many Nationalist towards it have been explored in detail. Other reasons why the League struggled to get better following at this time were due to clerical indifference towards it in most parishes, the fact that most MP's spent much time in Parliament during 1902 and 1903, and O'Brien's poor health at this period, which meant he had less time to devote to organising new branches. The police played their part as well, by judicious and sound judgement in not suppressing meetings, and more importantly, in not taking iron-fisted measures in response to what can best be described as slightly inflammatory or sedition speeches of party MPs.

Both Burke and Reddy could have found themselves prosecuted on a number of occasions for such activity. As early as 1898, Burke had advocated the boycotting of graziers and grabbers at a speech in Balla county Mayo, which the police described as 'unusual', as up to then his speeches had been devoted to the topic of party 'unity'.⁴⁰ The following August he was reported as having used 'violent language' against people who took an evicted farm at Drummin in Roscommon⁴¹, while in November he was reported for having given a pro-Boer speech at Balla again.⁴² Reddy made a number of similar speeches in Galway and King's county towards the end of 1902, and on one occasion the

police intimated that 'his language would be evidence in charge of a conspiracy if instituted'⁴³, after he had denounced local landgrabbers at a meeting in Cloghan. However by not taking proceedings in such cases, the police spared the League much needed publicity and the creation of local martyrs. This action no doubt was taken in the view of their admission that the 24 branches of the League in the county by July 1902 were considered to be 'inactive and will probably die out before very long'.⁴⁴ Given this assessment, it was most surprising then that they should change their course of action when dealing with a number of events (which will now be discussed) that occurred in Birr during the following month, August 1902.

It was to be at this crucial time in the League's development, when its fortunes appeared to be flagging, that the UIL was to receive an unexpected boost in support, particularly in the southern division and around Birr. Early that month, the King's County Landowners Defence Association, composed mainly of local Unionists, held a meeting at Clavan's hotel in Birr and passed a resolution in support of the 'practical political action being taken by the Government to resist the attacks of the UIL against the rights of property'.⁴⁵ This resolution was passed in response to the strong UIL campaign against the grazing system which was taking place in the west of Ireland at that particular time, a line of action endorsed by Lord Rosse who chaired the meeting.⁴⁶ What appeared a rather innocuous resolution was everything the League in the county could have hoped for it now had an object and scapegoat which to attack around which all shades of Nationalist opinion in the county could seemingly unite. This opportunity was not about to be lost on local League leaders.

Shortly afterwards it was announced that an 'Athletic Sports' would be held in Birr on August 15th, promoted by the Birr Recreation Company, a group of leading business and townsmen who had come together to purchase a field for use by different sporting bodies in the town. The committee in charge of the arrangements of the sports was composed of locals of all shades of politics, and Lord Rosse amongst others was announced as a patron of the event.⁴⁷ The chief organiser of the event was Pat White and the sports were to be carried out under Irish Cycling Association and GAA rules. White in fact was a noted Nationalist, and had been a chief mover behind the erection in Birr of a memorial to the Manchester Martyr, Michael Larkin, in 1893. However, he did not hold membership of the UIL. The sports had been an annual event for eight years and it was announced that the official handicapper of the GAA, Mr. F.B. Dineen,⁴⁸ the IRB centre for East Limerick,⁴⁹ would attend, but he failed to put in his appearance on the appointed day. The sports, which comprised a fine number of events, also included horse and pony jumping. Personally, Lord Rosse had nothing to do with the arrangements for the sports and neither was he a shareholder in the Recreation Company, having only subscribed funds to the sports committee when appealed to.⁵⁰

Notwithstanding this fact, the local branch of the League took the matter up, and condemned the 'flunkeyism and shoneenism'⁵¹ of those preferring to be Nationalists who joined in with a 'landlord exterminator'⁵² in promoting the sports. In turn they decided to organise a counter rival 'Gaelic Sports' for the same day, which was emotively advertised in the Midland Tribune:

Who says our country's soul has fled?
Who says our country's heart is dead?
Come let them hear the marching thread
of twice five thousand Hurling men.
God save Ireland.⁵³

At a meeting of the Birr UIL Executive around the same time, Fr Meagher told those assembled to have 'nothing to do with the original sports' and a resolution was passed calling on Nationalists to boycott it.⁵⁴ The Midland Tribune also supported this call and threatened that the names of those 'who should enter the exterminators sports would be published'⁵⁵ in the paper. Meanwhile Reddy and John O'Donnell MP visited the town on the tenth of August and canvassed support for the Gaelic Sports, which was convened by placards which contained the words, 'down with landlordism and shoneenism'⁵⁶

The police reported that the majority of Birr shopkeepers were shareholders in the original Sports Company, and were against the rival Gaelic Sports. Attempts by Reddy and O'Donnell to entice them to join the UIL failed,⁵⁷ much to the annoyance of the former. Having regard to the fact that the rival sports were to be held in adjacent grounds, it was found necessary to assemble a force of 160 extra police in order to preserve the peace, 60 coming from Limerick, 50 from south Tipperary, and the remaining 50 from Tullamore, Edenderry and Banagher districts.⁵⁸ Other precautions were also taken, most notably the public houses were closed for the day by order of the magistrates.⁵⁹

Due to these measures, the sports passed off without incidence. The RIC estimated that 1,500 attended the original sports, and 3,000 with five bands from the surrounding districts (including Tullamore and Maryborough), the Gaelic Sports.⁶⁰ The Midland Tribune meanwhile estimated that 10,000 attended the Gaelic Sports, and 20,000 a public demonstration held later that evening,⁶¹ both figures being undoubtedly exaggerated. It was clear that the UIL's action, as depicted by the King's County Chronicle, smacked of the need to 'gratify a spirit of revenge'⁶² while at the same time providing a cheap advertisement for the League which wanted to have a quarrel at any cost.⁶³ The irony is that both events in many respects were a failure. Eight hurling teams had been announced to take part in the 'National Sports,' but only two fielded and a football match afterwards between Ferbane and a mixed team from other parishes generated little interest among the crowd.⁶⁴ In relation to the original

sports, the King's County Chronicle admitted that while the grand stand and enclosure were 'well patronised', the attendance in the usual portion of the field was 'not up to standard'.⁶⁵

In many respects the highlight of the day was a public meeting held in the early evening under the aegis of the UIL. Some of the comments made by speakers at this said meeting are worth noting, as they go a long way to show the ambiguity surrounding the League's identity and aims (or aims that it wished to portray) and highlights the attempt to organise a personal Land League style campaign against landlords. This is highlighted best by the comments of a local UIL figure, William Lowry, when he said:

....I tell you gentlemen, that the citadel of Landlordism, which is now broken down practically, will come with a mighty crash to the earth within the coming Winter. He hoped the Nationalists of the county would give the required assistance to demolish landlordism forever off the face of the land(applause)...⁶⁶

Michael Reddy also gave a very inflammatory speech in which he criticised those Nationalists in the county (referring in particular to Birr Urban Council) who had 'welcomed back the butchers and robbers of South Africa' and had expressed 'joy' at the coronation of the King.⁶⁷ He implored the crowd to 'fight against the 11 months man, boycott the grabber' and before long 'that cursed system of landlordism would disappear from the face of the country.'⁶⁸ He was followed by Haviland Burke, John O'Donnell (who referred to landlords as 'vultures') and Michael Glennon, an UIL organiser, all of whom spoke in similar tones before a resolution was passed:

approving the principles of the UIL and calling on the business people of Birr at once to become members of that organisation otherwise one would be compelled to regard them as supporters of Castle Rule and Landlordism, and shall in future refuse to patronise the shops of those who do not give support to the National cause.⁶⁹

While the League may have failed to prevent the holding of the original sports (something the police suspected it might attempt), the whole day's events served as a useful purpose in gaining the movement its first real publicity coup since its foundation there in 1899. The apparent campaign against landlordism which it expressed helped to unite various sections of Nationalist public opinion and postponed the day when the League would have to clearly outline its objectives and face the emerging social divisions that threatened it from within. Having said that, the event alienated the future support of many business people in Birr for the UIL, and this manifested itself

in the years ahead in the shape and form of a poor branch in the town, which was always struggling to keep up its existence.

The whole event was to have a startling sequel when on the first of September, the Government proclaimed the rural districts of Birr No.1 and Roscrea No.2 along with the Birr Urban District.⁷⁰ In many respects this was a surprise development, because over the previous four years the Government as noted (almost certainly acting on the advice of their law offices), were reluctant to ban meetings of the League, arrest MPs for seditious speeches, or proclaim districts, because they felt it would give the League more publicity than it deserved and therefore increase its potential support. As a result of this action, Reddy, Burke and O'Donnell along with three others found themselves prosecuted on three grounds; namely intimidation against shopkeepers in Birr, inciting other persons for said purposes, and unlawful assembly. At the first day of hearing, only Burke appeared and warrants were issued for the remaining five defendants. Reddy and Burke each received two months imprisonment with hard labour, and in addition they were ordered to give bail (themselves in £50 and two sureties in £25 each), and to be of good behaviour for twelve months; to be in default would incur a further period of three months imprisonment. On appeal their sentences were later reduced.⁷¹

The whole event surrounding the trial and sentences received top coverage in the Midland Tribune, and to a lesser extent the other two papers in the county. This publicity did the League's standing a power of good, and injected a new lease of life into many branches in the Birr division, reflected in the take up of collections for a 'Defence Fund' which carried on into 1903.⁷² Daniel Powell, the new editor of the Midland Tribune, also received two months imprisonment at this time for publishing intimidating resolutions.⁷³ Meanwhile the major bodies in the county, including the County Council and Birr No.1 Council passed resolutions against 'coercion,' while Birr Guardians on the proposal of Michael Reddy resolved to:

...protest most emphatically against the uncalled for action of Dublin Castle in proclaiming the Birr Rural Districts at the solicitation of a few local shoneens, who in their semi-moribund state are glibbering and shrieking for coercion at the back of the Great Mogul of Birr Castle.⁷⁴

A local Unionist on the board admitted that while he was not in favour of the resolution, he (Captain Drought) did not feel it was necessary to proclaim the district,⁷⁵ which nobody came out and publicly supported, for as well as being an unpopular decision locally, it resulted in an increase of £20 10s 10d in the rates for the additional police stationed in the district.⁷⁶

The action taken by the Government ironically gave the League a shot in the arm at a time when the early enthusiasm (which had been lukewarm at best) concerning the movement was beginning to fade. In September it was reported that 100 new members had joined the Eglisk and Drumcullen branch in sympathy with the prisoners and to protest against coercion,⁷⁷ while a month later, the Executive meeting of the UIL in Birr had representation from 15 branches, the highest recorded yet, and was attended by David Sheehy MP.⁷⁸ Tullamore UIL also passed a resolution against the proclaiming of areas near Birr, and an outdoor meeting was also held in Cloneygowan to protest against the jailing of the MPs.⁷⁹ The change of attitude towards the League and the extent of feeling towards the recent events was also referred to by the editor of the King's County Independant at this time when he said:

..Up until recently, apathy was prevalent in the King's County. The efforts of the Castle to breakdown the spirit of the people have had the opposite to the desired effect. Messrs. Haviland Burke and Michael Reddy were never more firmly implanted in the affections of their constituents. The King's county should be proud that both its representatives have fallen victim to Mr Wyndham's Coercion Policy...⁸⁰

With an apparent turn around then in the League's fortunes, another remarkable sequel to the whole episode occurred towards the end of the year that could hardly have been anticipated, even by members of the League. Fox hunting was a very popular sport in north Tipperary and the southern end of the King's county. Two clubs existed for this purpose in these areas, the King's County and Ormond Hunt Clubs. Shooting on the otherhand was a much more popular sport in the northern portion of King's county. In 1986 the correspondence of a survivor of the "Shoot," Peter Jones, appeared in the Leinster Express and gives us a good insight into the significance and importance of this sport in that end of the county.

Jones worked on the Nesbitt estate at Tubberdaly in Rhode from 1912 starting on a weekly wage of nine shillings. During the year there would be three large "Shoots", namely the "Grouse shoot", the "Rabbit shoot", and the "Pheasant shoot".⁸¹ Labourers like himself would be employed specially on these days as beaters which lasted for a couple of days for each "shoot". Jones vividly recalled how at the end of each day, the beaters would be provided with hampers of sandwiches and large pots of tea, while visitors would be entertained in the mansion and accomodation for the night provided. Meanwhile the valets would clean the guns and store them in a special room for the following day.⁸² There can be little doubt that the occasion on the whole was a major social event in the county.

Equally, there is little doubt that the importance of

these "Shoots" in the north of the county was matched by a similar importance of the hunt in the south of the county. If anything the hunt clubs were much bigger and better organised, taking part in many more meets during the year and covering a wider catchment area. Curtis (1987), puts across the point well concerning the importance of hunting when he detailed that,

... Hunting involved far more people, money and organisation than met the eye of anyone watching the Master and his huntsmen and whips down a covert and then gallop away in hot pursuit of a fox. One authority on hunting reckoned tht the sport involved an annual expenditure of half a million pounds...⁸³

It is hard to gauge how much capital the two hunts mentioned generated within the King's County, but the willingness of one master to spend £100 building new kennels in 1907,⁸⁴ shows that expense was not spared to keep up the tradition. One important point concerning both the hunt and shoots was that they brought together many different social classes, landlords, farmers and labourers, and in this respect, both were possibly unique, transcending division of class, politics and creed. While this bond had been shaken by interference with many hunts during the Land War of 1880-82, normality had been restored by the time in question. However two new attempts were to be made in this century to disrupt the hunt, the first in 1902 and the second during the Ranch War of 1906-09.

During his public address at Birr on August 15, 1902, Reddy referred to the hunt in unfavourable terms, and asked those who had 'handled the hurleys that day to come and hunt the hunters' (cheers). He referred to the participants in the hunt as men who would 'ride roughshod over and banish them;⁸⁵ and was supported in his views by the Midland Tribune, which openly called on farmers to 'end the hunt, at least until Coercion is dropped'.⁸⁶ As a result, the Dunkerrin branch of the UIL was the first to take up the challenge and it passed a resolution some time afterwards to the effect:

That as practically all members of the King's County and Ormond Hunt Club are of the landlord, agent, and shoneen class, promoters of and sympathisers with Coercion and upholders of foreign rule in this country, we hereby withdraw from the said clubs and their members the privileges heretofore given them of hunting over our lands, and that if said members persist in hunting over our lands we shall prevent them by force if necessary, and that copies of this resolution be sent to the Earl of Huntington, M.F.H., the local press, and all surrounding branches of the League.⁸⁷

Not surprisingly the following week the editor of the Midland Tribune fully backed the resolution claiming that 'for too long the people have crouched under the feet of the landlords and their agents, too long have they offered a slavish respect to shoneens...'⁸⁸ Support for the Dunkerrin proposal also came from four other League branches, Kilcoleman, Coolderry, Ferbane and Birr. However, at the south King's county Executive meeting in October, there were conflicting reports as to the desirability of the course of action taken by these branches. The Midland Tribune reported that letters were read from members of the Ormond Club requesting permission to hunt, but that this was refused,⁸⁹ while the King's County Chronicle claimed that 'after a lengthened argument, a motion to stop the hunt while the MPs were in gaol was defeated..⁹⁰ On the other hand the county inspector's report fails to give us a conclusive account of the meeting, simply claiming that 'interference with the hunt was condemned by some of the branches of the League'.⁹¹ Certainly it was not unreasonable to expect opposition from some branches and members at least, for some farmers and labourers would have benefited directly from the hunt and therefore would have resented interference in it.

Despite this, some branches of the League at least were determined to have their way. On the second day of November, the police reported that the Frankford Branch had also passed a resolution resolving to stop the hunt. A notice was also found posted up in the locality to the effect:

The committee, Frankford branch UIL are unanimous in stopping the fox hunting in the parish of Ballyboy and Killoughy. It is expected large numbers will attend on Tuesday next at Derrydolney at 10 o'clock a.m. No hunting to be allowed until the political prisoners are released.⁹²

When the King's County Hounds next met at Frankford, a force of eight police were present to prevent any interference with it. The hunt met with no opposition until they reached Martin Kilmartin's land, where they found the gates locked, and Kilmartin informed the Master that there was no permission to hunt over his farm. At that point the hunting party undertook to turn back and go home. Later that day, the police also reported that Kilmartin was seen with about 20 men and boys, who were armed with sticks, walking about the fields and roads, obviously with intent to stop the meet should it attempt to return.⁹³

The Hunt committees responded by not publishing notice of their meets in the Midland Tribune. Nevertheless on the 11th November, a meet arranged for Belmont had to be changed to Doon because opposition was feared. In turn, at Doon, the meet was frustrated when groups of men and boys apparently well organised, gathered blowing horns and whistles.⁹⁴ Crowds had also gathered in Belmont including 70 or 80 persons who had come from Shannonbridge, Michael Reddy's native parish. The police also

reported that the majority of these were armed with sticks and everything pointed to a determination on the part of the people to stop the hunt.⁹⁵ A scene was avoided however in both places when the weather turned inclement and no attempt was made to hunt.

The League also adopted new tactics to frustrate the meets, the most notable being the decision to poison lands where the hunt operated. Late in November, nine such poison notices appeared in the Midland Tribune, while the same issue deemed the collections for the "Defence Fund", started after the imposition of coercion and in support of the prisoners a 'triumphant success' in Birr and Carrig, prompting the editor to claim that the 'heart of the King's county town is sound'.⁹⁶ Collections were taken up by all branches in the south of the county and most areas responded generously. There can be little doubt that at this stage the League appeared set to win its struggle with the hunt. The Midland Tribune even went as far as to publish a ballad confidently predicting its demise. It certainly recorded much of what had occurred over the previous few months and is worthy of inclusion here in full.

REYNARD'S HOLIDAY

Air - From the Shamrock

I

O'er hills and rocks, our friend the fox
Enjoys his recreation,
Go as you please he takes his ease
and spends a long vacation;
He's free to roam away from home,
His step is light and airy,
This autocrat is getting fat -
In King's and Tipperary.
Chorus

Base Intriguers, Birr and Roscrea Leaguers,
With bold affront, you stopped the Hunt!
United Irish Leaguers

II

Quoth Wright [editor King's County Chronicle]
tis sad, it makes me mad,
These farmer's sons have stopped our runs
and meetings, all this season.
They lie in wait, they lock each gate,
They're cross and quite contrary.
While Reynard grins and licks his shins.
In King's and Tipperary - Chorus

III

Tho' Curran raves and calls us slaves
we'll thunder forth our slogan
with cheer and shout, we'll welcome but

Brave Lowry and Mike Hogan.
Hurrah for Meagher, Dunkerrin's star,
His principles don't vary.
His "Poison Puns" means Read who runs
In King's and Tipperary - Chorus

IV

Proclaim away! Birr and Roscrea
Have spoiled your grand diversion
Last May and June - "the Bould" Tribune
Told how to check Coercion
Commandant Powell - as gay a soul
A Botha or Delaney
He spoke out blunt, to stop the Hunt
In King's and Tipperary - Chorus 97

The ballad however was a little premature and Reynard was not about to get over fat by any means, for a number of reasons. It was difficult for the League to prevent all meets, as many members of the hunt held large tracts of land themselves. Even the Earl of Huntington (M.F.H. Ormond Hund Club) had 3,379 acres⁹⁸ and even if all this was not for his own personal use, it came as no surprise when the King's County Chronicle could report in November that 'the meets of Lord Huntington's hounds have been notable for the largeness of the following, young as the season is...'⁹⁹ It was evident then that the League could only prevent some meets, and in those areas where it had most support.

Secondly, a point mentioned in passing, but worth repeating again, is that some Nationalists would have received benefits from the hunt, and were therefore likely to resent the League's interference in it. This will become much more apparent in 1907-08 when a more serious and determined attempt to prevent the hunt occurred. Thirdly the attempt to stop the hunt got a decided check with the advent of the Land Conference at the end of 1902. With it, the Irish Party began to pursue a period of co-operation with landlord representatives. In line with this new policy, it was not surprising that the Inspector General should remark in December that:

The sporadic attempts made in Limerick and some other of the southern counties to stop hunting, have for the present been abandoned pursuant to orders from the headquarters of the UIL.¹⁰⁰

In the King's county, no attempt to interfere with the hunt occurred after the meet at Doon in November 1902 and the county inspector could happily record the following month that the 'attempt to stop hunting has not occurred and I don't think will again.'¹⁰¹ Almost a year on in October 1902, the Midland Tribune carried a notice for five meets the following month,¹⁰² when it was also claimed that the 'opening meet of the season had a numerous assembly.'¹⁰³ A resolution passed by the Frankford

branch of the UIL that month proposing that 'every tenant farmer should stop the hunt where there is an evicting landlord until such evicted tenants are reinstated'¹⁰⁴ was totally ignored by all other League branches, and not even carried into effect by the branch in question.

Yet, by the end of 1902 and start of 1903, most League organisers must have been content that the movement now appeared vibrant, and well organised, having grabbed the attention of Nationalists, and appeared seemingly fit to face any challenge pitted against it. True, it still had identity problems with some of its members; in January 1903 a member of the Dunkerrin branch was expelled and farmers censured for taking up land usually let to labourers¹⁰⁵ while, in April, 'silky parties who pretend to be Nationalists' were condemned for availing of the 11 months system,¹⁰⁶ with a similar resolution being passed again in May 1904.¹⁰⁷

Despite this, at the end of 1903 the League had 25 branches in the county, with a membership of 2,498, a slight increase on the previous year. Funds were in a healthy state, £376 having been collected that year,¹⁰⁸ more than in the previous four years of the League's existence. The episode concerning the Birr Sports had given the movement a much needed boost at a crucial time, particularly in the south of the county. While there was room for improvement in the northern end, there were signs from this division as well that the League had been making some headway with the formation of a proper Executive there in October 1903. While a disappointing five branches were only represented at this first meeting,¹⁰⁹ League organisers were content that the passing of the Wyndham Land Act, and the general welcome for it at the end of 1903, seemed to indicate that there were good times ahead for the movement. Ironically however, this act, which is the subject of the next chapter, was in the long term to pose problems for the UIL and hasten its decline in support after 1908.

CHAPTER 3

THE WYNDHAM LAND ACT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE UIL, 1903 - 1908.

'.... a landlord bonus measure, pure and simple....'¹

The editor of the Midland Tribune on the act, May 1904.

'.... you would need x-rays to solve [understand] the Land Act' (laughter).²

An evicted tenant, Miss Masterson, speaking on the act at a meeting of Killeigh UIL in December 1904.

The central point and bone of contention in this chapter is to explain how the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, which ironically the passing of, was regarded as a major achievement by the IPP, contributed to the decline of the UIL as a strong Nationalist organisation. The origins of the act had been born in the Land Conference of December 1902 when representatives of landlords and tenants agreed to meet in discussions to hopefully bring about an amicable settlement to the land problem. Under the chairmanship of the Earl of Dunraven, it completed its report after only a fortnights discussion³ with its main recommendation outlining plans for a massive scheme of land purchase, giving tenants an opportunity to purchase at reasonable prices, while at the same time protecting the financial fortunes of their vending landlords. At this time it seemed to signal the era of a new spirit of conciliation and co-operation between the respective parties at the conference, and some of the participants, most notably Dunraven and William O'Brien hoped it would lead to some later settlement on the national question.

The Conference's report was generally welcomed in Ireland, the Inspector General claiming that month that 'it makes for peace',⁴ while the county inspector for the King's county reported in January 1903 that the public bodies of the county had received the report 'favourably'.⁵ When William O'Brien spoke at an outdoor UIL meeting in Edenderry that month concerning the conference, he was well received throughout.⁶

It was remarked in the last chapter that the attempts to stop hunting in 1902 were finally abandoned after the UIL headquarters requested so during the conference, a move that made for relative peace within the county. During the whole of 1903 up to the passing of the Wyndham Act in August, the county remained in a very peaceable state. The county inspector's reports during this period were noted for their shortness and lack of detail on any agrarian crimes. In June he reported the condition of the county to be 'satisfactory',⁷ in July a caretaker protection post was no longer deemed necessary,⁸ while in August protection to another caretaker on an evicted farm ceased.⁹ The expectations generated by the passing of the bill seem to have engulfed the attention of most tenants. The Inspector General recorded in October that 'for the present the question of land purchase dominates all others in Ireland',¹⁰ while the county inspector noted in December that the farmers seemed 'very anxious to purchase their holdings ..'¹¹

The Midland Tribune, possibly caught up in the euphoria of the

moment, gave the act a guarded welcome at first, claiming that 'it was not unlike any other measure of the British Parliament, a thing of perfection', but acknowledged that 'if the tenants of Ireland get fair and reasonable terms under it, they will be reaping an immense advantage in many ways'.¹² The Kings County Independent was even more generous in its praise, describing the act as simply 'a great measure'.¹³

There can be little doubt but that the measure was a very important piece of legislation, and later historians were to acknowledge this. Tierney (1978) described it 'as the most effective piece of land legislation yet enacted'¹⁴ while Lyons (1975) went so far as to say that:

.... the measure was one of great importance, probably the most momentous piece of social legislation which was passed for Ireland since the Union... While its financial provisions later proved inadequate, it deserves to be called revolutionary....¹⁵

Despite the general welcome the land act received, some members of the IPP had grave reservations concerning it, most notably John Dillon, and also Michael Davitt. Dillon feared that if such social legislation proved successful it would wean Nationalists away from Home Rule, and as will be pointed out later in this thesis, his fears were well founded. His infamous Swinford speeches in late August and October 1903,¹⁶ along with the Freeman's Journal attacks on the act led to O'Brien's resignation from the party in November. The course of these events have already been well documented by historians, most notably Bew (1987) and Lyons (1968), and will not be dealt with here in any detail; however the reaction to same and the implications for the working of the act in the county merit attention.

When the news of O'Brien's resignation broke, it did appear at first that he had a great deal of sympathy within the county, most notably in the northern division where three branches of the League, Killeigh, Rhode and Philipstown, passed resolutions calling on him to return to the party, while only one in the south, Kilcoleman, did likewise. The reason for this may have to do with the attitude of the two MPs in the county to O'Brien's decision. Haviland Burke had been instrumental in helping O'Brien start the UIL in Mayo during 1898 and they remained on friendly terms, even after the latter left the party. Burke even went as far as to publicly appeal to O'Brien with letters to the local papers 'earnestly asking him to reconsider'¹⁷ his decision. Reddy on the other hand remained silent on the topic at this time, but was later to become a staunch critic of O'Brien, and came to regard Dillon's stance on the land act the correct one to follow. At first, both Nationalist newspapers in the county were also supportive of O'Brien, the Midland Tribune describing his resignation 'as one

Ireland could ill afford to lose,¹⁸ while the Kings County Independent regarded it as a 'National Calamity'.¹⁹ Once however the split remained longer than was anticipated, the Midland Tribune soon switched back its allegiance to Redmond and Dillon, claiming in October 1904 (one year after O'Brien's departure), that both would have the 'accord of every patriotic Irishman who had the welfare of his country at heart'.²⁰ The King's County Independent, (which also switched back to loyalty for Redmond and Dillon) was however a little reluctant to abandon totally some support for O'Brien, and welcomed his return to public life that month after he had resigned his seat and was returned unopposed again for Cork city.²¹ As late as January 1910, when O'Brien held very little support outside Munster, the paper was expressing the wish that 'the wisest counsel might prevail to allow O'Brien, Healy and McKean be re-admitted to the ranks of the Irish party'.²²

These divisions within the party concerning the act were soon to have repercussions for its working in the King's county and elsewhere. Having stated already, that the county inspector reported in December 1903 that tenants seemed anxious to purchase their farms,²³ a whole series of negotiations were opened up on many estates with landlords to effect sales soon after the act became law. Table nine, compiled from police reports, and verified in many cases by newspaper accounts, shows the level of negotiations and purchases that took place between November 1903 and June 1904. Although passed in August 1903, the act did not become operative until November.

TABLE 9: King's county Land Sales arranged and in negotiation, November 1903 to June 1904.

Date	Sales Arranged		Sales in Negotiation	
	Number of Landlords	Number of Tenants	Number of Landlords	Number of Tenants
Nov. 1903	3	122	16	540
Dec. 1903	none	none	8	277
Jan. 1904	6	48	8	303
Feb. 1904	none	none	10	314
Mar. 1904	5	58		not given
Apr. 1904	4	47		do
May 1904	8	106		do
June 1904	3	58		do
Total	29	439	42	1434

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After June 1904, the monthly reports of the county inspector rarely carried this information.

It is of interest to note here that in all the sales completed, the transactions took place on small estates, where it was easier to get agreement among tenants concerning matters of

price, game rights, turbary rights etc. The only big estate where negotiations took place in the county at this time was the Digby estate in Geashill, but negotiations here with the landlord broke down early in October 1903. Table 10, below, will give a more complete picture of the total number of land sales completed under the land acts up to April 1908.

TABLE 10(a): Lands sold and vested in purchasing tenants or in the Estate Commissioners or in the Congested Districts Board for re-sale to tenants (in the King's county) to April 30th 1908.

(Holdings under Irish Church Acts excluded)

Acts 1870 - 1896				Act 1903			
No. of Holdings	Area Acres	PLV	Purchase Money	No. of Holdings	Area Acres	PLV	Purchase Money
888	36,625	19,351	£354,873	858	33,785	17,995	£345,728

TABLE 10(b): Lands agreed to be sold but not yet vested in purchasing tenants, including lands comprised in Estates for the sale of which to the Estates Commissioners and the Congested Districts Board proceedings have been instituted to April 30th 1908, for King's county.

No. of holdings	Area	<u>Land Act 1903</u>	
		PLV	Purchase Money
1,792	67,614	359,652	£690,964 25

When we take the figure of 439 holdings purchased to June 1904 (as indicated in Table 9), and notwithstanding the fact that sales for 1,792 more holdings were agreed upon but not vested in purchasers to April 30th 1908, (Table 10 b), it can be seen that the rate of sales fully conducted and concluded after June 1904 slowed down considerably to April 1908; in fact during the first eight working months of the act to June 1904, a marginally higher number of sales (i.e. 439) was concluded than for the next four years of the act to April 1908 when 419 sales were carried into effect. The explanation for this slow down in sales after June 1904 partly lies in the aforementioned split in the Irish Party and the division of opinion regarding the workings of the act.

William O'Brien had hoped that Landlords and tenants would work in a conciliatory spirit concerning the fixing and arranging of land sales that would lead to amicable agreements concerning prices. He outlined clearly what he had hoped for in a letter to the Midland Tribune in April 1904, from which the following quote is extracted:

The success of the Act depended on it being worked out in the same friendly and reasonable spirit of the Land Conference. That spirit (has) been defeated by a small but powerful band of gentlemen at both extremities with disastrous results all round²⁶

Dillon on the other hand feared that the act would lessen the demand for Home Rule if successful, and sought to hinder its progress by calling on tenants to strike for hard bargains with their landlords. In doing this, he won over the support of a majority of the party, as J.J. Howard's resolution at the UIL Directory meeting in August 1904 calling for 'a return to the policy of conciliation' was defeated by 50 votes to 12, Michael Reddy not surprisingly voting with the majority.²⁷ A resolution was also passed condemning:

the aggressive and unreasonable spirit in which the great majority of the Irish landlords have met their tenants, and their tenants in consenting to pay prices greatly in excess of the prices for which similar land sold before the Act was passed....²⁸

Haviland Burke was not present at this meeting, but notwithstanding his friendship with O'Brien, he rowed in with the majority of the party in cautioning tenants not to pay high prices for land. Speaking at Edenderry in November 1905, he warned tenants not to pay 'fancy prices' as 'foreign and colonial competition was getting more severe every year',²⁹ thereby indicating that hard times were ahead for farmers. By this stage, the Midland Tribune was also firmly entrenched in the Dillonite camp and claimed that the proper way to conciliate landlords was 'to fight them and bring them to their knees'.³⁰

With the majority of party MPs not favouring conciliation, they sought to hinder the progress of the act. Michael Reddy's attitude concerning the subject was clear from the outset; as early as October 1903 O'Brien wrote complaining to Redmond regarding his support for a motion at a meeting in Birr approving Dillon's speech at Swinford denouncing the act, individual landlords and conciliation as 'an open and offensive vote of censure on you and me'.³¹ Throughout 1904 and 1905, Reddy voiced a consistent line of thought on the topic at public meetings throughout the midlands. Speaking at Athlone in January 1904, he referred to the 'inflated prices'³² of land sales while stressing that landlords were as 'rapacious as in the days when they could have the whip over the heads of the people (groans).³³ In June at Birr he cautioned tenants not to be hurried into making 'disadvantageous bargains' as 'the days of the landlords are numbered'.³⁴ He referred again in similar terms at a UIL demonstration at Clonmacnoise in September.³⁵ This policy on the land act also tied in nicely with the theme developed in the last chapter___ that of singling out landlords for attention and

making them a subject for public odium that would hopefully unite various shades of public opinion behind the UIL.

Reddy was by no means ploughing a lone furrow when expressing these sentiments. When Michael Davitt spoke at a meeting near Ballybrophy in January 1904, he claimed landlords were 'exacting what prices they pleased from tenants'³⁶ in land sales. William Delaney, who often spoke at public meetings in the King's county when deputising for the unavailability of Burke, referred humourously to what he termed the 'Landlord Bonus Bill' at Cloneygowan in September that year when he said:

They were told that conciliation was in the air, and they now felt afraid it was only in the air, as it never seemed to get down to the land. (laughter) ...It would now appear that they were in the Rand, and not in poor stricken Ireland, and that there was a gold mine in every bog and mountain farm in the country. (laughter and applause)....³⁷

The editor of the Midland Tribune echoed the sentiments of party MPs in denouncing the workings of the land act and the way in which sales were being carried out. In January 1904, Powell complained that from the moment the measure became law, 'prices suddenly became inflated and no stone was left unturned to induce occupiers to pay fancy prices'.³⁸ Later that same month he accused landlords of being like 'Oliver Twist, always wanting 'more',³⁹ while in June he commented that sales of land in the Midlands 'continue to go on at prices invariably over the average which the policy of conciliation had led us to suspect'.⁴⁰ Powell was to add a touch of humour to his criticism in November when referring to the proposed sale of Lord Huntingdon's estate, claiming that if he could 'drag' from his tenants the terms of his proposals, 'he would certainly waltz away with a fine cart load of money'.⁴¹ He was also extremely critical of most landlords insistence in keeping game rights, remarking in Huntingdon's case that the housekeepers would be expected to keep the newest breed of buff orpingtons, for which his new English foxes are 'said to have a special predilection'.⁴² By July 1908, the tone of the paper was still unrepentant, insisting that the 'Wyndham Land Bill was a Landlord Relief Bill designed to re-fill the depleted coffers of bankrupt landlords'.⁴³

Towards the end of 1904, with a general election pending at any time, Reddy developed a new argument put forward by other MP's at this time also, against rushed land sales. At two meetings in Eglish and Cloghan late that year, he warned tenants not to be like the 'hungry pike and snap at the anglers bait at once'.⁴⁴ He went on to predict a Liberal victory in the upcoming election and confidently expected the new Government to remove the restrictions on the importation of Canadian and Argentinian cattle, a decision that would inevitably result in a sharp reduction of the prices of cattle and beef. The implications of this were clear and obvious to tenant farmers as Britain was Ireland's only importer of cattle at the time. With

the resultant prospect of reduced incomes in the years ahead the likely outcome, tenants would have feared being unable to meet the yearly annuity re-payments. In January 1905 at the Birr UIL Executive meeting, Reddy kept up the pace of his warning by referring to the fact that a new Canadian meat store opened recently in Ballinasloe, had attracted so many customers for its cheap provisions, that two policemen had to be placed to regulate the traffic in the town!⁴⁵ Undoubtedly this was an exaggeration, but the point to those present was not lost nonetheless.

Another interesting ploy used by party MPs during 1905 to slow down land purchase sales, was their call on tenants to buy land through the Estates Commissioners or Congested Districts Board. There were undoubtedly a number of advantages for tenants in carrying through sales in such a manner, the most obvious being that these bodies could purchase untenanted land for division amongst tenants and others, something the latter groups could seldom afford in most instances, if this land was put up for sale on the open market. Another advantage of such transactions was that when the tenant signed his agreement of purchase through the Estate Commissioners or Congested Districts Board, the holding would be security to the state for the loan advanced to buy out the landlords, and there was no fear that in times of hardship in the years ahead, that the tenant farmer (purchaser) would have to pay the annuity because rates in aid like the money for unions, asylums, or the agricultural grant would be stopped until defaultations were made good. Some party MPs and UIL leaders were worried lest this might result in a loss of revenue to local councils should too many cases of defaulting tenants arise, and it was not surprising that the issue was the subject of a resolution at the UIL Directory AGM in January 1905, when it was unanimously passed:

That in view of the liability incurred by the ratepayers under the Land Act of 1903 for the advances made for the purchase of land, we consider it advisable that all rateable authorities, Urban and Rural should as soon as possible protest against advances over and above Ashbourne prices..... and that no amending Land Act be deemed satisfactory which will not empower the County Councils to veto sales of unsatisfactory character, by which means alone the county may be saved from the exactions of grasping landlords and the rashness of some purchasing tenants under the present most irregular and corrupt methods of purchase.⁴⁶

It should be made clear here that there is no contradiction between the call by the party MPs on tenants to purchase through the Estates Commissioners or Congested Districts Board on the one hand, and the above resolution on the other,

which is cautioning in the main against the paying of high prices for land. The net result, as indicated by Table 10(B) on page 41, was that a majority of tenants were reluctant to opt for "direct sales" with their landlords, preferring instead after 1904 to deal through the two agencies mentioned above. Direct sales also usually meant dealing with landlord agents, who were in many localities disliked and distrusted since the the land troubles of the 1870s and 1880s. These agents were suspected of creaming off part of the landlord bonus paid under the Wyndham Act. The net result of this policy was, one suspects, a flooding of requests to the agencies involved in land sales, an inevitable build up and back-log of work for them to complete, with a consequent slow down in the rate of sales completed. One example from the King's county bears this point out when it was announced in January 1908 that the Digby tenants had come to agreement to purchase their holdings through the Commissioners,⁴⁷ but as late as 1920 this sale had not yet been vested.

Whether intentional or otherwise, the UIL's stance concerning purchases on estates with evicted tenants, also served to hinder the rate and progress of land sales. The League wished to present a public image of having concern for what were generally termed the "wounded soldiers" of the Land War. Party MPs stressed that no sales should be completed on estates until the evicted tenants were first restored. A resolution to this effect had been passed at a UIL Directory meeting in August 1904 when the various Executives were urged to actively take up the case of all evicted tenants and press their claim for reinstatement on the Estates Commissioners, as an essential condition of sales.⁴⁸ The reason for this stance was because if sales were completed without the interest(s) of the evicted tenant(s) being catered for, the so called grabber(s) or new tenant(s) would be virtually impossible to remove from such holdings. It should also be pointed out that the Wyndham Act generated (falsely as it turned out) an expectation among evicted tenants that they would soon be restored to their farms, and many looked forward to the apparent opportunity to purchase their holdings.

However the reality was often very much different as in most cases the new occupiers refused to give up these farms, understandably so in many instances, as they had made improvements and investments in these and in some cases withstood intimidation in the previous years, which in turn meant they were unlikely to give them up easily now. In reply to a question by Reddy in the House of Commons during May 1906, Chief Secretary Bryce claimed that the Estate Commissioners had purchased 239 acres (and were in negotiations to purchase almost 5,000 acres more)⁴⁹ of land which could be used to restore evicted tenants of which applications had been received from 84 for reinstatement,⁵⁰ but only five had been restored up to that date by their owners.⁵⁰ The figure of 84 given by Bryce may seem excessive when we consider that during the same month the county inspector recorded that the total number of evicted farms in the county was 41, 18 of which were described as being derelict.⁵¹

However, the difference in totals can be explained by referring back to an earlier point, namely that the expectations generated by the land act were so great as to encourage not only evicted tenants to seek reinstatement, but to likewise encourage the relatives of some to make claims for farms going back over the previous 50 years, claims even the county inspector may have been unaware of. The most interesting (or outlandish?) example of such a claim was that made by Mrs Egan of Tullamore, who sought reinstatement to her father's farm, the latter having been evicted in 1852, 'allegedly for refusing to vote against his conscience'.⁵² The Standing Committee of the UIL also reported in January 1907 that many applications had been received from England, America, Australia, and Canada from people who had emigrated since their eviction in the hope of getting their holdings back.⁵³

Following the advice of party MPs and a directive from the National Directory of the UIL, it was not long before the two Executives in the county made clear their position concerning the evicted tenants. At the northern divisional meeting in November 1904, the following resolution was passed:

That as the sale of estates is now proceeding in all parts of the county, we desire most earnestly to impress on the tenants on every estate the absolute necessity and that it is their bounden duty to refuse to make any bargains until the case of each and every evicted tenant is taken into consideration and arranged to be dealt with in a thoroughly satisfactory manner.⁵⁴

A very similar resolution was passed by the southern directory at their meeting in January 1905,⁵⁵ but despite these best intentions, there was little the UIL could effectively do to restore evicted tenants, a decision that ultimately rested on the goodwill of the "grabber" to give up the farm on the one hand, and the willingness of the landlord to restore the evicted tenant on the other.

Another reason for this powerlessness lay in the terms of the 1903 act, which did not give the Estates Commissioners compulsory power to purchase untenanted lands, which they might use to re-allocate to evicted tenants who were experiencing difficulties or had failed to get back their old holdings. Again the purchase of these lands depended on the willingness of the landlord to sell, many of whom were reluctant, especially if they already had it rented on the profitable 11 months system, which will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. What even made the commissioners task more irritating was the insistence of many evicted tenants in stubbornly refusing to except no land except their old holdings. Many only accepted offers of a second farm, after all the channels to get back their original holdings had been finally exhausted. It was not until the Evicted Tenants Act of 1907 was passed that effective measures could to be taken to

buy land compulsorily to give such tenants holdings. This went a long way to solving the age old problem, the UIL Standing Committee claiming in 1909 that almost 3,000 evicted tenants had been restored to holdings, while over 5,000 claims had been investigated up to the same date.⁵⁶ This works out percentage wise, at about a 60% reinstatement rate. However over a 10 year period from November 1903 to March 1913, applications had been made by 260 evicted tenants in the Kings county, but only 67 were restored to holdings, 48 by landlords and the remaining 19 by the Estate Commissioners,⁵⁷ which works out at only a 26% reinstatement rate. Because a majority were refused reinstatement in the King's county then, this led to a tension on estates where negotiations for sales were being completed, which will become clearer in the examples that follow.

Some landlords at least were determined that former evicted tenants would never get back their farms. One such case referred to a tenant, Amos P. Doolan of Shinrone, who held a farm of 127 acres from Mr W. Lloyd at an annual rent of £143. In 1888 he was unable to pay the rent and the following year he became caretaker of the farm but soon afterwards he vacated the post.⁵⁸ The farm was then taken by Lloyd's agent on the 11 months system until the 25th September 1903 (just before the land act became operative), when the agent became a judicial tenant on the farm. This enabled him to apply to purchase it through the Estates Commissioners in June 1904.⁵⁹ The Shinrone branch of the UIL pledged support for Doolan⁶⁰ in attempting to get back the farm, but were powerless to prevent the sale taking place once the other tenants on the estate agreed to purchase terms.

A similar case that caused much resentment around the Tullamore area was that concerning Robert Owen, a Welshman who had become caretaker of three evicted farms on the Somers Estate in 1893, and later caretaker of another farm on the Bomford Estate.⁶¹ Granted constant police protection due to his unpopularity, Owen's attempt to send his three children to Ballycowan NS had led to a boycott of the school by the locals to such an extent that during the Summer holidays in 1894, the parish priest attempted to induce Owen's to send his children to either of the Protestant schools in the town. The rector of Tullamore also used his influence but to no avail.⁶² However when the holidays ended that summer, Owen's efforts to send his children back to Ballycowan NS were frustrated because the teacher refused them admittance on the grounds that there was not sufficient room available. The manager of the school informed the district inspector (RIC) that the National Education Board concurred in this decision. There were 73 pupils present when the children were refused admittance and the district inspector considered that the number had been evidently got together specially for the occasion, as the general average was 54.⁶³

When Owen became tenant of the farms in 1896, those evicted knew that their hopes of reinstatement were slim to say the least, and the feeling against him in the locality became more bitter. On May 9th 1897, an attempt was made on his life by

means of an explosion caused by a device consisting of the metal box of a cart wheel filled with gunpowder, slugs and the ball-bearings of a bicycle. Owen, and a RIC sergeant constantly protecting him, both escaped serious injury.⁶⁴ In July 1904 the county inspector reported that Owen had purchased his farm on the Bomford Estate containing 99 acres,⁶⁵ and when Haviland Burke questioned the Chief Secretary in July 1905 on whether he had purchased the land through the Estate Commissioners, the reply was in the negative.⁶⁶ Technically at least, the Chief Secretary was not misleading Burke or the House, as it is quite likely that the sale was a direct one between landlord and tenant.

The reason why these two cases have been dealt with here is to show basically how powerless the UIL was to stop such sales. More importantly however, is the fact, that by attempting to block sales on some estates, the League was to lose the support of many tenants who wished to buy their farms. This not only led to friction and infighting within branches (and between the UIL and those Nationalists who were not members), but it directly led to a fall off in support for the movement. A case of such a dispute rendered one branch of the League virtually dead by the end of 1908, and now merits detailed attention to back up points made earlier.

John Lenehan was a member of Philipstown branch of the UIL, and had been a member of the Land League and INL in the 1880s. A noted Nationalist, he was evicted from his 104 acre holding in June 1890 after failing to pay his annual rent of £90.⁶⁷ This farm was situated on the Warburton Estate approximately 4 miles from Philipstown. Subsequently a caretaker appointed to this farm, Joshua Rose, had to receive protection by police patrols because local feeling against him was marked.⁶⁸ Shortly after his eviction, Lenehan purchased a small farm of 22 acres on the Grogan Estate in the same parish for £65, but the agent on the Warburton Estate followed him for costs incurred during the eviction, and Lenehan soon found himself on the roadside again, the subject of a second ejection.⁶⁹ Rose also became caretaker of this farm, and later tenant of both.

In July 1904 the Warburton tenants made terms with their agent to purchase their holdings,⁷⁰ and in doing so, were obviously breaking League rules. A hastily organised meeting of Philipstown UIL was called in August at which the following resolution was passed:

That we request the tenants on the Warburton Estate at Barnan, not to complete their arrangements for the purchase of their holdings until the evicted tenant be reinstated.⁷¹

There was ironically only one dissenting voice at the meeting to this resolution, voiced by the chairman Charles Dunne, a Warburton tenant anxious to purchase, and in September he was expelled from the branch.⁷² Later that same month at another meeting, it was claimed that five of the seven tenants on the

estate were supporting John Lenehan in his bid to get back his farm, and had agreed not to purchase until he was re-instated.⁷³ (Rose would have been another, eight tenant, obviously not a member of the UIL). As a result the sale was postponed in the short term and efforts were then made to induce Rose to give up the farm, but he refused to yield to the strongest pressure, which included a dispute between the UIL and the King's County Farming and Industrial Society over the Tullamore Agricultural Show which will be discussed later. Party MPs including John Redmond were kept briefed on the details of the case and Haviland Burke notified the Estates Commissioners, who in turn offered Lenehan a 35 acre farm in Westmeath.⁷⁴ But when he and four other tenants in the county went with Commissioner Donnellan to inspect the farms with a view to getting possession, they met a very hostile reception from a noisy crowd which had assembled, and Lenehan refused the offer.⁷⁵ Obviously the Nationalists of Westmeath cared little for the "wounded soldiers" of the King's county! The size of the farm offered to Lenehan is interesting, for it in no way compensated him for his 104 acre holding, but at 74 years of age, the Commissioners were only sticking to their usual practice of giving small farms to people considered old, the reason being that such tenants might not be able to keep up with repayments on large holdings, and were therefore likely to fall behind in annuity payments. By refusing the offer of this farm, Lenehan also suffered the fate of having his name struck off the Commissioners list, but due to Burke's efforts he was restored on it again in November 1908.⁷⁶

In May 1908 further and deeper divisions emerged within Philipstown UIL when it was announced that the Grogan tenants had agreed to purchase their holdings⁷⁷ after a meeting to decide terms independent of the UIL, and under the guidance of the local parish priest. On a motion of John Dunne, county councillor and member of the UIL, seconded by John J. Cronly, a hearty vote of thanks was passed to the 'chairman, Fr Bergin, PP, for having carried through the sale so successfully and with such favourable results for the tenants'.⁷⁸ Not having catered for Lenehan's reinstatement though, these tenants in turn were guilty of breaking League rules, but most cared little as they were not members anyway, and were therefore not bound by such rules. At a subsequent meeting of Philipstown UIL, a resolution was passed 'appealing to the tenants on the estate not to purchase until the evicted tenants (Lenehan and George Pilkington) are reinstated or otherwise provided for'.⁷⁹ Two members including Dunne voiced their dissent at this motion and their action led the chairman of the branch to resign in disgust, James Mahon giving as his reason the fact that 'I hold different views from those members of the committee who have accepted a grabber as a brother tenant'.⁸⁰

These incidents sparked off a series of rancorous letters and public clashes between Dunne and P.J. Bermingham. The latter was a leading member of the UIL, and very likely a relation of Lenehan's. At a Divisional Executive meeting in Tullamore during August 1908 (ironically called to aid the evicted tenants in the division), Bermingham raised the case for

Lenehan and after a heated discussion, Dunne excitedly explained that:

... they did all they could to get the grabber turned out and when they could not, they would have to do the best for themselves, and he did not care for any man ...⁸¹

He also went on to allege with bitter feeling that Lenehan had got his second farm (on the Grogan Estate) 'fouly', a reference to the way the sale had been concluded and alleged rumour that Lenehan had not fully paid for it. Bermingham on the other hand claimed Dunne had agreed to abide by the decision of Joseph Delvin MP, whose advice and direction had been sought in the case, but when the latter directed the tenants to get an undertaking from the agent to reinstate Lenehan, Dunne refused to countenance his proposals and went ahead with the negotiations for the sale.⁸²

Bermingham in turn resigned from the Philipstown branch of the UIL that October,⁸³ by which time the branch was really torn asunder by divisions concerning both cases. To the end of the year, a number of attempts were made by the branch to acquire a new chairman after Mahon's resignation, but each proved fruitless. As late as May 1909, a Philipstown correspondent to the King's County Independent was lamenting the fact that the branch 'was still without the guiding hand of a chairman'.⁸⁴ The rancour concerning the case died down after January 1911 when it was announced that John Lenehan had passed to his eternal reward, just as he had accepted an offer of the Estate Commissioners for a farm at Catherinestown in county Meath,⁸⁵ which he had been offered over two years previously in 1909. However it was to be some time before the divisions would fully heal within Philipstown UIL. The local correspondent claimed in June 1909 that 'if something is not done shortly to arouse the members of this branch, the League is likely to become a thing of the past in Philipstown'.⁸⁶ Yet, even he could hardly have anticipated that it would be August 1914⁸⁷ before another meeting of the branch was held.

Shortly after the Inspector General had noted in May 1908 that the 80 tenants on the Grogan estate had agreed terms for the sale of the estate, came the news in July that the eight tenants on the Warburton Estate had done likewise.⁸⁸ Land sales had really taken off again at this time at a fast rate, as there was a rush to complete agreements because the 12% bonus paid to landlords was due to cease in October. The county inspector gave details that month of four landlords having sold to 192 tenants,⁸⁹ and in November he had details of eight more landlords selling to 892 tenants,⁹⁰ the latter sales also having being completed before the date of bonus expired. It was clear by this stage that the UIL's attempts, backed up by party MPs, had failed in its efforts to thwart land sales, and their stance taken concerning such sales, had virtually placed the organisation in a no win situation. For in attempting to block sales to protect the interests of evicted tenants, the League caused an undesired

delay in purchases which tenants in many cases resented.

It would be wrong also to see the case of John Lenehan as being one in isolation, as similar cases occurred within the Killeigh, Rhode, Clara, Shinrone and Tullamore branches of the UIL. The fact that only 26% of those evicted tenants who sought reinstatement were successful in getting back their holdings, (a point referred to earlier) there were ample cases within the county to cause delays like that involving John Lenehan. However it is often difficult to get concrete facts concerning many of these, as sales were often completed too quickly for some UIL branches to block their progress. Two other examples worth mentioning however in brief did come to light. As early as August 1904, William Delaney MP accused Arthur Byrne (a leading member of Killeigh UIL) of having negotiated with other tenants on the Fox Estate for completion of sales without first securing Miss Masterson, an evicted tenant, her rights.⁹¹ In November 1908 a letter from a Leaguer to the King's County Independent claimed that the tenants on the Kemmis estate near Tullamore had abandoned the evicted tenants thereon by agreement of purchase,⁹² and this was confirmed in April 1909 when a letter of Haviland Burke to one of these tenants stated that when the requisite majority of tenants on any estate had signed purchase agreements, 'not the whole House of Commons, let alone any individual members of the Irish Party can prevent the proceedings from going forward'.⁹³

One of the most interesting developments in relation to land sales which has not yet been mentioned is the role played by the Catholic clergy in carrying out such transactions. It was noted in the last two chapters that many of the clergy were reluctant to get involved in the organisation of the UIL for a variety of complex reasons, even though they had played a major part in old INL and INF. It is equally surprising that most tenants seemed to prefer the mediating role of these same priests in negotiations for land sales, rather than their local UIL branches. This may to a certain extent indicate the level of esteem with which priests were held in society at this time, but another reason that may be surmised is the fact that most tenants were not members of the UIL anyway, and were therefore reluctant to engage the League in carrying out part of their business. If we take the case of the Grogan Estate mentioned in relation to John Lenehan, the 80 tenants therein agreed to purchase terms in May 1908, but when Philipstown UIL tried to block the sale thereafter, only two tenants voiced dissent at the meeting.⁹⁴ This would inevitably lead one to conclude that most of the Grogan tenants were not UIL members, and it is likely that the same was true in relation to most branches. Another good reason why tenants may have engaged the mediating role of local priests, was the fact that these same priests were not handbound or tied to any set of rules or directives, which the local UIL branches were subjected to, concerning such matters as the reinstatement of evicted tenants. Priests themselves on the otherhand had an interest in the anticipated benefit of tenant proprietorship, expected no doubt to lead to local harmony over

an issue (land) which had caused so much controversy in the recent past. More importantly it would hopefully help stem the tide of local emigration if more families were tied to the land, an issue that was of concern to many clergy at the time, if we note the contents of their speeches particularly in relation to the ranching or 11 months system. Speaking at a meeting in Roscomroe during April 1907, Fr Slattery, PP, deplored the lack of population in the district claiming:

... The whole country around here is depopulated. In time gone by we all remember the object of the Government was to drive the people out of the land and they got willing assistance from the landlords, who with their crowbar brigades and emergency brigades drove the people out of the countryside to rot in the dykes, go to the workhouse, or to the emigrant ship... (groans).⁹⁵

At the same meeting, when discussing the same topic, Fr Cunningham, CC, was more poetic, claiming 'grass ranches and willing horses are good, but better still is human flesh and blood'.⁹⁶ Later that May at Shinrone, Fr Crowe, PP, complained that the ranchers 'were driving many people out of the country'.⁹⁷ The clergy obviously believed that the anticipated economic prosperity that would result in the sale of ranches and tenant holdings, especially for large and medium size tenants, would as Kennedy (1978) points out, help contribute important sources of clerical funds for 'items of capital expenditure, be it the provision of a stained glass window or a new church school'.⁹⁸

There can be little doubt then but that the clergy-tenant axis worked to the advantage of both sides, or at least was expected to in the long term. It is not surprising therefore that as early as the last months of 1903 and start of 1904, the following members of the clergy, Fr T.O'Reilly, PP, Shannonbridge, Fr M.Callery, PP, Tullamore, Fr J.Kinsella, PP, Edenderry, Fr L. Gilligan, PP, Shinrone and Fr Murray, CC, Killeigh⁹⁹ were actively involved in sale negotiations, while Fr E.O'Reilly, PP, Kilcormac took it upon himself to write to all landlords and agents in his parish 'to ascertain on what terms they were willing to sell'.¹⁰⁰ On the otherhand with the exception of Killeigh and Tullamore and Durrow UIL branches, the League did not actively participate in sale negotiations. There can be little doubt also, but that the League would not have endeared itself to many tenants by attempting to block sales (for whatever reasons), after in many cases long and hard negotiations had been conducted with landlords.

It must also be said that all sales negotiated by the clergy however, did not always have the desired results. One of the most notable land disputes in the county during these years was that involving the parish priest of Kinnitty, over the sale of untenanted land in what became known as the Cadamstown land

dispute. A branch of the UIL had been formed here in August 1901, but it quickly died out for want of enthusiasm and with the more energetic members throwing in their lot with the parish branch at Kinnitty. This branch also died out quickly however due to lack of interest in its affairs.

The branch at Cadamstown was revived however in December 1906 when it was learned that a local landlord, Captain French, was about to sell the grasslands ¹⁰¹ (untenanted land) which adjoined his estate. The land in question consisted of 300 acres, ¹⁰² and once the branch was revived, it was quickly announced that 'subscriptions were generously handed in', but concern was also expressed that the land was being sold for 'purposes other than redistribution', while deploring the fact that 'such people can sell land to grabbers'.¹⁰³

What annoyed the members of the branch most was the fact that the four tenants on the French estate, namely James McRedmond, holder of 59 acres, Bernard Donnelly snr., holder of same, Matt and Brian Donnelly jnr., joint tenants of 140 acres and Peter McRedmond, occupier of 70 acres, ¹⁰⁴ had negotiated with Fr Slattery, PP, Kinnitty for division of between 12 and 15 acres each, seemingly without regard for the small uneconomic holders in the district. He had conducted the negotiations with the Estate Commissioners, and it was also alleged that he had secured a big house on the land for one of the tenants. James Dempsey, the secretary of Cadamstown UIL had hoped to get this house, and had made two previous offers to French for it.¹⁰⁵ When he failed in his efforts to secure it, his determination to make trouble for the tenants became more intense. The county inspector maintained all along that the real driving force behind the formation of the branch was to upset the sale of the grasslands to the tenants, who were described as 'large farmers', and to demand the division of the lands amongst the small landholders in the district, who were mostly tenants on the estate of Mr L'Estrange Malone.¹⁰⁶ As rumours were rife in the district, a letter to the Midland Tribune claimed the land was to be divided amongst 'big graziers and new tenants'.¹⁰⁷ An interesting statement was released by the branch the same week, that there were 'about half a dozen, outsiders who seem not to understand the objects of the UIL' and a resolution was passed calling on Messrs Reddy and Hogan MPs to attend a meeting in the area on December 23rd, 'to instruct those who are ignorant of their duties'.¹⁰⁸ The irony was however, that the tenants were perfectly within the law in getting a share of the untenanted land, as section 2A of the 1903 Act empowered the Estates Commissioners or Congested Districts Board to distribute same to tenants situated on the estate (which included such land) in the first instance, and to other groups thereafter.

The RIC also reported that the meeting held on December 23rd was convened in opposition to the wishes of Fr Slattery, who nevertheless attended and addressed the gathering present. He claimed it was 'got up without his consent', and that there was no necessity for it, being arranged by some parties in the parish

'who had a spite against others'.¹⁰⁹ It is of interest to note that the reports of these meetings in December 1906 contained in the files of the Midland Tribune, are extremely short and vague in content, with the paper being careful not to take sides in the dispute at this stage. The Cadamstown Leaguers however were determined not to let the matter drop, but they received a decided set back at the meeting of Birr UIL Executive on the 6th January 1907. Despite stating their case, Fr Slattery's action on the whole matter was approved.¹¹⁰ Not surprisingly the editor of the Midland Tribune now took a similar view!¹¹¹ Two of the delegates at this meeting, who represented Cadamstown UIL, while stating little on this occasion, later during the same month denounced publicly Fr Slattery's role in the affair at meetings held in Cadamstown.

On the following Sunday, the branch organised a demonstration to express their dissatisfaction at the manner in which the grass farm was to be divided. The police reported that about 300 people marched in procession, some carrying Chinese lanterns and others imitation pikes, through Kinnitty to Fr Slattery's house, but on finding him absent, returned to the town where they halted to sing songs composed by locals, holding up to odium those who had purchased some of the land.¹¹² A band had been formed early that year in Kinnitty (in which Dempsey and many of the other Leaguers in the district were members), and it came into good use during such disturbances. However outside the parish, the agitators had practically no support, and four neighbouring UIL branches, Birr, Eglisk and Drumcullen, Kilcoleman and Dunkerrin, passed resolutions disapproving of their actions and pledged support for the role played by Fr Slattery in the dispute.

Two further demonstrations were held on the 17th and 20th of January, but at the latter, Fr Slattery took some of the steam out of the crisis by announcing that some small farmers and even people without land would share in the distribution.¹¹³ Despite this assurance, other meetings were held at the end of February and on the 3rd of March, which the police calculated were more apparently to annoy certain people than in connection with the division of the estate. Offensive songs against obnoxious persons were sung and at the subsequent Petty Sessions in Kinnitty, 10 persons were summoned to give sureties of the peace. Michael Reddy appealed to the bench not to bind over the defendants on each giving an assurance not to repeat such conduct, and their cases were adjourned for six months, when they were dismissed without prejudice.¹¹⁴

Extra police were also drafted into Kinnitty which no doubt helped to maintain the peace,¹¹⁵ but what checked the opposition most was the emergence of divisions within Cadamstown UIL that March. The King's County Chronicle reported that the 'agitators', who included James Dempsey, had been 'thrown over' or expelled by the League and that they were now in 'communication with William O'Brien and his sympathisers'.¹¹⁶ This report was given more credence when the editor of the

Midland Tribune subsequently announced that the Irish People carried a notice for the formation of a branch of the Land and Labour Association (LLA), at Cadamstown, which was to be addressed by D.D. Sheehan,¹¹⁷ a supporter of O'Brien who had been expelled from the Irish Party. This report galvanised Reddy into action and he addressed another public demonstration on St. Patrick's day, attended by 500 of a crowd which was described at times as 'having assumed a very hostile attitude'.¹¹⁸ The following evening Reddy headed a deputation of 30 men to meet French's agent, with a view to having the remainder of the untenanted land put into the hands of the Estates Commissioners for division. The basis for this action was on the understanding that the meeting announced to be held by Sheehan would not in fact take place, and appears to have won over many of the demonstrators, whose main fears at this point was that outsiders might get the land.¹¹⁹

Dempsey however tried to keep the agitation alive and was the main mover behind the formation of a branch of the LLA in April.¹²⁰ By now Cadamstown had two rival Nationalist organisations, the UIL and LLA. The latter will be the subject of attention in chapter five, and it is sufficient to say at this point that it drew most of its support from landless men. The formation of such branches were to further weaken support for the UIL in the years ahead and it is of interest that most of those who sided against Dempsey and his associates, were small farmers or sons of same, who continued to support the UIL. However, both organisations were to have a short tenure in the parish and had faded out of existence by the end of the year.

The bitterness generated by the dispute however took a little longer to abate. In July 1908 it was reported that the Kinnitty band accompanied the parish hurlers to play Coolderry in the county championship, but that they were refused entrance to the field of play by Fr Culligan, CC, Kinnitty.¹²¹ This action in turn prompted the hurlers to withdraw from the field and no match took place. A similar occurrence had taken place a year earlier at a match that did not even involve the Kinnitty team,¹²² but by 1909 the dispute was but a memory.

However it must be stressed that in the whole affair, the UIL was the real loser from start to finish. It demonstrated a number of weaknesses in the movement, which may not have been evident to League organisers at this time. The first is the fact that no UIL branch existed in the parish before the dispute arose, and within a few months of its completion, the League still had no organisation in Kinnitty. Secondly the League failed to block the sale of the lands, and created division and ill feeling in the parish by attempting to do so. Thirdly, the action of the League in not being seen to support the claims of the landless men, led to the formation of a rival branch of the LLA, and however weak it may have been, the UIL could ill-afford the formation of such rival branches after 1908, when its support began to decline. Finally, this dispute, which took place in a small rural parish in the county, was a reflection of the wider

split that had been ongoing in the Irish Party since 1903. Many rank and file Nationalists were tired of the continuance of such petty divisions, and only the lack of an effective opposition at this time was the main reason why the Irish Party did not lose more grass-root support. Such was not to be the case after 1916.

Before ending this chapter, it is necessary to give details of another dispute which lost the UIL support in the King's county at this time. As a direct result of its involvement in the case involving John Lenehan, the UIL became embroiled in what was better known as the Tullamore Show dispute of 1905, which had striking similarity with the attempt to stop the Birr sports of August 1902. The Agricultural Show at Tullamore, which was first held in October 1840, had a short first life to 1843,¹²³ but had recommenced again in 1903. It was organised by the King's County Farming and Industrial Society. The origins of the dispute lay in the efforts made to induce Joshua Rose to surrender Lehehan's farm at Philipstown, and was based on a resolution passed by the local branch of the UIL in January 1905 resolving 'to pledge ourselves not to join any society or compete at any show where planters are admitted'.¹²⁴ This was directed at Rose who was a major exhibitor at the show, and had won prizes at same in 1904.¹²⁵ The Tullamore and Durrow branch of the UIL pledged support to its Philipstown counterpart and Leaguers who were also members of the King's County Farming and Industrial Society, willingly found themselves defending the resolution at their AGM meeting in February that year. Joshua Rose, who was also a member of the Society, indicated strongly at the meeting that he would continue to exhibit at the show, and it was decided on this occasion to leave a decision on the matter to the committee.¹²⁶

They in turn decided at first to try to induce all "planters" or "grabbers" (for want of better words) not to exhibit, but Rose persisted and at a stormy meeting in June divisions concerning the matter came to a head. Some committee members wished to postpone the show for a year, fearing that if certain individuals were not allowed exhibit, the society would lose its annual grant of £100 from the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. On the other hand the UIL members on the committee wanted the "planters" excluded and the show to go ahead.¹²⁷ When a motion to postpone the show for a year was taken by a show of hands, the result was a tie, eight voting for and against. The chairman E.J. Beaumont-Nesbitt used his casting vote in favour of postponement, which he declared carried amongst some disorder. P.J. Bermingham angrily asked for a vote by name as he did not believe 'the people could be cowardly enough to postpone the event for the sake of a few planters'!¹²⁸ However this development gave the same result and in turn William Adams handed in a notice of motion to have the order rescinded, and that the show be held exclusive of planters, a decision that necessitated the convening of a special general meeting of the society.¹²⁹ Because this in turn necessitated a month's notice by Society rules, the meeting did not take place until the 18th of July. A resolution was then passed by a majority of members

indicating that:

The Society or committee reserves the right of declining or returning any entry without incurring any liability. In the event of the Society or committee being unable to accept any entry, notice will be given not later than 6 days after the final closing of entries and the fees lodged will be refunded.¹³⁰

However with this matter out of the way, the question of whether to hold the show that year or not still had to be decided, as time for organising the event was running short. Surprisingly the decision was left to the committee to decide, which met a week later.

Unexpectedly Adams was late in arriving for this meeting, but claimed on entering the hall that he 'would be anxious to see his resolution carried on' (ie. to hold the show), but caused some amazement by also announcing that he 'saw difficulties ahead'!¹³¹ He went on to add that it had always been his principle to rely on the people but he felt it would be 'throwing too great an onus on young men who would attempt to hold a show late in the season', while at the same time diplomatically adding that 'there were a great many anxious to get on with it'!¹³²

This opinion of Adams brought him in turn into dispute with the chairman, Thomas H. Cobbe, who rightly implied that he was backtracking in his views in relation to the difficulties with holding the show so late. Earlier, UIL members had given the opinion all along in the dispute that the show could be held despite the apparent lateness in organising the event. But by this stage, it was obvious that there were problems in relation to financing the event as many landlords and patrons had not yet subscribed as a result of the original Philipstown UIL motion, and were unlikely to do so because of the Society's adoption of same. It had been stated at the meeting that only £26 had been collected in subscriptions from farmers, a long way short of the £150 deemed necessary to stage the event,¹³³ although this point was argued against by P.J. Bermingham who claimed that no direct appeal had been made to farmers for subscriptions.

By this stage the meeting witnessed the strange spectacle of Adams not being prepared to propose his own notice of motion and it was left to two Philipstown UIL members, James Mahon and Bermingham, to propose and second it. When the vote was counted however, eleven had decided against holding the show with only two in favour.¹³⁴ Of the thirteen present, it is important to point out that eight were UIL members, and it was clear to most of them by this stage also that it was too late to proceed with the venture. More importantly, the whole exercise had backfired badly from the UIL's point of view, and was a source of embarrassment to many of its leading members.

When the show was held again the following year, the King's County Independent claimed that its abandonment in 1905 mainly accounted for 'a considerable falling off in exhibits for that year',¹³⁵ The show was also a failure in 1906 from a financial viewpoint, indicated by the fact that expenditure was £80 over income.¹³⁶ The emergence of other shows was also cited as another reason for the failure, but this could not be held accountable for the abandonment of the show again in 1907; a decision taken on the grounds that the committees appeal for subscriptions to meet their deficit yielded a very poor response. An appeal had been made to Fr Callery, PP, Tullamore, but he declined, claiming that:

... if the show is to be a success in the future, no political resolutions should be introduced by the committee. If the platform be not a common one on which we can all stand, I take the liberty of saying I shall subscribe nothing.¹³⁷

This more than anything else indicates the clear depth of feeling there was in the county concerning the matter. The whole episode concerning the show and its abandonment in 1905 and 1907 did the UIL's standing within the county no good, and smacked of pettiness, spite, and vindictiveness. Such shows had become part of the social calendar for many at the turn of the century and their growth and popularity were exemplified by similar events at Banagher, Birr, Philipstown, Kilcormac, and Edenderry, as well as Tullamore. Sadly from the latter's point of view, it would be 1913¹³⁸ before a show was held there again.

This chapter then, has focused on the implications of the Wyndham Land Act for the UIL. By the end of 1908 land purchase under the bill had come to a standstill with the expiration of the 12% bonus paid to landlords. By March that year, over 40% of the holdings in the county had been bought out by tenants¹³⁹ (see Table 14 p.81), and those tenants who had not purchased to that date, now looked forward with hope to the new land bill due the following year. The chapter has pointed out that the 1903 Act created tension within UIL branches, that was to lead to a falling off in support for the League, especially in the north of the county. The Ranch War that occurred for the most part alongside it from 1906 to 1909, created more difficulties in turn for the League, particularly in the south of the county. This is the subject or topic for the next chapter, the theme of which remains similar to chapter three, ie to show how the Ranch War in turn created further problems for the UIL, all resulting in a decrease of support for the movement.

CHAPTER 4

THE RANCH WAR, 1906-1909

His Honor. (Judge Curran) 'Where do you come from?'

Applicant. 'King's county'.

His Honor. 'Is it from that county the cattle driving business comes from?'

Applicant. 'Oh, it comes from every county' (loud laughter)...

Scene from Birr Quarter Sessions when an applicant applied for £60 damages for the maiming of three head of cattle.¹

'...Take hold of the Ranchers and do not let your hold go until you make smithereens of them...'

Fr Crowe, PP, speaking at a public meeting in Shinrone, May 1907.²

During 1905 and 1906, considerable agitation arose in parts of the midlands and the west of Ireland in connection with what was popularly known as the letting of lands on the 11 months system. This agitation became so acute the following two years that the RIC had serious difficulties in maintaining law and order in the following counties; Roscommon, Galway East Riding, Clare and Leitrim, while in parts of Galway West Riding, Sligo, Queen's, Cork West Riding and King's, there was much unrest.³

In early 1907, the Inspector General reported to the Government after having undertaken a tour of the west of Ireland that there was a 'marked disregard of the law in districts visited by him', and that 'the police were harassed both day and night by the constant duty imposed on them',⁴ due to the agitated state of these districts. This agitation took the form of cattle drives, intimidatory letters, boycotting and typical agrarian outrages such as cattle maiming and tail cutting. Numerous prosecutions were brought against offenders, but the Inspector General noted that many failures of justice occurred because of the 'open partizanship' and bias of the ex-officio magistrates during Petty Session sittings with similar views being held by many jurors at Assizes.⁵ Certain MPs were also guilty of fanning the flames of disorder and although he mentioned no names in his report, Laurence Ginnell and Michael Reddy were undoubtedly two the Inspector General had in mind.

To meet this trouble, he applied to the Government for an increase in the RIC of 1,300 men, but only 400 were granted. By August 1907, with the strength of the force at just over 10,000, the maximum allowed, the only means of raising the required men was to proclaim those areas where extra police were to be allocated. Thus on the 27th August 1907, the Lord Lieutenant declared the counties of Clare, Galway, Leitrim, Roscommon and King's to be in a disturbed state and requiring additional police. Each of these counties would then be liable for half of the expenses incurred while keeping the additional force of RIC men. Consequently the King's county received 52

additional policemen. Following a second tour in May 1908, the Inspector General sought an additional 750 men, which on being granted the King's county was allocated 24, with Westmeath and Sligo joining the list of proclaimed counties.⁶

The main reason for the increase, particularly in agrarian trouble at this particular time, which was commonly referred to as the "Ranch War", has to do with the aforementioned system of renting land on the 11 months system. After the famine clearances of the 1840's and 1850's, landlords found themselves with large tracts of untenanted land, which became a useful source of income, if let in the Spring time of year to graziers. These in turn, usually large farmers, traders, merchants or shopkeepers, could avail of the opportunity of fattening cattle for which there was a steady market in England with the increase in population there during the nineteenth century. Jones (1983) points out the prices for store cattle, beef, and mutton were 'particularly buoyant between 1900 and 1920',⁷ and graziers were quick to seize the opportunity to make profit.

In distinguishing the grazier or rancher from a tenant farmer, there are a number of contrasts that immediately come to the fore; firstly the grazier almost undoubtedly held over 200 acres of land, and nearly always in a number of holdings and rarely if ever would he be fortunate enough to be able to rent enough land in the one townland or even parish. Secondly, and consequently, the grazier was generally not a residential occupier and had to employ herdsmen or caretakers to tend to his cattle or sheep. Because of the decline in the number of labourers after the famine, it necessitated that farming systems would have to adopt to the shortage of labour. The 11 months system provided the solution in many instances, as the care of cattle and sheep necessitated less labour than tillage farming would have required. Thirdly, the grazier did not have the same dependence on the landlord as the tenant had; if times were poor, he could simply refuse to rent the land and often, especially in the case of shopkeepers, channel his investments elsewhere. On the otherhand the land meant everything to the tenant as he depended on it during good and bad years for his survival, a survival that was consequently linked on his total dependence to the relationship with his landlord.

For the landlord in turn, the 11 months system held a number of distinct advantages. Graziers could be ejected if found necessary without notice once their 11 months term expired and without course to costly court cases. More importantly with the good prices for beef cattle during the period in question, the price fetched for such land was in many cases much more profitable than from ordinary tenancies, many of which had been subject to rent reductions in land courts set up by the second Gladstone Land Act of 1881.

A certain tension had always existed between the tenant farmer and grazier, but this was to become more marked after 1900. Members of the UIL pointed out that it was difficult to

get rents reduced once 11 months land was making exorbitant prices, which landlords could point to when such reductions were sought. Secondly, a point noted in the last two chapters was the fact that some graziers often rented evicted farms, which resulted in problems over land purchases for tenants and some UIL branches. Thirdly, a point developed by Jones (1983), is that with the passing of the land purchase acts, 'the realisation developed that there was little point in giving tenants the land if the size and fertility of their farms were insufficient to provide and secure a reasonable livelihood'.⁸ In order to make small farms economically viable, tenants began to demand a distribution of untenanted land within their townlands and/or parishes. The Estates Commissioners could purchase such lands under the 1903 Act provided the landlord was willing to sell; but many were clearly not, simply because the 11 months system was already paying such dividends. Tenants realised that if this system could be halted, or better ended, the landlord would be more likely to sell the land. In essence they began to view the grazier every bit as much with distaste as they had the landlord during the Land War of 1879-82. This then was the real basis for the Ranch War of 1906-09, which will now be examined in detail for the King's county. It is also intended to show that this period of agrarian conflict did not only witness a tenant-grazier divide, but was to have profound implications for tenant-labourer relations, and for many members within the various UIL branches in the county.

The extent of the grazing system within the county can be gauged from a number of sources. The police estimated in May 1907, that the approximate acreage of grazing farms, including 11 month tenancies let to the end of that month was 11,945 acres, with a further 1,435 acres unlet owing to the influence of the UIL, or for other reasons.⁹ The amount of such land is actually likely to have been higher, as rentals for hay are possibly excluded here, as these would have taken place in most instances in June and July of each year. The bulk of this would have been untenanted land, in which the county abounded. In many cases tenants eyed this land hawk like, as their ancestors had been evicted from it during the Famine years, this being another reason why they sought its division. Table 11 gives some indication of the amount of such land, by giving examples of some of the more notable landlords in the county who held same.

TABLE 11: Acreage of Untenanted land held by a selected number of Landlords in the King's county in 1906

Landlord	Acreage	
Lord Rosse	6,000	
Lord Digby	5,991	
Richard Warburton	2,716	
Marquis of Downshire	4,014	
Henry L. King	3,725	10

There was not a parish in the county which did not have some amount of such land and small tenants in particular and landless men would have earmarked it for enlarging their holdings. The 1903 Land Act had raised expectations that this was about to occur, but a closer inspection of Section 2 of same will go a long way to explain why this expectation was frustrated in many areas. It empowered the Estates Commissioners or Congested Districts Board to distribute untenanted land among the following groups; (A) the tenants of the estate on which such land was situated, (B) sons of such tenants, (C) evicted tenants and, (D) landholders in the district whose valuation did not exceed £5. When the foregoing cases had been satisfied, the Board or Commissioners could allot such lands to other persons at their discretion ¹¹ but undoubtedly if there was still more land left to distribute in any district after the first four groups had been satisfied, it would rank alongside the miracle of the loaves and fishes! It must also be borne in mind that the agencies involved did not have compulsory powers to purchase such lands (until the Evicted Tenants Act of 1907 and Birrell Act of 1909), and therefore, landlords were unlikely to sell them unless good prices were obtained.

What often caused friction in parishes as well, was the fact that Section 2A of the Act, and to a lesser extent Section 2B, often allowed relatively large or well-off tenants the opportunity to avail of getting extra land, even before the claims of small uneconomic holders or landless men in the same townland or parish, but not on the same estate. This is what occurred in the Cadamstown land dispute, dealt with in the last chapter. Once a landlord had agreed to sell his estate, the tenants most often insisted that he sell the untenanted land to the Estates Commissioners for division as part of the terms of the sale. Such a course of action could be the making or breaking of the local branch of the UIL, depending on how well the demands of those who sought extra land could be satisfied. In August 1906 after the sale of the Burdett estate in Banagher, it was announced that the Estates Commissioners had purchased the adjoining Cushcallow grass farm, and the inspector sought a list of names from the UIL branch of those seeking a portion of the spoils. At the subsequent branch meeting to draw up a list of applicants, the Banagher UIL correspondent noted with a slight tinge of sarcasm that:

..it was surprising how many hands found their way to the League rooms, when the fruits of the labours of many branches of the League throughout the county were to be taken possession of. It is earnestly to be hoped that they were not making a flying visit to this haven of refuge for the distressed and downtrodden people, but that they will come in equal, if not greater numbers on Sunday next at noon-day to join the branch, when Mr M. Reddy our worthy Parliamentary representative, who has promised to attend, will address

them.¹²

The correspondent was not to be disappointed as a 'large number of new members' joined the following week, when the branch was described as being in a 'splendid condition with a roll of membership that can compare with any in the county'.¹³ The distribution of such lands did not always end in such a harmonious settlement however, as was exemplified in Cadamstown.

The Spring of 1907 in the King's county witnessed a major attempt by UIL branches to deal with the problem of the 11 months system. Graziers were the recipients of letters requesting them to surrender such farms which came up for auction at this time. The Midland Tribune threw itself fully behind the campaign by claiming the system had 'ruined families, decimated homesteads, retarded agricultural progress, filled the emigrant's ship and populated the workhouses'.¹⁴ Ironically on the opposite column to these expressed views were three advertisements for grazing lands!¹⁵ However two weeks later the paper had fallen into line with the announcement headed above its editorial:

Important.

We beg to inform the public that we shall not accept any grazing advertisements for publication in our newspaper.¹⁶

The campaign was stepped up and at public meetings, large graziers were the subject of resolution and held up to public odium. The result was a number of successes in the early Summer months, the most notable being that concerning the Roscomroe grazing farm held by Nathaniel Luttrell, a merchant from Roscrea.

The farm in question belonged to the representatives of the late Mrs Bernard and comprised almost 400 acres.¹⁷ Luttrell claimed in a letter to the Midland Tribune that he did not rent it on the 11 months system, but that he had been a yearly tenant of the farm since 1892.¹⁸ However the secretary of the Roscomroe UIL replied later in the same paper citing three arguments against the case Luttrell had put forward.¹⁹ In order to compel him to give up the farm, a public meeting of the UIL was held at Roscomroe on the 14th April 1907, attended by Fr Slattery, PP, Fr Crowe, PP, Fr Cunningham, CC, Fr Culligan, CC, and Michael Reddy MP among others. The speakers all deplored the lack of population in the district, blaming the grazing system for this occurrence. Fr Culligan in the course of his speech claimed that:

....The broad acres that you see around you were once in the possession of the people, and the primary object of this meeting is to bring the people back again to those broad acres (applause).²⁰

Reddy in particular gave a vigorous speech and told the crowd that they would be 'cowards to let Luttrell stand between them and their just rights', while going on to add that if they wanted

the farm divided, to follow 'the example of the people in the west',²¹ where cattle driving was rampant at this time.

This advice was soon acted upon and on the morning of the 30th April 1907, a crowd of about 200 men armed with sticks assembled on the farm and drove the entire stock, cattle, sheep, horses, and lambs (350 head in all) off the farm and into Roscrea to Luttrell's residence.²² The police had come on the scene but despite their warnings to those present of the illegality of the act, the crowd persisted in their action. Having noted the names of some of those involved, 30 police drove the stock back to the farm that afternoon. Protection patrols were placed near the farm to prevent a re-occurrence, but on the 18th May, a second drive was organised involving the driving of 40 cattle into Roscrea.²³ The following day three printed boycotting notices were posted on the farm directed against Luttrell, and as a result on the 22nd May, a district inspector and 25 policemen encamped permanently on the farm to prevent further drives.²⁴ The King's County Chronicle even carried a photograph of their huts on the farm a week later, when reporting the events.²⁵ The county inspector complained that the police were wholly boycotted as regards cars and provisions²⁶, but the editor of the Midland Tribune announced with regret that they were eventually supplied with these in Birr.²⁷

A total of 16 people were arrested in connection with the first drive for unlawful assembly and brought before the magistrates at Roscrea Petty Sessions on the 27th May, where their case was adjourned with the bench being equally divided. Again on the 10th June with the bench being equally divided, the case was adjourned to the 24th of the month when the magistrates by a majority refused information.²⁸ Eight of those summoned in the first drive were also summoned along with four others for the second drive and brought before the Resident Magistrate at Roscrea on the 27th May. Their case was also adjourned to the 31st May, when he returned the 12 for trial at Assizes, and admitted them to bail. At the subsequent Summer Assizes of 1907, the case against the prisoners was adjourned owing to the illness of material witnesses in the case. By the time the case was finally heard at the Winter Assizes in Cork, the jury found the accused not guilty, a verdict that clearly annoyed the Judge, Lord O'Brien, who remarked on hearing it, 'Gentlemen, I am astonished'.²⁹

On the occasion of the hearing of the two cases in Roscrea on the 27th May, a crowd of about 2,000 people with 8 bands assembled in the town. Once the proceedings were over, they assumed a hostile attitude, and even sand and gravel were thrown at the police, many of whom had been specially drafted into the town to help preserve the peace.³⁰ The agitation concerning the farm came to an abrupt end however on the same day when Luttrell wrote to the secretary of the Roscomroe UIL indicating his willingness to surrender the farm at the end of his term. His action was not welcomed by the King's County Chronicle, which it deplored 'as giving an immense impetus to the

attacking force and serves to stimulate them to pursue their deeply laid strategy'.³¹

There is little doubt but that the surrender of Luttrell gave a great boost to those who sought to end the 11 months system. It encouraged others to step up the agitation on graziers and the Midland Tribune described his capitulation as a 'Great Victory', and went on to add that:

...the crusade against holders of grazing farms on the eleven months system is rapidly spreading and there seems to be a recrudescence of a spirit that was hardly equalled in the days of the Land League.³²...
The agitation is only in its infancy³²

It might be tempting to claim that he was exaggerating but this seems unlikely when the county inspector claimed at the end of July that there were 'about 68 cases where illegal pressure was being brought to bear on owners or occupiers to give up their farms', a figure only exceeded in Galway at this time.³³ To counteract this, the Inspector General announced that 22 extra police were to be stationed in the county and that large detachments of officers and men had also to be sent into the county from time to time during the month to preserve order outside Petty Sessions courts.³⁴

During the end of May, cattle drives had also taken place on three farms in Drumcullen for which 12 men were arrested and summoned at local Petty Sessions to appear before the Assizes. Afterwards at a public meeting addressed by Reddy, he advised the crowd assembled to 'drive the cattle in every district in the King's county, now that the heather was on fire, they should keep it on fire'.³⁵ On the last day of the month, a cattle drive also took place near Banagher and at Birr Petty Sessions on the 14th of June, fifteen men on refusing to give bail were sent to Tullamore jail for one month. The scene outside the courthouse afterwards witnessed a police baton charge on the assembled crowd. The Midland Tribune laid the blame for the disturbances solely on the police, who were described as the 'Royal Incubators of Crime' after 'old men and children were trampled under their feet'. The report added that the police, as 'Legal Hooligans', showed a 'brutal disregard for age and sex, such as does not prevail among savages'.³⁶

Michael Reddy MP referred to the incidents at a UIL meeting in Banagher two days later, claiming that the next time this 'ruffianism' occurred, he would not hesitate to 'tell everyman to bring a good stick along with him' (great cheering). He went on to tell the crowd to make sure that the next time 'the police would bite the dust'.³⁷ The following day the cattle were driven off two farms belonging to John Parsons of Birr for which 17 people were summoned, and when 13 of these refused to give bail, they each got 2 months in jail. The scene outside the courthouse afterwards was if anything more violent than that at

Birr on the 14th June. The King's County Chronicle gave a vivid description of the events after the police had escorted the prisoners from the courthouse:

... Some stone-throwing was immediately answered by a sudden wheelback of the rereguard who chased and battoned with impartial freedom, friend and foe, male and female, the result being several cut heads and bruised bodies. Among the individuals roughly molested were Mr Egan JP ... while Major Dease RM was struck by one of the stone-throwers. The turmoil was kept up to the Railway (Station) while even the meeting of a funeral in Wilmer Road had no restraining influence on the angry but fortunately fast thinned crowd. The Prisoners to the last maintained a defiant bearing and cheered until out of hearing.³⁸

In all eleven cases of cattle driving took place in the King's county during 1907, four in which no person was proceeded against, while a further twenty eight who refused to give bail were subsequently imprisoned. More worrying from the police and government's point of view was that during the Summer of 1907, the agitation appeared to be succeeding in its aims. The county inspector acknowledged this in June when he admitted that intimidation by cattle driving in most cases 'had met with complete success'.³⁹ A glance at the files of the Midland Tribune for June and July appear to confirm this viewpoint. In early June the Drumcullen branch of the UIL passed a resolution expending 'the best thanks' of the members to a grazier who had agreed to surrender his farm.⁴⁰ Around the same time, a letter from Michael Pendergast of Kerry to the secretary of Cloghan UIL claimed he was willing to give up his farm when his present term of tenure expired,⁴¹ while in late June, six graziers were named at a Shinrone UIL meeting who held land in the district indicating a similar willingness to surrender grazing farms.⁴² The same week at a Kilcoleman UIL meeting, two letters were also read from graziers, and the brother of another attended offering to do likewise.⁴³ Similar good tidings were announced at Eglish and Drumcullen, and Kilcormac UIL meetings in July. A look at the police figures relative to grazing in Table 12 would seem to confirm that the agitation was achieving the desired result from the UIL's point of view.

TABLE 12: The acreage of farms let and acreage of farms unlet due to UIL influence in the King's County, 1907 to 1910.

Year	Acreage of Farms let	No. of Farms unlet due to UIL influences	Average of farms unlet due to UIL influences
May 1907	11,941	5	1,435

May 1908	14,849	17	4,051	44
May 1909	10,663	10	2,668	
May 1910	11,917	6	1,230	

It is evident from the table that the success of the agitation reached its zenith by May 1908 and from then on was waning in extent. However it should also be acknowledged that during the same year, the highest acreage of farms let is recorded for the four years shown. It may have been unknown to most at the time, but after July 1907, the tide was beginning to turn, albeit slowly, in favour of the grazier, and there are a number of complex reasons for this which must be now fully dealt with. A good place to start is to detail the determination of the county's best known graziers, the Kennys, against Shinrone UIL during the period in question. Their behaviour and action in withstanding strong intimidation went a long way in turning the tide back in favour of the grazier during the Ranch War.

Henry Davis and Harry Briscoe Kenny were two of the largest graziers in the midland region, holding land in Tipperary, Westmeath and the King's county. In the Summer of 1907, the Shinrone branch of the UIL called on them to surrender grazing farms at Ballingarry in north Tipperary. The police reported that H.B. Kenny promised to accede to this request but that H.D. Kenny refused to comply.⁴⁵ As a result, on the 28th June 1907, a crowd of between 250 and 300 people assembled at his farm at Lisnagower and drove the stock off his residence, easily overcoming an attempt by 10 police to prevent them. While this was going on, surprisingly another party simultaneously organised a drive at H.B. Kenny's farm at Springpark.⁴⁶ The latter drive was an error of judgement on the part of the League however as from then onwards, H.B. Kenny was determined not to surrender the farm in question. The whole operation bore striking similarity with the Roscomroe cattle drive and the Leaguers obviously hoped for the same result. In connection with the two drives, 25 of the ringleaders were arrested and tried before Petty Sessions at Borrisokane in August, but with the Bench being equally divided, the hearing was adjourned to Wednesday 4th September, where the Bench by a majority refused information in both cases.⁴⁷ At this stage the Attorney General directed that a "bill" be sent up to the Grand Jury at the Spring Assizes of 1908 against 10 of the principal persons involved in the Lisnagower trial, the proceedings of which will be discussed later.⁴⁸

Despite the agitation, the Kennys stubbornly refused to surrender the grassfarms, and for the next year were to show resolve that no League branch had yet encountered by graziers. In September 1907 the county inspector reported that a boycott of H.B. Kenny had commenced and that his workmen had left him.⁴⁹ Owing to police protection by patrols, the members of Shinrone UIL were unable or more likely, unwilling to risk further drives, so they were forced to adopt different tactics to keep the heat on the Kennys.

The importance and popularity of hunting was touched upon in chapter two and at a full committee meeting of Shinrone UIL in late September, it was resolved to 'permit the hunt as usual on condition that the Kennys be excluded from taking part in it',⁵⁰ and letters making this resolution known were sent to Messrs Craddock and Saunders, the respective Masters of the Ormond Hounds and Corolanty Harriers. Hunting had grown in popularity in the area at this time, and a third club, the King's County Hounds also existed. Of the three clubs, the Ormonds was the biggest and when Thomas Craddock was unanimously re-elected master for a second term in March 1907, the Kings County Chronicle claimed it guaranteed him a sum of £750 for the next year.⁵¹ Later that same month it was announced that he had erected new kennels 'on a modern plan costing £100' at his residence on Fairy Hill which the paper happily felt it indicated that 'he had come to stay'.⁵² He had leased this residence for a 10 year period specifically for the purpose of hunting.

The contents of the letters sent by Henry Torpey (the secretary of Shinrone UIL) to the respective masters, made clear extra demands not in the resolution published in the Midland Tribune, for not only were the Kennys to be excluded from hunting, they were to be excluded from membership of the clubs as well.⁵³ In October the secretary of the Ormond Hounds, J. Rolleston replied to the Shinrone UIL demands, that 'because fox hunting is open to all, the committee will not interfere in anyone wanting to take part in the sport'.⁵⁴ Their letter also included a warning that on failing to secure the support of the people to allow hunting, the committee were 'prepared to advise the discontinuance of hunting and the dispersal of hounds and horses'.⁵⁵ It concluded by adding that the Kennys did not intend to hunt for the present but Torpey replied making it clear that nothing but their expulsion would satisfy the UIL. In the meantime, before he was aware of this last letter, Craddock being under the impression that the whole matter had been satisfactorily arranged, published a list of meets,⁵⁶ the first to be held on Monday 28th October.

To meet what they saw as this open defiance of their resolution, a special meeting of the League was held on the Sunday before, at which it was decided to stop the hunt, and that afternoon a manifesto was posted up and spread around the district to the effect:

Stop the Hunt! The Ormond Club have published fixtures in defiance of the Shinrone UIL and in violation of the terms of their own letter. They back the graziers against the people. The men of Shinrone and Ballingarry are fighting the people's fight. They ask all Nationalists to support them. Come in your thousands to Fairy Hill on Monday at ten o'clock. Teach insolent men a lesson. Stop the Hunt!⁵⁷

In response to this call the next day a crowd assembled with a band at Craddock's residence on Fairy Hill, its size estimated at about 300 by the police,⁵⁸ and 2,000 by the Midland Tribune.⁵⁹ Some were armed with sticks and bottles and the assemblage included the MP for north Tipperary, Michael Hogan, who addressed the crowd afterwards denouncing the 11 months system. A most disorderly scene followed with three of the 100 strong hunt party allegedly drawing revolvers while some of the crowd damaged the owners pleasure grounds, entered his residence, and also the stables to see if any of the horses belonging to the Kennys were present.⁶⁰ A force of eight police who were present were powerless to prevent the confrontation and only the timely intervention of Fr Quinn, PP, Kilcoleman, prevented more ugly scenes from occurring, and on this occasion, no attempt was made to hunt.⁶¹

As a result of these deplorable scenes, the Hunt Committee held a meeting in Roscrea on the 31st October to decide their course of action in response to these developments. Fr Darcy, PP, Terryglass, a supporter of the sport, made a valiant attempt to negotiate an amicable settlement between the two sides. His efforts however, while appearing at one stage to bear fruit, were frustrated by hard-liners on both sides. Major Dease RM, a member of the hunt, did not see why 'they should recognise the League at all',⁶² and he was backed by a substantial minority at the Roscrea meeting (14 out of 30), who also wished to continue the hunt in the meantime;⁶³ while on the other hand certain UIL members not only demanded that the Kennys be excluded from the hunt, but that their horses not be allowed take part in some of the point-to-point races. They were encouraged by pledges of support by at least four other UIL branches in the county, Maryborough UIL, the north Tipperary UIL Executive and the support of Fr Quinn, PP, and Fr Scanlan PP. By the middle of November, Shinrone UIL had increased its demands to 'declare all hunting stopped until the Messrs Kenny surrender the eleven months lands'.⁶⁴ Little surprise was then expressed when the next attempt to hunt at Derrylahan on the 18th (despite the alleged presence of 50 police) and Borrisokane on the 20th when the members moved to Mr Whitfield's residence after a hostile crowd had gathered, but scenes reminiscent of October 28th were again witnessed — two ladies were assaulted and Henry Torpey offered to fight Whitfield. The latter issued processes for trespass arising out of the these incidents. The Corolanty Harriers had also announced at this stage that they would not stop objectionable persons from hunting, having earlier given an assurance to Fr Quinn that they would do so.⁶⁵ Divisions also deepened as Craddock and Whitfield issued processes against seven members of the League for trespass at his residence on October 28th. At the subsequent Birr Petty Sessions, decrees and costs totalling £340 were awarded against the defendants by Judge Curran in both cases mentioned above.⁶⁶

This action galvanised support behind Shinrone UIL from the surrounding League branches in the King's county, and even the north Tipperary Executive passed a resolution 'expressing

disgust at the treatment meted out to them by Judge Curran'.⁶⁷ The Portumna branch also passed a resolution making clear that if 'the Kennys, Craddock, or Whitfield followed the East Galway Hounds, effective steps will be taken to put an end to hunting in east Galway'.⁶⁸ As a result of another committee meeting of the Ormond Hunt Club in late November, the fox hounds were advertised for sale,⁶⁹ disposed of the following month and the decision taken to stop hunting. In May, 1908 a function was organised by the club to present a cheque and silver salver to Craddock to mark his period of time as master of the hounds.⁷⁰ Beforehand that January, it was also announced that Mr F.E. Saunders had sold the Corolanty park and moved to the continent with his wife and son, leaving Corolanty House in the hands of a caretaker.⁷¹

To many outsiders, this appeared to mark the end of the saga but there were more striking sequels to come. Up to this, the King's County Hounds had escaped attack, but in February one of their meets was frustrated at Kinnitty by a crowd that included Fr Drennan, PP, Seir Kieran, because a nephew of the Kennys was present.⁷² At the end of the month the Sheriff seized some twenty head of stock under the decrees issued at Birr Petty Sessions in January belonging to six of the defendants. The county inspector got 50 police to escort him in the course of this duty, and while they met with no opposition, crowds followed them blowing horns and shouting loudly the whole day.⁷³ The seventh defendant, an unemployed medical dispensary doctor, Dr Graham, paid up as his furniture was about to be seized.⁷⁴ The Midland Tribune declared that the sale of the stock was to be in effect 'the burial service of the Ormond Hunt',⁷⁵ and a remarkable event occurred the night before the sale. The police had placed them in the pound at Birr with a securely fastened gate, and every precaution was taken to safeguard them, the place being under the supervision day and night of a bailiff, three assistants, and two police. Notwithstanding all these precautions, the cattle escaped.⁷⁶ The Midland Tribune made the most of the event, theorising that they had escaped through a slit in the gate 'owing to the substantial nature of the food supplied to them during their period of captivity', while the police were reported as rushing around like 'mad bulls' looking for information which failed to exact how the animals were spirited away.⁷⁷ They were recaptured later the following day about 3 miles from the town and at the auction, many of them were bought back by their owners. During the sale the Shinrone League organised a mock impersonation of Mr Craddock and the hunt.

All of these events were eclipsed however early in March when 18 men were sent to Limerick jail for a period of between one and three months by Major Dease, RM, at a specially convened court sitting in Cloughjordan for the original charge of cattle driving and unlawful assembly at the H.D. Kenny's farm in June 1907.⁷⁸ Much condemnation of this action was expressed by Nationalists owing to the fact that Dease had been a member of the Ormonds, and calls were also made on his wife to resign as a member of Nenagh Guardians. Later that month, seven of the ten men who had been the subject of an Attorney-General bill, were

tried at Nenagh Assizes, the others at this stage already in Limerick jail. They were charged on three counts, unlawful assembly, riot and conspiracy, but acquitted on all counts. It is of interest to note that this trial was attended by six priests and four bands in support of the defendants.⁷⁹

By this stage it was obvious that both sides in the dispute (the Kennys and Shinrone UIL), having gone so far and now locked firmly in battle, were going to see the matter through to the bitter end. It must have been very heartening for the Leaguers that prominent moderate clergymen like Fr O'Reilly, PP, Kilcormac, were coming out and backing their stance. He expressed the view at a Kilcormac UIL meeting shortly after the above trials that:

... unless the gentry who were enjoying the privilege of riding rough-shod over the lands, breaking down their fences and often injuring their sheep etc., expressed their condemnation of Messrs Craddock and Whitfield of the Ormond Hunt Club, none of them should be permitted to enjoy the privilege any longer.⁸⁰

At the special south Executive UIL meeting held later that month to discuss the whole hunt question, Fr Scanlan, PP, Shinrone, appealed for assistance from the other branches in the division for funds to help defray the costs of supporting the prisoners, which he claimed was costing £10 a week. While one member present did feel that his branch would find it hard to subscribe another £10 (as they had already given £80), the delegates from the 13 branches went on to pledge the sum demanded, with the hope that the balance would be met by north Tipperary.⁸¹ Despite these assurances, the financial plight of the Shinrone League was still evident when a representative of the branch attended a north Tipperary Executive meeting in April and disclosed that their debt still stood at £281,⁸² the result of which it was decided to hold collections in that riding during May. At the Birr meeting also, Michael Reddy, who had missed the early year's developments due to illness, proposed that until the amount of the fines levied on the Shinrone men is refunded, that no member of the the Ormond Hunt Club be allowed to take part in any meet, whether King's County or Ormond'.⁸³ While the resolution was passed, it was silly to expect the fines to be refunded, the main impact of which had been to drain the resources of most of the League branches in the south of the county.

For the remainder of 1908, both sides struggled to gain the upperhand in the dispute. At the end of March the cattle of H.B. Kenny at Springpark had once again been driven despite police patrols in the area, and this time no arrests were made.⁸⁴ In April the point-to-point races at Redmount Hill in Galway were abandoned after the east Galway Executive of the UIL had served notice that if any of the Ormonders were allowed to take part, it would be the 'death-knell' of the hunting and racing in that part

of the country.⁸⁵ The same month, William McCann, a leading Shinrone Leaguer was summoned at Petty Sessions for a speech he made against H.B. Kenny on the day the police had sold the stock in Birr, when he warned that if the latter did not surrender the grazing lands, 'he would get a premature grave'.⁸⁶ His case was adjourned for 6 months with a severe caution as to future utterances.⁸⁷ When a number of the Limerick prisoners were released at the end of May, a crowd of 300 that gathered to greet them in Roscrea went one and a half miles out of its way to pass H.B. Kenny's house where they groaned, booed, shouted, and blew horns at him,⁸⁸ for which an additional six defendants were bound over and their cases adjourned for 3 months.⁸⁹ In June, H.D. Kenny was attacked and beaten by two unknown men while returning from Roscrea fair, his face being badly cut but the police made no arrests in connection with the incident.⁹⁰ The following month the King's County Chronicle announced that there was to be no agricultural show held in Birr that year and blamed the suspension on 'cattle driving and hunt stopping',⁹¹ while later, H.D. Kenny who frequently exhibited at such shows (including at the RDS show), was refused entry at the Maryborough Show by the committee.⁹² The final event of note in the saga was the additional seizure of cattle belonging to Michael Hogan MP and John Torpey in Tipperary during August and September under the processes served by Thomas Craddock, the Midland Tribune announcing that their completion marked that 'this devils's work is finished....'⁹³

While the Shinrone League may have won their battle against the Ormond Hunt, it failed to win the war against the Kennys. Despite their continued opposition and intimidation, the Midland Tribune regrettably admitted later in September that 'The Kennys indeed still hold out...'⁹⁴ Increasingly the tide turned in their favour during 1908. They had managed to secure four new workmen within a month of their regular employees leaving,⁹⁵ and while they had to be protected by patrols, the boycott directed against them waned as the year progressed. By this time also, Shinrone UIL was beset by its own difficulties, and the police reported a split in the branch during November,⁹⁶ while a correspondent of theirs admitted in December that 'certain persons were helping to stock the Springpark ranch', having earlier returned funds to a member who had supported the Shinrone Defence Fund.⁹⁷ Attempts to boycott shopkeepers, a wood merchant, and cattle dealers who dealt with the Kennys were all unsuccessful and in the Spring of 1909, they still continued to rent the lands. By the completion of that year the agitation was for all practical purposes dead, as is evident from the following end of year police report:

.... H.B. Kenny, a large grazier, incurred considerable odium because of his refusal to surrender any of his grazing lands, and in consequence his employees were boycotted which was continued throughout the year, but it did not seriously inconvenience the parties concerned, and is gradually been slackened.

In places, the UIL made efforts from time to time to keep the agitation against the grazing system alive, but to little purpose, owing to dissensions between the members of the different branches... in no case was serious outrage resorted to.⁹⁸

The resolve of the Kennys stiffened opposition by graziers to the UIL's tactics to force them to give up grazing farms and police figures indicate that after 1908, they were winning the war. In that year, 17 farms consisting of 4,051 acres remained unlet in the county due to UIL influence but by 1910 the figure was down to 6 farms consisting of 1,230 acres, and remained so thereafter.⁹⁹ These figures are backed up by the corresponding trends indicated in Table 13, which also show clearly that the police had come to grips with the agitation in the Ranch War by 1908.

TABLE 13: Returns indicating the level of disturbance in connection with the Grazing System, 1908-1911.

DISTURBANCE	YEAR	KING'S COUNTY	IRELAND
Agrarian Outrages Excluding Threatening letters.	1908	6	343
	1909	3	219
	1910	3	233
	1911	1	193
Intimidation by Threatening letters and notices.	1908	6	233
	1909	7	178
	1910	1	187
	1911	5	131
Number of Cattle Drives	1908	6	681
	1909	4	200
	1910	5	188
	1911	1	114
Number of Persons under Police Protection	1908	12	270
	1909	13	335
	1910	2	331
	1911	4	305
Number of Persons Boycotted (Minor) on 31st January	1908	7	not given
	1909	12	"
	1910	5	"
	1911	3	"
Number of Extra Police on 31st December	1908	24	839
	1909	*	389
	1910	*	382
	1911	*	291

100

* On the 26th May 1909, Proclamations were issued by the Land Lieutenant in Council revoking the Proclamations under Section 13 and 6 and 7 William IV, chapter 13, declaring some counties, including King's to be in a state of disturbance.

This latter point more than anything else goes to show that the agitation regarding grazing farms in the county had begun to wane considerably. With a few minor exceptions above in Table 13, all the main indicators show that the police in Ireland as a whole were coming out on top in the Ranch War. There are a number of other reasons, varied and complex, why this war had lost its impetus after 1908. The deployment of extra police and the determination of graziers like the Kennys have already been dealt with in detail. But it is doubtful if these alone could have checked the cattle drivers, without the divisions that had resulted within the UIL and among other Nationalists as a result of this policy, and which now require examination.

The most striking characteristic in the campaign against the landlord during the "Land War" of 1879 - 1882, was an almost complete uniformity in Nationalist ranks of aims and purpose, among the various social groups — farmers, tenants, labourers, shopkeepers, grazier, merchants etc. Any social tensions or differences that may have existed between these groups appear to have been clouded over in such vague slogans as "The land of Ireland for the people of Ireland". The closing of Nationalist ranks at this time was however not to be repeated during the Ranch War. Farmers (and/or their sons) who sought the breakup of the ranches, were consciously aware of similar claims of so called landless men and labourers. The latter two groups in particular had reaped little or no benefit from the Wyndham Land Act. The desire for an extra five or ten acres by a farmer already with forty or fifty acres to enlarge his holding did not appear just alongside the similar aspiration of a labourer with no land for thirty acres. For obvious reasons, graziers were loathed by both groups. The existing social tensions between the various groups that made up the UIL, which was touched on in chapter two, would also have widened considerably as a result of the stoppage of the Ormond Hunt.

It may be argued that Judge Curran exaggerated when he claimed that hunting in Ireland was not only a great national pastime and source of pleasure to its members, but that it was also 'a source of emolument and profit to those in the district who were farmers, horse-dealers, hotel keepers, and that large body of labourers and servants who are concerned in the management and care of horses'.¹⁰¹ How popular and important was the hunt then? Curtis (1987), claims that the campaign against it 'united many farmers and small labourers as well as townsmen in the south and west'.¹⁰² While this may have been true of the earlier campaign against the hunt during the Land War of 1879-82, it does not apply to events that unfolded in the King's county in 1907 - 08. On the otherhand, closer inspection of the sources bear out Curran's testimony of the importance of hunting to the groups mentioned above.

The county inspector reported in December 1907 that its stoppage had resulted in 'disappointment to the people' and that the 'large majority of farmers about the Shinrone area are now beginning to feel the effects and are sorry that hunting has been stopped'.¹⁰³ Similarly it is hard to see how individuals like John Dooly, (a leading Birr UIL member) could have welcomed its abandonment, given that he supplied the decorations for the annual hunt ball each year.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, early that November, the Nenagh LLA branch were the first to publicly voice criticism against the stoppage of the hunt,¹⁰⁵ and some UIL branches also expressed reservations. The Terryglass branch supported Fr Darcy's attempts to effect a settlement and also passed a resolution 'permitting hunting so long as no objectionable person turns up',¹⁰⁶ while Fr Houlihan of Lorrha advised his congregation at mass to 'assume no attitude of unfriendliness towards the hunt'.¹⁰⁷ At a meeting of Nenagh UIL the same month, the secretary submitted a memorial signed by 20 men including farriers, horse trainers and grooms, protesting against the stoppage of the Ormond Hunt as a matter which seriously affected their livelihood'.¹⁰⁸ In the course of passing a resolution supporting Shinrone UIL at the north Tipperary UIL Executive in December, a delegate was moved to express the opinion that it 'was unwise to put so many horse trainers, grooms and labourers out of employment'.¹⁰⁹ The person seen to most effect against the stop hunt policy was Tim Gleeson, a district councillor and member of Dunkerrin UIL. Attempting to solve the dispute, he announced to the press that he had received a guarantee from Kenny's not to hunt, an assertion that was hotly disputed by the Shinrone UIL. Gleeson was clear in his mind that the stoppage of the hunt would have disastrous consequences for the district in general, claiming it would:

... stop a large circulation of money...
injure the market for new hay, straw and oats,
to the detriment of poor farmers... lessen
the value of hunting horses, and so injure
horse breeding ... seriously injure the
harness-maker and tradesman and deprive 200
labourers of a means of livelihood.¹¹⁰

The latter figure may appear exaggerated, but very unlikely because none of his claims were disputed except by the editor of the Midland Tribune, whose counter argument that the policy of Shinrone UIL was justified on the grounds that 'it had been endorsed by the people',¹¹¹ certainly wears thin when compared alongside the above facts. Gleeson went on to describe the leading Shinrone UIL members in unfavourable terms, depicting them as 'arrogant dictators', 'red patriots' and 'fire eaters', while describing their tactics as 'disgraceful, bully and rowdy' in stopping the hunt.¹¹² For his efforts, he found himself expelled from the UIL.

While it is difficult to gauge exactly from all of this how much support or opposition there really was to the stoppage

of the hunt, a scene from the meeting of Birr Executive of the UIL in March, already referred to, and attended by delegates from 13 branches goes a long way to show that many Nationalists did in fact regret the events of the previous six months. As noted, but worth repeating, Michael Reddy proposed that 'until the amount of fines levied on the Shinrone men is refunded, no member of the Ormond Hunt Club be allowed to take part in the any meet...'; yet he also admitted that he would 'not like to see hunting done away with'.¹¹³ More interestingly William Lowry of Birr, who referred to the 'gentlemen' that hunt as the 'bastard aristocracy', went on to propose a much stiffer amendment to Reddy's proposal, 'that no hunt (of any kind) be allowed within the bounds of the King's county'¹¹⁴ until the money was refunded. The passing of this amendment would have involved the stoppage of the King's County Hounds also, but Fr Slattery cautioned against it, 'as stopping the enjoyment of people who were not to blame',¹¹⁵ and it came as no surprise when the original proposal was adopted instead. A year later, Fr Scanlan was to claim at the corresponding Executive meeting that it had taken all Fr Slattery's 'tact and eloquence to see Reddy's proposal through' on that occasion and that Lowry's amendment had 'met the feelings of the Executive more fully'.¹¹⁶ But this is hardly credible, since nobody even seconded the amendment on that occasion, and despite Scanlan's assertion that Ormonds had hunted with the King's County Hounds during the 1908-09 season, it was Reddy's proposal that was again re-affirmed at the Executive meeting in March 1909.¹¹⁷ Surely a year later, if feelings on the subject were as indicated by the Shinrone pastor, a proposal more akin to Lowry's amendment would have been adopted the second time round. But the real point worthy of note here and the truth of the matter was, that, at this stage, a majority of the county's Nationalists did not want to stop the King's County Hounds. Having realised the error of their ways in destroying two clubs, they were not about to make the same mistake this time round. On the whole, it is very likely that it was labourers who regretted the stoppage of the hunt most and its abandonment helped the growth of the LLA, which will be dealt with more in chapter five. Without doubt, the real loser in the whole dispute was the UIL.

Another relatively small incident that occurred during 1908 which also shows that the main movers behind the stoppage of the hunt were fast losing sympathy, was the case of the unemployed Dr Graham. As already noted he had been fined at Birr Petty Sessions in January, and in May the Dunkerrin branch of the UIL (backed by five others, including Shinrone) passed a resolution supporting his application for the medical officership of the Cloughjordan district which fell vacant at this time. The editor of the Midland Tribune threw his support behind Graham also, hoping he would get the job unopposed and thus spare 'Lower Ormond the humiliation of having the gauntlet thrown down to National Sentiment, to the credit of all concerned'.¹¹⁸ However Graham lost to Dr Gilligan from Dublin, by 16 votes to 10, and even the Midland Tribune could not hide its disappointment, expressing the sorrowful view that the result would give the 'grazing system a new lease of life', the new motto was now to be

the land for the ranchers... God Help Ireland'!¹¹⁹

To get back at this point to explaining other reasons for the failure of the Ranch War, or more correctly, the failure of the UIL to end the grazing system, there emerged within the League branches themselves at this time, diversity of opinion and a lack of unity and common strategy on how to deal with the graziers. At no stage during the whole agitation, did a joint delegation from the two county Executives meet to develop a shared policy and plan tactics. It is also of interest to note that not even one collection was made in the northern division for the Shinrone defence fund in 1908. Such lack of co-operation made it easier for the police to deal with the cattle drivers, as is illustrated by an event which soured relations between the Tullamore UIL branch and most UIL branches in the southern division in 1907.

Henry Egan, owner of the main malting company in the county at Birr and Tullamore, with a hotel also in the latter, was a leading King's county Nationalist and chairman of the County Council from 1899 to 1908. He had been one of the first men in the county to join Isaac Butt's Home Rule Association¹²⁰ and one of the founders of the Land League in Tullamore, also later serving as secretary of the INL branch in the town. He underwent a term of imprisonment during Forster's Coercion Act of 1881, but was later appointed a JP. He lost this title however when the Government dismissed him during the Plan of Campaign after his insistence on visiting the prisoners in Tullamore jail up to 12 times a day as Chief Magistrate for the town.¹²¹ Egan had been pressed hard in 1900 to stand for MP but declined the offer and along with William Adams, he was regarded as the leading Nationalist in the town.

Despite this, he found himself the brunt of exceptionally heavy criticism from the Midland Tribune during June and July 1907 when his firm supplied cars to convey police to Birr for the Petty Sessions prosecutions of the 15 English cattle drivers, and later to convey these same prisoners to Tullamore jail.¹²² Egan justified his action by citing an old resolution passed on the advice of T.P. Sexton, by the then Tullamore Land League allowing Nationalists who feared they would lose their licence(s), to give cars to the police. This action had been taken after a local hotelier Hayes had lost his licence during the Land War for refusing the police transport.¹²³ The Tullamore branch of the UIL stood by Egan, claiming the Midland Tribune attacks were 'unjustified and uncalled for',¹²⁴ but most of the branches in the south of the county denounced his action also, and supported the paper's stance. However Egan was not alone in helping the police in time of necessity; in May 1907 the editor of the Midland Tribune again complained that the police in Birr had been 'received with open arms and graciously given brakes, horses and cars',¹²⁵ by three people, two of whom were also publicans.¹²⁶ Obviously then, all Nationalists were not prepared to lose out during the Ranch War and thus the task facing the cattle drivers was always likely to become more

difficult, as the police became more effective in stifling the agitation.

Another reason why some Nationalists, in towns particularly, did not relish the prospects of a long Ranch War, had to do with the increased hike in rate charges imposed as a result of the imposition of extra police in the county. These increases would have hit property owners (eg. shopkeepers, merchants, publicans, etc.) most while many of the cattle drivers (small farmers, their sons, labourers, landless men) would in many cases have been exempt from these. The extent of these rises can be gauged in a number of ways; Judge Curran claims in his book, that for the years 1907-08, he awarded a total of £4,333 for malicious injuries including £998 for burning dwelling houses, barns etc., £893 for hay, straw etc. and £178 for maiming cattle (among others) for the King's county.¹²⁷ Along with this, the various councils in the county, but principally the County Council, had to pay £1,039 in 1909 for the charge of stationing extra police therein to the end of March that year.¹²⁸ This figure, the third highest in Ireland after Roscommon and Galway, happens to be for the cumulative sum built up during 1907 also. During these two years (1907-08), the County Council had refused to pay the money due,¹²⁹ preferring instead to inform the Inspector General that they deemed the extra police had not been required. The Government's response to this action was to threaten to deduct the money due from various grants, usually agriculture, as reportedly happened in north Tipperary.

This in turn threw up some interesting divisions among the various Nationalist council members, as those from urban areas who did not wish to pay the extra constabulary charges, were preferably willing to see the money deducted from the agricultural grant. Such a scene took place in August 1908, when John Dooley of Birr proposed that the extra charges not be paid,¹³⁰ obviously having regard for the fact that most of his electors did not wish for an increase in the rates, and also because they would not gain much if any benefit from the agricultural grant anyway! On these occasions however, the rural councillors usually held the upperhand, simply by their numerical majority, and it was no surprise when the council decided instead to pay the charges. In April 1909 the clerk of Birr Urban Council complained when similar charges were sought for the town by simply declaring that 'Birr is crimeless',¹³¹ and his views were backed up by many members whose main grievance was that while the extra police may have been stationed in Birr urban district, the disturbances relating to their presence occurred outside the domain of the district. Similar sentiments were expressed at another meeting in June when a member noted ruefully that 'a man living in the country can do four times as much damage (as a man living in a town) and pay the same rate'!¹³²

A number of other small, and varied but important events occurred at this time which also helped to check the Ranch War. In November 1908, newspapers that had published intimidating notices or resolutions against graziers were warned by an order



of Government to cease such practices. Within the county, the only paper effected was the Midland Tribune which described the order as 'an attempt to muzzle the Irish Provincial Press'.¹³³ Despite its pledge 'not to be bullied into suppression',¹³⁴ the tone of the paper in relation to anti-grazing resolutions and what might be termed offensive or seditious extracts, were kept to a minimum thereafter. That month also a member of Roscrea No. 1 Council proposed a resolution 'calling on Mr. Redmond to make a public pronouncement as to the practice of cattle driving' in view of the appalling tragedy in Sligo when the police shot a young cattle driver and 'having regard to the public expense which cattle driving often involves'.¹³⁵ While he got no seconder for his proposal, it does show that some people were willing to give public pronouncement to a view that would have been scorned by most only a year before. In February the following year Redmond was to formally rebuke the cattle drivers in Parliament,¹³⁶ and clearly the tide by this stage had turned against their favour.

The Birrell Land Act of 1909 would also have gone a long way to making for peace, one of its most important powers allowing for compulsory purchase in certain areas deemed necessary outside the west (where it was also allowed) for the relief of congestion. The crisis that year concerning the Budget and the two elections of 1910 when the issue of Home Rule again came to the forefront, would also have helped to switch the focus away, temporarily at least, from the ranch question. Another good reason the cattle drivers had for casting aside the hazels was in relation to a decision taken by the Chief Secretary Birrell in 1908, that those associated in such practices would not participate in the division of untenanted lands.¹³⁷ While the South Galway MP W.J. Duffy had claimed in 1907 that 'the people of Leinster are too much afraid of jail',¹³⁸ to participate vigorously in cattle driving, there can be no question but that the fear of not sharing in the benefit of the division of land by participating in same would undoubtedly have served to frighten most away from said practices for good!

Taking all these points into consideration for the abatement of the Ranch War, it is now time to deal with possibly the main reason why the UIL failed to clear the ranches; simply because some of its own members indulged in the 11 months system themselves and were prepared to flout League rules to achieve their objectives. The number of such members holding land on the grazing system was shown in Table 7 on page 20 for 1902. Unfortunately after this date, the police never revealed such information, and so we are left to draw conclusions from the files of the newspapers on the extent to which UIL members used the system, but luckily they don't disappoint us in this regard.

In June 1906, at a time when the Ranch War had not effectively started in the King's county, but was in progress in the west, the editor of the Midland Tribune complained:

We have received reports of a very complaining

nature with regard to the taking of grazing lands on the 11 months system. This information is the more regrettable as some of the offenders are stated to be members of the UIL ... We trust we will not have to refer to this insidious evil again. If it creeps into our system of living gradually it will take years to work to eradicate it....¹³⁹

It would be another year however, by which time the Ranch War had started within the county in earnest, that the extent of the problem was to be more fully exposed. In June 1907 the Kilcoleman branch of the UIL called on the Birr branch to 'fall into line with the rest of their fellow countrymen in looking after the grazing ranches in their district, as we believe that they are not only held by large graziers, but also by members of the branch'!¹⁴⁰ The following month the Lusmagh branch expelled a member (Michael Byrne) whose farm had been driven because he refused to give it up and his subscription was returned.¹⁴¹ A letter from John Garry of Cushina in August complained that the 'very man' who took his fathers evicted farm was also 'an eleven months man and a big man in the Bracknagh branch of the UIL'.¹⁴² On numerous occasions also, letters sent to the press complained of UIL members carrying out work, such as cutting meadows on the big eleven month farms to feed livestock over the Winter months. When Michael Hogan MP addressed a meeting near Birr in November, he encouraged the crowd to 'wash out the 11 month chums', but was interrupted by a member present who made remarks about UIL members holding such land. Hogan replied that he was not only sorry to hear it, but 'Leaguer or no Leaguer, he would have to give it up' and claimed he personally was prepared to 'head the drive of any 11 months take at any time'.¹⁴³ Yet the same "farmer Hogan" was prepared to ally himself with graziers when it was necessary to keep his seat.¹⁴⁴

By August 1908 the editor of the Midland Tribune was still complaining that 'the 11 months men hold on to their swag' but confidently predicted that the 'fight against grazierdom will continue'.¹⁴⁵ In September the Philipstown branch of the LLA passed a resolution thanking John Egan (president of Croghan UIL) for 'taking his cattle off a grazing farm', but regretted the fact that no sooner had he done it, but another member of the League took it'!¹⁴⁶ A dispute over an eleven months farm in Clara was so bitter between two members of the League that the branch broke up and held no meetings for three years. Even then after reorganisation, the dispute resurrected itself. The farm in question consisted of 86 acres and was rented by Martin Flanagan until 1887, when he gave it up on failure to pay his rent. It was taken from 1891 onwards on the 11 months system by Thomas Lalor, first president of Clara UIL, whose son also served as secretary of the branch for a period. In July 1902 Flanagan looked to get the farm back,¹⁴⁷ for no doubt he hoped, as noted in the last chapter, to avail of the impending Land Act to purchase his farm. Lalor refused to comply with his wishes however and after a heated meeting in August 1902, which broke up

in disorder on failing to solve the dispute, the bitterness generated by the event was so great that the branch remained dead until 1906. At the end of 1908, Clara UIL considered the whole case again and Lalor was asked to throw up the farm or give fair compensation to Flanagan.¹⁴⁹ No more details of the case emerged in the press thereafter.

However, the case which caused most controversy and received the most public attention occurred towards the end of 1908 over what was popularly known as the "Dowras Farm", three miles from Birr. The farm in question was owned by Jane Hackett of Dalkey in Dublin¹⁵⁰ and had been set on the 11 months system to the Kennys until the Spring of 1906 when they surrendered it. The farm was then taken by another grazier but he soon surrendered it after a cattle drive organised by nine tenants on an adjoining estate and members of Eglish and Drumcullen UIL.¹⁵¹ They wished for the Estates Commissioners to purchase it for division purposes as their farms were uneconomic, few exceeding £5 in valuation and none above £10.¹⁵² In 1907 the agent set the farms to the tenants pending sale to the Estates Commissioners. When their term expired in 1908, they continued to graze it and were the subject of processes issued by Hackett's solicitor, which were heard at Birr Quarter Sessions in October.¹⁵³

In the meantime the agent had put the farms up for sale during the Summer of 1908, but by public auction at Dooley's Hotel in Birr, which angered the tenants who had hoped it would be sold directly to the Estates Commissioners. At the sale, attended by Michael Reddy MP, the Estates Commissioners made an offer, but there were other bids also, most notably that of Ellen Hackett, no relation of the owner. One of the tenants, Patrick Murray later claimed he warned her 'to have nothing to do with the place',¹⁵⁴ and Reddy also gave a similar caution to her.¹⁵⁵ She was then informed that the latter was making arrangements with the Estates Commissioners to buy the farm. The sale was then adjourned, and Ellen Hackett later claimed she gave Reddy time to work out arrangements for purchase terms,¹⁵⁶ but the tenants insisted she bought it privately 'over their heads',¹⁵⁷ four days after the auction.

The farm may have been purchased by Ellen Hackett, but the police reports at this time always claim the new owner to be her husband George, a former president of Birr UIL, and still a member of the League. The tenants noted sarcastically that he had been referred to in the past as 'a true and tried Nationalist'.¹⁵⁸ At this stage, pressure was exerted on the Hacketts to sell the farm again and Ellen Hackett claimed she even went as far as to allow Reddy more time to work out some settlement with the Estates Commissioners, but they in turn refused to increase their original offer.¹⁵⁹

Accounts as to what occurred next differ; Ellen Hackett claims Reddy then gave her the 'go ahead' to complete the sale, but when the objections still continued, she did her best to try and get out of it but couldn't because of a threat of action by

the owner and the resulting possibility of losing her deposit lodged after the sale.¹⁶⁰ Not surprisingly Reddy denied this in a letter to Eglish and Drumcullen UIL claiming 'I now give the lie direct to Mrs Hackett, as I never told her any such words'.¹⁶¹ Having failed to secure a re-sale, some members of the League began acts of intimidation to force same. In December 1908 two padlocks were removed from the farm and Fr Gilsean, PP, of Eglish referred in a sermon to the conduct of some 'so called patriots in the townland of Dowras as disgraceful ___ Rowdyass he would call it in future'.¹⁶² The herd had to receive police protection as two men, William Downey a tenant, and William Buckley were charged with having used threatening and abusive language towards him and were bound over in two sureties of £5 each and personal bail of £10.¹⁶³ However the herd in turn was bound to the peace in July 1909 for threatening to shoot Downey and another man.¹⁶⁴ In January 1909 the gates in the farm had been pulled up and part of the wall slightly knocked,¹⁶⁵ an action condemned by the local UIL branch.¹⁶⁶ The boycott of the herd continued into 1910, but declined thereafter. While the Dowras case may be an isolated one, it, along with the previous cases covered, go a long way to show the double standards of some UIL members, standards that undoubtedly led to cynicism in regard to the League, which would give impetus to the rise of organisations like the LLA in the years ahead.

In any overview then, it is true to say that the "Ranch War" marked on the one hand, the highpoint of UIL activity, agitation, and organisation within the county; for in the middle of 1907 during the campaign, the UIL was judged to have 4,078 paid up members in 31 branches,¹⁶⁷ figures never bettered again. More importantly however on the otherhand, was the fact that this same war created social tensions, divisions of opinion, and splits within the UIL. Overall then, when taken in conjunction with the problems created by the 1903 Land Act, the Ranch War created more problems for the UIL than it solved. It may not have been evident to League leaders at the time, but from 1908 on, the movement was to move into a decline that would culminate in its final defeat by Sinn Fein in 1918. While all trouble concerning land was by no means over, in 1909 there could be no better conclusive proof that the Ranch War was effectively over than when the Lord Lieutenant issued proclamations withdrawing the extra police from the county in May 1909.¹⁶⁸ The UIL was now about to face a new threat ___ the threat from within itself and other Nationalist organisations.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DECLINE OF THE UIL ACCELERATES, JULY 1909 - APRIL 1912

'.... he had the eloquence of a Gladstone, the administrative ability of a Bismarck and the legal acumen of Tim Healy...'

John Dooly JP, Chairman Birr Urban Council when proposing Michael Reddy's nomination for MP in December 1909.¹

In the last two chapters the fortunes of the UIL were examined in the light of the Wyndham Land Act and the subsequent Ranch War. It was argued that both had long term damaging implications for the League that may not have been evident to party leaders and organisers at that time who preferred instead to gauge the movement's strength by such dangerous yardsticks as the number of branches in existence at any particular instance. The aim of this chapter is to show that up to April 1912, for a number of varied and complex reasons, the fortunes of the UIL continued to decline at a time when the Home Rule party held the balance of power at Westminster. More surprisingly, this decline was for the most part unnoticed by party leaders, who appear to have been completely overtaken by the political drama concerning the passage of the Third Home Rule Bill, thereby neglecting local party organisation, much to their cost in later years.

One of the main reasons for the decline of the UIL at this time was the indifference shown by tenant purchasers towards the movement. John Dillon's fear that land sales would invariably damage the demand for Home Rule appears to have been well founded. As early as September 1905, when speaking at a Divisional Executive meeting in Tullamore, the chairman William Adams claimed that while he did not like to draw 'comparisons' concerning the collection made for evicted tenants in the constituency, he still felt compelled to 'point out that the money subscribed by the working men of Tullamore and a few shopkeepers doubled what the farmers gave'.² A member at the Birr UIL meeting in March 1906 regretted that there were not many farmers present despite the fact that they had received many advantages from the movement, going on to pour scorn on their failure to contribute funds before being greeted with applause when concluding:

..away with such soulless slaves ___ paltry
knaves ___ let them descend to the vile dust
from whence they sprang, unwept, unhonoured
and unsung.³

At Dunkerrin later in June when the collection was made for the parliamentary fund, it was remarked that 'a good many who have lately purchased their holdings did not subscribe at all..',⁴ while in December 1909, four speakers voiced annoyance and criticism at a Birr UIL meeting over the lack of support from farmers for the same cause.⁵ Table 14 shows the extent to which the Land Purchase Acts had been availed of in the county by March 1913.

TABLE 14: RETURN (A) TO 30TH APRIL 1908 AND (B) TO 31ST MARCH 1913 SHOWING THE EXTENT OF LAND PURCHASE FOR THE KING'S COUNTY

1. Lands sold and lands in respect of which proceedings for sale have been instituted and are pending.
Acts 1870-1909*

	No. of Holdings	Area	P.L.V.	Purchase Money
A)	3,538 (40.88%)	138,024 (34.14%)	73,308	£1,391,565
B)	6,780 (78.34%)	254,825 (61.25%)	129,148	£2,566,643

2. Estimate of land in respect of which proceedings for sale have not been instituted under the Land Purchase Acts.
Acts 1870-1909*

	No. of Holdings	Area	P.L.V.	Purchase Money
A)	5,116 (59.12%)	266,232 (65.86%)	142,233	£2,732,644
B)	N.G. (21.66%)	161,211 (38.74%)	86,250	£1,737,433

*1909 Act does not apply for returns up to 1908 ⁶

The exact accuracy of such figures is open to question, for it can be deducted from the above that the total acreage of land in the county in 1908 was put at 404,256 acres, while the corresponding figure for 1913 is 416,036. However to be fair to the Estates Commissioners who compiled such data, it must be pointed out that the task was exceedingly tedious and difficult. For this reason alone, any small anomalies can be overlooked in gratitude. From the point of view of this study, the important conclusion arrived at here is that over 61% of the land in the county was sold to tenants, while 78.34% of this group had purchased their holdings, or at least agreed to it by March 1913. As noted already, the majority of these purchasers seemed content to withdraw from active participation in politics and their support for the UIL waned. Even the county inspector remarked in the course of his monthly report in February 1910 that:

.....to a considerable extent the purchase acts have been availed of largely and in the localities where this is so, there seems to be a distinct tendency on the part of purchasers to withdraw themselves from political movements...

These sentiments were echoed again in February 1912 when the editor of the King's County Independent did not hide his feelings when referring to the appeal by Redmond for funds to help fight the case for Home Rule, by indicating that:

...It is pitiable to see our farmers so mean spirited and poor hearted. They will neither support Church or State. The farmers of France paid off the War indemnity in a few weeks, which Bismarck imposed after the Franco-Prussian War. The towns may be relied upon as ever to stand by the Irish Party...⁸

The last point here is interesting in that it shows an irony that was increasingly evident to town dwellers at this time; namely that those who benefited most from the Irish Party seemed most reluctant to support it financially. It was noted in chapter two that the UIL was not a particularly strong organisation in the towns of the county, with most urban dwellers not particularly interested in the details of land purchase and agrarian disputes. To protect their interests in turn, a new movement, the Town Tenants Association emerged, which will be henceforth referred to as the TTA.

A branch of this organisation was first formed in Birr during October 1904,⁹ and later in Tullamore, both demanding the three Fs for town tenants. In many respects the movement was born out of frustration by their members to have its demands heard at UIL meetings, and also by a widely held view that the Irish Party at Westminster cared little for their needs. This feeling was made quickly known by a member of the Birr branch in December 1904 when he complained that the town tenants had always 'championed' the cause of the UIL, but they had received 'nothing' in return.¹⁰ Adding that farmers had by this time most of their grievances settled, he urged the 'town tenants to strike out for themselves in marking their grievances known'.¹¹ Fitzpatrick (1977) has argued that leaders of the Irish Party and UIL often viewed with suspicion the growth of other movements like the TTA which were likely in some way to draw on their support. In turn, to check the growth of such movements, a rather clever strategy was used to bring them under the party's wing, which Fitzpatrick (1977) described the working of as follows:

The almost mechanical reaction of Home Rule organisers when confronted by an energetic popular movement claiming to be without politics was to infiltrate it, reorganise it and add it to the cluster of party auxiliaries...¹²

This depiction of the party as a vampire engulfing other organisations is certainly true, for many speakers at UIL meetings in Birr expressed the view that the interests of the town tenants would be better served within the UIL, and one leading member, John McDonnell felt 'it would be difficult to keep up two organisations in the town'.¹³ John Dillon even wrote to the secretary of the new branch claiming himself to be 'in sympathy' with the movement but advising that 'the town tenants and UIL should work hand in hand with one another so that no

friction would exist between them'.¹⁴

It did not take long for leading town tenant organisers to see that they needed the Irish Party's support every bit as much if not more than the party needed them. Within two months of the formation of the branch at Birr, a member acknowledged that 'they would have to give the UIL all the support in their power, or how can we ask the parliamentary party to fight our battles?'.¹⁵ By February 1905, the Tullamore branch had joined with the local UIL counterpart,¹⁶ holding meetings jointly until they split again in March 1908 when it was felt both would work better on their own. All this points to Fitzpatrick's (1977) conclusion that 'groups wishing to protect their own interests accepted that success was possible only within the Home Rule machine...'.¹⁷

With its fortunes directly linked to that of the Irish Party, and having such a small base of support from which to draw, the movement was always going to face difficulties in maintaining support and it came as no surprise when a leading national member, Coghlan Briscoe, admitted in a letter to the Midland Tribune in 1909 that 'it was being carried on under financial difficulties', with only enough being subscribed to its coffers in 1908 'to pay one-third of the expenses necessary to carry on the organisation that year'.¹⁸ Because the organisation by this time also held collections to support the Irish Party's funds, the task of paying its own way was even more difficult. Despite the passage of the Town Tenants Act in 1908, many members still felt their interests were not well served in Westminster. A Birr town tenant complained in April 1910, that 'Redmond did not give much thought to the movement',¹⁹ in July another complained that it was 'extraordinary that the Irish Party were doing nothing',²⁰ for the movement, while a year later, Reddy was called to task for neglecting their communications, his attitude towards the branch being described as one of 'contempt'.²¹

Another movement which emerged at this particular time and which soon found itself in many ways facing the same problems as the TTA, was the LLA. It was very similar in its aims to the Back to the Land Movement which existed in county Meath at this time. Coogan (1983) rightly points out that despite the passage of the Land Acts, 'there still existed in many parts of the country a land hunger that had not yet been sated'.²² It attracted to its ranks many labourers, uneconomic holders and landless men, who wished for a division of the untenanted land and large ranches in the county. While the UIL also wished for the breakup of these, many of the above groups had lost confidence in the League because it appeared in most instances to favour the claims of farmers or their sons when such farms were being divided.

The best example of this was touched upon in Chapter three when discussing the Cadamstown land dispute. A branch of the UIL had been formed there in December 1906, to secure the division of Captain French's untenanted land, but when most of the labourers

and landless men failed to secure a portion of it, they formed a branch of the LLA to press forward their demands. On the formation of the branch the chairman remarked that:

....it is a sad state of affairs to see this land parcelled out to men in possession of large holdings. Some of them are owners of upwards of 100 acres, while the labourers and people buried in the mountain have not sufficient land to graze a cow. He wished to urge upon them the necessity of forming a strong branch of the Irish LLA as to be able to counteract that influence, whether it be the UIL, or landlords who try to keep the honest worker from a means of living on his native soil (cheers).²³

It is very interesting to note the tone of speeches given when these branches were first being organised in the county during 1906 and after. A distinct anti-farmer theme was portrayed and criticism was also expressed of party MPs, and to a lesser extent the UIL. Farmers were held up to idiom for three reasons. Firstly as noted, they benefited mainly from the distribution of untenanted land, courtesy mainly of the clauses of the 1903 Land Act. Secondly, with the formation of democratic local councils in 1899, farmers used their UIL contacts to secure road contracting work, much resented by labourers who wished for direct labour schemes to be employed by the councils instead. Resolutions concerning this particular matter were a regular feature at LLA meetings in the county. A member of the Clara branch in December 1906 made reference to the 'road grabbers'²⁴ prevalent in the county, while in March 1907 the secretary said bluntly that 'the farmers were their bitterest enemies at present'.²⁵ Thirdly labourers resented the fact that some farmers also used their influence to block their applications for sites for labourers cottages. The Labourers Act of 1906 had paved the way for the erection of thousands of these cottages, but some labourers found difficulty procuring sites. The National Directory of the UIL were at pains to stress in 1908 that no 'branch of the work of their Committee had yielded more satisfactory results than the success of these acts'.²⁶ By 1910 however, it admitted that 'complaints' had been received as to the delay in building cottages 'caused by the opposition of farmers and landlords, but was also at pains to stress that 'most of these came from Ulster where public bodies are entirely or almost entirely Unionist'.²⁷ This may be true, but the same problem did exist elsewhere also.

These emerging social divisions between labourers and farmers was of concern to party MPs, who no doubt feared it could lead to a drop in support for the party. At a meeting in Cloneygowan in April 1906, Haviland Burke warned that 'labourers, farmers and shopkeepers should keep united _____ they were to sink or swim together',²⁸ while in May 1908, William Delaney MP went out of his way to stress that the 'IPP was just as much the

representatives of the labourers as they were of the farmers'.²⁹ In October 1910 at a LLA demonstration in Killeigh, Burke again warned those present 'to beware as you would of the devil himself any attempt to sow the seeds of discord between the labourers farmers and town tenants..'³⁰ However, for the time being at least, the MPs need not have worried, because the LLA soon found itself falling under the wing of the IPP. Like the TTA, most of its leading members were content to throw their support behind the party, much to the relief of party leaders. In November 1906, the Philipstown branch expressed the wish that 'the LLA would join forces with the League',³¹ in January 1907 the Clara branch passed a resolution which it considered 'urgent' to bring before the public claiming 'to be in full working harmony with the UIL and supportive of John Redmond',³² who was also wished every success and blessing for the new year, while the following month it was not surprising to find William Delaney MP expressing 'delight' that the Killeigh branch 'was working in harmony with the UIL'.³³

Occasionally from then on at LLA meetings, speakers expressed the desire for the movement to adopt a more independent policy, but they were lone voices and did not receive much support. Above all, the movements leadership was weak, and it was a much easier course to fall into line with the leaders of the Irish Party, than to be seen to challenge them or the UIL. This is surprising because much more so than the TTA, the LLA could have been a strong force if properly organised. However its weakness is best exemplified by its attitude towards the local elections. The six branches of the organisation that existed in the Tullamore division had formed a divisional committee (similar to the UIL Executives) and pledged before the local elections in April 1911 'to secure all the labour members possible',³⁴ a step in the right direction because strength on the local councils would have meant that direct labour schemes could be fought for. However the leadership of the movement made no attempts to secure good candidates or organise effective canvass of support, and it came as no real surprise when their representatives either withdrew or were heavily beaten. The Philipstown branch had passed a resolution in late 1908 calling on Parliament to pass a bill to end the present system of road contracting, and 'then those cheese-paring farmers who are at present acting as rural and county councillors in Ireland will no longer have the option of starving the unfortunate labourer',³⁵ yet in the next election for county councillor in the district, they only managed to muster sixteen votes for their candidate!³⁶

The important point to note from the experiences of the TTA and LLA is the fact that potentially at least, both movements could have drawn support away from the UIL and Irish Party; the reason they did not was because southern Ireland at this time was in effect dominated by one party, and both movements fortunes were intertwined with it. It is not really realistic to say that they could have opted to support William O'Brien's All for Ireland League, because outside Munster it was virtually non-existent and by 1910, O'Brien had practically no support in the

King's county worth talking about. When given an opportunity to vote against one of the county's sitting MPs in December 1910, both movements supported a rival party candidate against Michael Reddy, who still however managed to hold his seat relatively easily. However this cosy position of having no real opposition would change with the growth of Sinn Fein in 1917. Social groups like the TTA and LLA which had become disillusioned with the Irish Party long before this date, were then given an effective opposition and choice they had not previously enjoyed. The last chapter of the thesis will explore how they took up this opportunity.

Having considered the merits of these organisations, it is now time to turn back to the UIL and deal with its organisational strength from 1909 to April 1912 in the county. Fitzpatrick (1977) informs us that for Clare, 'the decline of the UIL had already begun in 1914',³⁷ while Coogan (1983) claims that in Meath, the League had the greatest number of branches of any county in Leinster that year, being undoubtedly the foremost political organisation in early twentieth century Ireland'.³⁸ However it has been argued in the introduction to this study that for the King's county, the decline of the UIL began as early as 1908 and both newspaper and police reports confirm this. In April 1909, the editor of the Midland Tribune remarked that 'it is quite evident that the League is in a lamentably disorganised condition at the present time, and has been for the past twelve months or so'.³⁹ In May, his counterpart in the King's County Independent claimed the 'old National Party, with Tullamore as headquarters, had not broken down, it had simply disappeared'.⁴⁰ The Tullamore branch itself by this stage was dead, while no Divisional Executive meeting had been held for nearly a year, even though they were to have been held quarterly. With the possible exception of the Killeigh branch, all others in the division were in a poor state, the editor also noting the constituency 'had made no serious effort to answer the National Treasurers appeal for funds'.⁴¹ Meanwhile the Birr branch was in little better shape than its counterpart in Tullamore, with reported attendances of five and six members being the norm.⁴²

With the resultant political crisis over the budget, and the completion of the Birrell Land Act foremost in most MPs minds, they had little time for constituency organisation that year. Even Reddy admitted at the Birr Executive meeting in October that the movement was simply 'not organised'.⁴³ He referred to the lack of support from farmers claiming that if they each only 'gave a shilling to the parliamentary fund, they would have no need to go to their exiled children for funds to carry on the struggle'.⁴⁴ Patrick Meehan MP also echoed these sentiments and claimed that the organisation was not only 'backward in the King's county, but in other parts as well'.⁴⁵ With the general election coming in January 1910, the editor of the King's County Independent remarked again that the northern constituency 'was still anything but well organised'.⁴⁶ But the best summing up of the League's position at this time was given by the editor of the Midland Tribune in September 1910, when in a

long address concerning the movement, he summarised that:

The people appear to be quite satisfied with their existing condition, and in this state of mind, it is not to be wondered that the UIL has been allowed to drift. A grievance will fill a League hall on one Sunday, and when that grievance is adjusted, there is a relapse. A few small branches in this county meet occasionally but the Birr branch, once strong, cannot now command a quorum especially when it comes to the time of arranging for the parliamentary collection. The movement is not organised and unless something is done to enliven it, it will soon be a dead letter. This is regrettable. The farmers of the King's county owe much of their prosperity to the League, and it does not follow because there is nothing important now doing, that they should allow it to become impotent...⁴⁷

This position in regard to the organisation did not improve during 1911, and if anything became worse. The county inspector noted that March 'that five branches had held no meetings for over a year, had not been affiliated and could therefore be taken as having ceased to exist'.⁴⁸ For the next twelve months to the passing of the Home Rule Bill in April 1912, he described the UIL as being 'inactive,' and on one occasion commented that 'in many cases branches of the UIL are moribund'.⁴⁹ By that date the RIC estimated the strength of the movement in the county to be 16 branches with 1,585 members, compared with 31 branches and 3,830 members at the end of 1907 during the height of the Ranch War.⁵⁰ By the end of 1912, the branch numbers had dropped by one to 15, the lowest number in the county since 1901.⁵¹ As might therefore be expected, the number of meetings reportedly held by the League also dropped during the period 1910 - 1912. The following table, drawn up from the files of the Midland Tribune show how marked this trend was.

TABLE 15: NO. OF UIL MEETINGS REPORTED IN THE MIDLAND TRIBUNE 1910-12

	Ordinary Meetings	Executive Meetings	Outdoor Demonstrations.
1910	59	4	4
1911	43	1	0
1912	34	1	4

Not all UIL meetings held by any means would have been reported in the paper, but the trend shown is self evident and self-explanatory. All the ills that have been documented so far concerning the declining organisation and effectiveness of the UIL, appears to have gone unnoticed by the Standing Committee of the National Directory, which reported annually on the state of

the organisation in the country.

These meetings took place in Dublin and at the tenth annual gathering in February 1910, it was reported that 'the record of the National Organisation has been one of unprecedented progress in all directions during the past twelve months'.⁵² The number of branches affiliated was put at 1,076, 39 greater than in any other year of the movement.⁵³ A year later the same sentiments were expressed, the Standing Committee confidently announcing that 'since the palmiest days of the Land League, there had been no parallel for the strength and efficiency of the National Organisation as it then stood'.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly this self-delusion was kept up at the meeting in February 1912 when Joseph Devlin, the general secretary of the National Directory claimed the past year 'stands out as one of the most prosperous and successful in the history of organisation, which numerically, financially, and from the point of view of efficiency never stood better than it does at present'.⁵⁵

Much greater research on a county basis is required to unravel how the Standing Committee came to these conclusions for it is certain that they did not apply to the King's county, and some other Leinster counties as well. This can be gauged from the number of branches affiliated to the Directory each year, the details of which were supplied in the annual reports.

TABLE 16: NO. OF UIL BRANCHES AFFILIATED TO THE NATIONAL DIRECTORY FOR ALL LEINSTER COUNTIES 1909 - 1913

From;	1) 8/2/1909 to 10/2/1910	2) 10/2/1910 to 18/1/1911	3) 18/1/1911 to 7/2/1912	4) 7/2/1912 to 7/2/1913
Carlow	9	7	7	5
Dublin	21	26	25	33
Kildare	6	5	2	5
Kilkenny	25	24	22	22
King's	15	15	12	11
Longford	19	14	12	12
Louth	16	19	12	18
Meath	21	19	21	24
Queen's	16	17	16	14
Westmeath	35	25	16	12
Wexford	31	26	34	26
Wicklow	7	15	7	12

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This table shows that while some counties like Wexford, Kilkenny and Meath were well organised branch wise, many others, most notably Carlow, Kildare and Wicklow, and to a lesser extent Longford and Queen's, like the King's county, were in anything but a good condition. Westmeath is also interesting, showing a marked decline in strength from 1910 to 1913, due mainly to the

refusal of the Irish Party to admit Laurence Ginnell to its ranks after the 1910 General Election. A question that must be posed for all these countries also is how effective were these affiliated branches? Table 15 has shown that for the King's county, they were certainly anything but effective, an impression supported by police reports.

At the start of the chapter some reasons were given for the declining effectiveness of the UIL in the county, and it is to this point we must again return. It may appear strange to suggest that the lack of real effective political opposition in the line of another political organisation or party, may in fact be one major reason why the UIL was to drift into a state of chaotic disorganisation. It has been pointed out that the TTA and LLA were not in reality opposition to the League or party, becoming in time auxiliaries of it. The only other organisation or groups that existed in Ireland at this time that could in any way have challenged the UIL within the county were the AOH, Sinn Fein, and the southern Unionists. The latter group, simply by their lack of numbers can be discounted straight away, with only the Birr Division containing a branch of the Irish Unionist Alliance, which in turn had been inactive up to the time of the passing of the third Home Rule Bill. It held a large meeting at Birr in June 1912 to voice opposition to the proposals which were expected to 'create most dangerous confusion',⁵⁷ but thereafter local Unionists were powerless in county affairs and confined their opposition to supporting the financial demands of the Irish Unionists Alliance.

The absence of effective AOH branches to challenge the UIL is harder to explain. Fitzpatrick (1977) details that by 1913, 'the AOH was a direct competition of the UIL as a launching pad for political office in Nationalist Ireland',⁵⁸ and noted that the topics discussed at their meetings 'followed the pattern of League proceedings'.⁵⁹ He also referred to the 'ceaseless struggle for power'⁶⁰ within and between the organisations, while Coogan (1983) claims that in Meath, the UIL was rivalled in popularity by the AOH, which had only three branches less than the former in 1914.⁶¹ There can be little doubt then that the AOH was not only strong in both Clare and Meath, but also in other parts of Ireland if we are to judge by the Inspector General's comment at the end of 1912 that the AOH was 'now perhaps more influential than the UIL'.⁶²

In the King's county surprisingly on the other hand, the AOH never became a strong force politically (if at all) and although it did acquire support as a recognised friendly society under the National Health Insurance Act of 1911, its branches never numbered more than five, at Tullamore, Edenderry, Birr, Clara and Belmont, the latter three only being formed during 1912. No account of political resolution being passed at its meetings can be found, and not even all the branches bothered to send delegates to the county Conventions to select candidates for MP which they were entitled to under the constitution of the UIL. It is possible that with the late formation of most of these

branches in the county, at a stage when Home Rule seemed an almost certainty, its organisers may have felt another political organisation unnecessary; hence the AOHs confinement to benefit purposes only. Except for a fiery speech by the Leinster organiser of the movement, T.P. O'Brien, given on the formation of the branch at Birr in May 1912, when he outlined that the movement was a barrier against masonry and socialism, the movement was not associated with politics and at all times the county inspector referred to it as a 'benefit society'.⁶³ Candidates were selected to represent the organisation at Home Rule demonstrations in Nenagh during September 1912 and at Tullamore in December 1913. Many of its members included leading UIL figures like William Lowry, (also chairman of Birr UIL Executive) but these men left their political speeches for the meetings of the UIL or LLA. Even as a benefit society the AOH faced opposition, admittedly only at Tullamore where a thriving branch of the Irish National Foresters had been in existence since 1899. It was so successful that the local AOH branch there folded up in August 1911,⁶⁴ being unable to compete against a Foresters branch that survives to the present day.

The absence of a strong Sinn Fein party in the county up to 1912 is not as surprising given that this organisation was weak in most parts of Ireland to this date at least. The two branches of it that did exist had their origin in an earlier movement founded by Griffith in 1900, namely Cumann na nGaedheal. It had been set up to 'cultivate a fraternal spirit among Irishmen'⁶⁵ through the support of Irish industries, the study and teaching of Irish history, literature, music, and art, the promotion of Irish games and language, and basically the resistance to everything tending towards the anglicisation of Ireland. The branch at Tullamore, founded early in 1901 was particularly active, Edenderry less so, though John Kelly, a leading light in the latter was also on the Central Executive of the organisation.⁶⁶ Its list of activities in the county included most of those noted above, as well as distributing anti recruiting literature, and after 1906, promoting what became the main plank of the Sinn Fein policy, namely abstention from Westminster. It drew support from IRB members in the county like William Kennedy who said in a speech at Tullamore late in 1907 that 'England would never give anything to Ireland unless forced to do so', and while ruling out the use of force at that particular time, went on to claim 'it was not far distant'.⁶⁷ By 1908 both branches had virtually turned themselves into Sinn Fein clubs. The movement never gained any foothold within the rural districts, possibly because its programme lacked an attractive land and agrarian policy to win the support of tenants.

Both the county's MPs had a clear dislike of the organisation, which became clear from their public speeches. At an Executive meeting of the UIL at Birr in August 1907, Reddy indicated that 'he could not understand the cry of Sinn Fein', and referred to Dolan, the Leitrim Sinn Fein by-election candidate as a 'runaway from Maynooth and clerical misfit'.⁶⁸ Meanwhile Burke claimed the policy of abstention 'would mean

that the Orange gang would be left as the sole spokesmen for Ireland at Westminster' ⁶⁹ and indicated he would resign his seat if he favoured the Sinn Fein policy. Not long after he had made them and other remarks about the movement, the Edenderry branch challenged him to a public debate on the topic of 'Sinn Fein versus Parliamentarism', which he incidentally shirked. ⁷⁰

The county's newspapers did not give the Sinn Fein organisation any backing either, the King's County Independent not mentioning any of its activities, the King's County Chronicle was openly hostile while the Midland Tribune claimed 'its policy had already being tried and failed, and we are confident it will fail again'. ⁷¹ The police kept a close eye on its affairs and noted in February 1908 that at a county board meeting of the GAA, the 'King's county Gaels declared themselves in favour of the Sinn Fein policy', ⁷² but one must question the real merits of such action because no member of the board was seen to promote the Sinn Fein movement afterwards. It was easy to pass such resolutions at meetings, and while the county inspector did record in July 1911 that copies of Irish Freedom were sold at a match in Edenderry, ⁷³ he also pointed out on a number of occasions that there was 'no connection between the GAA and Gaelic League and disloyalty'. ⁷⁴

The Sinn Fein clubs, like their predecessor, mainly confined themselves to lectures, small organised demonstrations in honour of the 1798 patriots and Manchester martyrs, the holding of concerts, and in some cases Irish speaking classes. Little wonder then that the county inspector could report with pleasure in November 1909 that 'the two branches are at present still inactive', ⁷⁵ in January 1910 that 'Sinn Fein is making little headway as yet', ⁷⁶ while in January 1912, the Tullamore branch turned itself into a Wolfe Tone club, which was expected to 'afford amusement in the form of singing, dancing etc' and to succeed better than its predecessor because 'it might perhaps afford some amusement for the shop assistants of the town'. ⁷⁷ The only indication we have of the strength of these branches was that given by the inspector in March 1910, at 60 for Tullamore and 30 for Edenderry. ⁷⁸

By April 1912 then at the time of the passage of the third Home Rule Bill, neither the AOH or Sinn Fein could in any way be said to have offered any serious political opposition to the UIL. As it turned out, this was to the detriment of the latter, because with no effective opposition to challenge it, the UIL became disorganised, disjointed, and dilapidated; its leaders and organisers were lulled into a false sense of security with the organisation being allowed to lapse into a poor state. The blame for this was partly with the National Directory, which should have noticed the drop in the number of branches being affiliated after 1908, but more so with local leaders and MPs, who adapted a passive attitude towards its affairs. What the movement required in 1910 was a good organisational shake up and strong leadership at the top, especially from the county's MPs. Instead it was presented with apparent lack of interest,

understanding, guidance, and direction from Burke, and from Reddy, controversy and conflict. The role played by both these men in the decline of the League in the county now merits attention.

Dealing with Michael Reddy first, he certainly was the more active of the two MPs, having undoubtedly worked hard to build up the UIL in the county during the early years of its development. While a controversial figure at times, he remained popular in the county to 1910 at least. However, from 1907 onwards, for reasons hard to gauge, he found himself in hot waters on more than one occasion, the UIL being the real loser in the long term. A possible explanation for some of his remarks from this time onwards may have to do with one of the central points in this thesis; did Reddy detect the decline of the UIL? (which most others clearly did not.) Were his actions directed to checking this decline?___because if they were, they backfired in most instances.

To start with, it is hard to explain his attack on the Gaelic League at the Birr UIL Executive meeting in August 1907. It had 17 branches in the county by that year and while it presented a colourful lively programme of activities, only half the branches were really active. More importantly the Gaelic League in no way interfered in the politics of the county and could not in any way be described as a threat to the UIL. Yet Reddy in the course of a vigorous speech, was foolish and shortsighted to remark that:

...We have a great deal too many of these Leagues and Associations. I do not know what this Gaelic League is at all - a lot of Christy Minstrel Troupes about the country. I ask the ULL to boycott these affairs, whatever they call them, as I think they are anti-National, as much as possible. We only want one organisation and we want nothing to do with them. I would go so far as to wreck them, and not have them sailing under false colours...⁷⁹

Not surprisingly the Birr branch of the Gaelic League passed a stringent resolution the following week entering 'an emphatic protest against the unreasoned and ill-favoured words of Mr Reddy MP',⁸⁰ and shortly afterwards the president of Ferbane UIL resigned in protest⁸¹ at the remarks. Reddy's sentiments were to be a particularly sore point not only with Irish Irelanders, but also town tenants for a number of years afterwards, and were resurrected during 1911 in a letter to the Midland Tribune by a town tenant at pains to explain why that movement had not supported Reddy in the general election the previous December.⁸²

The years 1909 and 1910, particularly the latter, were

ones Reddy would soon wish to forget, as his popularity declined steadily during this period. When the position of county coroner fell vacant for the Birr division in April 1909, he decided to seek the post, which had an annual salary of £50. In this, he was strongly backed by the Midland Tribune, which supported his candidature by stating that:

...Mr Reddy is a Nationalist of the old school, and valued member of the Irish Party, esteemed and admired by his colleagues and feared by Capt. Craig, Mr Moore and Company. The members of the King's County Council have achieved a wide reputation for patriotism, and we anticipate that on this occasion they will be true to their traditions.⁸³

At the Council meeting the following week, Reddy got 11 votes in the first count, as against 9 for Dr Meagher of Ferbane and 5 for another candidate Joseph Corcoran. But in the second count however, all Corcoran's supporters moved over to Meagher who secured the post. Reddy took his defeat rather badly, for while he thanked those who had supported him, added that 'there would be another day for some of those who had failed to record their votes as they had promised'.⁸⁴ One of those who had voted against Reddy was James Perry Goodbody of Clara, the head of the firm of Goodbodys jute and flour mills. He had been returned unopposed as county councillor for the town since the passage of the local Government Act came into operation in 1899, a point Reddy referred to as 'a shame' when speaking at a public demonstration in the town during October 1908.⁸⁵ However it was in June 1910 that he launched into a scathing attack on the family when speaking at another public demonstration in nearby Ballycumber. The reasons for this are unclear, he could have been doing it out of spite or resentment for the way Goodbody had voted in the coroner contest; more likely however is that with the Ranch War effectively ended by this time, Reddy was taking an opportunity to attack a family which were Unionist in politics, and also large owners of land in the county. During the course of his speech, he claimed the Goodbodys 'would have to give up their 5 miles of grasslands or else we will let loose the dogs of war'.⁸⁶ This caused a disturbance among the crowd as there were employees of the company present who in turn called on Reddy to withdraw his remarks. The latter persisted however, using other unsavoury remarks such as 'hirelings, not King's county men or even Irishmen' to describe the Goodbodys, while going on to cast doubts as to the numbers alleged to be employed by their firms, which he put at '50 or 60 hands'.⁸⁷ Meanwhile a small melee resulted which the police prevented from getting out of hand by making a number of arrests, and a contingent of the crowd along with the Clara band withdrew from the meeting in protest at Reddy's remarks.

The King's County Chronicle remarked that his speech 'came like a thunderclap'⁸⁸ and carried a report from the Daily Independent of interviews with local Nationalists and

representatives of the Goodbodys following the Ballycumber meeting. The latter claimed the lands Reddy had referred to were owned by the family for 50 years, and were never let on the grazing or eleven months system. More importantly they pointed out that their firms in Clara employed roughly 700 people, with an average wage bill of £500 per week.⁸⁹ The local Nationalists interviewed also voiced disapproval of Reddy's remarks, and a letter from Michael White, a former secretary of the Clara branch of the UIL to the King's County Independent at the same time, also made clear that he did not wish to be associated with the remarks.⁹⁰ There was little doubt but that the Goodbodys were popular locally, the parish priest having always proposed James Goodbody for election as county councillor which he secured without contest from 1899. Despite all this however, Reddy refused to retract his statement, and again attacked the family at another public meeting in Clareen later in the month. In September at Shinrone, he warned that when 'the long nights came, their land would be driven',⁹¹ in May 1911 he referred to them as 'petty tyrants whose day is gone',⁹² while as late as August 1912 he found time at a meeting in Kinnitty to carry on his vendetta.⁹³ Yet despite this the lands were never subject to cattle drives (until 1918) and Reddy's expressed views were on the whole not popular within the county. However he cared little for this, as Clara was in the northern constituency, and he was unlikely to lose many votes over his attacks as a result.

Later in June 1910, Reddy had embroiled himself in more controversy, this time with Fr O'Reilly, PP, Kilcormac, a leading Leaguer in the county. During the meeting in Ballycumber, Reddy took time to relate to views he claimed were expressed by an eminent Catholic divine (unnamed) at a meeting in Kilconnell two years previously, when the latter referred to cattle drivings as 'immoral and illegal',⁹⁴ a view Reddy said he did not 'believe' as cattle driving was the only 'weapon' in the hands of the people to get back their land.⁹⁵ This irked Fr O'Reilly who went on to criticise Reddy at a UIL meeting in Kilcormac and claimed that 'in future we are to turn for direction to the gospel of Shannonbridge', before a strongly worded resolution was passed denouncing Reddy's remarks, which were seen as 'serving no good purpose'.⁹⁶ One would have expected that this action would have prompted Reddy to leave the issue aside and let it rest in peace but at another public meeting held afterwards, he arrogantly remarked that 'far from retracting what I have said, I now repeat every word of it',⁹⁷ before claiming that Fr O'Reilly should have first written to him for an explanation, 'before denouncing him in the chapel yard'.⁹⁸ This in turn resulted in further strongly worded resolutions by Kilcormac and Killoughy UIL who solidly stood behind O'Reilly but the main result of this episode was to strain relations within the UIL that were to have far greater repercussions later that year.

Reddy's reputation was damaged even further by his dealings with the Ferbane branch of the UIL around the same time. This branch had passed resolutions in April against the eleven months system of grazing,⁹⁹ which was particularly prevalent in

the district, and these were forwarded to Reddy, who in turn requested the holding of a public meeting, which was convened in May. Before giving a strongly worded speech against the ranching system, he announced in response to a public address given to him, (ironically as it turned out), that he would 'never through any act of his disappoint the hopes or betray the aspirations of the people of Ferbane' (applause, and cries of 'you have good blood in you').¹⁰⁰ Later in the month, cattle drives took place on the lands of four locals, for which 30 men were arrested.¹⁰¹ One of these drives had taken place on land owned by Daniel Egan, a member of the UIL and local county councillor who was also a good friend of Reddy's, who in turn voiced annoyance at the Leaguers action.

Naturally this was resented by the majority of the branch, who went on to express anger at remarks made by Reddy who alleged he would 'put his boot on Ferbane UIL for the purpose of crushing it' while further adding that the 'drives were organised by 'light hearted people'.¹⁰² The hypocrisy of Reddy in this event is shown up by the fact that he questioned the Leaguers action as to why they had not organised drives on the land of the local landlord, Henry King, which he had expected them to do after having spoken at the public meeting earlier in the month. Reddy went on to allege 'cowardice' as the reason but the Ferbane Leaguers argued that they were in negotiation with King over land sales already,¹⁰³ and not wanting to prejudice these discussions, they did not drive the lands in question. Bitter correspondence passed between both sides with the Ferbane branch secretary eventually writing to the Standing Committee in Dublin asking for a representative to be sent down to solve the dispute.¹⁰⁴ This line of action however gave no joy as the latter did not apparently want to become involved in the dispute which was to have important sequels later that year and in 1911.

By December 1910, the UIL in the Birr division had finally split into two groups, helped to a large extent by the events over the preceding months, but also due to an important misunderstanding between them over the holding of a Convention that month. The surprise calling of an election in December necessitated the summoning of a special meeting of the National Directory, which in turn decided that:

...as the time for preparation for the General Election is short beyond precedent... this meeting decides to dispense with the holding of Conventions in the present emergency. [However] Conventions can be held if local circumstances render it desirable...¹⁰⁵

This last point was the root of much controversy in the Birr division of the county. A number of branches of the League, most notably Ferbane and Kilcormac wished for a Convention to be held, as they hoped to oust Reddy, but the Directory refused this request. The latter group only allowed Conventions where there

was not already a sitting Home Rule MP, or in 'exceptional circumstances'.¹⁰⁶ John B. Powell, the editor of the Midland Tribune, claimed the UIL office in Dublin denied receiving correspondence from branches requesting a Convention but that when he went to Dublin in person, he was informed such requests had been received from Ferbane and Shinrone. He further alleged that a representative of the Standing Committee refused the request on the grounds that 'as there were 24 accredited branches in the division,' a majority clearly did not want a Convention'.¹⁰⁷ If this information from Powell is accurate, and even allowing for the fact that the LLA and TTA were entitled to representation at such Conventions, it is hard to see how the representative could arrive at the figure of 24; as the National Directory minutes show clearly that there were only 15 branches of the UIL affiliated for the whole county in 1910!¹⁰⁸ To add fuel to the fire, Powell also alleged that in requesting a Convention, the representative abruptly replied 'We want Reddy', the main suspicion of those branches which hoped to oust the latter.¹⁰⁹ To them, this appeared like coercion from the National Directory.

Even before this information from Powell became public, the opponents of Reddy organised their own Convention in Birr to put forward a candidate. At this meeting, Frederick Ryan defeated Powell on the casting vote of the chairman, Fr O'Reilly, PP, and in the election that followed, the Midland Tribune claimed he had the support of four branches of the League as well as the TTA and LLA.¹¹⁰ However the poll proved a disappointment for the opponents of Reddy, who defeated Ryan by 2,123 votes to 624.¹¹¹ The county inspector remarked that had Ryan begun his canvass earlier, he may have had some chance of success 'as the more intelligent people are tired of Mr Reddy and his ignorant tirades'.¹¹² There may be some truth in this but the main reason Reddy won so easily was because Ryan, virtually unknown and not even a leading Leaguer in the county, was a particularly poor choice for opposition candidate. He was undoubtedly the choice of Fr O'Reilly, PP, but Powell would have been a better selection, as his high profile within the division from his association with the Midland Tribune made him a more likely winner, but his late entry into the contest proved costly.

The election campaign itself had been lively, and one of Reddy's meetings in Birr had to be abandoned due to opposition, mainly from town tenants.¹¹³ However, the deployment of extra police in the division kept order, and there was more "blood" spilt after the contest than during it. In January 1911 the Birr branch of the League expelled a leading member of the town tenants for supporting Ryan,¹¹⁴ an action indefensible when contrasted with the fact that the branch failed to select candidates to go forward in the local election for the urban council the following month.¹¹⁵ That same January the Ferbane branch of the UIL decided that since the Birr Executive had to all practical purposes broken down, their secretary be instructed to write to all League branches in the division with a view to having it reconstructed, a move backed up by Shinrone UIL.¹¹⁶ A

fortnight later to their surprise, they received a letter from the Executive informing them of their 'suppression' and of it 'being cut away from the National Organisation'.¹¹⁷ No official reason was given for this action, but it was beyond doubt that the events of the previous six months and the branch's support for Ryan had taken their toll. Certainly no meeting of the Executive decided on this action and most people would have concurred with the view of the Ferbane UIL chairman that the decision 'was the product of the fertile brains of Mr Reddy'.¹¹⁸ A resolution from this branch requesting the National Directory to 'put the Executive of the south King's county in order', elicited no response from that body, and as a result of all these proceedings, the Ferbane branch was to act independently for over a year.

In November 1911, Reddy allowed himself yet again to be drawn into controversy, this time with the editor of the Midland Tribune, at a meeting of the Birr Executive. The press had been banned from the proceedings, but Powell forced his way in towards the end and demanded to know if a motion had been drawn up by Reddy 'condemning the Tribune'. The basis for this disagreement had to do with some of Powell's editorials going back to October 1910, when he first expressed criticism of another Irish Party MP, Mr T.P. O'Connor, for speeches the latter made on a visit to Canada indicating a willingness to accept a federal system of Home Rule for Ireland. On one particular occasion Powell referred to O'Connor as an 'English Atheist',¹¹⁹ with Reddy in his presence, but the latter only took exception to these remarks after the 1910 general election, possibly because he suspected Powell of supporting Ryan during that contest, which incidentally Powell denied.¹²⁰ When Powell attended the Executive Meeting in November 1911, Reddy used threatening and abusive language towards him, before pushing his fist under his nose, and when Powell in turn attempted to address the gathering, the chairman terminated the proceedings.¹²¹

All these events documented so far damaged the UIL's support within the county, but Reddy can by no means be blamed entirely for all the League's ills during this period. Haviland Burke in turn must take a large share of the blame for the virtual breakdown of the organisation in the Tullamore division, for entirely different reasons. His main failure was to neglect to attend the constituency on any sort of regular basis, which resulted in a growing apathy among the local UIL organisers, who must have despaired at his indifference to their needs. As early as April 1908, the secretary of the Philipstown branch was instructed to write 'expressing extreme displeasure with him for not paying more attention to communications which had been sent to him'.¹²² The following August at an Executive meeting which Burke failed to attend, even though it had originally been postponed to fall in line with his schedule, again saw criticism voiced by delegates from three branches regarding his negligence in attending to constituency affairs.¹²³ One delegate expressed so much frustration at unanswered correspondence that 'he gave up writing altogether' to Burke.¹²⁴ It was not long before the

editor of the King's County Independent was adding his weight to these feelings, expressing the view that 'he never worked hard for the constituency'.¹²⁵ By December 1909, he was comparing Burke to the former MP for the constituency whom he had replaced, Dr Joseph Fox, who had also been noted for his absences from the constituency, and mused that 'it was no wonder that the people are dropping out of the ranks'.¹²⁶ Undoubtedly Burke was lazy and this is reflected most in his poor attendance at meetings of the National Directory, for of the 19 gatherings of this body that were held between 1904 and 1914, he only attended 9 and sent letters of apology for absence on three of the 10 occasions he was missing. This contrasts poorly with Reddy who managed meanwhile to attend on 15 occasions.¹²⁷ One defence of Burke however during the years leading up to 1914 was the fact that he was in failing health, which partly accounts for his neglect of constituency work. On the occasion of the second reading of the Home Rule Bill, he had to leave his sick bed to vote, and so serious was his condition that he was accompanied by his wife and medical adviser.¹²⁸

However this may not have been well known in the county and by the end of 1909, only the Clara branch appeared content with his performance, and it came as no real surprise when it was rumoured he would be challenged at the Convention that December for nomination for MP. Equally surprising was the fact that his support held exceptionally well when matters came to a head, as he was opposed by Patrick Gavigan from Tyrrellspass, vice president of the south Westmeath UIL Executive, who only managed to secure the support of the Tubber branch at the Convention.¹²⁹ In many respects, Gavigan like Frederick Ryan, stood little chance as he was not involved in UIL affairs in the county.

Having looked then at the performance of the county's two MPs, it can be safely concluded that both were responsible to a large extent for the poor state of the UIL in the county by 1912. Other small but important factors or points outside their control to a large extent, must now be mentioned before closing this chapter. The first considers the whole question of Home Rule itself, or more precisely the length of time it took to get the topic on the political agenda at Westminster. Many Nationalists had confidently expected the Liberals to introduce the measure after coming into power in 1906, but it was to be 1910 before the issue became a possibility again, and even when the Bill was passed in 1912, two years would lapse before it was expected to become effective. Meanwhile all this time the Irish Party were dependent on the League for funds, which in turn relied on the general support of the public. These annual fund raising collections were one of the least liked tasks undertaken by League organisers and by 1912, as indicated by Table 17, some party supporters at least were becoming less generous.

TABLE 17: Funds collected by the UIL in the King's county, 1908-1912

YEAR	UIL PURPOSES	HOME RULE FUND	OTHER	TOTAL
1908	£280 8s 9d	£ 28 0s 0d	£17 0s 0d	£325 8s 9d
1909	£ 96 4s 6d	£141 2s 7d	£37 7s 6d	£274 14s 7d
1910	£ 61 13s 0d	£109 5s 0d	£36 2s 6d	£207 0s 6d
1911	£ 34 0s 0d	£ 95 13s 0d	£ 4 0s 0d	£133 13s 0d
1912	£ 37 5s 0d	£ 63 14s 6d	£20 5s 6d	£121 5s 0d

Footnote¹³⁰

The high figure for UIL purposes in 1908 is mainly accounted for in connection with the funds collected to aid the Shinrone branch in their campaign against the Kennys and the Ormond Hunt Club during the Ranch War. It can be argued that in many respects that whole campaign drained the generosity of League supporters to some extent, but the main reason revenue was down by 1912 had again to do with the poor organisational structure of the League by that time throughout the whole county. Interestingly the National Directory reported that year that the Home Rule Fund for Ireland amounted to £20,717 11s 2d, being even greater again in 1913.¹³¹ This would indicate that the organisation was functioning well in places at least, but it would be interesting to know how much of these funds were coming from America. After all, grave problems were experienced throughout Ireland around this period in relation to the collection of funds to erect a monument in honour of Parnell.

A letter from Joseph Devlin to the Birr UIL branch in May 1908 gave details of £6,000 having been collected for this particular project in America, with an additional £3,000 needed to be collected in Ireland, or about £100 per county, which it was expected all UIL branches would have little difficulty in raising to complete the task.¹³² The editor of the Midland Tribune announced the following August with confidence that 'the statue will soon be erected',¹³³ but UIL branches were slow to take up the collection at this time, more immediate financial strains from the Ranch War no doubt taking their toll, and by the following February the Birr Guardians had received a communication from the organising committee to arrange collections.¹³⁴ By the end of that year, only one third of the amount needed had been raised,¹³⁵ the King's County Independent claiming it was the 'blackest piece of ingratitude that can be laid at the door of the Irish people in our time'.¹³⁶ By this stage the King's county had subscribed £16 13s 6d to the committee, but other counties fared little better, Galway contributing £61 1s 0d, Meath £42 6s 0d, Kildare £10 15s 0d and Mayo £9 12s 6d to name just four while only Tipperary gave the anticipated amount¹³⁷ the King's County Independent sarcastically remarking that it hoped 'none of the counties would be embarrassed by their extravagance...'¹³⁸ Even when the monument was being unveiled in September 1911, the editor

remarked that the money required 'had not yet been fully realised', blaming the lack of support from farmers as the principal reason, when their subscriptions should have been so large as to raise 'a monument of gold' to Parnell's memory.¹³⁹ This whole episode raises the question of how well organised the League was in other counties, but only detailed county studies could help give the answer to this question.

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to mention the importance of the 1909 Budget and its role in the decline of support for the party and UIL, which admittedly is extremely hard to gauge. There can be little doubt that this budget was unpopular in Ireland, and especially so in the King's county, where many leading public bodies and organisations including Birr and Edenderry Guardians,¹⁴⁰ Birr Town Tenants,¹⁴¹ Tullamore Traders,¹⁴² Edenderry Rural District Council¹⁴³ and at least five branches of the UIL¹⁴⁴ were to pass resolutions condemning its contents. Criticism of the proposals were also expressed at the Birr and Tullamore UIL Executive meetings in December 1909. Especially of concern were the clauses concerning land taxes, liquor licences, spirits and tobacco. At the Birr meeting, it was stated that the proposals would have adverse effects on the 10 to 12 acres of tobacco that was grown in Kilcormac district¹⁴⁵ but it was the whole effect on the malting, brewing and distilling industries that caused most alarm in the county.

Tullamore alone had two breweries and a distillery, the main families concerned being the Egans and Williams, both of whom were also involved in the malting business. Representatives of both families expressed grave concerns at the budget proposals in an interview with the King's County Independent which were expected to 'adversely effect the licensed trade as well as the brewing and distilling industries'.¹⁴⁶ Egans in particular had been staunch party supporters, and it is interesting to note that the Williams group backed a rival party candidate in a north King's county by-election in 1914. Farmers also were worried about the effects all this would have on the price of barley, as the King's county had the fourth highest acreage of that particular crop in Leinster in 1908 at 13,573 acres, behind Kilkenny, Queen's and Wexford.¹⁴⁷ Letters to the local papers also voiced complaints of stamp duties on land and warnings that the future prospects for Irish farmers 'was not a very pleasant one'.¹⁴⁸ In all the proposals seemed to some Nationalists at least, a heavy price to pay for Home Rule.

In conclusion then, all the main indicators by April 1912 show that the UIL was certainly in a poor state within the county. The Standing Committee of the League had sent an organiser to the county in 1911 to re-organise branches that had lapsed and while he did succeed in temporarily bringing back to life some of these, many of them soon fell back into their previous lapsed chaotic state. Land issues, dealt with at length in the last two chapters, still caused problems for some branches, most notably Eglisish and Drumcullen, which split in August 1909 over the division of a farm in the locality. When

Eglish officers attempted to organise a collection outside the local parish Church, it aroused the anger of some Drumcullen members which resulted in a fight between the ringleaders of both sides and ended up in court proceedings.¹⁴⁹ All the points documented in this chapter, most notably the success of the purchase acts, the lack of effective political opposition to the League, the bungling of Reddy especially, but also Burke, and the concern over the 1909 budget along with the slow enactment of Home Rule, had together been too much for the organisation to handle. By April 1912 the UIL and its policies had become stale, stodgy and sterile; and it was now about to face an embarrassing failure in the north King's county by-election of 1914, the subject of which will be dealt with in chapter six.

CHAPTER SIX

The "Rigged" Convention --- May 1912 - December 1914

'The Convention [of the 19th November 1914] was a gerrymandered, rigged and fraudulent one'¹

Edward J. Graham speaking a day before the north King's county by-election in December 1914.

The last chapter explored the poor organisation of the UIL in the King's county up to April 1912, and by this date, it was remarked that not one branch of the League could be said to be really active or in a flourishing state. This chapter in turn takes a look at the continued declining fortunes of the League up to December 1914, when it was to suffer a humiliating defeat in the North King's County by-election of that month. However it will also examine the renewal of land agitation that occurred in the same constituency during the period in question, which was largely the work of two branches of the League (and also due to the activities of two LLA branches). The renewal of this agitation goes to show that once agrarian issues became important again, like during 1903-1909 period, various branches of the League were propelled into taking action to protect their own interests.

If League organisers had hoped that the first passage of the Home Rule Bill in April 1912 would do much to enliven the organisation's fortunes, they were soon to be disappointed as the measure did not generate any great excitement in the county. The county inspector reported that month that despite the fact that the majority of the population was Nationalist, 'there does not appear to have been a great amount of interest in the introduction of the Home Rule Bill',² and only four branches of the League within the county (all in the Birr division)³ held meetings to select delegates to attend the National Convention in Dublin to hear Redmond's views on the matter latter that same month. Most leading Nationalists in the county were reported as being happy with its proposals and public bodies like the Tullamore Guardians also passed resolutions in its favour.⁴ A meeting was held in Birr to arrange for the illumination of the town, and to organise for a number of bonfires which were later carried out with National flags also being displayed. On this occasion the Riverstown band paraded through the town and the Midland Tribune reported that it was 'accompanied by a great crowd of enthusiastic followers.'⁵ However the paper gives no indication of how large this crowd actually was, which it usually would on such an occasion, and also, when William Lowry addressed the gathering, appropriately at the Manchester Martyr memorial, the paper carried no account of the details of his address. Both these omissions would go a long way to indicate that the proceedings were not well supported.

The paper also reported celebrations in other surroundings districts; 'bonfires blazed on hillsides', Kilcormac was 'brilliantly illuminated'⁶ but no celebrations took place in Banagher owing to a bereavement, while no mention at all was made of Cloghan, Shannonbridge or Ferbane. In fact the whole report on the celebrations only merited half a column in the paper, and

it would appear that the enthusiasm generated by the bill's passage did not even enliven the editor himself.

The situation in the north of the county was even worse, as here no celebrations were reported in any town, again a clear indication of how weak the UIL had become in this division. Only the local public bodies along with the Tullamore Foresters sent delegates to the Convention in Dublin. The Edenderry correspondent to the King's County Independent blamed the lack of activity on the 'coal strike and the Atlantic calamity' [the sinking of the Titanic], while the Philipstown correspondent claimed there was more talk that week about three gaelic matches in the town than the Home Rule Bill which was 'delegated to a minor place'.⁷ It was clear from all this that the dispirited state into which the UIL had lapsed, would clearly not be improved overnight, and this is best illustrated again by the feeble attempts made that same year by branches in the southern division to erect a hut for a local evicted tenant.

John Joe Corcoran of Drumcullen has been evicted along with his wife and eight children by their landlord Valentine Ryan in May 1911 for non-payment of one and a half years rent.⁸ After he got accommodation in what was described as a 'miserable dilapidated hovel',⁹ a fund was opened in June 1911 to erect a proper hut for the family, with £6 being quickly collected by the local Eglisk and Drumcullen branch of the UIL.¹⁰ It was hoped that all the branches in the Birr division would subscribe to this worthy cause, but at an Executive meeting held in Birr during February 1912, it was reported that by that stage only three branches had subscribed. Michael Reddy MP reckoned that it would take £25 to complete the hut and a committee was duly formed to organise the collection, with each branch asked to give £2.¹¹ Reddy added also that it would be a 'disgraceful thing if they allowed an evicted tenant to be neglected' and pointed out that if the Executive failed to enforce its resolution, 'there would be no respect for them'.¹² The editor of the Midland Tribune also threw his weight behind the scheme but funds came in very slowly and at a second Executive meeting in June 1912, a resolution was passed requesting those branches which had promised to subscribe to do so at once'.¹³

At this stage the organisers decided that to boost the appeal, a number of outdoor meetings of the League would be held. The first of these took place at Kinnity in August and the attendance included not only Reddy, but Michael O Hartigan, the head of the Evicted Tenants Association (of Ireland), and also a League organiser sent to the constituency during 1911 (and now again), to carry out re-organisation of branches which had effectively died out by this time. Good news was announced at the meeting that a site for the hut had been given by a local district councillor, but it was also pointed out that only four branches of the League had still subscribed funds.¹⁴ A couple of days afterwards, work commenced on the erection of the hut, helped by a 'large number of willing workers',¹⁵ and by this stage Corcoran himself had undergone an operation in Birr Union.

The Midland Tribune announced early in September that the family were to take up residence in the hut on the eight of that month,¹⁶ but this deadline was not met, and at another demonstration a week later an appeal was again being made to the nine branches of the League to subscribe their promised sum of £2.¹⁷

By November the whole organisation of the scheme had reached farcical proportions, with the walls and chimney of the hut in place, but the doors and windows still missing.¹⁸ The Midland Tribune regretted that 'all the eloquence expended on the scheme did not seem to have got it any further' since the previous meeting and in January 1913 complained again of the 'outstanding monies still due'.¹⁹ At the first Executive meeting of 1913, further reports were heard of branches not having yet subscribed their funds, while another committee was formed to complete the task. Despite this no account of the huts completion was ever detailed in press or police reports. The county inspector had reported the previous October that 'the hut remained unfinished' and that O' Hartigan had left the county and returned to Clare.²⁰ The episode on the whole reflects again on how poorly organised the League had really become that it could not complete a simple task that the old Land League had carried out on many previous occasions.

In January 1914 the UIL received a further embarrassing setback in Birr during the local urban elections held that month. Over a year previously Lord Rosse had voted against the Home Rule Bill in the House of Lords,²¹ an action that irked Michael Reddy who used this as an excuse to commence a series of personal attacks on him, which were no doubt intended to revive his flagging loss of popularity sustained over the previous three years. The recommencement of this series of attacks (which were noted in chapter two as a device used by the League leaders in the early years of the movement) began at an Executive meeting in March 1913 when Reddy criticised Rosse as Land Chancellor of the county for having selected too many Protestants as magistrates. He was heartily applauded by the assembled delegates when he indicated that Rosse should not be appointed to any public board in the county, and specified the technical board as the example which quickly sprung to his mind.²²

The frosty relationship that had developed between Reddy and the Midland Tribune dissipated after John B. Powell emigrated to the US in 1912 to become a successful journalist in Boston. The new editor, James Pike, who had been an associate editor of the Irish Peasant and an active member of the IRB,²³ fully endorsed Reddy's views concerning Rosse and also made a special reference to the £100 the latter had subscribed to the funds of the Irish Unionist Alliance to fight Home Rule,²⁴ before going on to inaugurate a campaign that Summer to prevent Rosse's re-election to the Urban Council in Birr the following January. In June, Pike sarcastically remarked, 'we will see [then] how many votes he will get',²⁵ only to receive a decided rebuke the following month when the Nationalist majority council members

again selected Rosse to their technical committee without one dissenting voice—the paper commenting that 'Birr folk have always dearly loved a Lord...'²⁶ Pike was especially critical of the fact that the treasurer of the Birr UIL Executive was present, but did not take a stand on the matter, while going on to argue that most other so called Nationalists who were absent on the occasion should openly declare themselves 'Tories'!²⁷

Disappointingly from the paper's point of view, only the Drumcullen branch of the UIL condemned the action or rather inaction of the Urban Council,²⁸ and also joined the editor in calling on the farmers of the county not to re-elect Rosse as their president.²⁹ The organisation in question, the King's County Farmers Association had been reformed in August 1912,³⁰ with Lord Rosse elected president, on the motion of William Delaney MP!³¹ He had gained reputation at this stage as an eminent agriculturalist, helped mainly by the success of his dairy enterprise in Birr. The supply of milk was a major problem in many areas at this particular time, so much so in fact that a commission had been appointed by the Lord Lieutenant to enquire into the effects of the scarcity on public health and with a view to trying to find a remedy for the problem.³² A large part of the evidence taken by the commission centred on Rosse's dairy, which consisted of a modern cow shed built to accommodate 50 cows, which in 1911 produced 32,100 gallons of milk. An average of 540 gallons of milk each week was sold locally, experiments were also carried out at the dairy using foodstuffs and one cow produced almost 1,000 gallons alone in 1910.³³ All of this contrasted with the position in the Tullamore district for when the commission made enquiries there later in July 1912, four speakers gave details of the shortage of milk in the locality.³⁴ Despite the attempt by some UIL members then, it came as little surprise when Rosse was re-elected president of the society in his absence at a meeting in Tullamore during October 1913.³⁵

It was however when the the local urban elections approached in January 1914 that the Midland Tribune and Birr Leaguers were to make their most determined efforts to ensure Rosse would not be re-elected onto the council. The task facing them was difficult, for in the previous elections of 1911, Rosse had been elected third in the poll of 21 councillors.³⁶ At a meeting of the Birr UIL to select candidates, a Nationalist ticket of 21 candidates was put forward for the voters which also included 6 Unionists or Conservatives as they were described. The latter group did not include Rosse and the local curate, Fr Crowe, CC, fully supported the attempt to oust the latter.³⁷ The Leaguers were soon dealt a blow however when a previous Nationalist member signed his election papers. The Midland Tribune proclaimed that it would be a 'lasting disgrace should Lord Rosse be returned to the Urban Council'³⁸ but went on to stress nonetheless that it was 'confident'³⁸ of the right outcome.

A vigorous canvass of the town was undertaken by the League, and while it was anticipated that all the 200 Unionist

electors would plump for Rosse, they still expected to win as house to house visits were undertaken and 'full use made of the printers services'.³⁹ Meanwhile the Chronicle called on the electors to go 'to the polling booth with their opinions unbiased by outside interference',⁴⁰ but appeared unconfident when it took time to criticise the 'poor organisation',⁴¹ on the part of the Unionist candidates. Yet despite this, Rosse was elected and even though he only won the last (ie, 21st) seat, it was a remarkable achievement in the circumstances. The Midland Tribune's efforts at hiding its disappointment over the result by claiming that 'men were seen that day in Birr who in fact had ceased to reside in the town',⁴² was only overshadowed by the local League's so called 'rejoicing',⁴³ at almost having unseated Rosse and placed him as the last of those elected, given his high vote in the 1911 election. William Lowry delivered a speech on the evening of the count in which he proclaimed that the election showed that the people of Birr 'were true to the old cause' having returned 20 of their 21 candidates.⁴⁴ To all outsiders however, the result was clearly a defeat for the League, for after all its one aim in the whole contest had been to unseat Rosse, and this it clearly failed to do. It had been the first time since May 1902 that Birr UIL had taken up an electoral challenge, and like on that occasion, it had again come off second best.

It was noted in the last chapter that the Standing Committee of the National Directory of the UIL, and the National Directory itself, did not appear to detect this disorganised state into which the League had slipped, and this again was the case in 1912-13 also. At the thirteenth annual meeting held in February 1913, it was pointed out that the affiliation fees for 1912 again exceeded that of 1911, while the Home Rule Fund topped over £20,000.⁴⁵ A year later the Directory was more than satisfied with the continued progress of the UIL when it was confidently pointed out that :

The National Organisation was never more widespread, more efficient or more powerful than it is today. The number of branches is a record one, and the standard of efficiency among the branches is higher than ever. The number of local meetings held all over the country, the collections organised for the Home Rule Fund, the remittances for affiliated fees, and practical and effective work done in connection with local elections, wherever National issues were involved, all go to show how deeply the spirit of the people has been moved by the progress of the Home Rule Bill.⁴⁶

On virtually every count here, with the exception of the Home Rule Fund, the main indicators were all out of line for the King's county in 1913. While the 12 affiliated branches was one greater than in 1912, this compares poorly with the 20 affiliated in 1907,⁴⁷ and the movement was far from being widespread with

large pockets of the country without branches. The standard of efficiency among these was anything but competent, as was displayed by the pathetic effort made to erect a hut for J.J. Corcoran. The declining trend of the number of meetings reportedly held in the Midland Tribune since 1910 which was outlined in table 15 on page 87 continued into 1913 and 1914. During the former year in question, 29 ordinary meetings, 3 Executive meetings, and 4 outdoor demonstrations were held, while the corresponding figures for 1914 were 23, 1 and 4 respectively.⁴⁸ The League had also failed in the one contest upon which it embarked during the local elections in Birr. The only really bright note in the years work was that the Home Rule Fund for 1913 amounted to £138, compared with just £63 in 1912,⁴⁹ but even here this figure was boosted by the first real successful collection held in Tullamore for years which had amounted to over £50.⁵⁰

The poor state of many of the branches is again reflected from the accounts given by the local papers, and particularly the comments given by the two editors of the two Nationalist papers. In September 1912 the editor of the Independent complained that the 'north King's county badly needs to bestir itself', having pointed out the need for a complete revamp of the UIL in the whole midland region.⁵¹ That same week the Tullamore correspondent took Burke to task for his neglect of the constituency and advised that 'it would be well that he turn his attention to organising the division and awakening the National spirit which has been in a dormant state for a long time past'.⁵² A year later the paper was glad to be able to announce that both Burke and Reddy had at last visited the constituency and held a 'number of successful meetings',⁵³ all to support the Home Rule cause and whip up support for a large outdoor demonstration held in Tullamore during December 1913.

The problems in the northern division were compounded by the fact, that no Executive meeting was held there from December 1909 to November 1914, a period of almost five years - and such meetings were expected to be held quarterly each year! This in turn meant that local League leaders were not pressurised into keeping their branches in shape, and of the 12 branches affiliated to the National Directory in 1913, not surprisingly only two, Tullamore and Croghan, came from this division.⁵⁴ Elsewhere in the county, there were problems also; a letter to the Midland Tribune from Mathew Graham of Shinrone in November 1913 complained of the poor state of the once strong branch in that district, which he described as having 'latterly been suffering from narcotism'.⁵⁵ How the Standing Committee of the League could allow such laxity to develop is hard to comprehend. It is true that they sent organisers into the county each year from 1911 to 1914, but they appear to have made little effort to monitor how successful these men were in their tasks. Early in 1913 it was announced in the King's County Independent that one of those sent, Michael Conway, was about to visit Kinnity, Philipstown, Clara, Kilcormac, Ferbane, Banagher and other areas to reorganise the local branches of the UIL. Only two of the

above mentioned areas had been affiliated in 1912, but ironically none were affiliated at all during 1913 ___hardly successful re-organisation.

The efforts of a second organiser, J.P. Kelly, who visited the county in 1914 appear on paper at least to have been more successful. He helped to reorganise branches in a number of areas by cleverly building on the enthusiasm generated by the growth of the Volunteer movement in the county during that year, a movement that now merits some attention. The main result of the growth of this organisation was an uplifting in Nationalist activity on the one hand, with a paralleled reorganisation of many UIL branches on the other, which appeared at first glance at least to signal a revival of its fortunes. Surprisingly it was the Birr AOH branch that first discussed the possibility of the formation of a Volunteer corps in the town as early as December 1913, but decided against on the grounds that it would be 'premature to take such steps,' and the idea was abandoned.⁵⁶ No further developments occurred until the Offaly GAA County Board passed a resolution the following March giving approval and support to the formation of corps 'wherever it shall be feasible or practicable in the county'.⁵⁷ During the next couple of months, the formation of such corps mushroomed, with the various public bodies in the county leading support. In April a big rally of at least 3,000 was held in Tullamore at which Professor Kettle and Roger Casement spoke,⁵⁸ the King's County Independent even carrying a rare photograph of the occasion.

By this stage the county inspector noted that the Tullamore corps were drilling three times a week with a membership of 240,⁵⁹ while the membership for the whole county was reported as being drawn from 'various classes of people ; farmers sons, shop assistants, clerks, artisans, labourers, ex-soldiers, militia, and cornerboys'.⁶⁰ Up to this time, he had still not formed a definite opinion as to the 'future result of the movement', but regarded it as 'the most dangerous organisation for the last 35 years to emerge in the county'.⁶¹ By June it had 15 branches with 1508 members⁶² and the level of enthusiasm generated by the movement was evident from the fact that the Tullamore corps managed to collect £100 and its Clara counterpart £25, for the purchase of belts, bandoliers and water bottles that same month.⁶³ As people rushed to join it, the King's County Independent reported that 'never before had a movement made such rapid progress in such a short time'.⁶⁴ Joseph Kelly a member of Edenderry Volunteers (and not to be confused with J.P. Kelly, the aforementioned UIL organiser sent into the county in 1914) wrote later that 'all the able bodied men of the county seemed to be in the movement' and admitted that 'we were all so pleased with our black peaked Volunteer caps and body belts of black leather and our Irish Volunteer badge...' that the 'dress more impressed than the politics of the time'.⁶⁵ Yet even at this stage when matters in the Volunteers appeared to be running smoothly, he recalled a local event that would resemble the divisions that later emerged within the movement

nation-wide. That September a review of Volunteers by Colonel Moore took place at Philipstown and over 300 attended from Edenderry, many having travelled the journey by canal. Kelly recalls how this 'jaunt on the canal boats sounded the death knell of the Irish Volunteers' in Edenderry as the hoisting of a 'Red, White and Blue flag', although French, savoured too much of the British counter part for the 'liking of a few of the company' and had to be taken down in favour of the 'Green flag with the Harp'.⁶⁶ The split that was later to become a feature of the Volunteers in the county will be examined more in the next chapter when discussing the topic of recruiting.

The early enthusiasm for the Volunteer movement was cleverly tapped by J.P. Kelly, who operated mainly in the Tullamore division where he managed to reorganise at least seven branches of the League, including Philipstown, which had been dormant since 1909. On two occasions at Croghan and Clonbullogue, he used the formation of local Volunteer corps to take the opportunity to re-establish the UIL in these districts.⁶⁷ This task was made all the easier by John Redmond's effective take-over of the movement in June and within a month, the number of members in the county was estimated at 3,100, and while they had no arms, the Batchelor's Walk incidents in Dublin late that same month had 'infused a considerable amount of enthusiasm into the movement'.⁶⁸

In most places the new Volunteer Corps was guided by men of local influence. In Tullamore for example, the leading lights were Dr O'Regan, medical officer under the Insurance Act, J.A. Lumley, chairman of the Urban Council, and Dr Meagher of the County Infirmary. Many of the local clergy were present on the formation of the corps, while in many localities ex-military men, of which there was no shortage owing to the military barracks in Birr, were carrying out instruction and drill lessons. In May the county inspector had noted that 'the progress made in elementary drill is somewhat surprising'.⁶⁹ With the outbreak of World War 1 in August, many Unionists began to lend support, William Mulcock of Ballycumber even made his demense for drill,⁷⁰ while many others subscribed funds to the movement. Only one, Captain Burdett, openly expressed reservations and refused to suscribed funds on the grounds that the 'Volunteers had not taken the oath of allegiance as a body and enrolled under the War Office for the duration of the War'.⁷¹ A county committee of the Volunteers had been established in July to spearhead organisation within the county, which was also divided into north and south sub-committees.⁷² The highlight of September was the visit of Colonel Moore when he inspected over 2,000 Volunteers warning them 'to stay clear of the political controversies of the time',⁷⁸ while at Tullamore he told his listeners exactly what they wanted to hear___that they would get rifles 'as soon as possible'.⁷⁴

While the enthusiasm generated by the quick growth of the Volunteers rubbed off to some extent on the UIL up to September 1914 at least, from that to the end of the year this

growth was not only checked but reversed, and with it the superficial revival of the UIL ceased abruptly. A number of reasons can be given for this reversal in the fortunes of the Volunteers. Firstly the lack of guns soon made drill monotonous and boring. The county inspector noted in September that there were only 10 Lee Enfield rifles, one manser and some old guns in the county⁷⁵ with 1500 rounds of ammunition, and while 96 extra rifles were received in Birr the following month,⁷⁶ there was no way this amount could satisfy demand. By the time the split in the Volunteers was completed, the National Volunteers held 18 of these rifles, the fifth lowest number in Ireland,⁷⁷ with only Carlow, Longford, Roscommon, and Sligo faring worse.

Secondly, there was a lack of facilities for drill and once the winter evenings approached few wished for such exercises on dark, cold nights ___ hence after September the numbers attending such practices dropped. Thirdly, there was a decided lack of enthusiasm in the county for Redmond's call to enlist in the war effort. This is made clear by the fact that while 367 reservists had rejoined the army on mobilisation, only 250 recruits had joined up by the 15th of December 1914.⁷⁸ As Fitzpatrick (1977) rightly asserts, 'while most Irishmen preferred to approve of others fighting, they preferred not to participate in person',⁷⁹ and while the King's County Independent was sympathetic to England's participation in the war, the Tribune was noticeably hostile to Redmond's call for enlistment claiming 'we have nothing to be grateful to England for',⁸⁰ having argued that Ireland did not desire a further depletion her manhood.

Fourthly, the call up of the Reservists meant that drill instructors were in short supply which in turn led to further defections from the Volunteers. It came as little surprise when the county inspector noted in October that the numbers enrolled were 244 less than the previous month and he added that 'there were signs of decay in several places, notably Tullamore, Clara, Birr, Rhode, Croghan and Ballybrien'.⁸¹ All these reasons for the decline in activity of the Volunteers meant a decline in Nationalist activity towards the end of the year, which in turn had consequences for the UIL also. In many ways also, the latter organisation was regarded by many as being redundant once the Home Rule Bill received the Royal Assent in September 1914. This occasion surprisingly, was not greeted with any great rejoicing in the county, the county inspector even remarking that 'a good many Nationalists appear to be dissatisfied and suspicious over the matter'.⁸² Many members of the League were again content to allow the branches, many of which had been re-organised in the Summer, to re-lapse into a poor disorganised state once again. The only tangible benefit of the work of J.P. Kelly in 1914 was that the number of branches affiliated in the county rose from 12 to 17 for that year, but once some of these were re-organised, no further details of their activities are revealed and we can safely conclude that they held no further meetings that year.

Within this malaise of disorganisation and inactivity, there were two branches of the League during 1913 and 1914 that were particularly active, and this can be accounted for by the fact that they were both involved in that most contentious of issues — namely land. The first of these to be considered here is Bracknagh UIL, and the dispute in question centred on what was known locally as the Ballynowlart farm, which comprised almost 1,000 acres. This had been held by Captain Trench D.L. (as a tenant) from Lord Ashtown and was used mainly for grazing purposes. Both men in fact were cousins, but a dispute arose between them early in 1913 concerning rent and Trench was evicted. For a short while the land was left idle and a meeting was organised by the local UIL branch which protested against any further letting or renting of the farm and a campaign was started to have it taken over by the Estates Commissioners for division among the local members.⁸³ A resolution was also passed 'warning outsiders' from interference with the farm as the branch 'pledged to do everything in its power to prevent any person occupying the land'.⁸⁴

By all accounts Lord Ashtown seems to have had no objections to the Estates Commissioners expressing an interest in the land, but in the meantime his agent rented it on a monthly basis to Samuel Lee and Edward Walker (an employee of Ashtown's), both of whom stocked the land with cattle. This caused considerable disquiet in the locality and a cattle drive took place at the end of February but the police took no action when it was not reported by the occupiers.⁸⁵ However owing to information received that a further drive was being organised for May 15th, 18 police were assembled at the farm on the date in question under head constable John Wolfe, but they failed to prevent a crowd of up to 300 people assembling where they encountered the police with sticks, stones and bottles, in what was described as 'a savage attack',⁸⁶ Wolfe having earlier advised the crowd 'to go home and have sense' before he was himself struck on the head.⁸⁷ An iron gate on the farm was pulled down and the cattle driven, one beast being killed on the land and another was found dead eleven miles away.⁸⁸ The police did manage to arrest 18 prisoners, 16 of whom were returned for trial at Assizes on a charge of riot. More importantly though from the police's point of view was the fact that neither occupier yielded or was intimidated into surrendering the land.

It was however then found necessary to station 50 police on the farm to prevent further drives,⁸⁹ and while this figure was reduced over the coming months, all the nearby local police stations were also strengthened. The police were refused supplies locally as a stringent boycott was also organised against Lee and Walker.⁹⁰ Their employees left them and they had to secure the services of Property Defence Association men to work for them.⁹¹ In July the successful boycott of an adjoining 200 acres farm which was up for auction was undertaken and the police had to take extra precautions to prevent the spiking of meadows in the district.⁹² A public UIL meeting was held in Portarlinton during August at which Haviland Burke called on the

Estates Commissioners to purchase the above mentioned lands, and he made adverse reference to the 'rank outsiders and Unionists',⁹³ who now held Ballynowlart. In December horses belonging to the 16th Lancers at the Curragh camp which had been put to graze the farm, were also driven, but later the Colonel commanding this regiment removed them all, (83 in number) after he understood the reasons for the dispute concerning the farm. In turn he received a letter from Fr Kennedy, CC, Bracknagh on behalf of the local UIL branch allowing them the shooting of their lands in thanks for this action.⁹⁴

All this time the branch managed to keep up the agitation, with £60 collected in May being used to defray the expenses of defending the prisoners and to pay their wages while on remand.⁹⁵ In December it was reported that Walker failed to sell his pigs at Geashill fair, and while no drive occurred on the farm during 1914,⁹⁶ the police reported intimidation, boycotting, agitation and unrest throughout the year, and it would be 1921 before the farm was purchased for division locally and the dispute finally settled. The activity of the Bracknagh UIL and LLA branches in the dispute goes to show that not all branches of the national organisation were inactive, and when land issues arose, they could be quickly propelled into action to protect their own interests.

The second estate where agitation occurred during this period was Lord Digby's at Geashill, the largest estate in the county. In this case however it was the local LLA branch that made all the early running, as the UIL branch had been dormant here for some time. A large number of tenants had entered into agreement for purchase of the estate in 1908, (the solicitors involved in the transaction claimed in February 1914 that 557 of the 570 tenants agreed to purchase)⁹⁷ but by this time, the agreements were still pending and the farms had not yet been vested in the purchasing tenants. During the negotiations for sale, Lord Digby had refused to sell some untenanted lands (500 to 600 acres) which were described at the time as a "home" farm. However the trouble arose out of this matter when he later agreed to create a number of tenancies on this land, with four farmers benefiting ; Frederick Abraham, Reginal Digby (his agent), James Bagenall and Stephen Cavanagh. The latter beneficiary created most controversy because he had not been an original tenant on the estate, but had land adjoining. The local branches of the LLA (Ballinagar and Geashill and Killeigh) wished for these lands to be divided amongst small holders and called on the Estates Commissioners to purchase same, and in the meantime hold over the sale of the estate until the matter was addressed. What also annoyed locals as well was the widely held belief that the lands were held on the 11 month system, the Ballinagar and Geashill LLA branch referring in May 1913 in no uncertain terms to the 'ranchers who hold the land on the eleven month system',⁹⁸ but at a magisterial investigation at Tullamore in November 1914, two of the occupiers claimed they were 'tenants'⁹⁹ of the land. To co-ordinate their plans the local LLA branches (and later the UIL) formed a vigilance committee to keep a watchful eye over

proceedings.

A cattle drive had taken place on the lands in May 1913, but it was a minor affair, and it was to be 1914 before the agitation was stepped up, with a number of organised outdoor meetings taking place in the district. At the first of these William Delaney MP (a tenant on the estate) advised the gathering not to consent to the sale until the untenanted lands were sold and the evicted tenants restored.¹⁰⁰ Efforts were made shortly afterwards by the vigilance committee to induce the tenants to sign a memorial to be sent to the Estates Commissioners to hold up the sale, but it is hard to gauge how successful they were. In February they approached the agent to see if he would agree to sell the lands, but he refused,¹⁰¹ and the county inspector anticipated correctly that the agitation would 'probably lead to some cattle driving in about two or three months'.¹⁰² However the police were unprepared when in April over 50 men drove 250 head of cattle off the four farms¹⁰³ and from then a police station was operated in the village of Geashill. This checked the agitation for the time being, but further meetings were held in Cloneygowan during May and Geashill again in June where Paddy Adams, a county councillor, advised the tenants to continue to agitate until the grass lands were included in the sale.¹⁰⁴ Ironically, Adams had applied for a section of the lands in question at the end of 1908, but had lost out in his claim, and he now became the leading spokesman and figure campaigning to have the lands divided!

By the time of the next public meeting in October, Haviland Burke MP had died, and Adams was staking his claim to be selected as his replacement. The local UIL branch at Geashill had been reorganised in July and along with most of the local priests, was now throwing its weight behind the campaign, announcing in October that 'it had declared war against those who were in occupation of the ranches'.¹⁰⁵ There is further irony here again in that leading members of the branch in 1908 had arranged the purchase terms for the sale of the estate in the first place! In November the frustration of the vigilance committee was at its peak when its representatives failed to secure an interview with the Estates Commissioners, and it was at this stage that the largest organised cattle drive in the county was planned.

The arrangements for the drive had been made on Friday 13th November when scouts were sent around the surrounding districts to rally support, and this ploy proved successful as Geashill village was packed the following Sunday. Paddy Adams himself arrived late by car, having come from a UIL meeting in Tullamore, but he quickly took command of the situation by organising the assembled crowd in fours before marching them to the farms in question. The procession was headed by two bands from Croghan and Tullamore, while the local sergeant undertook a mental picture and note of as many present as possible before sending for reinforcements in Tullamore.¹⁰⁶ Many of the crowd (estimated at between 500 and 1,000) were armed with hazel

sticks, and a fight took place between some of them and the police. The scene became more dangerous than usual when some of the police drew their revolvers and a shot was also fired by a member of the crowd.¹⁰⁷ Despite being outnumbered, the police prevented a drive and the following week made 46 arrests, including that of Adams. The prisoners were returned for trial to the Winter Assizes where six (including Adams) got sentences ranging from 6 to 12 months with hard labour.

The attempted drive had taken place on the 15th November, four days before a Convention was held in Tullamore to select a candidate for MP in the interests of the Home Rule Party. Haviland Burke had died on October 4th after a period of ill health and Paddy Adams, the main mover behind the Geashill cattle drive (as it is known), was quick to put forward his claim for the candidature, but he was soon challenged by two well known Nationalists, E.J. Graham of Tullamore and P.J. Bermingham of Philipstown. At one stage it had looked as if the Lord Mayor of Dublin would seek the nomination as well, but he withdrew in favour of the local candidates. It was more than a little ironic that a division which had failed for over 25 years to secure a local representative as an MP (in fact there was no contest since the formation of the division), now found with the Home Rule Bill on the Statute book that three candidates were lining up to contest for the nomination and many took the view of an "Old Nationalist" who wrote to the King's County Independent that the contest was both 'a personal one and a scramble for the £400 a year'.¹⁰⁸

The vacancy posed problems for the UIL within the division, for all these men were members, both Graham and Adams of the Tullamore branch. Also, as noted before, the north King's county Executive had broken down since 1909 and many Nationalists in the constituency felt there should be no Convention held as too many of the UIL branches had been allowed to lapse from that time, and would therefore not be entitled to representation — hence their view that a Convention would not be representative of Nationalist opinion in the first place. This view was expressed most strongly at a meeting of Tullamore RDC that November when at least three members present voiced opposition, one stating that the people 'should be allowed to exercise the franchise in accordance with their own discretion,' while another rightly forecast that if all branches of the UIL 'did not get representation there will be a rumpus'.¹⁰⁹ These views were again expressed at a meeting of the County Council the same week but Adams warned of the dangers of the seat being lost to a Unionist in the event of three Nationalist candidates running. This view, which was apparently shared by the Standing Committee of the League, appeared most unlikely, as there was no political organisation of Unionist standing to put forward a candidate in the division. It more than anything points to the fact that Adams, with the high public profile he had built up over the agitation on the Digby estate, felt confident of winning at the Convention, which would give him a very safe seat, without the trouble of a gruelling contest. On the otherhand, the Standing

Committee also wished to keep the Convention system, for it would prevent any split emerging in the Nationalist vote during the election proper.

However, disastrously for both, the results were anything but what they had wished for, and the Convention which was held at Tullamore on the 19th November, was about to cause the most controversy since Parnell had imposed Captain O'Shea on the electors of Galway in 1886. Adams and Graham had already clashed earlier over the choice of venue for the gathering, the latter smiling when the former suggested that Philipstown or Geashill would be a more central location.¹¹⁰ When it came to selecting delegates to attend the Convention at a later Tullamore UIL meeting, an honourable compromise was agreed, with three being selected to support each candidate.¹¹¹ A strong canvass was undertaken by the candidates including Birmingham of all branches in the division entitled to representation, whether UIL, AOH, INF, LLA and the various public bodies. Some of these, most notably Tullamore INF and Geashill UIL came out openly beforehand and declared their support for Adams, who also had the backing of many of the LLA branches connected with the agitation on the Digby estate. Meanwhile Tullamore UC and RDC split in favour of Adams and Graham respectively (in both cases by narrow margins), while Philipstown UIL was solidly (with the exception of their secretary) behind Birmingham.

There were 20 clergy present at the Convention, which was chaired by Fr O'Leary, PP, Portarlington,¹¹² the highest number that ever attended a UIL gathering in the county, while John Muldoon MP represented the National Directory. When the result of the first poll was announced, Adams had secured 42 votes, Birmingham 37 and Graham 23, and on the latter being eliminated, Adams headed the second poll by 59 votes to Birmingham's 51; a number of clergymen from the diocese of Meath not having voted in the first poll.¹¹³ Surprisingly before the voting took place, the candidates were not asked to sign the usual undertaking to abide by the decision of the Convention (which appears to have been the usual practice in such instances), an error that was to prove costly in the long term.

The controversy surrounding the Convention centred on the fact that the four UIL branches at Philipstown, Rahan, Clara and Portarlington, along with the LLA branches of Clonbullogue and Bracknagh, were refused delegates admittance cards beforehand, while on the day in question, delegates from the latter mentioned LLA branch were refused admittance to the Foresters Hall, despite having travelled to Tullamore in person. Birmingham added fuel to this controversy the following week when in an open letter to the King's County Independent, he claimed two of the LLA branches present were not entitled to representation, and went on to offer his support to Graham in the election proper if he would stand.¹¹⁴ To opponents of Adams, the popular view developed that the Convention had been "rigged", a view, held most strongly by some of the clergy in the constituency, most notably Fr Paul Murphy, PP, Edenderry, Fr

Michael Kennedy, CC, Bracknagh and and Fr Thomas Norris, PP, Rhode, who said on the 6th December that the 'convention at Tullamore had been rigged without doubt and men were allowed to vote who did not reside in the constituency at all'.¹¹⁵ As a result Graham was induced to stand for election (not that he needed much encouragement anyway), and north King's county was about to witness its first electoral contest since the constituency changes were introduced in 1885.

The election campaign itself was the most lively and exciting that ever took place in the county up to that time. Rival meetings were held outside chapel gates and two very disruptive gatherings took place in Tullamore. Full use was made of motor cars and bands to enliven the proceedings, but throughout the contest the utmost good order prevailed despite the usual heckling that is a characteristic of such contests. To opponents of Graham, strong allegations were made that he was a 'factionist' candidate, while his supporters never tired of making reference to the "rigged" Convention. The Irish Party threw its full weight behind Adams, and 9 MPs were drafted into the constituency in support of his canvass, and on polling day, these were dispersed throughout the division to help maximise his support. More importantly, much was made of a valiant effort by John Redmond to induce Graham to withdraw his candidature after the two held a meeting in Dublin, and later, through an open letter to the local papers in which the Irish Party leader appealed to Graham to opt out of the contest on the grounds that:

You will take a grave responsibility if you persist in your candidature, and in the present crisis will inevitably come before the country as a revolter against party discipline, and whether successful or defeated, will inflict serious injury on the National Cause. I appeal to you to make one more sacrifice to your devotion to the Irish cause by withdrawing your candidature and allowing the decision of the Convention, no matter how distasteful to you and your friends, to have effect for the short remaining period of the life of this Parliament.¹¹⁶

The Independent called on Graham to accept Redmond's advice,¹¹⁷ but the Tribune hoped the party would relax its position and 'give a fair field and no favour to both candidates'.¹¹⁸ Not surprisingly however, Graham refused to withdraw, pointing to his record as a Nationalist over the years as proof of his credentials for MP. He had joined the Land League at 16, was later a member of the INL and INF, and had been for 14 years clerk of the union and town council in Tullamore. He also served as vice-chairman of Tullamore Guardians and chairman of Tullamore RDC and UIL.¹¹⁹ Graham, who was one of the organising committee that looked after the wants of the Plan

of Campaign prisoners and was privy to the smuggling of a suit of Blarney tweed into William O'Brien when the latter refused to wear prison clothes in Tullamore, was also at pains to stress throughout the whole campaign that he was and would remain loyal to John Redmond and the Irish Party. Adams on the other hand did not possess the same track record; he was a county councillor but better known as the son of the veteran and respected Nationalist, William Adams (incidentally a member of the National Directory of the UIL for a number of years, who had died in August 1914), and for his part in the Geashill cattle drive, which Graham rightly described as an 'electioneering dodge'.¹²⁰

As expected the result was close, Graham winning by a margin of 79 votes, having secured 1667 votes to Adam's 1,588. Of the telegrams received after the declaration of the poll congratulating him upon his success, nearly one half made contemptuous reference to the "rigged" Convention. Sixteen of those published had such allusions as 'crushing blow to Convention riggers', 'glorious success over Convention riggers' and 'corrupt Conventions'.¹²¹ The questions we must finally consider here are, was the convention rigged and why did the UIL and Irish Party fail to win the contest?

The whole event had aroused so much controversy that John Muldoon MP, who had represented the Directory at the Convention, felt compelled to answer all the allegations made throughout the campaign and after in a pamphlet entitled, The Story of a Rigged Convention, which was published early in 1915. His conclusions are so clear and coherent that one must conclude, using also the evidence of the minutes of the National Directory and the account of the proceedings given in the King's County Independent that the Convention was not rigged. Muldoon provides ample proof that both the Clonbullogue and Bracknagh branches of the LLA were affiliated in Kildare,¹²² while Birmingham's claim that two other branches of the same organisation were not entitled to representation, was similarly untrue as both were duly affiliated for the required time in the county. The four branches of the UIL excluded representation had also been dealt with fairly; Portarlinton was affiliated in Queen's county, while both Rahan and Philipstown were only affiliated after Burke's death, and were therefore according to UIL rules, rightly refused representation.

A claim had also been made by Birmingham that Clara UIL was wrongly refused representation, and while Muldoon made no reference to this branch in his report, this claim is also incorrect. It had been reorganised in June 1914, and the secretary of the branch claimed on that occasion that the branch would 'be affiliated by the end of the week.'¹²³ However he failed to carry out this task until October, (which was admitted by another member in 1915),¹²⁴ and therefore again, this branch was rightly refused admission to the Convention.

Muldoon also challenged Graham and his supporters to answer five charges made during the campaign, most notably those

regarding 'the methods resorted to, to rig the Convention,' and to name the LLA branches 'started only yesterday which were present and those denied representation that were 5 years in existence'.¹²⁵ No reply to any of these charges was made, which again proves the Convention was not rigged, this was however not the case.

There can be little doubt that the defeat of Adams was a major disappointment to the leaders of the Irish Party and UIL. It was after all the first contest the IPP faced since the Home Rule Bill had been placed on the Statute Book, and its failure to win was compounded by the fact that Redmond himself had become directly involved in the campaign. By claiming that Graham had won because he secured the Unionist vote,¹²⁶ the party showed remarkable immaturity by clutching at such straws, as the King's County Independent reckoned their votes were 'evenly divided',¹²⁷ between the contestants. The immediate consequences of the defeat for the party were best summed up by the editor of the the same paper when he referred to the 'cost' of the election as having resulted in:

...the flaunting of the authority of the Irish leader at a time when in the history of the Nationalist Movement there was never greater necessity to extend to him united support; the repudiation by the Irish party as a "factionist" of a man who has given a life-long service to the National Cause...¹²⁸

All in all this was a reasonable summing up of the contest but the editor made no attempt to explain why the UIL had lost. It is also interesting to note that Muldoon made no reference to the poor state of the organisation in the constituency, as he probably did not wish to be seen to publicly criticise its poor organisational state at that time. A number of factors, all important, can be put forward to explain why Graham triumphed. Firstly, he was popular in the constituency and his track record stood to him, and it should also be noted that he was involved in organising the sales of some estates in the Tullamore area earlier in the century which had helped him build up a network of contacts. Secondly, some at least voted for him, believing that the Convention was rigged. Thirdly, other Nationalists believing Home Rule was already assured, may not have felt the same loyalty to the party, and therefore did not feel compelled to vote for its candidate.

But the main reason for Adams defeat lay in the lack of organisation of the UIL within the constituency since 1909, the reasons for which have been documented in the last two chapters. As argued previously, the National Directory and Standing Committee of the League must take a large share of the blame in this regard, as they appear to have been unable to distinguish the essential difference between the number of branches affiliated at any certain time, and the effectiveness of these same branches. Affiliated branches to the central office in

Dublin paying their yearly £3 annual subscription were of little use in fighting elections, if they only met once annually and made little attempt to maintain some semblance of proper organisation and activity. After the electoral defeat in north King's county in December 1914, the realisation may at last have been dawning on party leaders and organisers that the UIL badly needed boosting, guidance, and organisational shake-up. The important question to be faced now however was, whether the party and League hierarchy had the enthusiasm, will and time to complete such tasks. The next chapter explains why the attempts to reorganise the UIL in 1915 came too late to save the movement.

Chapter Seven

Attempted Reorganisation, January 1915 to October 1916.

Throughout the country the defeat of the Irish Party and UIL candidate in the north King's county by-election of December 1914 was seen as a big setback to both these bodies and a blow in particular to John Redmond's standing, when coming only months after the Home Rule Bill had been placed on the Statute Book. The Irish Unionist Alliance group publication, Notes from Ireland, was quick to print Redmond's appeal to E.J. Graham to stand down before the election,¹ as opponents of the Irish Party did not forfeit the golden opportunity of causing as much embarrassment from the election outcome as possible. This was a source of annoyance to the editor of the King's County Independent who regretted that in 'some quarters there continues a determined tendency to make factionist capital'² out of the result while his counterpart in the Midland Tribune claimed in late January 1915 that 'columns of newspaper articles had been written about the election', and that there had been 'letters go leor'³; a reference to the fact that the Freeman's Journal gave detailed analysis of the event in the early months of the new year. Surprisingly in the county itself, the result was somewhat overshadowed (if only temporarily), after the Winter Assizes in December when the 46 Geashill cattle drivers were convicted, one receiving twelve months with hard labour, six others including Paddy Adams received terms of six months with hard labour, while the remaining 39 were bound over to keep the peace.⁴ These sentences were deemed harsh by many in the county and served to unite Nationalists in the constituency, with the King's County Independent claiming that the one good result from them had been the 'sweeping away of much of the bitterness resulting from the recent election'.⁵ Nowhere was this more evident than at a special meeting of the County Council held just before Christmas when a resolution calling on the Lord Lieutenant to exercise 'clemency' on behalf of the prisoners was unanimously passed on being seconded by E. J. Graham MP.⁶

A large demonstration in support of the prisoners and to voice disapproval of the sentences was held in Tullamore,⁷ while a memorial to plead for leniency to the Lord Lieutenant was also drawn up and signed by many prominent public representatives, including the chairmen of nine county councils.⁸ This action may have influenced the relevant authorities somewhat as six of the prisoners were released after two months,⁹ while the last, Tom Hynes (who allegedly struck a police constable during the cattle drive), went free after four months in captivity.¹⁰ Ironically as it turned out, these developments reopened on a large scale the rancour following on from the by-election of 1914, and anyway, as might have been expected, the harsh sentences imposed on the prisoners at that time did not kill off all the heat and bitterness of that event, but merely served to temper and suspend it temporarily.

The attempt by the Irish Party to justify holding a Convention before the election by its publication of the aforementioned The Story of a Rigged Convention, ironically as it turned out, only served to widen the splits created by the election which were in turn to hamper the efforts that were later

made to revive the UIL in the county. Many Nationalists in the county, strongly backed by Midland Tribune wished for Redmond to admit E. J. Graham to the party, but the publication of Muldoon's pamphlet made this a virtual impossibility, as the party was not likely to admit a man to its ranks whom it had described as a factionist throughout the election. Despite this, early in January 1915, Tullamore RDC passed a resolution making such a call,¹¹ but the following week a letter to the Freeman's Journal signed by five members of that body voiced their disapproval of the motion which had been carried without their notice.¹² It came as little surprise then later to hear that when Graham attempted to take his seat in the House of Commons, difficulties arose regarding his introduction (which no member of the Irish Party consented to do), and he was eventually introduced by two MPs, Sir W. Byles and M.C. Scott, described as 'unofficial Liberals'.¹³ This slur did not go unnoticed in the county, and was even the subject of a resolution by the Queen's County Council which viewed:

With regret the action of the Irish Nationalist Party, both in excluding Mr Graham from their ranks, and in failing to give expression to the wishes of a Nationalist constituency by their refusal to introduce him in the House of Commons, in which assembly he is at least entitled to a seat as many of those who sought to ostracise him.¹⁴

It was after the release of the prisoners in February that the bitterness generated by the election came to the fore front again. The scene was set on the evening of their release when a public demonstration of support was held in Tullamore, and addressed by Paddy Adams and UIL organiser Michael Conway. The latter had been dispatched yet again to the county early in 1915 to complete that unenviable task of reorganising the UIL. Having gone over the events of recent months, he confidently told the audience that in relation to the Geashill lands; (ie Lord Digby's untenanted land):

We will have the land that bore us;
We will make that cry our chorus;
We will have it yet, though hard to get,
With Adams banner floating o'er us.
(loud and prolonged applause)¹⁵

Later comments by Conway and others (most notably William Delaney MP) at other UIL reorganisation meetings were unjustifiable to say the least and only served to prolong the existing divisions in the constituency, with the UIL the real loser in the long term. At one such meeting in Rhode during March, Delaney claimed the Protestant Church bells rang after Adams was defeated before adding that one 'would imagine the Battle of the Boyne was fought over again'.¹⁶ The Midland Tribune challenged him for proof of his assertion and the following week still deplored that 'there is no cessation of hostilities in north King's county'.¹⁷

Earlier in the month Adams, when speaking at Croghan, claimed that in the next election 'the entire King's county will rally back to John Redmond and will not be misled by fraud and lies as they were in the last election'.¹⁸

Meanwhile Graham held his counsel until a banquet in his honour was held in Tullamore on St. Patrick's day, attended by his friends and supporters. During the course of an after dinner speech, some of his remarks went to prove that the political slugging match was not about to end quickly when he remarked:

Mr Muldoon is looking out for a position in the Home Rule Government, and I hope he will be made Lord High Commissioner of the Secret Service (cheers). [On the convention]...he [Muldoon], with all his energy and ability turned about, organised delegates here and delegates there and elsewhere, some of whom had never been in a League room in their lives, (A voice.. These were the tourists), and some of whom were brought in at the extraordinary expenditure of four shillings a day....¹⁹

Speaking at Killeigh later in the same month, Conway described the same banquet given in Graham's honour as an 'orgie' while Adams claimed his remarks were made in 'the bar of the hotel... with alot of drunken friends'.²⁰ Such deep divisions led John Pike (the editor of the Midland Tribune) to claim that the north King's county 'was unique in Ireland in that it was the only one where there had been no political truce'.²¹ By this stage some of the charges made by Adams concerning Graham also bordered on the farcical especially his claim that the latter was 'kicked out' of his positions as secretary of the Tullamore district council and as clerk of Tullamore Guardians, after the 'rigging' of the books of the latter body.²² Much surprise was expressed at this charge as Graham had resigned from the latter post in May 1912, much to the regret of other members who pleaded with him to remain on, and ironically the strongest pleas were made by William Adams, father of Paddy Adams!²³ After Pike made a further plea 'for a cessation of the political hostilities',²⁴ the rancorous allegations by both sides were less frequent after April 1915, with William Delaney MP firing the last major salvo when at a meeting in Philipstown that month he reiterated that the seat in north king's county had been 'swindled away from the services of Ireland',²⁵ before switching his attack to P.J. Bermingham who was alleged to have attempted to bribe two delegates at the convention by handing them an envelope with a £1 note included.²⁶ This naturally led to another series of counter claims, but events settled back much to normal once most of the UIL branches had been apparently reorganised by May and the consequent holding of public meetings (where such charges were made) were therefore less frequent. By this time also, both Graham and Delaney would have been spending more time in Parliament and therefore had less time to indulge in political

mud slinging.

At this point it is important to mention the report of the Standing Committee of the League for 1914 in the light of the Irish Party's defeat in the by-election. As already shown in chapter five and six, this body was very much out of touch with the position on the ground concerning the organisation and structure of the UIL from 1908 onwards. In many ways the report submitted to the fifteenth annual meeting in January 1915 (one month after the defeat in north King's county), is the most contradictory of all reports issued up to then. On the one hand the self-delusion of the previous years is continued regarding the state of the UIL, as indicated by the following long paragraph:

... In order to give an opportunity for the better organisation of the National Volunteers, the work of organisation in connection with the UIL was not pressed during the last year ... [this] accounts for a considerable number of branches having neglected to send in their affiliation fees. This however is not to be mistaken for any lack of enthusiasm or falling off in support of the National Organisation. At no time in its history was the organisation more united, spirited, efficient, and determined than it is today. This fact has been made evident from month to month by the meetings held and by the unparalled success of the mighty demonstrations addressed by Mr Redmond and other Irish leaders....²⁷

A number of points can be made concerning this part of the report; firstly while the Volunteers were founded in November 1913, the movement did not really take off until April the following year, and the Irish Party did not gain control of it until the following June. Most branches of the UIL should have been affiliated well before the latter date and it is hardly plausible to blame their failure to do so on the grounds that an opportunity had to be given to the Volunteers to organise, especially when we consider that some Irish Party leaders, particularly Redmond himself, viewed the growth of the latter with some trepidation at first. Secondly the organisation of the UIL was pressed in the King's county at least by the sending of a paid organiser, J.P. Kelly, to the county during the year and thirdly, while the report speaks of 'month to month meetings' and the 'unparalled success of mighty demonstrations',²⁸ as indicated in chapter six, the number of reported UIL meetings in the Midland Tribune during 1914 was only 23, with the four outdoor demonstrations that were held all being convened in connection with the agitation on the Digby Estate. There were no monster meetings held at all in connection with Home Rule. Lastly, it was obvious after the by-election in the county during

December, that the organisation was anything but 'united, spirited and efficient...'²⁹

As indicated before, it is possible, though not likely, that the King's county was an exception in regard to the strength of the UIL. Not likely because, even more astonishing is the fact that the whole tone of the above quotation from the report is rendered almost laughable by the admission at the end of report that 'steps have now been taken for the re-appointment of organisers and the calling together of the various Divisional Executives'.³⁰ Surely this prompts the question that if the organisation was in fit shape, why was there a need to re-appoint organisers which after all, would put extra costs on running the organisation? Later on in the meeting, the minutes include another interesting resolution which was passed calling for:

the re-establishment of branches of the League in every district in which, for whatever cause, they have been allowed to lie inactive or become extinct; and that for this purpose we call upon every Divisional Executive to meet at as early a date as possible.³¹

Clearly some members of the National Directory at least were in touch with reality and could see that the organisation was in anything but good shape; now it remained to be seen if the appointment of organisers could halt the slide in the League's drift into disorganisation.

This re-organisation commenced quickly in the Tullamore constituency for the obvious reason that the Irish Party had lost the recent electoral contest there. But more worrying from the Directory's point of a view was the fact that E.J Graham, the newly elected MP, had lost no time in building up his future support base and had attended a meeting of the UIL in Mount Bolus before the end of January when a small branch of the League was reorganised apparently in his favour.³² This jolted the Directory into action and before the end of the same month, Michael Conway had attended a similar reorganisational meeting in Clara, where he openly challenged Graham to answer the charges made in Muldoon's pamphlet concerning the recent Convention.³³ Graham was never reported as having answered these, and his last piece of work before taking his seat was to start a UIL branch in Tullamore backed by his own supporters in the town. During the course of a speech, he referred to another 'bogus branch' in the town, a clear reference to the affiliated branch in Tullamore which was dominated by supporters of Paddy Adams.³⁴ In June this branch was also reorganised, but in the interests of the latter who was elected its president. When speaking on this occasion, Adams himself went out of his way to indicate that the National Directory had returned the affiliation fees of the 'other branch', before a motion of confidence was passed in Redmond.³⁵ By this stage the UIL had openly split in Tullamore, with neither branch really commanding much support as many former members became increasingly fed up and disillusioned with the existing

political sniping, and by the end of the year it was no surprise that both branches were effectively moribund.

After Graham took his seat in February, he definitely lost out to Adams in the race to win over other UIL branches as the latter now had an open field and the backing of a paid organiser. Other reorganisational meetings took place at Durrrow in February,³⁶ at Croghan³⁷ and Rhode³⁸ in March, Killeigh³⁹ and Phillipstown in April,⁴⁰ and finally Cloneygowan in May,⁴¹ Adams being present on each occasion personally to oversee developments. New branches in the constituency were also established at Ballycommon and Kilclonfert for the first time⁴², as most corners of the constituency were raked for support. Meanwhile similar work took place in the south of the county, with the branch at Killoughy reorganised after being five years out of existence,⁴³ while similar developments occurred at Ballinahown,⁴⁴ Clareen,⁴⁵ Cloghan,⁴⁶ Birr,⁴⁷ (where not surprisingly it took two meetings to complete the task), Kilcoleman⁴⁸, and a new branch was established at Clonmacnoise in July.⁴⁹ As late as September another new branch was established in Belmont.⁵⁰

By all appearances, the newspaper accounts of these meetings at the time indicate that most of them were well attended, being usually described as 'large and enthusiastic gatherings'.⁵¹ All in all, the work carried out mainly during the first half of 1915 appeared at least on paper to have been successful, not only in the King's county, but throughout all Leinster with the exceptions of Kildare and Wexford, where branch numbers affiliated either stagnated or declined. This can be deduced from table 18, which is drawn from the minute book of the National Directory.

TABLE 18: Number of branches affiliated to the National Directory of UIL for Leinster counties in 1914/15.

County	From		From		Change
	29/1/1914	to 12/1/1915	12/1/1915	to 14/2/1916	
Carlow		5		12	+7
Dublin		17		29	+12
Kilkenny		20		24	+4
Kildare		5		5	Same
King's		17		25	+8
Longford		11		13	+2
Louth		9		26	+17
Meath		18		27	+9
Queen's		17		24	+7
Westmeath		4		6	+2
Wexford		22		19	-3
Wicklow		5		8	+3

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The counties that made the most progress along with King's were Carlow, Dublin, Louth, Meath and Queen's. The annual report for 1915 also painted a seemingly good state of affairs in relation to the UIL (in all Ireland) for despite acknowledgement that

there was a drop in affiliation fees due to the war, the number of affiliated branches throughout the country showed an increase of 312 on 1914,⁵³ almost an average of ten per county. However this drop in affiliation fees seemed irrelevant when the view was expressed that:

.... the County Conventions decided upon were without exception an unqualified success. They were large, representative, enthusiastic and united. So far as efficiency is concerned, the branches are well manned and officered and ready for any emergency — generally speaking the organisation is well up to the standard of its highest form....⁵⁴

Not surprisingly again, it was not the first time that sentiments expressed in the annual report of the Directory did not apply to the King's county. While we must allow for the increase in affiliated branches, the question that must be posed is, how efficient were these branches? A good gauge is to check again the files of the Midland Tribune for their reported meetings, which only comes to 34 ordinary gatherings, an increase of 11 on the 23 reported in 1914, while the number of Executive meetings reported dropped by one over the same period. More interesting however is the fact that almost half (16) of the 34 reported meetings dealt with the topic of re-organisation, while at least six more dealt with a land dispute in Kilcormac, which will be discussed later. What this really shows is that many of the branches which were reorganised early in 1915, reportedly held no further meetings for the rest of the year, and by the start of 1916 were effectively dead. This is undoubtedly true of the Philipstown, Ballycommon, Kilclonfert, Croghan, Ballinahown, Killoughy and Cloghan branches. Unknown, or more likely ignored by the Directory was the fact that the reorganisation that took place in the King's county, effectively took place on paper only.

The reference to county Conventions in the report does not apply either as one never took place at any time in the League's history from the time of its establishment in the county back in 1899. Certainly there were mutterings of such a development during the year, but nothing came of these; for example, the Midland Tribune announced in September 1915 that the south King's county Executive meeting for that month was deferred as Michael Reddy had informed the paper that a Convention for the whole county would be held at a date to be named, with either 'Redmond, Dillon or Devlin to attend'.⁵⁵ This important announcement included an appeal 'to all Nationalists in the county to keep their branches up to full strength', but the anticipated Convention never materialised. In January 1916 two calls from Geashill and Tullamore UIL were made to the Directory at least to establish an Executive in the north of the county,⁵⁶ but these appear to have fallen on deaf ears. By this stage, Paddy Adams made a valiant effort to convene such a meeting, but it fell through for no apparent reason on three occasions in April, May, and June.⁵⁷

The failure of Michael Conway to hold a Convention in the northern constituency earlier in 1915 is really inexcusable especially when one considers that he had seemingly re-established many lapsed branches in the division. A gathering of such kind might have injected some enthusiasm into leading public figures to keep the organisation alive and his failure to hold one only invited a repeat of the infamous rigged Convention of November 1914, should another vacancy arise. His failure also begs the question of how accountable these organisers were for their work as there appears to have been little scrutiny by the Directory of their efforts. After the death of William Adams in August 1914, Paddy Adams was the only other figure in the constituency who had enough standing to summon such a gathering, but in 1915 at least, he preferred instead to devote his energy to building a power base among four branches of the UIL and three branches of the LLA bordering on the Geashill Estate, which he finally brought together at the end of the year to form a barony executive.⁵⁸ When he did attempt to hold a Divisional Executive meeting later in 1916, the events and emphasis on the Rising were the main stumbling block for his failure.

Financially as well, support for the League within the county continued to decline from 1913 onwards, as many Nationalists now believed that its function was served since Home Rule seemed inevitable. Table 19 indicates clearly the extent of the decline.

TABLE 19: Total Funds collected by UIL branches in the King's County, 1913-18.

Year	Amount Collected
1913	£305 195 6d.
1914	£169 195 6d.
1915	£100 115 6d.
1916	£ 27 65 6d.
1917	£ 9 145 0d.
1918	No money collected ⁵⁹

What has been conclusively shown here so far then is that the attempted reorganisation of the UIL in the early months of 1915 was in the long term a dismal failure. The number of reported meetings given in the Midland Tribune for 1916 was down to 19, and even more significantly, no divisional Executive meeting was reported for in any part of the county during the year. The reasons for this failure merit some detail, but before going into them, it is necessary to give one example of how impotent the UIL was as a force in the county at this time, by reference to what became known as the "Reams case". The failure of the League in this particular instance resembles its failure to erect a hut for J.J. Corcoran in 1912.

The case in question centred on Kilcormac UIL and the wounded soldier or evicted tenant who had been ejected from his

holding in 1882, allegedly for joining the Land League, was James Reamsbottom.⁶⁰ A branch of the Evicted Tenants Association had been formed in the locality during October 1912 to agitate for his reinstatement after Francis Fletcher purchased the farm,⁶¹ but it soon faded out of existence. The case came to light again in September 1915 when Fletcher also disposed of the holding, and while many locals hoped Reamsbottom would have little difficulty purchasing it this time round, there was disappointment when another party, Daniel Sweeney, an employee of Egans in Tullamore purchased it for £500 and proceeded to let it on the eleven months system.⁶² Pressure was exerted on Sweeney to dispose of the farm to Reamsbottom by Kilcormac UIL, but he resisted and at a special meeting of the south King's county Executive held in September to discuss the case, it was decided to write to his employers the Egans, who were described as 'always having been good Nationalists', to induce them to 'advise' Sweeney on the matter.⁶³

This line of approach however brought little success for at a second Executive meeting the following month, the contents of a letter read from Egan's indicated that while they mentioned the matter to Sweeney, 'it was not their practice to interfere in the private affairs of their employees'.⁶⁴ A meeting of the local branch in November again discussed the case, but took no action, and the dispute dragged on into 1916, when in March the branch decided (to no avail as it turned out) to communicate with the Egans once more.⁶⁵ The following month the powerlessness of the League was exemplified when a vague resolution was adopted 'asking for the co-operation of all members with regard to the eleven months system and the Reams farms',⁶⁶ but again nothing was done to carry it into effect. In May a report in the Midland Tribune showed that the farm had been let again on the eleven months system,⁶⁷ the last reference in the paper to the farm. This was the only challenge taken up by any UIL branch in the county during this period and its failure was hardly surprising given how weak the movement had become. By this stage its members were dispirited, its resolutions ignored, and an absence of any type of leadership rendered it rudderless. Despite the efforts of Michael Conway during early 1915, by May of that year for a number of reasons which will now be analysed, the movement had slipped again into a state of permanent decline.

Unfortunately from the League's point of view (and those who attempted to revive it), most of the reasons why the movement struggled to gain prominence and strength again throughout 1915 and 1916 were simply beyond its control. Here its ties with the Irish Party were unfortunately to play a major part in its decline, just as those same ties had benefited the UIL in the early years of the century through the successful winning of major reforms like the Wyndham Land Act, these ties now became a millstone around the League's neck. Probably the most damaging in the long term was the Irish Party's support for recruiting, which turned out to be very unpopular in the King's county outside the two main urban centres of Tullamore and Birr which supplied the bulk of the county's recruits.

The first major recruiting drive had taken place in Birr during September 1914. It was supported by well known Nationalists like John Dooly (chairman of Birr UC and King's County Council), William Lowry, (president of the south King's county UIL Executive) and Michael Reddy MP. Even at this very early stage of the war, while a resolution was passed 'endorsing Mr Redmond's advice to join the army in sufficient numbers to enable an Irish Brigade to be formed',⁶⁸ there was also continuous opposition voiced to the speakers during the meeting by a small group, the most notable being Valentine Powell who became a source of annoyance to chairman Dooly, for his continued interruption of Major O'Connor, during the latter's speech. This led to some jockeying for that most sought after of positions__that of honorary Irish man:

Chairman (pointing to Powell): 'I consider myself as good an Irishman as this'.

Major O'Connor (to Powell): 'I consider myself a better Irishman'.

V. Powell: 'And I consider myself as good an Irishman as both' (laughter and some applause)⁶⁹

While this may have been the highlight of the meeting for the protesters, it should not have been, for Reddy displayed a remarkable level of ignorance during his speech concerning the war, when twice he referred to the 'Russian troops on the plains of Belgium',⁷⁰ despite having been corrected on both occasions by William Lowry. Many jibes were also thrown in his direction concerning his own sons, and the whole experience must have had some unsettling effect on him, for Reddy was more noticeable for his absence from future recruiting meetings than for his presence.

Opposition to recruiting came from a strange coalition of interests__some Volunteers, one priest, farmers, and one newspaper editor from the start of the war. Early on the Seir Kieran's [Clareen] Volunteer corps, which had pledged loyalty to Redmond, went out of its way to stress that a 'recruiting campaign was neither profitable or justifiable',⁷¹ but this was mild compared to the criticism voiced by Fr Crowe, CC, Birr when in a letter to the Midland Tribune he made clear his opposition when addressing those who became known as the Irish Volunteers:

I am with you in spirit. Your resolve to continue to train and drill is worthy of admiration. Let not the recourse to flattery about the "martial spirit of our race" and "the defence of liberties of other nations" muddle the minds of our young. One would think we are an island of people bereft of common-sense, peculiarly set aside for servitude in time of peace,⁷² and ready for hiring out in time of war...

Most reluctance to join the army came from the farmers sons, who now experienced a boom due to the extra demand for food in England. As early as March 1915, Justice Moriarty complained at the Spring Assizes that 'they are not coming forward at all..',⁷³ a charge repeated by John Dooly the following month when he regretted to have to say 'that the farmers sons of this county are not doing their duty'.⁷⁴ The county inspector was to make the same complaint on many occasions also; during May 1915 he reported 'the farmers sons are not enlisting'; in September he remarked that the 'number of farmers sons who have enlisted is exceedingly small'; in January 1916 his tone had not changed when he alleged that 'farmers sons and countrymen generally are not coming forward'; while in July he accused them of 'not taking the slightest interest in the matter'.⁷⁵ A particularly good reason for this reluctance to join the army on the part of farmers sons was the additional labour involved in the increased tillage, the extent of which can be gauged by examining Table 20. What this meant in effect was that their labour was badly required at home.

TABLE 20: Acreage of certain crops in the King's county in 1916 and 1917.

CROP	1916 ACREAGE	1917 ACREAGE	% INCREASE
Barley	15,094	17,015	12.72
Oats	18,267	25,455	39.34
Wheat	839	1,762	110
Overall Total	34,200	44,232	29.33 ⁷⁶

Even the county inspector admitted on a number of occasions to a shortage of labour in the county for in November 1915 he reported that despite the favourable weather, this shortage had resulted in the potato crop not being 'dug out', nor had the turf in many parts been 'carted home', while in July 1916 he announced that 'factory owners were not able to get hands to carry out all the work they have to do'.⁷⁷ A Government report published in 1916 also admitted that in 1915, 'casual labour' in the county was 'scarce',⁷⁸ being one of the reasons given for an increase in wages at this time. Because work was so plentiful, emigration from the county virtually ceased during the war, dropping from 302 in 1913, to 153 the following year, 39 in 1916 and down to three in 1918.⁷⁹

The deepest resentment of the jibes at recruiting meetings directed at the failure of farmers sons to enlist came not surprisingly from farmers representatives themselves. At a meeting of Tullamore RDC in June 1915, E.J. Graham MP regretted 'farmers were abused for not sending forward more recruits' while making reference to the lack of men in tillage districts, while two other speakers claimed 'the only men idle were the police and those making speeches' at recruiting meetings!⁸⁰ A meeting of Ballinagar and Cappincur UIL in July heard complaints of farmers sons being overworked, while a resolution was passed 'opposing in

every way possible conscription on the farming community owing to the great dearth of men at the present time'.⁸¹ The following month complaints were heard in the neighbouring parish of Philipstown that 'farmers could not save their crops owing to the scarcity of labour',⁸² while a year later things appeared to have reached a critical point when it was reported that in the Tullamore district, 'women harvesters were earning five shillings a day', a King's County Independent correspondent adding that 'cheap agricultural labour is a thing of the past'.⁸³

Despite this it is necessary to point out that the number of recruits who joined the army from the county during the period from August 4th 1914 to October 15th 1916, was 1,055, the sixth highest in Leinster outside Dublin,⁸⁴ which does not include 367 reservists who also joined up. Table 21 gives a breakdown of recruiting at different times during this period.

TABLE 21: Number of Recruits from the King' county at particular periods up to October 1916.

PERIOD	NO. OF RECRUITS	MONTHLY AVERAGE
4 Aug. 1914 - 15 Dec. 1914	250	Approx 50
15 Dec. 1914 - 15 Dec. 1915	594	Approx 50
15 Dec. 1915 - 15 Oct. 1916	211	Approx 21 ⁸⁵

Two points of interest here are the fact that up to the end of 1915, the numbers joining remained steady at approximately 50 per month, but this number drops significantly during 1916 despite the fact that a county recruiting committee had been established that January,⁸⁶ which included rural, urban and county councillors, and a number of the county's leading Unionists. Their suggestion to the military authorities to reopen the military barracks⁸⁷ in Tullamore to help boost the campaign was not acted upon, and their invitation to John Redmond to visit the county for similar purposes was also ignored.⁸⁸ This committee's work was to run up against the shortage of labour already mentioned, but more significantly the change in attitude to recruiting in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. This also accounts for the drop in recruits for that year, and interestingly in June, Inspector Crane claimed that exactly 'only 21 enlisted from the county during that month.'⁸⁹ Sadly from the researchers point of view he fails to supply this type of information from this date onwards, but he did admit in August that not only was recruiting at a 'standstill', but that 'the estimated cost for every recruit enrolled in the county for some considerable time was £200 to the Government',⁹⁰ while the following month he reported that only nine recruits had joined up from the Tullamore division in September that year.⁹¹

There can be little doubt also that once the gory details of the war began to reach home, some at least of the 2,189 men estimated to have been available for military service in the county,⁹² would have had second thoughts about joining up. A letter to the Midland Tribune in May 1915 claimed that 'Hell

was all over Belgium and northern France',⁹³ while the private letters of Lord Rosse also reveal the brutality of the conflict. Rosse had seen service in the South African War and afterwards became a captain in the Irish Guards.⁹⁴ On the outbreak of World War I, he joined as a reserve and went to the front where he kept in contact with his family back in Birr. During April and May 1915, five of his letters sent home at that time have survived. In one of these he had complained of 'the trenches becoming very filthy' after heavy rain which left him 'covered with yellow mud up to the waist',⁹⁵ and while he spoke on a number of occasions of how relatively quiet things were in his section of the trenches, he also referred in unsavoury terms to the enemies use of gas and urged 'that the Government ought not any longer carry on war as at present but treat the Germans as savages...',⁹⁶ the latter description he felt compelled to stress again the following month.⁹⁷ Shortly afterwards he suffered severe injuries to the head from shrapnel at La Bassee,⁹⁸ and for several days afterwards, he lay between life and death.⁹⁸ Interestingly both he and his family went to great lengths to keep this news secret, and we find his agent was at pains to stress in a letter to Rosse's uncle of 'his absolute silence' on the matter, while however going on to admit 'that rumours of something of the sort',⁹⁹ were already out because so many people in the Birr area had friends and relations serving at the front. Rosse himself was to take no further part in the war and returned home in November 1915,¹⁰⁰ but he never fully recovered from the injuries he sustained and eventually died from their effects in June 1918.¹⁰¹

The King's County Chronicle made a valiant effort to whip up enthusiasm for recruiting once the numbers joining began to decline in 1916. From February of that year, photographs of soldiers from the Birr area on active service were given weekly, as were columns of the names of those who had joined up in the county.¹⁰² One is immediately struck by the number of families that supplied from three to six members to the war effort, but from this stage on it was becoming a much more difficult task for the reasons already outlined to entice men to join. In all 453 men from the county died in the war, with almost one-quarter of these coming from Birr alone,¹⁰³ but the main point at issue here is that while the county may have provided its share of recruits, members of the county recruiting committee like John Dooly continued to insist that there were slackers, especially farmers sons. This insistence, and the Irish party's support for recruiting was unpopular among many Nationalists who had no desire to join the war effort, and who argued that they were playing their part by supplying extra food at this particular juncture. In the long term, as the recruiting campaign became more unpopular, the UIL was the real loser because of its direct association with the party; for its leading members like Dooly were expected to front the recruiting campaign. The lack of enthusiasm for carrying out this type of work was increasingly evident from two examples at the start of 1916. A special meeting of the County Council had been convened by Dooly in December 1915 to make arrangements for the formation of a

recruiting committee but it fell through after only himself and the vice-chairman, J.P. Goodbody, bothered to attend;¹⁰⁴ while at a similar gathering of county, district and urban councillors as well as local magistrates in January 1916, again only two county councillors turned up.¹⁰⁵ When it was suggested at this meeting to form committees for each electoral area, one member present expressed the view that such appointments were a 'farce', and instanced the Tullamore UDC recruiting committee as a good example of one which had never met to carry out its task.¹⁰⁶ Clearly by this stage, the task of organising recruits was not the most sought after post, and this task was to become even more difficult in 1917 and 1918 when the mood of the county changed in the aftermath of the Easter Rising.

The early attempted reorganisation of the UIL in 1915 also met another thunderbolt within the county, and in fact the whole midland region, when in April of that year, the Government announced proposals for a series of liquor sur-taxes, whereby the duty on spirits was to be doubled from 14s 9d to 29s 6d, and sur-taxes of 12s, 24s, and 36s were to be imposed on various types of beer (per barrel) depending on the specific gravity of the product.¹⁰⁷ It was mentioned in chapter five that Lloyd George's budget proposals in 1909 had not been popular in the county due to similar intended proposals, but the opposition voiced on that occasion was nothing compared to what emerged at this period. This resulted in Lloyd George watering down many of his proposals in May 1915, but during the war, the Government still introduced a number of measures which hit the liquor trade hard; these included the Intoxication liquor Act of August 1914 which made for shorter pub opening hours, increases in the price of beer and spirits in successive budgets, and regulations making for weaker beer,¹⁰⁸ culminating in more severe restrictions in April 1917, which will be discussed in the last chapter. The point to understand here is that the UIL suffered from these proposals because the Irish Party did not appear to resist them sufficiently when they were first introduced into the House of Commons. This point was made clear at a large public meeting representative of the distilling, brewing, agricultural, general traders, and labourers interests in May 1915 at Tullamore, a town heavily dependent on these industries. During the course of his speech, P.J. Egan (a noted Nationalist), claimed there were 500 people directly employed in the town's breweries, maltings, distillery, and allied trades. Later Captain Daly, one of the joint distillery owners, broke down in fine detail the numbers employed in each sector, 'from the 396 ground staff...to three harnessmakers and one electrician', as if to get the message across clearly.¹⁰⁹ The same meeting also heard that these men were responsible for converting 70,000 barrels of barley into malt each year, but all these facts take a deeper significance when Egan directed strong criticism at the Irish Party:

...I say it was an extraordinary state of affairs that Mr Redmond and the Irish Party allowed these taxation proposals to pass without a word of protest (hear hear)...1,500

people in Tullamore will be driven to starvation and 30,000 acres of barley and oats rendered useless. I think, men of King's county, we have for rather too long kept our tongues in our cheeks as far as the Irish Party is concerned. I think we have sacrificed ourselves a little too long in the interests of the Irish Party when I say we have come to the end of our tether and if we are going to send over this £400 a year bridge to Westminster, we are going to see that they deliver the goods to us.¹¹⁰

There is little doubt but that feelings ran high on the matter and even the county inspector noted in late April that 'traders are in a state of panic and farmers who grow barley likewise aghast over the proposal duties',¹¹¹ the controversy over which marked the beginning of the first serious criticism of the Irish Party on a large scale within the King's county. This was to have disastrous repercussions for the UIL, checking the reorganisation of branches in the county in the short term, and costing it much public support in the long term. Similar protests when further restrictions were imposed on the industries over two years later were to give a significant impetus to the rise of Sinn Fein in the county at that particular time.

Having looked now at a number of events which cost support for the Irish Party and UIL, it is necessary to mention before the end of the chapter, an event which occurred in the county before the Easter Rising, known to most as the "Tullamore Affair" of Monday, March 20th 1916. The prelude to this affair started on St. Patrick's day, when a language flag day was carried out by the local Gaelic League branch, during which the Irish Volunteer corps in the town, numbering about 75 men, headed a march of the Pipers Band.¹¹² This band had been started by the Gaelic League members and during the event, some booing was indulged in by people who had relatives at the front, but it led to no unsavoury incidents. Two days later a Wolfe Tone memorial match was played in Tullamore at which a Volunteer flag day in turn was organised, the Midland Tribune noting that again, 'some opposition' was offered but no finer details were given.¹¹³ It is fair to assume that it amounted to little more than booing again, but an Irish Times report did claim that when some of the spectators present 'attempted to remove a flag from one of the Sinn Feiners, he retaliated by drawing a revolver',¹¹⁴ although the county inspector made no mention of this incident.

However, the following evening a more dangerous event occurred outside what was known as the Sinn Fein hall in Tullamore when the Irish Volunteers (usually referred to by the police and press as Sinn Feiners), were attending one of their meetings. The local branches of Sinn Fein which had existed in Edenderry and Tullamore after 1906 were both by this stage practically dead, with the more energetic members in both areas having thrown all their support into keeping alive what may best

be described as two fairly active Irish Volunteer corps. These both opposed recruiting and the threat of conscription, and had aroused much opposition from those with relatives at the front. The corps at Tullamore had been boosted by a mix up on the part of the railway company in the delivery of a number of guns which had been paid for by the treasurer of the National Volunteers, but delivered to the secretary of the Irish Volunteers,¹¹⁵ the "mix up" being conveniently arranged by the latter. Accordingly the county inspector reported that during a parade in January 1915, the Irish Volunteers were unarmed, as it was anticipated that if they displayed the guns in public, 'the National Volunteers would take them...'¹¹⁶

On the night in question a crowd of about 200 men, women and children assembled outside the Sinn Fein hall in William Street in response to some jeering earlier in the day by Sinn Feiners at the railway station when a number of women were taking leave of their husbands who were serving with the 7th Battalion of the Leinster Regiment. A local urban councillor, T.R. Dixon had 'supplied some of the separation women with small Union Jacks'¹¹⁷ and they taunted those inside the rooms with cries of "Germans", and "Down with the Kaiser", and "Down with the Sinn Feiners".¹¹⁸ The police moved the crowd away several times (originally it consisted of about 30 boys), but it kept reforming after short intervals. District Inspector Fitzgerald claimed that at about 10.30 p.m., 'matters became threatening' as the night was dark and the public lamps in the town were not lit.¹¹⁹ Some of the Sinn Feiners had to be escorted to the rooms, and likewise a number of Cumann na mBan girls who left to go home. When a number of Sinn Feiners remonstrated with the crowd, one of them 'had a flag thrust into his face',¹²⁰ who in turn broke it in retaliation. By this stage the youths in particular were threatening those who entered or left the room,¹²¹ and eventually a small section broke into the hall as another group used a newsagent's trolley to bring back stones from nearby road repairs which were used to break windows in the hall. In response, the Volunteers displayed revolvers from the windows and one fired a shot over the heads of the crowd, which broke a window on the opposite side of the street, and suddenly what had started out as a juvenile prank now became very serious. The police then moved quickly to get the crowd back from the hall and two sergeants entered the premises to take the names of the 15 men present.

By the time this task was completed, Inspector Crane had arrived with reinforcements and he quickly gave orders to search the party for arms in connection with the shooting.¹²² This was both resented and resisted by the Volunteers who felt they had been the wounded party, with the end result being a scruffle and melee with the police. Fitzgerald's report then gives a vivid account of the resulting fracas;

...immediately 8 or 10 of the Sinn Feiners drew revolvers and fired deliberately at us. We got mixed up with them, and the firing continued by some while others attacked us

with hurleys and sticks. We were not armed....The County Inspector was severely injured in the face and head...Sergeant Ahearn had to be conveyed to hospital with his right arm broken and two bullets in his arm and side...It was a desperate attempt on our lives, and it is marvellous how we escaped as we did, for at least 20 shots were fired, and intended for us, but it is rumoured some of them lodged in our assailants...¹²³

Not to take from the seriousness of the affair, it is worth recording that local wags in the town claimed afterwards that the Volunteers had 'aimed at a crane but shot a heron'!¹²⁴ Only four men inside the hall were arrested on this occasion, the others escaping to be roughly handled by the crowd outside. Two of these later took part in the 1916 Rising, James Brennan serving in the GPO, while Peter Bracken was in Kelly's Shop overlooking O'Connell Street. The remaining prisoners were arrested within the next couple of days, three of them being later released on account of their young age. After the police had left the hall to escort (and protect) the prisoners to the barracks, the crowd invaded it and exacted retribution by wrecking the furniture, fittings, and instruments belonging to the Pipers Band.¹²⁵

The prisoners were afterwards subject to a magisterial investigation which was adjourned six times pending the release of Sergeant Ahearne whose evidence was considered crucial. During the Rising itself (and afterwards), the prisoners were not removed from Tullamore jail,¹²⁶ which was heavily guarded with timber and wire barricades as the police feared an attempt would be made to force a release.¹²⁷ At the last hearing, the prisoners were handed over to the military authorities on the instructions of General Maxwell and conveyed to Richmond jail in Dublin by train where they were re-united with Bracken and Brennan. On the occasion of their march to the railway station, the military escort had to provide protection for them from a noisy crowd which had assembled in a scene very similar to what was repeated in Dublin after Easter week. This event shows that the action of the so called Sinn Feiners had not much support in the town at this particular time.

The prisoners were subsequently tried by courtmartial at the end of May and defended by T.M. Healy MP, acting on the instructions of James Rodgers, solicitor Tullamore. Healy rightly contended that they had been illegally transferred from civil to military authority and while the prisoners were convicted, their sentences were not promulgated as the alleged offence had been committed anterior to the passage of Martial Law.¹²⁸ There is some difficulty in drawing a conclusion as to how they were received in Tullamore on their homecoming; the county inspector claimed 'there was not as enthusiastic a reception for the prisoners on their return as expected',¹²⁹ which contrasts with the Midland Tribune account that they were

met 'with a great ovation, the townspeople having turned out in vast numbers to greet them'.¹³⁰ The King's County Chronicle gave no indication of the size of the crowd but did convey that 'a sense of bustle and excitement'¹³¹ followed their release, while the King's County Independent claimed that 'a large crowd had convened' on the Wednesday evening when the prisoners were first expected home, but gives no indication of the crowd's size the following evening when they were reported as returning to a 'hearty reception by their friends and sympathisers'.¹³² Either way, the scene contrasted sharply with their send off to Dublin and indicated the overall change in reaction to the Easter Rising which had begun to take place in many parts of the country at this time.

Within the county, the "Tullamore Affair", allied to the dislike of recruiting and the liquor taxes imposed early in the war, all helped to create what the chief Secretary Augustine Birrell termed as 'the spirit of Sinn Feinism'¹³³ which grew during this period, as distinct from the rise of any Sinn Fein party or organisation. As noted earlier but worth repeating, the two Sinn Fein clubs at Tullamore and Edenderry were dead by this time, and Barker (1919) best summed up the mood of the country during this period when he referred to the new attitude emerging in many areas as 'a movement of opinion rather than an organised party'.¹³⁴ This movement of opinion was best reflected in the King's county by looking at the editorial comments of the county's two Nationalist newspapers. Up to September 1914, criticism of the Irish Party was a rarity and while both papers were slow to abandon support for Redmond, guarded criticism was more noticeable from this time onwards.

This criticism was more evident in the Midland Tribune, whose editor James Pike made known his distaste for recruiting as early as October 1914 when in a strongly worded editorial he made clear the paper's stance on the matter:

...We stand exactly as we have stood since the war broke out and believe it is not in the interests of Ireland as a whole that her population should be further depleted, as the manhood of Ireland may be required for Ireland's service after the war...In a word, a genuinely constituted National Convention could decide whether Irish representatives, elected to win Irish liberties, are now to become recruiting sergeants or not.¹³⁵

The same week Pike heaped sarcasm on Michael Reddy MP, who had attended the first major recruiting meeting in Birr when referring to his 'new alliance' with men like Toler Roberts Garvey, (Lord Rosse's agent), whom he had denounced on many occasions over the previous ten years.¹³⁶ On three occasions early in 1915, he called on Redmond to admit E.J. Graham MP to the Irish Party,¹³⁷ and on two further occasions he was especially critical of the party's decision not to hold

Conventions to select candidates in north Tipperary and the Harbour Division of Dublin, after having insisted on doing so in north King's county at the end of 1914.¹³⁸

Despite this guarded criticism, the paper was still solidly behind the party on most issues and it was only after the Easter Rising that this support began really to dissipate. The paper's view on the Rising was one of regret that it ever should have happened and in quoting Shakespeare to plead for mercy for the rebels, Pike showed a remarkable degree of prophecy when he wrote:

That the rebellion was a sectional one is clear from the attitude of the majority of the people...Mercy was shown to De Wet with excellent results. Let us trust that there will be no more blood letting in Ireland. The dead are often more dangerous in death than in life.¹³⁹

Apparent party blunders from then on came in for strong criticism, and late in June the paper made clear its 'emphatic protest'¹⁴⁰ against any proposals allowing the separation of Ulster from the Lloyd George Home Rule proposals being discussed at that particular time; by September it was lamenting the 'wave of discontent passing over the country',¹⁴¹ and by October was forecasting that in the next election, 'the Irish Party may possibly pass into oblivion'.¹⁴² Shortly after this, Pike made his most stringent criticism to date, wondering if Redmond was 'living on the moon'¹⁴³ over his failure to see the drift of events in Ireland, having earlier called on him to 'retire from the chairmanship of the Irish Party or act up to its duties'.¹⁴⁴ By November he made clear his break of support for the party when calling for a new 'National Policy', after having described its opposition in Westminster as a 'sham'.¹⁴⁵

The King's County Independent was slower to abandon support for the Irish Party, yet when it did switch its allegiance to Sinn Fein in 1917, its support for the latter was never in any doubt (and later in 1920 resulted in the destruction of the paper's printing facilities by the Black and Tans), and its criticism of the Irish Party was even more stringent than that of the Midland Tribune. The paper supported Redmond's call for enlistment in 1914 but by April the following year was having second thoughts, reasoning that 'as the King's county is largely a tillage county, young men can hardly be spared',¹⁴⁶ while in August the editor asked, 'what are the Nationalist members of Parliament doing?'¹⁴⁷, when forecasting that the country was drifting towards starvation. However it was the extra liquor taxes that most irritated the editor during 1915, which is not surprising considering their impact on the Tullamore region where the paper was based. When the proposals were first mooted that April, the paper spoke of a 'crisis in the Midlands' and remarked that 'no Irish party could countenance the destruction of all these interests by excessive taxation'.¹⁴⁸

Its reaction to the 1916 Rising was very similar to that of the Midland Tribune; a plea for mercy was made for the rebels and 'punishment if it must be for the leaders - but not the punishment of death'.¹⁴⁹ Earlier in March the paper had shown some sympathy with the Irish Volunteer prisoners arrested after the "Tullamore Affair" when the Sinn Fein movement was described as not being 'Pro-German' but 'love of country'.¹⁵⁰ Instead the paper laid the blame for the fracas squarely at the hands of the police, whom it was felt should have dealt with the crowd outside the hall. This sympathy for the Volunteers may stem from the fact that the paper's offices were in the same building as the Sinn Fein rooms. Yet it is equally surprising that the county judge, Judge Drummond expressed similar sentiments when hearing an appeal for damages to the Pipers Band instruments later in October. His expressed opinion that the conduct of the crowd outside the hall was 'mean and contemptible', similar to that of 'rioters and thieves going about for the mere sake of doing mischief', was later added to by criticism of the police for not having removed the 'disorderly and hostile crowd'.¹⁵¹

After the Rising, the King's County Independent was less critical of the Irish Party than the Midland Tribune, concentrating instead on focusing upon the flaws in the Government's Irish policy. The most obvious here was criticism of the Home Rule proposals in June 1916, described as the 'Lloyd George folly',¹⁵² while the Royal Commission which reported on the Rising was alleged to be made up of two elements, 'truth and balderdash' a little of the former and a great deal of the latter!¹⁵³ Later the return to civilian Government was described as 'Humpty Dumpty having been put together again',¹⁵⁴ but by September letters of criticism of the Irish Party were being published.¹⁵⁵ By the end of the year it was obvious that the paper's allegiance to the party was in doubt when it announced that the 'only remaining hope for Ireland lay in adequate representation at the Peace Conference'.¹⁵⁶

This movement away from unflinching and unwavering support for the Irish Party is matched by some public bodies and organisations after the Rising, particularly in relation to the Home Rule proposals of June 1916. A number of notable examples here include meetings of Mount Bolus and Kilcormac UIL branches, the latter expressing 'indignation at the exclusion proposals which exposed their Catholic brethren to the well known bigotry of the Orange majority...'¹⁵⁷, while Tullamore RDC by one vote consigned to the wastepaper basket a resolution from Nenagh UC congratulating the party on the same proposals.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, support for the party's stand came from Birr AOH,¹⁵⁹ Tullamore¹⁶⁰ and Birr UCs,¹⁶¹ and Geashill UIL.¹⁶² Clearly while the tide of opinion was beginning to turn against the party, not all Nationalists were prepared yet at least to abandon ship, and by Autumn 1916 the mood of the county was best summed up by two small quotes from the main newspapers, the King's County Independent claiming that by 'this stage, we don't know where we stand politically',¹⁶³ while Pike acknowledged 'Nationalists are

more largely divided at present than they have been since the days of Parnell...¹⁶⁴

One point was clear by September 1916 however, and that concerned the attempted reorganisation of the UIL early the previous year; it had simply not succeeded, ran out of steam by May, and was not carried on into 1916. The failure of many prominent Nationalists to lend it support can be accounted for by the bitterness left over after the 1914 by-election and a general apathy concerning League affairs. It should also be pointed out that the main basis for the reorganisation, ie, to secure the return of Paddy Adams in the next election, was entirely wrong and smacked of a desire for revenge to oust E.J. Graham MP which was clearly seen through by many in the county. Meanwhile, piecemeal reorganisation as that carried out by the National Directory only served to plug gaps in the porous national organisation here and there, and clearly there was no overall policy to carry out a nationwide re-structuring of the organisation at this time. What was attempted meanwhile, ran up against the backlash to recruiting, the liquor surtaxes of 1915, and later the changing mood of the country after the 1916 Rising, reflected in the King's county in the aftermath of the "Tullamore Affair". When all of this is allied to the declining stature of John Redmond during 1916, it only remained a matter of time before the whole UIL organisation folded up completely. The last chapter in the thesis examines the rather timid exit of the League from county affairs and the subsequent conditions that gave rise to Sinn Fein.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RISE OF SINN FEIN - NOVEMBER 1916 TO APRIL 1918

'We will all be Sinn Feiners now when there is no fighting to be done' (laughter).

Mr John Henry (Home Ruler) speaking at a Tullamore Poor Law Guardian meeting on a resolution for the release of Irish prisoners in England.¹

Mr James Fox: '...John Dooly has no more right to speak [at the Convention] for the people of the King's county than Paddy Onions the tramp' (laughter and loud applause).

Mr John Kelly: 'Paddy was never engaged in the transaction for the sale of his country, therefore an apology was due to Onions' (loud laughter).

Scene at Sinn Fein meeting in Edenderry during June 1917.²

Irish Party wounded in North Roscommon, killed in South Longford, buried in East Clare. R.I.P.

Mourning flag erected near Birr after the East Clare by-election, July 1917.³

Paddy Onions had gained notoriety throughout the county in the early years of the century for his famous escapades with the police in relation to petty thefts, and more especially in connection with bouts of drunkenness. A man of seemingly no fixed abode, his political affiliations were unknown, and it is unlikely that he would have expected to become the subject for discussion at a Sinn Fein meeting in 1917, but then strange indeed were the political developments of that time. A reporter to the King's County Independent commented on the 'great change' that had come over 'the people' in September 1917 when referring to a wedding at Croghan when two large Sinn Fein or Republican flags (ie the tri-colour) were seen to wave from the carriage during the progress of the wedding party, while several trees in the locality were also decorated with the tri-colour.⁴ At a coursing meeting earlier in November 1916, one dog that took part bore the name of Sinn Fein vi,⁵ all reflecting the changing mood of the country at this time. The final chapter in this thesis takes a look at this continued move of opinion towards Sinn Fein which manifested itself after April 1917 in the rise of a rejuvenated party of that name, coupled with a corresponding loss of support for the Irish Party and demise of the UIL as a force of any consequence in the county. During the remarkable period from November 1916 to April 1918, there was also a revival of other organisations within the county which merits attention, notably the LLA and Gaelic League, plus the emergence of another, the ITGWU, destined to play a major role in the political, economic, and social development of the country in the years ahead. Only superficial mention is made of the latter as it would require another study to trace its full development in the county.

The swing in sympathy for the men and ideals of 1916 was evidenced from June 1916 by certain gleanings from the county

inspector's monthly reports. During that month, about 50 people were observed wearing 'mourning badges' for the rebels executed in Dublin, while over £62 was collected in Birr, Shinrone, and Shannonbridge on behalf of the Irish National Aid Association.⁶ By the following month this sum had reached £230, the bulk of which (£220) had been collected in the Birr district.⁷ This is chiefly accounted for by the calling for such collections in parishes under his control by the Bishop of Killaloe, Dr Fogarty. An additional £16 was collected in the whole county for the Irish Volunteers Dependents Fund while further collections later in Edenderry and Tullamore amounted to almost £60,⁸ making a grand total of over £306, or more than had been collected by the UIL in any year since 1908. As late as 1918, football and hurling tournaments were still being arranged for the same purposes, and during one six month period at the end of 1916 and start of 1917, the GAA county board held no local championship matches as National Aid tournaments took prominence.⁹ At one of these earlier in September 1916, the county inspector remarked that the 'Tullamore club wore Sinn Fein jersies',¹⁰ though an extensive report of the matches played in the King's County Independent, surprisingly made no reference to this. Either way, a definite decision was taken by the Tullamore club the following year to abandon their red jersies with a green sash in favour of a tri-colour version of green, white, and gold, not quite identical with but very close to the national colours.¹¹ This decision is hardly surprising given that a number of club members had been arrested over the "Tullamore Affair" in March 1916. Interestingly it was the county hurling team that first wore the jersies in a competitive match (and all Offaly teams since the early 1920s) against Laois at Ballybrophy in June 1917. However when the team and supporters displayed a large Republican flag on the way home through Roscrea, it aroused the attention of local women with husbands serving at the front and the occasion was marked by some stone throwing.¹²

Supporters of the new wave of political feeling developing in the county were boosted by the remarks of county court Judge Drummond in connection with the claims for malicious injury arising out of the "Tullamore Affair" mentioned in the last chapter, and which must have come as a surprise to opponents of the Irish Volunteers in the town. Even the county inspector admitted his utterances 'gave some encouragement to the rebels and aroused considerable indignation among the law abiding members of the community',¹³ the only time he ever made reference in 20 years to the comments of a judge. The use of the term 'rebels' here is interesting as the term 'Sinn Feiners' was more commonly used and while the latter did not refer to any party or organisation of that name, a number of important developments (mainly national) took place early in 1917 which paved the way for the emergence of a party of that name.

Firstly, the return of Count Plunkett in north Roscommon during February came as a great boost to opponents of the Irish Party. Even before his election, one public board in the county, the Tullamore Guardians called on the voters in the constituency

to 'honour one of Ireland's greatest and most distinguished patriots by returning him at the head of the poll'.¹⁴ Afterwards Birr No.1 Council¹⁵ and Birr Guardians¹⁶ passed votes of congratulations on his election. However this apparent unity was shattered later in March when deep divisions were evident among the county's leading Nationalists over a circular issued by Plunkett calling for an assembly of delegates from various public and national bodies to attend an all-Ireland conference in Dublin for the purpose of insisting upon a demand that Ireland should be represented at the forthcoming Peace Conference. A special meeting of the County Council was convened to discuss the circular, which decided against sending delegates in a tight vote of nine to seven,¹⁷ but it is interesting that at least five of the latter had been leading Irish Party supporters at some stage over the previous 15 years. Birr Guardians¹⁸, No.1 and No.2 councils¹⁹, and Tullamore UC²⁰ all took no action on the matter or had the circular marked read, as did Cloneygowan RDC where the chairman wished for it to be burned.²¹ On the other hand, Tullamore and Edenderry RDC's appointed delegates to attend, as did the Tullamore and Rahan Sinn Fein clubs. More surprisingly delegates also attended from Tubber UIL as did two priests from the county, Fr Magee, PP, Tubber (later to become a leading Sinn Fein supporter) and Fr Conway, CC, Eglishe²². Overall the reaction of the various bodies to Plunkett's call shows that Nationalist opinion was divided on the topic; yet it is clear by this stage that the majority of those bodies who had declared their hand were still loyal to the Irish Party. This may appear at first glance to be a contradiction to what has earlier been pointed out concerning the general drift of public support towards what was termed "the spirit of Sinn Fein", but need not necessarily be so, as one suspects these public bodies would be slower to abandon the Irish Party since the majority of members on them had been elected as Nationalists in the first place. Yet, more and more of these same Nationalist's however were to abandon the Irish Party in the coming months as the number of Sinn Fein clubs mushroomed within the county.

The slow but steady change in public opinion was evident again by the hoisting of Republican flags throughout various parts of the country on the anniversary of Easter Week. The Inspector General remarked that about 265 such flags were displayed countrywide at about 165 different places that April, but of these, it is fair to say that the one which caused most public comment was that hoisted on top of Tullamore courthouse. After having examined the best means of taking it down, Constable Burke decided in the interests of safety that since the support rope used to erect it had been removed, the cutting of the flag staff was the best way of achieving the objective. The building in question was under County Council control and when the solicitor representing that body wrote to Inspector Crane concerning the matter in July, he received a reply that clearly indicated the police authorities had no intention of replacing the staff.²³ This reply propelled the leading Sinn Fein member on the Council, T.M. Russell, (who had been co-opted to same in February 1917 after Paddy Adams resigned his seat the previous August) to propose a resolution

that the county surveyor be directed to take proceedings arising out of the damage against the constable in question.²⁴ Subsequently the charge for £7 damages was held at Tullamore Quarter Sessions in November, but the judge dismissed the case²⁵ and a further appeal to Assizes later in 1918 met a similar fate.²⁶ However the rather heavy handed approach adopted by the police in the case of these flags is hard to fathom, as their insistence on taking them down only served to create amusement for those who put them up, while the publicity generated by these occurrences hardly deserved the space devoted to them. The taking down of one flag in Banagher created such a scene of commotion that the Midland Tribune reporter claimed the 'Engineers and Architects Association at their annual meeting never put forward such plans' as those devised for its removal. Sweeps, brushes, fishing rods, ladders, pot hooks, and hangers were all reportedly brought into action²⁷ and around the same time in Rahan when the police decided to fell a tree as the safest means of removing a flag, the plan failed as the flag got caught in an adjacent tree which also had to be cut!²⁸

How much these stories were exaggerated is hard to tell, but the practice continued as the county inspector reported the displaying of 50 flags in the county during May 1917,²⁹ many in response to the return of Joe Magennis in the south Longford by-election. The election of Magennis turned out to be the real driving force behind the swing of opinion in the county to Sinn Fein. In many ways the success of Count Plunkett was expected, for even Paddy Adams admitted at a UIL meeting Rhode that February that he would have been 'returned in any Nationalist constituency in Ireland',³⁰ given his connection with the Easter Rising. Magennis on the otherhand was relatively unknown, and his success spelt the end of any doubts the editor (McDermott Hayes) of the King's County Independent had for supporting the new type of nationalism emerging, and from then on his criticism of the Irish Party was more marked. A victory procession was held in Tullamore comprised of about 200 men headed by the St. Columcille Pipers Band,³¹ while a similar sized crowd marched in Banagher to the music of Irish pipes and the singing of "Easter Week".³² Bonfires were also lit in a number of places, including outside the residence of Fr Austin, CC, Shinrone,³³ while the county inspector also reported that month that 'a number of Catholic curates and three or four PPs in the county are Sinn Feiners'.³⁴

This support of the majority (as it later turned out) of priests in the county in helping to establish Sinn Fein clubs after May 1917 undoubtedly gave the movement a respectability it needed to win over the support of the more lukewarm Nationalists who originally held aloof from its activities. This development contrasts with the reluctance of many of the clergy in the county (noted in chapter two) to become involved in the setting up of the UIL branches after 1900. O'Fiaich (1970) argues that clerical support for Redmond's policy was already showing signs of waning even before the 1916 Rising',³⁵ a fact he attributes to their distaste for the recruiting campaign carried out during the early years of the war. While no priest in the county was

reported to the Government for using anti-recruiting or seditious language up to the end of 1914³⁶, Fr Crowe, CC, Birr, made quite clear his emphatic opposition to it throughout that August and September before his transfer to Ennis the following July. However one priest who became a noted Sinn Fein supporter after his move to Rahan in 1918 that did attract police attention during this period was Fr Smith, CC, of Tyrrellspass in Westmeath. During September and October 1914, he made two strong anti-enlistment speeches during the course of two sermons, and referred to young men who joined the army as 'fools, tinkers, and sweeps'. His advice on how to deal with recruiting officers was not beyond any doubt either when he expressed the view that 'the proper way to treat them was by giving them one between the two eyes'.³⁷ Later the level of his support for Sinn Fein can be gauged by his reported contribution of £40 to the Dr Mc Cartan by-election fund after a vacancy arose on the death of E.J. Graham early in 1918.³⁸

Despite this, Smith's arrival in the county a year after the rise of Sinn Fein had begun in earnest meant the member of the clergy who captured the attention of most people for his support of the movement was Fr Burbage, CC, Geashill. The son of an RIC head constable, Burbage was a keen promoter of the Catholic Bulletin³⁹ which had carried biographies of the executed rebels after the Easter Rising, and like Smith, was not a man to mince his words during political speeches as is evident from the press censorship reports of the time. During one such speech at Philipstown in August 1917, he made a strong attack on British Cabinet Ministers, comparing them to 'Satan in furthering their own interests', before going on to advise his listeners to 'follow the rebels of Easter Week even to death if you are true Irishmen'.⁴⁰ Later in October, part of his speech at a meeting in Killoughy was also deleted from the press reports⁴¹, while the police again took note of his comments concerning their alleged strong arm tactics used on the occasion of the arrest of the county's leading Sinn Fein activist, T.M. Russell, during March 1918, when Burbage announced that 'it was clear to all the world that all tyranny did not cease when the Czar of Russia was driven from his throne'.⁴² These and similar sentiments by Fr Burbage earned him the respect of the county's leading Republicans and it came as no great surprise when along with Fr Bergin, PP, Philipstown, both were elected vice-presidents of the north King's county Sinn Fein Executive in November 1917,⁴³ with the aforementioned Russell as president. Earlier in October, Burbage had also been elected vice-chairman of the overall county Executive of Sinn Fein;⁴⁴ and did not by any means confine his energy to the build up of the party, for he also expressed a genuine desire for the revival of the Irish and was a noted Gaelic Leaguer in the county. Later during the War of Independence, he was to suffer internment in Ballykinlar where he was sent in January 1920,⁴⁵ and was subsequently presented with a monsternce from fellow prisoners as a token of their esteem for him.⁴⁶ On the occasion of his detention, the county inspector noted sarcastically that, '... in my opinion Fr Smith of Rahan and Fr Magee of Tubber should be sent to keep him company',⁴⁷ and

at least half his wish was granted the following month with the subsequent internment of Smith.⁴⁸

It would be wrong to overstate the part played in the rise of Sinn Fein by Fr Burbage and Fr Smith for other priests made notable contributions as well in the work of organising clubs. For example, the south Kings county Executive was chaired by Fr Kennedy, CC, Coolderry, with Fr O'Reilly, PP, Kilcormack (a former leading UIL member) taking the post of vice-chairmanship. In a special report at the end of 1916, Inspector Crane had expressed clear opinions regarding other clergymen in the county, most notably Fr Murphy, PP, Edenderry, who was described as being 'disloyal for a number of years'; from Phillipstown, Fr Bergin, PP, and Cavanagh and Byrne, CCs, were all 'reputed to hold Sinn Fein views', while Fr Fanning of Rhode was regarded 'as holding Pro-German views.'⁴⁹ The latter also had two speeches subject to press censorship towards the end of 1917.⁵⁰ Crane's report also made reference to four older parish priests who were regarded as 'loyal and quite opposed to Sinn Fein.'⁵¹ Ordination dates for two were unavailable, while Fr Monahan, PP, Ferbane (ordained 1862) and Fr Callery, PP, Tullamore (ordained 1872),⁵² would have been around 80 and 70 years of age respectively given an ordination age of 26 ___ hence their likelihood of holding more conservative views than the younger clergy. Yet despite this (and Crane's assertion), Monahan did send a letter of support to a Sinn Fein rally at Ferbane in November 1917, when he gave the meeting 'his blessing and best wishes'.⁵³

The extent of clerical support for Sinn Fein was confirmed at two rallies in the north of the county during late September and early October 1917, held to protest against the continuing arrests of Sinn Fein members. The first at Tullamore was attended by five priests and in a rousing speech Fr Burbage claimed '.... English law has no moral force in this country',⁵⁴ while the second at Philipstown attended by seven priests came shortly after the death of Thomas Ashe, and drew a large crowd of about 6,000. The procession marched in funeral pace, bearing flags draped in black and wearing mourning emblems, headed by a band playing funeral dirges, from the town which was similarly decorated to a field where the meeting was held.⁵⁵ One of the most talked about aspects of the demonstration was the appearance of Fr Bergin, PP, who had earlier in the day been unable to celebrate mass due to ill-health, but made it his business to put in a public appearance at the meeting during which he called for prayers for the repose of the soul of Ashe.⁵⁶ By this stage there was little doubt but that the majority of priests in the county had swung their allegiance in behind Sinn Fein; and not even one of the older clergy who were reluctant to make the change were seen to publicly support the Irish Party from this onwards. This latter fact was made clear in the build up to the north King's county by-election of April 1918, and later in the General Election of the same year. In fact, on only one specific occasion did Inspector Crane mention an example of clerical opposition to Sinn Fein during 1916-18 and that was when in July 1917 he referred to the case of one parish priest (not named)

who would not permit his curate to attend the formation a Sinn Fein club.⁵⁷ The support of the clergy, (particularly younger priests) also appears to have been a nation-wide occurrence, for as early as January 1917 the Inspector General claimed 'many of them cannot be regarded otherwise than Sinn Feiners'.⁵⁸ Overall their support for the movement helped to give it a respectability it might have lacked because of its tendency to attract some militant Republicans to its ranks, and wild utterances like that of a young lady who accompanied De Valera on a visit to Tullamore in July 1917 in calling for 'three cheers for the hurley that killed Inspector Mills'⁵⁹ [during a meeting in Dublin to mark the Rising anniversary], might have frightened away more moderate Nationalists from the party if clerical support had not been forthcoming to guide the movement along more moderate lines.

De Valera's visit to the county shortly after his by-election victory in Clare gave a timely boost to local Sinn Fein activists who had started to form clubs in April just before the return of Joe Magennis in Longford. An estimated crowd of 10,000 people were in Tullamore for the occasion which was slightly marred by some stone throwing organised by what was termed the 'Separationist faction',⁶⁰ but the police quickly brought order to the proceedings, the highlight of which was Dev's speech. He dealt with the importance of the Irish language as well as the forthcoming Peace Conference and Irish Convention, but the latter he reckoned was doomed to failure as dealing with the British Government was described as being akin to 'going to law with the devil with the court in hell'.⁶¹ He was careful to explain the Sinn Fein policy of abstention from Westminster and claimed the Irish people now wanted 'absolute independence, as the day when they would be satisfied with the Colonial Home Rule was gone'.⁶² He finished with a call on young men under 18 to join the Fianna; the women, Cumann na mBan; those 18 to 45, the Irish Volunteers, and older men the political clubs.⁶³ Within three months of De Valera's visit, the Sinn Fein party was well established throughout the whole county.

Much of this organisational work, particularly in the north of the county, was carried out by Thomas M. Russell, a native of Limerick who had come into the county at the end of 1916 as an employee of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. Described by Inspector Crane as an 'able man',⁶⁴ undoubtedly Russell's main strength was his ability as an orator, as well as possessing a strong knowledge of Irish history, and while this knowledge was tainted with an anti-British bias, it fitted in well with the changing mood of the county at this particular time. He quickly established his reputation as a speaker within months of coming to reside outside Tullamore, being co-opted onto many public bodies, including the County Council, Tullamore Board of Guardians, and the management committee of the county Infirmary.⁶⁵ He first commenced the formation of Sinn Fein clubs in April 1917, and by the end of June the police estimated six were up and running with 300 active members;⁶⁶ these having been started in Tullamore, Ballinagar, Rahan,⁶⁷ Edenderry,⁶⁸ and Banagher.⁶⁹ There was no real set

pattern to the formation of these clubs, as three of the above areas could be described as being rural settings, with the other three large towns. However four of them were formed in the Tullamore division (Banagher and Killoughy, the exceptions), and this can be accounted for by the greater support of the clergy here and the presence also of Russell. The formation of clubs in the Birr division was slower, but only slightly so, and by the end of October, the number established was 27 (in the county) with 1695 members, described as being 'generally active' by the police;⁷⁰ these figures peaking by July 1918 at 35 clubs with almost 3,000 members⁷¹. Within this growth, as might be expected, the various public bodies in the county began to move their allegiance away from the Irish Party to Sinn Fein. For example, both Birr No.1 Council and Tullamore RDC passed resolutions protesting against partition and called on the County Council to refuse representation at the proposed Irish Convention.⁷² More surprisingly the Council accepted this call,⁷³ despite the fact that most of its members had been former UIL supporters, and only four months previously had rejected Count Plunkett's circular calling for an all-Ireland assembly to discuss the forthcoming Peace Conference. In opposition to the majority of Council members however, the chairman John Dooly still attended the Convention, which can be accounted for by his close personal friendship with John Redmond, and he remained the IPP's most loyal supporter in the county up to the end of 1918. His action proved costly however, for at the Council's AGM in June 1918, he lost the post of chairman to P. J. Bermingham (now a leading Sinn Fein figure in the county) by 13 votes to 7.⁷⁴ Other examples of public bodies switching their allegiance to the new type of nationalism emerging at this time is evident from the urban and rural councils decision in Tullamore to adjourn their meetings as a mark of respect on the death of Thomas Ashe,⁷⁵ while resolutions for the release of political prisoners were a frequent occurrence, particularly at County Council meetings.⁷⁶

Not all members of public bodies abandoned the Irish Party but the drift to Sinn Fein which began in 1917 went on unchecked into the following year. A correspondent to the King's County Independent noted that the Sinn Fein demonstration in Philipstown during October 1917 was characterised by the sight of many priests and well known public men on the platform.⁷⁷ Much was also made by Sinn Fein activists of Patrick Egan's (the Chairman of Birr No. 1 Council) decision to resign as a JP after 17 years in September 1917 to join Sinn Fein on the principle that 'no man could serve two masters'.⁷⁸ Fitzpatrick (1977) argues that 'the individual's decision to convert from constitutionalism to Sinn Fein was seldom easily made',⁷⁹ but a closer look at the history of Nationalist movements in the King's county over at least the 35 year period from the Land League to the rise of Sinn Fein shows that most Nationalists would appear to have made the switch of allegiance from one movement to another with relative ease. For instance all Land League branches in the county switched over their affiliation to the INL (established by Parnell in 1882) within two years, and the majority of these in turn switched again to the support of the

clerical backed INF during 1890 - 91. Subsequently in turn, almost all INL and INF members found no difficulty in moving to the UIL once branches of that organisation were formed in the county for the first time in 1899, and as shown, were finding little difficulty in 1917 and 1918 in abandoning it in droves for Sinn Fein. One suspects here that there is more than a grain of truth, however harsh it may sound, in Inspector Crane's assertion that 'they (ie the people) are a fickle minded rare and are not to depended on'.⁸⁰ The meteoric rise and fall of political parties like Clann na Talmhan and Clann na Poblachta during the last 70 years would also bear this point out.

Towards the end of 1916 and the following year, a number of other organisations also saw a revival in their fortunes and activities, most notably the Gaelic League, King's County Farmers Association, (KCFA), and the LLA. From the peak of 17 branches in 1908, the Gaelic League had by the start of World War 1 declined to three active branches in the county, at Tullamore, Coolderry and Seir Kieran (Clareen). A number of reasons can be given for this decline, the most notable being that many national and secondary schools took on the teaching of Irish, a point referred to by the county inspector in June 1916 when discussing the League.⁸¹ Other developments like the opening of a cinema in Birr would undoubtedly have been a popular counter attraction for language activists to compete against, while after 1908, many teachers who had been active in the League, began to devote more time and energy to the welfare of the King's county Teachers Association as issues of pay, working conditions, and Government support for education came more to the forefront in the years leading up to the war. The most notable examples here are James O'Quigley (Philipstown) and Catherine Mahon (Birr), although the latter did play a prominent part in the League's revival again during 1917.

The renewal of interest in the Irish language at this particular time was no doubt associated with the change in direction of the mood of the country in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. Many of its participants, most notably Pearse, had a strong passion for the language, and indeed a number of men arrested in connection with the "Tullamore Affair" (particularly Seamus Brennan), were also active Gaelic Leaguers even before the Rising took place. It is also of interest to note that the hall or Sinn Fein rooms used by the Irish Volunteers, was also the meeting place of the local Gaelic League branch, where the instruments of their band were also stored. This in turn no doubt accounts more than anything else for Inspector Crane's remarks regarding it and the GAA in September 1916 when he remarked that:

... the GAA I have always regarded as tainted with disloyalty, but I do not think it is as insidious in its disloyalty as the Gaelic League...⁸²

The following month, the first branch was reformed at Philipstown where 30 boys and girls attended classes two nights a week under

the guidance of a new local teacher.⁸³ However it was to be 1917 before the revival began in earnest, and again, as in the early years of the century, it was the clergy and teachers who were to be the guiding lights in the movement's revival.

Fr Burbage emerges here as a leading figure, and along with three other priests, he arranged for the holding of a special meeting of the King's county joint committee of Technical Instruction at which Padraig O'Connaire (one of the best known writers of Irish at that time) was appointed as a paid instructor to start classes at five centres in the north of the county for teachers who wished to learn the language.⁸⁴ Within weeks of his appointment, O'Connaire was reported as having 66 teachers and 210 pupils under his direction.⁸⁵ A second instructor was also appointed for the south of the county, but for no apparent reason he did not carry out his task. Consequently the revival of branches there did not take place until 1918. In January that year a Coisde Ceanntair was formed for the northern branches in Tullamore which included 12 priests, three of which occupied executive positions on its committee,⁸⁶ while in February a similar development took place in the south of the county with Fr Drennan and Fr O'Kennedy the leading lights.⁸⁷ Later at Kilcormac, Fr E. O'Reilly, PP, offered a series of prizes to those who made most progress in the knowledge of Irish,⁸⁸ while the King's county Teachers Association at their AGM pledged to 'do all we possibly can to spread the language'.⁸⁹ Another notable feature of the movement that developed particularly after 1918 was the holding of Feislanna,⁹⁰ which were extremely popular if one judges by the support they attracted. Despite all this apparent activity, the county inspector claimed that there were only seven branches of the League with 365 active members by July 1919,⁹¹ which compares poorly with the 17 branches in existence during 1908. The figure of seven is slightly conservative however, for at least nine branches existed to judge from the newspapers at the time. Ironically though, this small number in many ways saw a strengthening of the movement when compared to earlier years, as the branches now were more active, stronger, and vibrant, and therefore less likely to disband in the short term at least.

A second organisation which became more prominent in the county at this time was the KCFA, after it had been reformed in 1912. Despite the fact that most farmers did well financially during the war, by 1915 there had emerged a number of grievances which served to curtail their profits, and this was the main factor in the spread of the organisation from this time onwards. The first hint of these grievances came at the end of September that year when it was reported that large quantities of hay had been commandeered by the military authorities in several districts of the county, but principally from two main buyers of the product, D.E. Williams and P. and H. Egan, who were incidentally the owners of the county's main malting establishments.⁹² Later in October at one of their meetings, farmers voiced complaints that the hay was being purchased for £3 10s a ton, while the product was making £6 a ton in Dublin and £7

10s a ton in Scotland.⁹³ The following year, regulations regarding the sale of hay and straw were further tightened up when it was announced that farmers could not dispose of same except to the military authorities, in the absence of a licence from the District Purchasing Officer.⁹⁴ The extent to which farmers resented and tried to avoid such Government restrictions is evident from the fact that during the first three months of 1918, 24 were reported to the military authorities for selling hay without a permit.⁹⁵ Earlier in August 1916, the strongest criticism to date voiced by farmers was expressed at their AGM in Tullamore concerning Government regulations and restrictions, as well as two topics that were to cause much resentment in the county, the daylight saving scheme (ie. Summer Time Act), and Equalisation of Time Act which were passed that same year.

The former Act had been passed by 170 votes to two, and moved clocks one hour in advance of Greenwich meantime, thereby giving longer and lighter evenings and was expected to save thousands of tons of coal.⁹⁶ The second Act meanwhile standardised Irish and British time as "Dublin meantime" was 25 minutes behind the latter.⁹⁷ However both these had big implications for Irish farmers as it resulted in their help (ie. labourers) being available for work on dewy mornings for such tasks as cutting hay, while the same help often left the field early in the afternoon when real work could most profitably be done. This point was made clear in a strongly worded resolution at the KCFA AGM of August 1916, angrily voicing to the effect:

That we protest in the strongest manner against the Equalisation of Time Bill which, if it becomes law, will mean that next Summer statutory time in the greater part of Ireland will be one and a half hours before solar time. This measure if it becomes law, will mean the ruin of agriculture in Ireland, and will make it impossible for children to reach school in time, and as a protest against same we will not hold this year a Red Cross Gift Sale, and we call on the farmers of Ireland to follow our example.⁹⁸

The Red Cross Gift sale referred to in 1916 had raised £500, but the association stood by its word not to organise another the following year in protest at the Acts mentioned. The extent of opposition to the Acts is also evident from the comments of Arthur Cobbe, hitherto regarded by the police as a man of 'undoubted loyalty',⁹⁹ who claimed while discussing the subjects at the above meeting that 'Ireland had never got anything from England without taking the sword in her hand'; and while he admitted this may have sounded 'strange',¹⁰⁰ coming from him, there is no doubt but that the proposals were greatly resented, being a major factor in denting farmers confidence in the Irish Party, which was denounced at a meeting in Killeigh that September for 'not having voted solidly against them'.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile at the same AGM already referred to, further complaints

were voiced over the continued commandeering of hay, oats, and wool, the latter being reduced in price by 4d to 5d a pound (in weight) which one farmer present claimed cost him £30 that year.

Another grievance that farmers had at this time was the lack of labour (which was also more expensive as a result), and already touched on in chapter seven, while some also complained of the poor price being paid by malsters for barley, which partly resulted because of the Government's restrictions on the liquor trade. Meanwhile to add to these problems, compulsory tillage was introduced in January 1917, obliging farmers with more than 10 statute acres to till 10% of their land (or in the case of tillage farmers, 10% more), and a further 10% was again added in 1918, which continued until 1920.¹⁰² In 1917 also, the food controller fixed the price of cattle in September at 74s per cwt, and the price for the following January at 60s per cwt.,¹⁰³ both of which resulted in a drop in the price of cattle. This hit many farmers hard, particularly those who had paid high prices for cattle before the prices were fixed. Taking all these restrictions into account, it was not surprising that the KCFA grew rapidly from 1916 onwards. The main organisers of new branches in the county were T.M. Russell and Paddy Adams, both of whom ironically would later become political rivals in the county. The growing strength of the movement was revealed towards the end of 1916 when branches were formed at Philipstown, Killeigh,¹⁰⁴ Ballinagar,¹⁰⁵ Mount Bolus,¹⁰⁶ Rahan,¹⁰⁷ Durrow,¹⁰⁸ and Walsh Island.¹⁰⁹ The growth of the movement was matched by an equally rejuvenated LLA, both eclipsing, and in many respects replacing the UIL throughout the county at this time. Later in 1918 there were some indications of the future tension that would emerge between the farmers and LLA, when a strike took place at Rhode during harvest operations,¹¹⁰ and similar strikers would also take place during the War of Independence.

One person who had no sympathy with the grievances of farmers during the war was Inspector Crane, who as noted earlier had also regularly complained of their neglect of duty towards recruiting. One suspects that he had a certain resentment towards their new formed prosperity, given the relative poor rate of pay the RIC had by this time; for he remarked in November 1916 that farmers are 'doing well beyond their wildest dreams',¹¹¹ and the following April claimed that they were as 'prosperous and contented as ever will be'.¹¹² On other occasions he questioned their commitment to hard work, most notably when sarcastically remarking that 'if they only spent as much energy on work as they do in talk',¹¹³ there would be little difficulty in meeting the tillage regulations.

The organisation that underwent the most dramatic revival during the latter half of the war was undoubtedly the LLA. It had been noted in chapter five how this organisation had been so to speak brought under the wing or control of the UIL during its early growth in the 1906 - 1909 period. This development referred to by David Fitzpatrick (1977) as the 'vampiric urge',¹¹⁴ of the UIL effectively stifled the growth of

the LLA, and by January 1916, the police maintained its effective strength stood at only one branch with 30 'fairly active members'.¹¹⁵ This remained much the case to the end of that year but by April 1918 it could boast (according to police estimates) of having 11 branches with over 400 active members,¹¹⁶ although activists in the movement like John Gorman claimed the figures were much higher.¹¹⁷ All of this contrasts sharply with the total fall off in UIL branches during the same period.

A number of reasons are accountable for the growth of the LLA, the first associated with the rise in the price of everyday necessities during the war which hit labourers and their families hardest. An indication of the level of increases is clear from the following table given in the King's County Independent during November 1918.

TABLE 22: Price increases of various selected goods from 1914 to 1918

	1914	1918	Percentage Increase
Flour	1/5 per st.	2/8 per st.	88.24%
Tea	1/8 per lb.	2/8 per lb.	60%
Butter	1 shilling per lb	2/6 per lb.	150%
Shirt	2/6	6 shillings	140% 118

Accounts and reports of the time bear out the hardships resulting from the above increases. In October 1916 Inspector Crane spoke of 'considerable distress owing to the high price of food..',¹¹⁹ while the following January he confirmed that 'labourers are beginning to feel the pinch',¹²⁰ due to these increases. The King's County Chronicle in its review of 1916 meanwhile confirmed that 'the increase in the price of eggs causes rather more agitation in the average household than the fall of Bucharest', before another correspondent lamented that 'everything is costing us more'.¹²⁴ Almost a year later the paper spoke of 'acute distress in Tullamore owing to the scarcity of employment' due to the effect of lay-offs in the malting industries which resulted in 'more applicants for outdoor relief',¹²² at each Board of Guardians meeting. That year also the editor of the King's County Independent feared the end of year celebrations would more resemble a 'lenten scarcity than a Christmas abundance' before going on to make a strong appeal for support in aid of the Tullamore relief fund for the poor of the town.¹²³ In such circumstances it was easier to organise the LLA than in more normal times.

Secondly, labourers wages did not increase in line with these price rises. In January 1917, Crane complained that 'even though farmers are making enormous profits, they are very chary of paying adequate wages',¹²⁴ while that same month when speaking at the KCFA AGM in Tullamore, Fr O'Reilly, PP, Kilcormac called on farmers to 'treat the labourer in a fair manner in relation to wages'.¹²⁵ Meanwhile similar repeated calls were expressed by

speakers at LLA meetings all over the county¹²⁶ while in some cases individual branches (e.g. Coolderry and Ballinagar) operated a voluntary benefit scheme to which members contributed weekly or monthly for relief in time of distress, or to be paid to wives and families of deceased members. Prices were particularly high in Birr and Tullamore, a fact one LLA member attributed to the high separation allowance paid to those with relatives at the front.¹²⁷ In such circumstances labourers had a genuine grievance in calling for higher wages.

A third reason why labourers flocked to the LLA had to do with that organisation's demand for tillage plots in the county, especially in 1918. These demands were made in light of the fears of a food scarcity, a topic that was of much concern in the county, and which will be returned to later. Some LLA branches carried out successful negotiations with landlords for tracts of land to grow vegetables, (and potatoes especially) thereby reducing the panic over shortage of supply. For example the Kilcormac branch secured 31 acres on a local estate for tillage, meadow and grass purposes while at Cloneygowan, 80 acres were successfully negotiated for by the local branch.¹²⁸ Membership in such instances almost always guaranteed the labourer a better chance of getting a tillage plot. Lastly, the growth of the LLA at this time can be accounted for by the decision of the county executive to appoint a full time organiser of branches in the county. John Gorman secured this post which provided an annual salary and expenses, and worked hard at his task, receiving much support from Paddy Adams, who at this stage was involved in every organisation of note in the county except Sinn Fein.

By the end of 1917 then, the labourers were for the first time an organised force of some strength within the county. Two interesting points emerge from this, the political affiliation of the movement and its relationship to the newly emerging ITGWU, which had first gained a toehold in the county during October 1917. Many speakers at LLA meetings expressed the wish for the movement to stay non-political, and wished to follow the advice of a leading member that the 'Irish labourers had been political tools and political fools for quite long enough',^{but this} *as easier* said than done.¹²⁹ Two of the branches formed at Cloneygowan and Philipstown during early 1917 expressed 'unabated confidence in John Redmond', but with the swing of political opinion during that year, it was not long before resolutions of support for Sinn Fein were forthcoming. The Rahan branch openly congratulated the voters of Clare for returning De Valera, but more significantly expressed 'disapproval of the fact that the IPP are doing nothing to improve the lot of the Irish rural labourer',¹³⁰ while in April 1918 Michael Dalton had quite conveniently forgotten his earlier advice when he told a newspaper correspondent that 'he would appeal to the labourers of north King's county to vote for the Sinn Fein candidate',¹³¹ in the forthcoming by-election during the course of an interview from his hospital bed in Dublin.

The emergence of the ITGWU in the county with the formation of a branch at Tullamore the previous October would one suspects have had the backing of the LLA. Indeed at a meeting of the county executive that same month, it was decided to 'work hand and hand with but not join the ITGWU'.¹³² This decision was confirmed at a second meeting in January 1918 when it was felt 'the vigorous LLA branches could survive on their own'.¹³³ Whether this sparked off efforts by Union organisers to poach LLA members is not known, as five more branches of the ITGWU had been established at Tisaran, Clara, Banagher, Edenderry, and Ferbane¹³⁴ by March that year. It was at this time that the first real hint of friction between both organisations emerged over posters put up in the Banagher district concerning wages.¹³⁵ Another source of worry to some LLA members was the Union's support for the nationalisation of land. Resolutions on this topic had been passed at LLA meetings also,¹³⁶ but these were directed at the grazing ranches referred to in earlier chapters as labourers had no desire to see their one acre plots taken off them, which were after all, their guarded and prized possession. Much further research is required to see how the relationship between the ITGWU and LLA finally resolved itself during the rest of 1918 and afterwards.

The general upbeat of activity characteristic of Sinn Fein, the Gaelic League, LLA, KCFA, and ITGWU during 1917 - 18 contrasts sharply with the final demise of the UIL during the same period. Police reports claim that 18 branches of the UIL were still in existence by December 1918, but this existence was described as 'purely nominal'.¹³⁷ The latter fact is much more important than the statistic when one considers that only two UIL meetings were reported in the Midland Tribune during 1917, none at all the following year, while the total funds collected by the branches in this time was less than £10, the latter sum in fact all collected during the first quarter of 1917.¹³⁸ By this time also, both Divisional Executives had broken down completely as the morale of leading members was totally sapped with the rise of Sinn Fein. At national level, the organisation was in little if any better shape, with no reported annual meeting taking place in 1917, while only a small and short last gathering was convened in April 1918 after the death of John Redmond.¹³⁹ This suggests that many party MPs had resigned themselves to the inevitable defeat of the IPP in the next election.

The failure of Michael Reddy even to attempt to keep the UIL alive within the county is hard to comprehend given his level of enthusiasm and activity in its affairs, however misguided, up to 1914. From then on, and particularly after 1916, it is difficult even to find references to him in the local newspapers, such was the extent of his absence from public affairs. His only speech of note in the county during this period was delivered in February 1917 on the occasion of the election of a petty sessions clerk in Ferbane. Having supported Sergeant Brazel (who lost in the contest for the post), Reddy recounted many of his favourite topics of recent years in a speech when he criticised Lord Rosse for his selection of magistrates, the 'six square miles of land'

held by the Goodbodys, and a final call to 'clear the ranches of the bullocks'.¹⁴⁰ Rightly on this occasion, the editor of the Midland Tribune claimed his remarks were 'after election hot air' in view of the fact that he had failed to support either of the two civilian candidates for the vacant post.¹⁴¹ A whole year would pass before any reference of note concerning his activities appear again, when he wrote to the paper to contradict a statement indicating his nephew was the vice-president of south Offaly Sinn Fein;¹⁴² while a month later he became embroiled in a conflict of words with the secretary of Shannonbridge Sinn Fein who had alleged that Reddy abused his position as a magistrate to ensure that fines imposed on a number of Sinn Fein supporters were increased, a claim Reddy hotly denied.¹⁴³

One possible explanation for Reddy's inactivity during this period was a small reference in the Midland Tribune during July 1917 to the illness of his wife, which had caused him to miss a League meeting in Galway that month.¹⁴⁴ The death of Haviland Burke earlier in 1914, followed closely by that of William Delaney early in 1916, may also have had a depressing effect on him, as Reddy had attended many meetings with both, particularly Delaney, during the formative years of the UIL throughout the whole midland region. Either way, his neglect of League duties during the war helped to facilitate the almost uninterrupted rise of Sinn Fein clubs in 1917 and 1918.

The collapse of the League's structures in the north of the county was always a more likely development given that the Irish Party had no MP there after the election of E.J. Graham in 1914. Once the early attempted UIL reorganisation of 1915 petered out for the reasons outlined in the last chapter, the movement here also lacked solid and inspired leadership to guide its fortunes. Paddy Adams did make valiant efforts to keep it alive in part of the constituency up to 1916, but thereafter he also neglected its affairs and threw his energy behind the revival of the LLA. Opportunistic to the last, this was undoubtedly a tactical move on his part to secure the labour vote in the forthcoming election. For all the reasons outlined above, Sinn Fein gained an upperhand in this division earlier than in the south of the county, and it is noticeable how prominent public representatives here like Denis Sheil of Edenderry, Michael White of Clara, and P.J. Bermingham of Philipstown were quicker to abandon the IPP than their counterparts in the south of the county.

Those who stayed loyal to the party right up to the end of 1918, most notably John Dooly, Birr, Laurence Roe, Joseph Kearney, and Malachy Scally, Tullamore, and P.J. Harte, Philipstown, must have cringed with anger at the repeated Government mistakes and seemingly insensitive policy towards Ireland throughout 1917 and 1918, which greatly facilitated the rise of Sinn Fein. The editor of the King's County Independent alluded to this in a somewhat humorous but nevertheless accurate way when he remarked in September 1917:

The Sinn Fein Movement forges ahead rapidly. Each week marks an extension of its influence... For every leader imprisoned, a score of clubs and hundreds of members are added to the Sinn Fein muster roll. In this way the authorities are doing a good work, unintentionally we have no doubt....¹⁴⁵

Within the county, nowhere was this more evident than in the liquor and malting restrictions, which cropped up again in 1917 when additional restrictions were announced. The Midland Tribune reported in February that from April that year, only 50% of the customary supply of beer would be allowed to be brewed, while a Spirit Regulation Order was also to be enforced curtailing the sale of whiskey.¹⁴⁶ In response to this, P.J. Egan (an IPP supporter) claimed at a meeting of Tullamore UDC that 'an attempt was being made to smash the industries in Ireland',¹⁴⁷ while later the County Council entered a 'strenuous protest',¹⁴⁸ again at the Government's actions. Early in April also, the Midland Tribune not surprisingly announced that men engaged in brewing, malting and kindred industries in Tullamore had been laid off,¹⁴⁹ and at the end of June a very large protest meeting was held in the town to voice anger at the restrictions. It was well attended, and not surprisingly since there were also malting establishments in Edenderry, Birr, Kilcormac, and Banagher. Representatives were present from Sinn Fein, the IPP, LLA, County Council and the KCFA. Captain Daly (joint owner of Tullamore distillery) complained that 'Redmond missed the opportunity of his life in not hurling out of office the so-called Liberal Government',¹⁵⁰ and interestingly while all speakers present were listened to attentively and continually cheered, this was not the case with P.J. Meehan, MP, (Leix), who was interrupted on a number of occasions by such calls as ; 'why didn't you protest in Parliament?' and 'they are too fond of the £400 a year ...'¹⁵¹ The local Sinn Fein club were quick to make the most of the occasion by holding a parade after the protest through the town carrying the Republican flag.¹⁵² The loss of employment in those industries (and farmer grievances) more than anything else that occurred locally facilitated the rise of Sinn Fein, and one doubts if national events alone could have accounted for the strong fall off in support for the IPP at this time. Shortly after the protest, T.M. Russell confidently predicted that before the month of July was over, 'I believe there won't be a parish in Offaly without its Sinn Fein club...'¹⁵³ His prediction was slightly optimistic as there were 12 clubs by that time,¹⁵⁴ but this had increased to 25 by the end of September.¹⁵⁵

Another issue cleverly exploited by Sinn Fein activists in 1917 and even more so the following year was the whole issue of tillage and food production. When the Germans re-commenced their U-Boat campaign early in 1917, there was what can only be best described as minor panic throughout the county over the issue of sufficient food supply. This is particularly evident

from the amount of space devoted to the topic in all the county's newspapers, as well as the time spent dealing with the subject throughout the county. Alone in the first eight weeks of 1918, Pike referred to the topic on five occasions in his editorials, McDermott Hayes in the King's County Independent went one better, while tillage columns were a regular feature of the King's County Chronicle by this stage also.

After Fr O'Reilly, PP, Kilcormac, who had called for increased food production as early as 1915,¹⁵⁶ Lord Rosse was in fact one of the first major public figures in the county to highlight the problem with his appeal by way of letter to the local paper extolling all landowners to put all possible land under crops as he feared 'the times ahead loom ominous',¹⁵⁷ Little did he suspect that this plea would later be used throughout the county at many public meetings to make repeated calls for the break up of ranch land and eleven months farms; and possibly to save himself some embarrassment, he gave 50 acres for tillage purposes to residents at Crinkle outside Birr early in February 1917.¹⁵⁸ Others quickly followed suit, like Captain Ryan who gave almost 20 acres to Birr UDC for use,¹⁵⁹ at Banagher Captain Burdett made 50 acres available to an exceptionally energetic Fairs Committee in the town,¹⁶⁰ while Lord Digby offered one-eighth acre allotments to householders in Geashill and its vicinity.¹⁶¹ Tullamore UDC also received letters from landowners (including Paddy Adams) with offers of over 150 acres in total for tillage purposes.¹⁶²

Others were less forthcoming, most notably Lord Howard Bury and James P. Goodbody. In the latter case, a petition was sent from small landholders in the Tubber parish through the local parish priest, Fr Magee, asking for con-acre on what was known locally as the Tully Farm, estimated to have been between 800 and 1,000 acres in size. Goodbody refused to let any portion of this farm, but he did offer some land in another parish for the growing of potatoes.¹⁶³ This incensed the locals, and about 60 of them according to police estimates, marched in protest to the farm with about 10 ploughs, where they were met by a force of 10 police who had earlier got word of their intention to plough some of the farm.¹⁶⁴ The presence of the police prevented this, but the whole incident does show the extent to which the tillage topic had caught public attention. It would be wrong to claim that the action of the Tubber locals was marked by spite or an attempt to take advantage of the situation in relation to the tillage regulations, as one only needs to recall the many attempts made by Michael Reddy in 1910-12 to organise drives on these lands, which were not acted upon at that time.

Tillage operations themselves had been hampered somewhat that year also by the wettest and coldest Spring for some years, which in turn caused that bit more anxiety over and above the normal. Despite this, most landowners appear to have made a genuine effort to meet their requirements (ie of ploughing 10% of their land), although complaints were voiced at LLA meetings of some holders who tried to unload their responsibilities by

renting their land; a development that caused much annoyance within LLA circles, as many of its members hoped the crisis would bolster their demand for a final break up of ranch land.¹⁶⁵ Pike meanwhile never lost an opportunity of poking fun at those who were slow to meet their 10% targets, particularly the bigger holders whom he referred to as the '10% patriots'.¹⁶⁶ Others like the Egans of Tullamore saw openings in the crisis to make some capital by purchasing tractors and ploughs for hire, which were capable of covering six acres a day.¹⁶⁷ Other developments included a decision by Tullamore UDC to rent 60 acres for sub-letting to small farmers and labourers for tillage¹⁶⁸ while Birr UDC also adopted a similar scheme despite meeting some difficulties in getting approval from the Local Government Board.¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile police were observed in Birr and Banagher using spades to till some ground, while a year later men from the Leinster Depot in Birr were observed tilling 14 acres.¹⁷⁰ One farmer, anxious to meet his target of tilling 700 acres reportedly yoked some bullocks and heifers to ploughs as he could not afford the loss of time waiting for the delivery of a new tractor.¹⁷¹ The tillage topic seems to have just about grabbed the attention of everyone as Dr Fogarty's lenten pastoral of 1917 also stressed the need for more food.¹⁷² Meanwhile, to ensure better production, the King's County Agricultural Committee held 59 meetings throughout the county early that year to advise farmers, and these were reportedly attended by over 2,000 anxious to increase their yields.¹⁷³

Despite these efforts, there were still shortages of food during the winter of 1917-18. Pike spoke of a 'bitter spirit',¹⁷⁴ emerging in towns as farmers were accused of selling their produce to dealers in December. In January he reported 'stampedes at farmers cars',¹⁷⁵ in Birr, while later, jam, lard, butter, flour and bacon were all reported to be in short supply.¹⁷⁶ Sinn Fein had not been in a position to benefit from the tillage question at the start of 1917 simply because the formation of branches in the county only commenced that April; but second time round (in 1918) activists like T.M. Russell used the issue to good effect to build up more support for the party. At national level meanwhile, Sinn Fein had produced a number of pamphlets in 1917 designed to win over farmer support, most notably the issues entitled; Farmers! Your turn now, (extremely vague in content and dealing with extra taxation), while War on the Cattle Trade hit out at the prices fixed for price of cattle that year. In November 1917, the southern Executive in the county decided to inform farmers of the inadvisability of furnishing information to the police or government officials, 'lest this could have for its object the commandeering of the Irish food supply'.¹⁷⁷ Early in January 1918, both Executives discussed steps that could be taken to safeguard supply and these included the formation of food committees in every parish, the urging of individuals to grow extra crops, and the proposal that each club should obtain a loan of money to buy oats and potatoes, which were to be stored for sale 'to people in actual want',¹⁷⁸ with a small percentage for working. With the exception of Banagher, where Sinn Fein members guaranteed over

£40 for such purposes,¹⁷⁹ the above suggestions, which were vague in the strictest sense, were simply ignored or not acted upon by the other Sinn Fein clubs in the county. Yet the party benefited by being seen to do something about the food problem, rather than for actually taking hard decisions to prevent its export, which appears to have been the main reason for the re-occurring shortages. For example, a decision to buy or even commandeer food off farmers who previously sold to dealers might have led to friction over prices, which could in turn have risked losing the party support in the long term. In such instances, vague resolutions were a safer means to ensure continued support, as was the ploy adopted by both Executives and some individual clubs to call on public bodies to pledge the use of the rates to purchase food.¹⁸⁰ These calls were rejected by the various councils on the grounds that the rates were insufficient to meet their own requirements, but the purpose of the exercise was served from Sinn Fein's point of view in that attention on the issue was switched away from their own inactivity.

During the early months of 1918, speeches by Sinn Fein activists led to calls and action for the break up of ranch land, similar to that of UIL activists ten years earlier. This call had the inherent danger of causing social unrest (as took place in parts of Connacht) which risked losing the party electoral support. Fitzpatrick (1977) found that cattle drives occurred in Clare at this time against comparatively small farmers and non-ranchers,¹⁸¹ but this was not the trend in the King's county, as the short campaign that developed that Spring was directed against large landholders who were unlikely to be Sinn Fein supporters in the first place. In one particular case, the illegal ploughing of seven acres took place on William Corbett's land,¹⁸² (a former leading member of the UIL in the Killeigh district), while similar scenes or cattle drives took place on land belonging or held by James Abraham, James Cavanagh (both on the Digby Estate), James P. Goodbody, Lord Ashtown, and James Chissell. In all these cases, none of the landowners mentioned were in any way involved in the Sinn Fein movement.

Inflammatory speeches like that delivered by Count Plunkett at Banagher in February when he spoke of a willingness to go to prison and use 'force' to prevent the export of food from Ireland¹⁸³ may have encouraged such activities at this particular time. The fact also that land purchase had collapsed during the war meant that there were still large tracts of untenanted land within the county that could have been used to produce food, and a call for the break up of these ranches had been made by the County Committee of Agriculture in 1915.¹⁸⁴ Similar calls being made by T.M. Russell now may have encouraged the renewal of cattle driving, for in a speech at Tullamore in late January, while he did not go so far as to advocate the forcible possession of land, he claimed it was 'the policeman's rifle and baton that stood between the people and the rancher';¹⁸⁵ later the following month at Clonbullogue he delivered a much more violent speech in relation to the Ballinowlart farm which resulted in his arrest and imprisonment

in Mount Joy on the grounds that he had unlawfully incited a crowd to drive cattle off the farm and till the land.¹⁸⁶ On this occasion, the Sergeant stationed in the protection hut on the farm since 1913 gave evidence that Russell said:

A machine gun was turned not very long ago on cattle drivers in Clare, and they were told they would be fired at if they moved. They did move and stampeded the bullocks and knocked the machine gun out of action. Now don't you fear a machine gun.... Get in your ploughs; plough up the land; don't starve for the want of food; put up the tri-colour on the land, and the horses will plough twice as well when the colours are flying over them.....¹⁸⁷

When speaking later at Clonaslee (Leix),¹⁸⁸ Russell was careful not to use such inflammatory language, but by the end of March the county inspector was reporting that there had been 'at least a dozen cases of illegal ploughing' compared with only one in February.¹⁸⁹ However, he had also added in March that the imprisonment of Russell had had 'a very good effect in making others cautious in being seen' to help organise such events. The campaign to plough the ranches had also received much support from the Midland Tribune and King's County Independent, and McDermott Hayes, in the latter spoke on various occasions of the 'ranch evil';¹⁹⁰ and the clear case now for 'the road for the bullock and the land for the people';¹⁹¹ while later adding that he did 'not care a thraneen about the methods by which that task might be accomplished'.¹⁹² This strong language was matched by an extensive coverage of the land troubles taking place in the west of Ireland at that time, which may in turn have given impetus to those who organised the campaign in the King's county. By April this campaign had halted, no doubt due to the extra vigilance of the police and the arrests of almost 30 in the county who had taken part in the proceedings,¹⁹³ but by then the threat of conscription became the dominant topic of conversation in Ireland. Illegal ploughing of land was not only more time consuming than cattle driving, but it was also much more difficult to organise in that it had to be carried out by day and carried a much greater risk of being caught to those who engaged in it. Sinn Fein by no means played an active part in the provision of extra food during 1918, but the astute participation of the party and its activists in the public discussion of it, had helped to win the party more support.

The decision of the British Government to pass a Military Service Act for Ireland (which was later not enforced) in April 1918, was as might be expected, no more popular within the King's county than in any other part of southern Ireland at this time. The extent of opposition to the proposal is best summed up in the following quotation which is taken from Inspector Crane's report that month:

The passing of conscription for Ireland raised such a storm as has not been seen for a long time. At first the people almost went crazy and Nationalists and Sinn Feiners united to oppose [it]... This opposition is not confined to one class, one creed, or species of political opinion. A number of Unionists and Protestants are bitterly opposed to conscription. The Irish are hardly aware that there is a War at all except that they are able to fill their pockets owing to the high price of agricultural produce. They are leading sheltered and for the most part leisured lives.... Thousands of people took the Covenant against conscription.¹⁹⁴

More worrying from his point of view also was the fact that there were '42 cases of illegal drilling' in the county during the same month,¹⁹⁵ as the King's County Independent spoke of the 'Government's mad decision' which prophetically turned out a 'blessing in disguise' for Sinn Fein;¹⁹⁶ while later a sum of £300 was collected in Tullamore after a large anti-conscription meeting.¹⁹⁷

The passage of the Act had added significance for the King's county, as E. J. Graham's death in late March resulted in a vacancy for MP in the northern constituency. Graham himself, given his strong contribution to public affairs up to December 1914, turned out a rather colourless character after his election that month. His main contribution in the Commons was the tabling of a series of questions concerning the "Tullamore affair" of March 1916, but for him personally the highlight of that year was his marriage in Birmingham.¹⁹⁸ During 1917 he missed three weeks in the Commons due to ill-health,¹⁹⁹ and he died the following March after another period of illness. The King's County Independent carried an obituary which laid squarely the blame for his low profile in public and political matters at the Irish Party's failure to admit him to their ranks, which was described as having had 'a disheartening effect on him'.²⁰⁰ A possible combination of all these factors probably contributed to his declining stature after 1914, and his death came shortly after the Irish Party had been successful in three by-election victories early in 1918. After the return of Captain Redmond in Waterford, a number of Irish Party supporters had held a celebration in Tullamore, where ironically Paddy Adams announced that:

...the south Armagh election had given De Valera his answer for Ulster, the Waterford election gave him his answer for Munster, and he would get his answer from Leinster...²⁰¹

Within four days of this announcement, he had the chance to deliver the blow for Leinster, but he declined to run for the north King's county vacancy. There may have been some

intimidation organised against him, as was later alleged to have taken place before the General Election in December 1918,²⁰² but one suspects Adams may have welcomed an excuse to opt out of the contest. In fact the Irish Party failed to get a candidate from the constituency to run, and various names were rumoured beforehand, including P. J. Egan Tullamore, Dr Kinsella Edenderry,²⁰³ and Dr. Sherlock, ex-Lord Mayor of Dublin²⁰⁴ who had connections with the county, but they all declined to go forward. This is hardly surprising given the complete breakdown of the UIL in the county, but still ironic nonetheless when one considers that three candidates vied for the post when the vacancy last fell after the death of Haviland Burke in 1914. This fact illustrates the extent of the swing in opinion to Sinn Fein, a fact confirmed by Michael Conway's (a UIL organiser) admission on visiting the constituency that the party had 'no organisation, no priests, and no bands on their side'.²⁰⁵ The clergy on the other hand were conspicuous by their support for Dr McCartan, the Sinn Fein candidate, with five contributing £5 each, and Fr Smith of Rahan giving a large sum of £40 to his election fund.²⁰⁶

Eventually a small meeting of Irish Party supporters did take place in Tullamore, at which John Dooly of Birr was selected to run, and it was reported that a sum of £160 was quickly subscribed to meet his election expenses. Interestingly though, no details of those who subscribed was released, as would have been usual in such circumstances. However on instructions from John Dillon, Dooly withdrew from the contest in protest at the Government's decision to introduce conscription, and thereby show the depth of feeling that existed in Ireland regarding the proposals. This decision was made easier in view of the fact that party activists knew they had no hope of success, and as O'Fiaich(1968) points out, the IPP may have 'welcomed the opportunity of making a sacrifice for national unity'.²⁰⁷ No contest was to take place in the county either in the General Election at the end of the year, despite the selection of Reddy to contest the new one seat constituency for the whole county. This situation came about because of the latter's failure to hand in any nomination papers, which contrasted with the return of 50 for Dr McCartan!²⁰⁸ Further Government blunders and the continued rise of Sinn Fein that Summer no doubt dictated Reddy's decision not to run, for whatever about his rash judgement in the past, the mellowed Reddy, who had seen IRB membership in his youth, to support for recruiting in later years, was not about to allow himself be the subject of an electoral defeat at the end of his career.

CONCLUSION

Mr Kennedy: [leading Tullamore UIL figure] 'What is your object in establishing a separate branch of the League there [ie at Durrow] now?'

Mr Gorman: [Durrow tenant] 'To have a local branch of the organisation. It will help the tenants in negotiating the terms of purchase and serve the district generally'.¹

Scene at Tullamore UIL meeting in January 1905.

'...the majority of the farmers, having purchased their holdings, have apparently ceased to be interested in the UIL...'²

Quote from the Inspector General's (RIC) Report, September 1917.

It is always extremely dangerous, (and possibly foolish as well) to attempt to sum up using two quotations the failure of any organisation which had dominated Irish political life for almost 20 years; but it is hoped the reader will excuse their use in showing how the apparent resolving of what may be termed "land related issues" more than anything else heralded the decline of the UIL as a strong force in the county's affairs from 1908 onwards. Land related topics had undoubtedly attracted the support of the majority of those tenants who joined the UIL and its ranks in the early years of the century, but once these issues were largely (though not fully by any means) dealt with in the land purchase acts, tenant farmer support for the movement declined steadily thereafter. At that same UIL meeting of January 1905, quoted from above, William Adams of Tullamore complained that the people of Durrow had never for the previous 25 years taken 'action with the rest of Ireland in the great national movement aimed at the freedom of our country',³ and he went on to single out the lack of support from farmers in both areas for the old INL, which he claimed had been 'kept up by the shopkeepers and traders'.⁴ However, when the sterling and veteran Nationalist had finished speaking, Gorman was quick to ensure him and all present that; 'you will get all the Durrow people to join the national movement now' (hear, hear)!⁵ It is very unlikely that 'all' the people in the locality did go on to join the UIL, but a branch of the League was formed within the next two weeks, which agreed to work jointly with its counterpart in Tullamore.⁶ The National Directory minutes show that the branch was subsequently affiliated under the name of Tullamore and Durrow UIL.⁷ However, once the negotiations on the nearby Somers Estate had been completed, enthusiasm for the upkeep of the Durrow section dwindled, and by the end of the year, the branch was effectively dead and its organisation but a memory.

As has been pointed out before in the thesis, the irony of this example is that the relative success of the land acts,

which the Irish Party played a leading role in formulating, resulted in a loss of support for the UIL in the long term. By 1913, over 61% of all land in the county had been sold (or agreements reached for its sale) to tenants, while more significantly, 78% of tenants had purchased or again, agreed to purchase their holdings.⁸

It is true that there was still tension and distress in some cases over the unresolved question of untenanted land, which many farmers eyed for enlargement of their holdings, but on the whole most of those who purchased seemed quite content with their lot. Nowhere is this more evident than in the county inspector's monthly reports, for on five occasions in a three year period after 1910, he always referred to the general welfare of the people (including workers) in positive terms. In July that year, he spoke of 'a fair share of prosperity throughout the county';⁹ in February 1912 he claimed the people were 'for the most part industrious and prosperous';¹⁰ while at the end of that year, despite an outbreak of foot and mouth disease, no attempt was made to evade the order restricting the movement of cattle which he accounted for by 'the considerable amount of prosperity and contentment',¹¹ which existed at that time. On other occasions like in April 1913, the county inspector also noted that those who had purchased were putting 'more industry into tilling the land',¹² a point alluded to earlier the previous November by the Inspector General who noted that 'purchased tenants are contentedly improving their farms'.¹³ Purchasers of farms generally found also that their annuities were less than they had been paying in annual rent. One known example here is that of John Kennedy, an occupier of eight acres on the Holmes Estate in Dunkerrin. His rent in 1897 was £4 - 15 - 0, while his annuity after purchase in 1904 was £3 - 15 - 2.¹⁴ Many farmers in turn who had purchased also greatly benefited from increased profits during World War I, yet this rising prosperity did not reflect any greater contributions to UIL coffers, for the League's finances in the county showed a steady decline from 1913 onwards. Clearly by this date, many former supporters had regarded the role of the UIL as served with the passage of the lands acts and Home Rule in 1912.

The early enthusiasm for the League generated by the Land Conference and Wyndham Land Act of 1903, is evident from the police reports which testify to the level of attendance at UIL meetings during the 1902-04 period. At Cloneygowan in September 1902, 400 attended a meeting addressed by Reddy, Burke, and Delaney MPs; 450 attended a similar gathering at Edenderry the following January when William O'Brien visited the county; while in November, 250 were present to hear Reddy and James Lynam discuss land purchase.¹⁵ League meetings were not only generally well attended in the early years of the century, but were also more frequently held, or at least reportedly held. For instance, over 82 meetings of the UIL were reported in the Midland Tribune in 1904, and this peaked to over 100 during the Ranch War in 1907, all of which compares with only 39 reportedly held during 1912, the year of the third Home Rule Bill. Yet if one analyses

the latter year's meetings, it can be revealed that over one third of them discussed land related issues or disputes, while less than one-fifth passed resolutions dealing with Home Rule. This again reinforces the point made at the outset that it was land related topics that took up the attention of most League meetings, and once many of these were solved, support for the movement subsequently declined. The drawing power of land issues is interestingly reflected again in the attendance by 200 (according to police reports) at the last UIL meeting in the county at Rhode in February 1917, when the main topic discussed was the Croghan Hill farm dispute, of which more anon. The size of the crowd is surprising when one realises that the UIL was virtually dead in the county at this time, but not so when one considers the issue for discussion.

Undoubtedly, once many land issues were resolved, some drop of support for the UIL could have been anticipated, but having said that, there was still room for an active movement built on agrarian grievances right up to 1918, and long after the UIL first began to decline. The purchase acts, despite their worth, did not solve all agrarian problems. This is best illustrated in connection with untenanted land, and while 10,663 acres of such land was purchased (but not all vested) in the county up to March 1913,¹⁶ there still existed over 8,374 acres let on the eleven months system in 1914, (the eighth highest total in Ireland that year) with an additional 1,230 acres unlet due to UIL influence,¹⁷ all of which and more, (see Table 11, p.58) remained to be dealt with. The question of this land continued to be a source of annoyance to small holders who wished for its division. The police reported five cattle drives in 1915, mostly in connection with these lands in the Banagher district, where many locals were experiencing difficulties getting extra meadow and grazing, while two outsiders meanwhile continued to hold large grazing farms in the area. Only vigilant police action and the erection of protection posts prevented similar occurrences the following year when the number of cattle drives reported declined to one. During the war, Irish Party leaders discouraged this form of agitation but the real point at issue here was their failure and that of local UIL leaders to focus attention on the continuation of the eleven months system. During 1917 and 1918, a golden opportunity existed with the need for more tillage to press in Parliament at least for the division of these lands. Such a course of action might have won the party back some support in rural areas at least. One is aware that lack of Government funding would have virtually rendered this task impossible on a large scale at least, but it was the failure of party leaders and MPs to address such grass-root issues that lost it so much support at this time. It also left the party hierarchy open to criticism of compliance with Government policy in Ireland, reflected no doubt in the view of a Birr rural councillor who expressed the opinion in April 1917 that they were 'having too many breakfasts with Lloyd George'.¹⁸

As pointed out in chapter eight, within the decline of the UIL, there emerged an increase in activity of the KCFA and

LLA to fill the void left by the demise of the League. In the case of the KCFA, its growth was built on the grievances being experienced by farmers at this time, despite the fact that many of them did well financially from the war. These grievances detailed in chapter eight; the scarcity and cost of labour, commandeering of hay, oats, wheat, and wool, controls on the price of cattle, compulsory tillage, the unsuitability of the Equalisation of Time Act, allied to the bureaucracy involved in obtaining permits to sell hay, oats, etc, all combined to dent the confidence of farmers in the IIP, whose leaders did not appear to have known the extent of feeling there was in Ireland against many of these enactments. Whereas in the early years of the century, such grievances would always have been aired at UIL meetings, now the scene switched to KCFA meetings. Another topic that could have been taken up by the party and UIL leadership was the dissatisfaction of unpurchased tenants, one of whom complained at a farmers meeting in 1915 that proprietors were benefiting from eight shilling reductions in the pound, while unpurchased tenants were meanwhile paying extra taxes.¹⁹ Altogether then, the many grievances outlined above could have been taken up effectively by the IPP and UIL; but their failure to do so led directly to a decline in their fortunes.

The inactivity of the UIL in respect of land related issues throughout the county during 1917 and 1918 contrasts sharply with the role of LLA during the same period. Two examples need to be outlined here to get this point across effectively, the first concerning the Croghan Hill farm. The farm in question consisted of 477 acres in two holdings on the estate of Lady Emily Bury,²⁰ rented for an annual sum of £270. The tenant Alexander Handy, had attempted to dispose of his interest in the farm in 1912, but his asking price was too high and he subsequently set the farm to a grazier on the eleven months system.²¹ Meanwhile small holders in the district began an agitation to have the farm divided and when the war started, Handy again agreed to dispose of his interest in the holdings before going to the front. Twenty small holders in the district then attempted to buy the farm but Lady Bury did not wish for its division and refused their request. In an attempt to overcome this difficulty, the small holders in turn arranged for two local farmers, John Sullivan and Patrick Scully, to purchase the farm in trust for £1,800.²² Handy agreed to this arrangement, but a crux arose when Lady Bury again, through her agent E.H.Browne, objected to the proposed sub-division of the holding and refused to accept the transaction as a bona fide one. The case was subsequently heard before a Land Commission sitting in Tullamore which agreed that the objection to the transaction was reasonable, upholding it, and declaring the sale void.²³

A branch of the UIL had been reorganised at Croghan in March 1915, but it soon died out for want of enthusiasm and leadership, as a result of which no local organisation existed in June 1916 to take up the case of the small holders regarding the farm. Paddy Adams did take an interest in the developments and organised a protest meeting in Rhode under UIL auspices during

February 1917 to highlight the apparent injustice of the case. However, the relative powerlessness of the UIL was soon evident, and short of passing a resolution calling on the Government to 'accede to a memorial sent to them in respect of the farm',²⁴ no further action was taken to press for its division. Adams did threaten at the meeting that if the Estates Commissioners did not take action to divide the farm, 'the biggest ploughing match that had ever been organised would take place',²⁵ but this threat never materialised as locals were given, and took, the opportunity to rent the land that year when the tillage regulations were introduced; the latter restrictions having been enough to induce the grazier to give up the farm. Later in 1919 when Handy returned from the front, he disposed of the holding to a local who had been a caretaker on the farm. This development in turn caused much local dispute which carried on into 1920.²⁶ However, the main point at issue here is the failure of the UIL to have the farm divided, which contrasts sharply with a similar case at Coolderry during 1917 involving a strong branch of the LLA.

That August an auction notice appeared in the Midland Tribune announcing the sale of 524 acres, then in the hands of the representatives of the late Anthony Robinson JP. A meeting was convened by the local LLA branch, (which was later attended by farmers from the district) to organise a scheme for the purchase of the land, which was for sale in three lots.²⁷ A fund was opened for the purpose and £2,500 quickly subscribed, and it was expected to reach £6,000.²⁸ However all these plans appeared to have been a waste of time when it was announced at the auction that the farm had been purchased privately beforehand, much to the annoyance of James Pike (editor of the Midland Tribune) and Fr O'Kennedy, PP, both of whom took a very active interest in the developments beforehand, not to mention the 20 locals who hoped for a stake in the purchase. The new owner, G.S Webb, already held 61 acres, and was at that time Master of the North Tipperary Hounds,²⁹ a new hunt club formed in 1912 to replace the Ormond Hounds which had disbanded in 1907-1908 after their struggle with Shinrone UIL. During the war this club later joined with the King's County Hunt Club to become again, the Ormond Hunt Club, as many members of both had joined the war effort. The revival of hunting on a large scale after 1912 is another indication of how weak the UIL had become by this time ; in fact the disruption of the war in many respects was a greater threat to its survival than the UIL had ever been.

Meanwhile, George Webb was stated to have paid £4,000 for the farm at Coolderry, but feeling ran so high against him locally that soon after he put cattle on the land, a drive was organised despite the presence of extra police in the district who were expecting trouble. Twenty were arrested in connection with this occurrence, which included six labourers, the remainder being either farmers or their sons. Of these, seven were sent to jail on refusing to give bail.³⁰ In order to step up the pressure on Webb, a number of public meetings were held in the

district to agitate for a re-sale of the farm. Fr O'Kennedy was the chief mover behind these, the last of which was proclaimed when over 50 additional police were brought into the district to help keep order.³¹ Meanwhile Webb, realising the strong show of opinion against him, opened negotiations with Fr O'Kennedy to re-sell the farm, which quelled all tension in the area after a successful out-come was reached.³² Shortly afterwards the seven prisoners jailed in connection with the cattle drive were also released.³³

This case, which involved the co-operation of the LLA branch and local farmers, was admittedly very much an exception. Most other LLA branches in the county were not in a position to repeat what the branch at Coolderry had done, though John Gorman (secretary of the LLA Executive) did refer to another case at Clonmore and Ballinabrackey on the King's county/Meath border where 150 acres was purchased through trustees in March 1918.³⁴ However, the LLA was to be much more instrumental (as shown in chapter eight) in carrying through negotiations for the renting of land for tillage purposes, particularly in 1918. The activity of their leadership in this area gained the movement much support at this time, and again to repeat, contrasts sharply with the failure of the UIL to tackle or address local issues from 1916 onwards. The leadership of the UIL had always been content to call on the Estates Commissioners to purchase lands that came up for sale and could be used for division purposes, but during the war years this was always invariably not acted upon because the various land agencies suffered from lack of funding. At this time, action and not resolutions was required, and whatever action was carried out during 1917-18, must be credited to the more energetic LLA branches in the county. The lack of leadership from party MPs at this time is also striking, and in Michael Reddy's case, this is even evident from his lack of attention to public affairs after the outbreak of the war. Once the rise of Sinn Fein commenced in earnest during 1917, the old dispirited leadership of the party lacked the will, energy, and enthusiasm to halt the decline of the UIL. Their almost total concentration on national issues like the Irish Convention of 1917-18, meant they neglected local issues, and once the outcome of such initiatives failed, the Irish Party became more discredited in the country.

All this was compounded by the fact highlighted by Rumpf and Hepburn (1977), that the party by 1914 offered nothing concrete to attract to its ranks the younger generation, be they farmers sons, landless men, workers, or Irish Irelanders. Its leadership was for the most part old and dominated by conservative elements, particularly shopkeepers, publicans and some large farmers. Most important of all, and this applied to the UIL as well, 'rightly or wrongly, the political subaltern class in Nationalist Ireland came to regard the party as synonymous with wire pulling and jobbery'.³⁵ At local level this was highlighted throughout the thesis in chapters two and four, which gave details of UIL members holding grazing farms; in

chapter three it was highlighted by the extent to which UIL members often tried to rush land sales without the restoration of evicted tenants, while chapter four also gave details of a leading UIL member purchasing the Dowras farm, which locals had eyed for distribution. A similar case had occurred in 1905 at Cloneygowan when James Dunne purchased what was known locally as the Annevilla ranch, consisting of over 300 acres. Dunne was chairman of Cloneygowan RDC at the time, and at a public meeting later in 1906, he argued that his decision to purchase the farm was based on the fear that 'some foreigner would come in and take it'!³⁶ before going on to assure the audience that he would build labourers cottages on it and give some local employment in the process.³⁷ However, Dunne was not true to his word and soon pressure was being exerted on him to re-sell it to the Estates Commissioners, and while he claimed that he was willing to do this in principle, his asking price was always excessive and frightened them off. Local frustration at this resulted later in a cattle drive on the lands in April 1914.³⁸ Later that July Dunne again indicated his willingness to sell the farm after two local priests approached him,³⁹ but most locals rightly doubted his sincerity and again during the food crisis of 1918, another cattle drive was organised on the land.⁴⁰ As late as February 1920, the farm was still the subject of dispute, and more efforts were being made by two local priests to have it sold for division purposes.⁴¹ Examples like this of the double standards of Nationalists like James Dunne, only served to give the UIL a poor image which in the long term served to alienate potential support for the movement. Much of this support remained under surface up to 1916 since there was no real alternative to the IPP, but was channelled into Sinn Fein thereafter. Expression against such practices was forcibly made by a Ballinasloe Nationalist on converting to Sinn Fein in December 1917, and while the example about to be given took place outside the King's county, it is hoped the reader will excuse its use in order to reinforce the point made earlier. Thomas Cahill was described as a leading east Galway UIL Executive figure, but in a long speech at a Ballinasloe No.1 Council meeting, he explained fully his reasons for converting to Sinn Fein, one of which interestingly was:

....He expected that the Sinn Feiners would do away with landlordism, grazierdom, and land grabbing, with which east Galway was reeking from stem to stern, and some of the principal offenders were Leaguers themselves...⁴²

Cahill's expectation of Sinn Fein solving all these land issues was unlikely to have ever been realised, but the point at issue here again is the expression of a certain anger and loss of confidence in the UIL, a phenomenon not confined by any means to east Galway.

Throughout the latter half of this thesis, much blame for the decline of the UIL was laid at the hands of the National Directory of the League, and this no doubt was justified. At this stage it is necessary to point out some possible

explanations for the shortcomings of this body, which was after all the main link the IPP had with the UIL at local level. The first inherent drawback or flaw of the Directory was its make-up or composition; it quite simply did not contain sufficient representation of ordinary UIL members from the various constituencies throughout the country. Each Divisional Executive appointed one member to represent it on that body, but in many cases those selected were often the local MP. For example, Michael Reddy represented the Birr division on the Directory for 18 years, while Haviland Burke also served on it up until his death in 1914 for the Tullamore division. Possibly to compensate for the latter's absences, William Adams also served on it after 1907 for this division also. However, the point here is that MPs were in many ways a poor choice on their own, simply because they had to spend over half the year at Westminster, where they were more likely to lose touch with local affairs back home, than somebody who would be resident all year round in Ireland. Table 23, taking two years at random, shows the extent to which MPs were represented on the Directory.

TABLE 23: Breakdown of attendance by certain selected groups at UIL Directory meetings in 1911 and 1914.

Group	1911	1914
MPs	24	16
Priests	9	9
Other UIL Members	28	26
		43

While MPs may not have been in a majority at such meetings, a much better system would have been to elect two members from each constituency, possibly including one MP. In this way the Directory would not have become top heavy, and would have maintained greater touch with issues at local level throughout Ireland.

A second criticism, that in many ways is linked to the above, is the choice of people by the Directory for its various committees. A good example here is the Standing Committee, appointed to solve disputes between members and branches throughout the country. In 1914 for example, nine of the eleven members on this committee were MPs,⁴⁴ and again it would be hard to expect these men to have sufficient time to solve many disputes, considering again their parliamentary duties. This in turn resulted in many disputes ending up not being solved at all which is clear from two major examples that arose in the King's county in 1911 and 1915-16.

The first of these had to do with the decision of the Birr Executive to expel the Ferbane branch and refuse it permission to attend its meetings,⁴⁵ after the latter had organised support against Michael Reddy in the General Election of December 1910. A subsequent appeal by the branch to the Directory to 'put the Executive of the south King's county in

order,⁴⁶ was not dealt with and the Ferbane branch was to act independently for over a year. In the second case, the Directory ignored (foolishly) repeated calls later in 1915-16 from UIL branches in the north of the county to organise a Divisional Executive meeting in the constituency after all the controversy surrounding the 1914 by-election. Earlier in the century, many land disputes were also left unresolved by the Standing Committee and obviously, many of the Directory's committees were hamstrung by their over-reliance on MPs which in turn accounted for unresolved disputes dragging on for years, thereby causing bad feeling among Nationalists and resulting in a loss of support for the UIL in the long term.

A third criticism to be levelled at the National Directory was that while it met twice or three times a year up to 1910, from then on it only met once annually. This in turn meant it fell further out of touch with local affairs, and in many ways from this time onwards, the start of the cleavage in the bond between branch members of the UIL and the IPP becomes more noticeable, undoubtedly peaking during the war years. It is also extremely hard to fathom the Directory's attitude towards the state of affairs in the Tullamore division after the defeat of its candidate, Paddy Adams, there, in December 1914. The Directory immediately commenced in the new year a reorganisation of the UIL branches in the constituency but neglected to form a Divisional Executive. What is equally surprising also is the failure of the Directory to co-opt Paddy Adams as one of its members after his by-election defeat, thereby leaving the division with no representation on the Directory for the next four years. This course of action might have boosted his chances of election next time round but the Directory's shortsightedness in turn meant that many local UIL leaders were not pressurised into keeping up the organisation, which has already been well documented in chapters seven and eight.

This brings us to the last point of note concerning the Directory, or more accurately, its secretary from 1904 to 1918, namely Joseph Devlin. By all accounts, Devlin was an able man as regards organisational ability, yet in many ways nonetheless, his choice as secretary for the main UIL organisation was strange, given his strong connections with the AOH, which in fact rivalled the UIL in many parts of the country. As pointed out earlier in the thesis, Devlin seemed oblivious to the poor state of the UIL up to 1916, and this is possibly accounted for by the fact that he himself represented a northern constituency where the UIL, because of sectarian pressure and the nature of politics there, remained strong up to 1918. One statistic alone proves this point — in 1912 the number of affiliated branches to the Directory averaged almost 15 a county for Leinster, while the corresponding figure for Ulster was almost 23 branches.⁴⁷ It is possible therefore that Devlin's base in Ulster gave him a false indication of the real strength of the UIL throughout the rest of the country, much to the future cost of the IPP.

The weaknesses of the National Directory having been

dealt with, the last major point to be made here in highlighting the breakdown of party and UIL discipline, refers to the "Convention" system used to select Nationalist candidates to go forward for MPs. An elaborate system of rules had been drawn up at a Directory meeting in July 1909 with the desired intention of making such gatherings as representative of Nationalist opinion as possible; while at the same time hopefully preventing future dissension or leaving the gap open for charges of rigging at such meetings. In order to achieve this, clergy of all denominations, county, district, and urban councils, the LLA, AOH, Irish National Foresters, TTA, and UIL were all given representation at such Conventions.⁴⁸ These organisations were in turn to select delegates before the end of January (in each year) and have their names forwarded to the central office of the UIL in Dublin, so that in the event of a Convention being called, admission cards would be forwarded direct to them at their own addresses. Public bodies in turn were to select their delegates at their AGMs each year.⁴⁹ This was all very fine in theory, but seldom carried out in the King's county at least, where most UIL branches and public bodies only selected delegates when a vacancy for MP arose. This was particularly evident in the lead up to the 1914 by-election, when many UIL branches, the County Council, Tullamore UDC and RDC, only selected delegates the week before the Convention.⁵⁰ This in turn led to charges of rigging from branches which were refused representation and it was ironic that changes made in Convention rules as recently as 1909 to prevent dissension, were in fact to have the opposite effect.

Much more significant however was the party's reluctance to hold Conventions at all after the defeat of Paddy Adams in December 1914. Before this by-election, many leading UIL members in the Tullamore constituency had called for an open contest between the three Nationalist candidates (in the election proper) without recourse to any Convention, but party leaders including Redmond and Dillon insisted one had to be held to prevent a split in the Nationalist vote. Ironically however, it was these same party leaders who were later to justify decisions not to hold Conventions in north Tipperary, and the Harbour Division of Dublin in 1915, and the Ossary division of Leix in April 1916. In the latter case, the Divisional Executive had broken down according to a report in the King's County Independent,⁵¹ while Dillon admitted the same concerning the other two aforementioned constituencies in a letter referred to in an article in the Midland Tribune which was published in September 1915.⁵² However all of this makes it even harder to have justified holding a Convention in north King's county in November 1914, especially when one considers that the Executive here had broken down in 1909! Again though, the main issue in all of this is that it clearly shows that party leaders themselves had lost confidence in their own Convention system, and their willingness to abandon it in the constituencies mentioned shows the extent to which party discipline had lapsed. Furthermore, the admission by Dillon that this decision was justified on the grounds that 'the machinery provided in the constitution of the League did not exist',⁵³ (in the constituencies already mentioned), more than

anything else bears out the central argument put forward in this thesis, ie, that the UIL, and so the grass-roots organisation of the IPP, had begun to break down long before the General Election of 1918.

In summary then, many reasons can be given for the decline of the UIL which began in earnest after the Ranch War of 1906-09. As pointed out in this thesis, which details the study of one county, these included the social divisions that emerged in Nationalist ranks during that agrarian campaign, which in many ways also financially drained the movement, the relative success of the land purchase acts, and the view taken by some League supporters at least, that its role was virtually served once the Home Rule Bill was first passed in 1912. The League's decline from then on was compounded by the apparent failure of the National Directory to check this decline, while its organisers were inept and apparently unaccountable for their work in attempting to reorganise lapsed branches in the various districts throughout the county. After the outbreak of World War I, the League was in turn hamstrung by its close connection with the Irish Party, as the latter's support for Britain resulted in identification with decisions that were to become increasingly unpopular as the conflict dragged on into 1918. Most noticeable here was the party's support for recruiting, while the additional liquor taxes and malting restrictions were especially unpopular in the King's county. Equally unpopular among the farming community was the wide range of regulations introduced by the Government such as compulsory tillage, while the passing of the Equalisation of Time and Daylight Saving Acts (or 'humbug' as one farmer described it)⁵⁴ were also to cause much resentment. Many farmers refused to comply with these, but in some cases this was resented in turn by labourers, while many school managers also failed to adopt it until forced to by the Educational Commissioners who insisted on the acts being recognised.⁵⁵

In turn, many of these events were added to by the Easter Rising, which had an important prelude in the King's county with the "Tullamore Affair" that March; both serving to create a change of mood within the county which was reflected in the growth of a spirit of Sinn Feinism. This manifested itself more fully in 1917 when Sinn Fein clubs were established in most areas as support for the UIL and IPP continued to dwindle. The food supply crisis of that year and in 1918 was also cleverly exploited by Sinn Fein activists to help gain the movement more support, while the decision of many of the clergy to throw their support behind the organisation of clubs helped to give the party a respectability it might otherwise have lacked. Meanwhile, the final nail in the coffin as far as the IPP was concerned in the King's county came with the Government's decision to pass the Conscription Act in April 1918. This ensured the uncontested return of Dr McCartan in the north King's county by-election that month, which was repeated again for the whole county in the General Election later that year. In many ways, the King's county turned out to be the political graveyard of the IPP, for the by-election defeat of its candidate there in 1914 was the

party's first major setback after the apparent securing of Home Rule that September, while the party's decision in turn not to contest for the same seat when it fell vacant again in April 1918 marked the final point of no return in its electoral fortunes.

The following appendices, which can best be described as ballads, are included because they add an extra "flavour" to the events that unfolded in the county during the period of study. The first deals with the drama surrounding the attacks on the hunt in the 1907-08 period, while two more deal with the infamous "Geashill cattle drive" of 1914. Here, the first (reputedly written by Fr Mc Donald who was curate in Geashill) appeared before the event and urged the locals to drive the lands in question; while the second was written from a local Unionist's viewpoint and is more in celebration of the failure of the drive, appearing after the event took place. The last two ballads deal with the 1914 and 1918 by-elections in the Tullamore constituency, the first reflecting the "scramble" for MP, while the second deals with the anticipated return of Dr Mc Cartan, the Sinn Fein candidate. In an age when television and radio played no part in peoples lives, these ballads were a popular way of spreading certain viewpoints, and for this reason, they deserve inclusion here.

Anti - Ranching Campaign

I

The hunting gentry have been hunted,
And their spirit is doomed to die;
The grazier is our looked for quarry,
And must be hunted bye and bye,
Men, not bullocks, want the ranches,
The Hunt we do not wish to spoil;
But when it numbers men obnoxious,
We'll view-halo the pack to foil.

II

Craddock thinks our race is savage,
Because we battle for our rights;
He plays no heed to graziers slander,
Nor the object of our fights,
But we must show him we're in earnest,
And will not break his surly tone;
We're bent on getting back the ranches,
Which now support one man alone.

III

We want those lands for distribution,
We will not see them longer grazed;
Behold the Nations slowly dying,
And yet those gentry are arranged,
To see us gather in our thousands,
To hunt the grazier from the land;
But we're determined - nought will keep us,
Our opening meet was truly grazed.

IV

Sure people say it is acting foolish,
To fight this bravely for our rights,
But God, to Whom we look not mortals,
Will judge according to our Rights;
We do not heed the voice of critics,
They're never where there's work to do;
"and for landless" is our motto,
And faith, we'll spilt the ranches, too.

Tally - Ho

Taken from the Midland Tribune of 16th November 1907

Geashill Cattle Drive

You people of this barony
Come listen for a while
And when you hear these simple lines
You needn't laugh or smile.

We had a lot of meetings
And speeches too of late
About the breaking up of ranches
On Lord Digby's grand estate.

Chorus

We have to get the land
Where the bullocks now do stand
And we never will give up the fight
Until we get the land.

So now my boys get ready
Have your hazels cut and dry
The time is fast approaching
When we'll win our cause or die.

Chorus

There's Abraham and Cavanagh
And there's Bagnall too also
They think it hard to part from us
But we say that they must go.

Chorus

Hark! I hear the hazels whacking
And feet hurrying to and fro
All in one voice shouting
"Surrender, the graziers they must go".

Chorus

Now rally round from every side
Our cause is good and grand
All Geashill stand united
For the division of the land.
When they came from near and far
To sign the memorial
Next day at Ballinagar.

So rise up young men of Killeigh
And to them your courage show
And sign against the sale going through
Until the graziers go.

Taken from John Kearney, Towards a History of Killeigh Parish
(Tullamore 1992), pages 97-99.

The Geashill Cattle Drive

On the 15th day of November, remembered it
will be,
The peaceful village of Geashill was plunged
in joy you see,
A crowd of about five hundred people in
village did arrive,
And to the music of two bands marched out to
have a cattle drive.

They formed up at 2 p.m. in military array,
And marched out in four deep with step both
light and gay,
The music was delightful the bands they
played so grand,
Encouraging all those warriors to go and clear
the land.

Ballydownan being the farm they intended for
to clear,
For we have hoodwinked the police this day to
you it is quite clear,
The members here are only four as you can
plainly see,
So now come on we are five hundred strong and
laugh at the RIC.

Cattle driving being their intent the law
abiding people they thought to scare,
Some of them arrived by motor and more them by
car,
They were in the best of spirits light-hearted
and true,
Until they encountered with the bonnie boys in
blue.

They travelled through the farm the cattle
rounding up,
Their leader saying cheer up my boys we must
deliver them up,
For Digby, Abraham, Cavanagh, and Bagnall
also,
When Ballydownan we have cleared we'll go to
Cappyroe.

When this drive started six policemen soon
arrived,
And led by their gallant County Inspector at
once did stop this cattle drive;
In order for to do this a charge he gave his
men,
Who nobly fought and victory wrought against
five hundred strong.

Now those drivers always select Sunday their
dirty work to do,
For Adams their leader how he tempted them
this day I'll prove to you,
He had brought them here from far and near,
the law for to bar,
All armed with the hazel and Tom Hynes with
his iron bar.

Now it was amusing to see them retreat,
They were driven very quickly into Geashill's
lovely street,
And you may bet they'll never forget as long
as they are alive,
They'll rue the day they came this way to go
and cattle drive.

After this attempted drive was over we had
another day,
When forty six of those brave warriors to
Green Street found their way,
They came along but not so strong as the day
they came to drive,
By making a crying apology for the Geashill
cattle drive.

Long life to the loyalists of Geashill to whom
a word of praise is due,
Who nobly went amongst the drivers that day to
assist the boys in blue,
A lot of names they wrote down which
afterwards proved quite true,
They are a credit to the Empire and the Red,
White and Blue.

Now to conclude and finish I have kept you
rather long,
But before I do I must include in this my
little song,
This drive it was an electioneering dodge as
you can plainly see,
For Paddy Adams by his tactics thought to be
our new MP.
But the voters in north King's county saw
through his little game,
And elected our present member, long life to
Mr Graham.

Collected by D. Robbins, Geashill and
obtained in Offaly County Library.

NORTH KING'S COUNTY

Parliamentary Handicap

WESTMINISTER STAKES

£400

The "Field"

I

Have you heard about the fellows that are
looking for "MP" ?
Sure the delegates all scratch their heads in
dire perplexity,
(For although the "House" can seat but one,
there's a "standing" room for three).

II

There's Graham, big and burly; he's the
Leaguer's tower of strength;
And there's Adams, who will make a valiant
stand for parliament-
(If he'd only hold his head up straight he'd
win it by a length!)

III

Then there's little Mr Bermingham; we all may
hope for him,
That his breadth of mind will compensate for
niggardness of limb.
(Though to fill a seat in Parliament some
think him rather slim).

IV

They say he's conscientious to a very high degree,
When dealing with the question of official f. s. d.
(Would he stretch a point, I wonder, for a
"Member's" salary?)

V

Now, Adams loves to agitate for slicing up the land,
And a mighty flow of eloquence he has at his command,
(Why he makes the very grabber want to "shake" him by the hand).

VI

There's Walsh, and then there's Kearney, and fighting Jim Curnane.
Who say that long-legged Adams and none other is the man.
(Three potent politicians, they'll elect him if they can).

VII

As for Graham, he's an orator of widely spread renown;
His rendering of "Fontenoy" is famous in the town.
(I hear he often did it without ever breaking down!)

VIII

No doubt he is a patriot-an honest one, I mean,
Or he'd never leave a "Pallas" with its lovely rural scene,
To represent his country far far from College Green.

IX

Adams, Graham, or Bermingham? up up the
standard high;
Home Rule-and no "Amendment"!- 'tis the
Nation's battle cry:
Whichever of you tops the poll must stand by
it or die.

X

All honour to the name of Burke! we hope it
may be said,
Whichever man the people choose to legislate
instead,
In gentleness and courtesy will emulate the
dead.

Taken from the King's County Independent, 7th
November 1914.

UP OFFALY

At last we've got the chance to show
We're out to turn the tide,
And cause the crowd we now hear crow
Their heads with shame to hide.
We mean the knock-out blow to give
To those whose power is gone
Who soon in solitude may live,
While we press daily on.

Remember 'twas King's County men
Dictation put aside,
Conventions rigged, will ne'er again
Upon our land be tried,
The credit of an act, so great
King's County men may claim,
'Twas thus they won the spite and hate
Of those aspired to fame.

Let no big MP stay away,
Let all of them come here
For we are ready for the fray,
And proud are we that near
The moment is when higher still
Our flag shall lifted be,
When planted on old Croghan Hill,
The tri-colour we'll see.

To every voter I appeal,
To give a helping hand,
let none be absent when the heel
Too long pressed on our land
Will quicker be removed for all
The watching world to see
We are resolved to lift the pall
Now oe'r us-and be free.

The contest will be watched, we know
At home and far away,
And when we give the knock-out blow,
No one can then gainsay
The fact that Sinn Fein's bounds to sweep,
All crawlers from its way
When comes the chance at which we'll leap
And glory in the fray.

Taken from the King's County Independent, 20th
April 1918.

FOOTNOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

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46. Ibid, p.21.
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3. MT, 13 June 1891.
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6. MT, 30 Nov. 1895.
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30. KCC, 27 Feb. 1902.
31. MT, 8 Jan. 1898.
32. Ibid.
33. IGMR, Mar. 1898.
34. CIMR, Apr. 1898.
35. Ibid.
36. MT, 20 Aug. 1898.

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38. MT, 15 Apr. 1899.
39. KCC, 16 June 1898.
40. MT, 14 Jan. 1899.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Co 904/184/1899 pp 1 and 74.
45. Ibid.
46. MT, 15 Apr. 1899.
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53. MT, 15 Apr. 1899.
54. KCC, 26 July 1900.
55. Bew, Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland; Parnellites and Radical Agrarians, p.79.
56. CO 903/9/1902, p.579.
57. MT, 23 Dec. 1899.
58. MT, 26 June 1900.
59. MT, 2 June 1900.
60. KCI, 9 June 1900.
61. KCI, 1 Sept. 1900.
62. KCI, 8 Sept. 1900.
63. KCI, 29 Sept. 1900.
64. KCI, 6 Oct. 1900.
65. KCI, 27 Oct. 1900.
66. Ibid.
67. MT, 29 Sept. 1900.
68. MT, 6 Oct. 1900.
69. Patrick F. Meehan, The Members of Parliament for Laois-Offaly (Queen's and King's Counties) 1801-1918 (Portlaoise 1985), p. 143.
70. CIMR, July 1901.
71. CIMR, Dec. 1901.
72. CIMR, Oct. 1901.
73. CIMR, Nov. 1901.
74. CIMR, Dec. 1901.
75. CO 903/8/1898-1901, p.53.
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80. CO 903/8/1898 - 1901, p.53.
81. CO 903/8/1898 - 1901, p.104.
82. CO 903/8/1898 - 1901, p.151.
83. CO 903/8/1898 - 1901, p.153.

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86. This figure was worked out by the meticulous probing of the files of the three local papers for the years in question.
87. CIMR, Aug. 1901.
88. CIMR, Oct. 1901.
89. CO 903/8/1898 - 1901, p.163.
90. IGMR, Dec. 1901.
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92. Ibid.
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96. KCC, 8 Apr. 1909.
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FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

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2. MT, 15 Mar. 1902.
3. MT, 8 Oct. 1902.
4. CO 904/20/1898-1921, part one-UIL Quarterly returns relating to branches.
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6. A return of Untenanted lands in rural districts, distinguishing demenses on which there is a mansion, showing 1) Rural District and electoral division; 2) townland; 3) area in statute acres; 4) valuation (poor law); 5) names of occupiers as in valuation lists. H.C. 1906 (250), C, 177, pp. 316-26.
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8. CO 903/10/1903, p.54.
9. MT, 27 Apr. 1901.
10. MT, 18 May 1901.
11. MT, 29 June 1901.
12. MT, 7 Dec. 1901.
13. CO 903/9/1902, p.564.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. CO 903/9/1902, p.676.
17. CO 903/9/1904, p.139.
18. KCI, 29 Dec. 1906.
19. KCI, 2 June 1900.
20. KCI, 2 Nov. 1901.
21. MT, 26 Jan. 1901.
22. MT, 17 Aug. 1901.
23. MT, 31 Aug. 1901.
24. KCI, 11 Jan. 1902.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. KCI, 12 July 1902.
28. KCI, 19 July 1902.
29. MT, 5 Oct. 1901.
30. MT, 1 Mar. 1902.
31. Ibid.
32. MT, 11 Jan. 1902.
33. MT, 18 Jan. 1902.
34. CO 903/9/1902, pp 380-81.
35. MT, 19 Oct. 1901.
36. MT, 10 May 1902.
37. MT, 24 May 1902.
38. MT, 31 May 1902.
39. Ibid.
40. CO 903/8/1901, p. 55.
41. CO 903/8/1901, p. 123.
42. CO 903/8/1901, p. 6 part 2.
43. CO 903/8/1901, p 40 part 4.
44. CIMR, July 1902.
45. KCC, 7 Aug 1902.

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47. CO 903/9/1902, p. 500.
48. MT, 23 Aug. 1902.
49. W.F. Mandle, The Gaelic Association and Irish Nationalist Politics 1884-1924, (Dublin 1987) p. 31.
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54. MT, 2 Aug. 1902.
55. Ibid.
56. CO 903/9/1902, p. 500.
57. Ibid.
58. KCC, 21 Aug. 1902.
59. CO 903/9/1902, p. 500.
60. Ibid.
61. MT, 23 Aug. 1902.
62. KCC, 21 Aug. 1902.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
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66. MT, 23 Aug. 1902.
67. Ibid.
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70. CO/903/9/1902, p. 487.
71. CO/903/9/1902, p. 503.
72. For examples see MT 13 and 20 Dec. 1902 and 10 Jan. 1903.
73. CO 903/9/1902, p. 528.
74. MT, 13 Sept. 1902.
75. Ibid.
76. MT, 28 May 1904.
77. MT, 27 Sept. 1902.
78. MT, 25 Oct. 1902.
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85. MT, 23 Aug. 1902.
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87. MT, 20 Sept. 1902.
88. MT, 25 Oct. 1902.
89. MT, 25 Oct. 1902.
90. KCC, 23 Oct. 1902.
91. CIMR, Nov. 1902.
92. CO 903/9/1902, p. 667.
93. Ibid.
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97. MT, 29 Nov. 1902.
98. V.H. Hussey De Burgh, The landowners of Ireland, (Dublin 1878).
99. KCC, 13 Nov. 1902.
100. IGMR, Dec. 1902.
101. CIMR, Dec. 1902.
102. MT, 31 Oct. 1903.
103. MT, 7 Nov. 1903.
104. MT, 14 Nov. 1903.
105. MT, 17 Jan. 1903.
106. MT, 4 Apr. 1903 and CO 903/10/1903, p. 102.
107. MT, 21 May 1904.
108. CO 904/20/1898-1921 part 1 - Quarterly Returns relating to UIL Branches.
109. MT, 17 Oct. 1903.

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4. IGMR, Dec. 1903.
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7. CIMR, June 1903.
8. CIMR, July 1903.
9. CIMR, Aug. 1903.
10. IGMR, Oct. 1903.
11. CIMR, Dec. 1903.
12. MT, 10 Oct. 1903.
13. KCI 2 Jan. 1904.
14. Mark Tierney, Modern Ireland Since 1850 (Dublin 1978), p.40.
15. F.S.L. Lyons Ireland Since the Famine, pp 218-19 and F.S.L. Lyons The Irish Parliamentary Party 1890-1910 (London 1975), p. 238.
16. Paul Bew, Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland 1890-1910. Partnellites and Radical Agrarians (Oxford 1987), pp 102-06.
17. MT, 14 Nov. 1903.
18. Ibid.
19. KCI 14 Nov. 1903.
20. MT, 29 Oct. 1903.
21. KCI 22 Oct. 1904.
22. KCI 29 Jan. 1910.
23. CIMR, Dec. 1903.
24. CIMR, Nov. and Dec. 1903 and Jan.-June 1904.
25. Return up to 30th April 1908, giving by Counties and Provinces the Area, PLV and Purchase Money of a) lands sold and b) lands in respect of which proceedings have been instituted and are pending for sale under the Land Purchase Acts 1870-1903. H.C. 1908 XC Cd (4412), 1404-05.
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27. Minute Book of the National Directory of the United Irish League, 10 August 1904 to 30 April 1918, MS 708, p. 38.
28. Ibid, pp 28-9.
29. MT, 18 Nov. 1905.
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35. MT, 3 Sept. 1904.
36. MT, 23 Jan. 1904.
37. MT, 3 Sept. 1904.

38. MT, 2 Jan. 1904.
39. MT, 16 Jan. 1904.
40. MT, 18 June 1904.
41. MT, 12 Nov. 1904.
42. Ibid.
43. MT, 18 July 1904.
44. MT, 19 Nov. and 3 Dec. 1904.
45. MT, 7 Jan. 1905.
46. Minute Book of the National Directory of the United Irish League, 10 Aug 1904 - 30 April 1918, MS 708, pp 67.
47. KCI, 1 Feb. 1908.
48. Minute Book of the National Directory of the UIL, 10 Aug 1904 - 30 April 1918, MS 708, pp 67-8.
49. MT, 19 May 1905.
50. Ibid.
51. CIMR, May 1906.
52. MT, 18 Apr. 1908.
53. Minute Book of the National Directory of the UIL, 10 Aug. 1904 to 30 Apr. 1918, MS 708, p. 234.
54. MT, 12 Nov. 1904.
55. MT, 7 Jan. 1905.
56. Minute Book of the National Directory of the UIL, 10 Aug. 1904 - 30 Apr. 1918, MS 708, p. 344
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58. CO 903/11/1904, p. 51.
59. MT, 25 June 1904.
60. CO 903/11/1904, p. 51.
61. CO 903/11/1904, p. 22.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. CO 903/11/1897-1900, p. 33.
65. CIMR, July 1904.
66. MT, 15 July 1905.
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68. Ibid.
69. Bermingham's letter giving the history of Lenehan's case to KCI, 17 Oct. 1908.
70. CIMR, July 1904.
71. KCI, 27 Aug. 1904.
72. Bermingham's letter to KCI, 17 Oct. 1908.
73. KCI, 17 Sept. 1904.
74. KCI, 20 Apr. 1907.
75. Ibid.
76. KCI, 14 Nov. 1908.
77. IGMR, May 1908.
78. KCI, 23 May 1908.
79. Ibid.
80. KCI, 20 June 1908 and 14 Nov. 1908.
81. KCI, 8 Aug. 1908.
82. KCI, 17 Oct. 1908.
83. Ibid.
84. KCI, 8 Aug. 1908.
85. KCI, 21 Jan. 1911.

86. KCI, 5 June 1909.
87. KCI, 22 Aug. 1914.
88. CIMR, July 1908.
89. CIMR, Oct. 1908.
90. CIMR, Nov. 1908.
91. KCI, 3 Sept. 1904.
92. KCI, 21 Nov. 1908.
93. KCI, 17 Apr. 1909.
94. KCI, 20 June 1908 and 14 Nov. 1908.
95. MT, 20 Apr. 1907.
96. Ibid.
97. MT, 25 May 1907.
98. Liam Kennedy, 'The early response of the Irish Catholic Clergy to the co-operative movement', in Irish Historical Studies (1978), pp 64-5.
99. Information plucked from local newspapers at end of 1903, start of 1904.
100. KCI, 22 Oct. 1903.
101. MT, 8 Dec. 1906.
102. A Return of the Untenanted lands in Rural districts, distinguishing demenses on which there is a mansion; showing 1) Rural district and electoral division; 2) townland; 3) area in statute acres; 4) valuation (poor law); 5) names of occupiers as in valuation lists. H.C. 1906, (250), c, 177 pp 316-26.
103. MT, 8 Dec. 1906.
104. MT, 9 Feb. 1907.
105. MT, 2 Feb. 1907.
106. CO 903/13/1907-08, p. 78.
107. MT, 15 Dec. 1906.
108. Ibid.
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110. MT, 12 Jan. 1907.
111. Ibid.
112. CO 903/13/1907-08, p. 78.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid and KCC, 4 Apr. 1907.
115. KCC, 28 Mar. 1907.
116. KCC, 7 Mar. 1907.
117. MT, 16 Mar. 1907.
118. MT, 23 Mar. 1907.
119. Ibid.
120. KCI, 27 Apr. 1907.
121. KCI, 23 Mar. 1907.
122. MT, 24 Aug. 1907.
123. Tullamore Show Committee - Tullamore and County Offaly Agricultural Show Society Ltd. Catalogue (Tullamore 1991), p. 21.
124. KCI, 21 Jan. 1905.
125. CO 903/12/1905, p. 7.
126. MT, 4 Mar. 1905.
127. MT, 24 June 1905 and KCI, 17 June 1905.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. KCI, 22 July 1905.

131. MT, 29 July 1905.
132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. KCI, 21 July 1906.
136. KCI, 25 Apr. 1907.
137. KCI, 27 Apr. 1907.
138. KCI, 9 Aug. 1913.
139. Return up to 30th April 1908 giving by County and Provinces the area, Poor Law Valuation and purchase money of land sold and lands in respect of which proceedings have been instituted and are pending for sale under the Land Purchase Acts 1870-1903; also the estimated area, P.L.V. and purchase money in respect of which proceedings for sale have not been instituted under the said Acts. H.C. 1908, XC, cd(4412), pp 1404-05.

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2. MT, 25 May 1907.
3. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 54.
4. Ibid.
5. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 55.
6. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 57.
7. David S. Jones, 'The Cleavage between Grazier and Peasants in the Land Struggle, 1890-1910' in Samuel Clarke and James S. Donnelly Jnr, Irish Peasants-Violence and Political Unrest 1780-1914 (Dublin 1983), p. 375.
8. Ibid, p. 387.
9. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 62.
10. A Return of Untenanted lands in rural districts, distinguishing demences on which there is a mansion showing 1) Rural district and electoral division; 2) townland; 3) Area in statute acres; 4) valuation (poor law); 5) names of occupiers as in valuation lists.
H.C. 1906 (250), c, 177, pp 316-26.
11. MT, 5 Nov. 1905.
12. MT, 18 Aug. 1906.
13. MT, 25 Aug. 1906.
14. MT, 25 May. 1907.
15. Ibid.
16. MT, 8 June 1907.
17. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 11.
18. MT, 20 Apr. 1907.
19. MT, 11 May 1907.
20. MT, 20 Apr. 1907.
21. Ibid.
22. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 12.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. KCC, 30 May 1907.
26. CIMR, May 1907.
27. MT, 25 May 1907.
28. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 13.
29. Ibid.
30. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 12.
31. KCC, 30 May 1907.
32. MT, 8 June 1907.
33. CIMR, June 1907.
34. IGMR, June 1907.
35. MT, 8 June 1907.
36. MT, 22 June 1907.
37. MT, 22 June 1907 and CIMR, June 1907.
38. KCC, 4 July 1907.
39. CIMR, June 1907.
40. MT, 15 June 1907.
41. MT, 22 June 1907.
42. MT, 29 June 1907.
43. Ibid.

44. CO 903/14/1907-08, pp 62-5; CO 903/15/1909, pp 107-08;
CO 903/16/1910, pp 134-35.
45. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 123.
46. Ibid.
47. MT, 29 Sept. 1907.
48. CO 903/14/1907-08, p. 124.
49. CIMR, Sept. 1907.
50. MT, 28 Sept. 1907.
51. KCC, 7 Mar. 1907.
52. KCC, 28 Mar. 1907.
53. MT, 4 Jan. 1908, letter produced at Quarter Sessions
54. MT, 12 Oct. 1907.
55. Ibid.
56. John Ayde Curran, Reminiscences (London 1915), p. 256.
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138. KCI, 30 Oct. 1909.
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11. MT, 9 Jan. 1915.
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36. MT, 27 Feb. 1915.
37. MT, 6 Mar. 1915.
38. MT, 13 Mar. 1915.
39. MT, 3 Apr. 1915.
40. MT, 24 Apr. 1915.
41. KCI, 1 May 1915.
42. KCI 13 Feb. 1915.
43. KCI, 30 Jan, 1915.
44. MT, 27 Feb. 1915.
45. MT, 6 Mar. 1915.
46. MT, 20 Mar. 1915.
47. MT, 24 Apr. 1915.
48. MT, 15 May 1915.
49. MT, 3 July 1915.
50. MT, 18 Sept. 1915.

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70. MT, 3 Oct. 1914.
71. MT, 24 Oct. 1914.
72. MT, 7 Nov. 1914.
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147. KCI, 21 Aug. 1915.
148. KCI, 8 May 1915.
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150. KCI, 25 Mar. 1916.
151. KCI, 28 Oct. 1916 and MT 21 Oct. 1916.
152. KCI, 1 July 1916.
153. KCI, 8 July 1916.
154. KCI, 12 Aug. 1916.
155. KCI, 16 Sept. 1916.
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157. KCI, 29 July 1916.
158. KCI, 2 Sept. 1916.
159. MT, 8 July, 1916.
160. KCI, 1 Sept. 1916.
161. MT, 8 July 1916.
162. KCI, 1 July 1916.
163. KCI, 16 Sept. 1916.
164. MT, 2 Sept. 1916.

FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER 8

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3. MT, 14 July 1917.
4. KCI, 8 Sept. 1917.
5. KCI, 18 Nov. 1916.
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7. CIMR July 1916.
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16. MT, 3 Mar. 1917.
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27. MT, 19 May 1917.
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