



**MONEY AND NATIONALIST POLITICS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY IRELAND:
FROM O'CONNELL TO PARNELL**

by

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**THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF PHD
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April 2009

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Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis could not have happened without the support and assistance of a great many people. Foremost of these is my supervisor, Professor R. V. Comerford. His deftness of touch on the tiller kept the vessel on course when it might otherwise have ended up on the rocks. His kindness, wisdom and encouragement sustained me throughout, and I am eternally grateful to him for his assistance in bringing the project safely to harbour. More practical support came in the form of a three year research scholarship which I was lucky enough to have been awarded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences. I wish to express my gratitude to the council for providing me with means to devote myself to fulltime research and my thanks also go to another council, my employer, South Dublin County Council, who were generous enough to grant me leave of absence for the duration of my research. It would be impossible to list all the fine people in libraries and archives who were helpful to me in my quest for sources but I would like to say a general and genuine thank you to the staff in the department of history and the library staff at N.U.I. Maynooth for their friendly assistance, to the staff of the National Library of Ireland, the National Archives of Ireland for their help and advice, to those who assisted me in Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, University College Cork, and in the many branches of the Dublin public libraries. My thanks to Noelle Dowling, and to her predecessor, David Sheehy, at the Dublin Diocesan Archives, and finally, acknowledgement must go to my wife and family for giving me the space, time, and encouragement to complete the work.

List of Abbreviations

Bew, <i>Land and the national question</i>	Paul Bew, <i>Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-1882</i> (Dublin, 1978)
C.S.O.R.P.	Chief Secretary's Office, Registered papers, National Archives of Ireland
Davitt, <i>Fall of feudalism</i>	M. Davitt, <i>The fall of feudalism in Ireland</i> (London and New York, 1904)
D.D.A., C.P.	Dublin Diocesan Archives, Catholic proceedings
D.E.M.	<i>Dublin Evening Mail</i>
D.E.P.	<i>Dublin Evening Post</i>
F.J.	<i>Freeman's Journal</i>
Hoppen, <i>Elections, politics, and society</i>	K. T. Hoppen, <i>Elections, politics and society in Ireland 1832-1885</i> (Oxford, 1984)
Jackson, <i>Ireland</i>	Alvin Jackson, <i>Ireland 1798-1998</i> (Oxford, 1999)
Lyons, <i>Parnell</i>	F. S. L. Lyons, <i>Charles Stewart Parnell</i> (London, 1977)
Macintyre, <i>The Liberator</i>	MacIntyre, Angus, <i>The Liberator: Daniel O'Connell and the Irish party 1830-47</i> (London, 1965)
N.A.I.	National Archives of Ireland
N.Y.T.	<i>New York Times</i>
O'Brien, <i>Parnell and his party</i>	Conor Cruise O' Brien, <i>Parnell and his party, 1880-90</i> (London, 1968)
O'Connell <i>corres.</i>	O'Connell, M. R., (ed.), <i>The correspondence of Daniel O'Connell</i> (8 vols, Shannon, 1972-1980)
O'Ferrall, <i>Catholic emancipation</i>	O'Ferrall, Fergus, <i>Catholic emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the birth of Irish democracy 1820 - 1830</i> (Dublin, 1985)
Shields, <i>Irish Conservative Party</i>	Shields, Andrew, <i>The Irish Conservative Party, 1852-68</i> (Dublin, 2007)
<i>Special Comm. Proc.</i>	<i>Special Commission Act 1888; reprint of the shorthand notes of the speeches, proceedings and evidence taken before the commissioners appointed under the above named Act</i> (12 vols, London, 1890)
U.I.	<i>United Ireland</i>
Wyse, <i>Historical sketch</i>	T. Wyse, <i>Historical sketch of the late Catholic Association of Ireland</i> (2 vols, London, 1829)

Introduction:

Any analysis of politics in the modern era will give due cognisance to the functional aspects of political mobilisation, recognising that it is very much the resources available to promulgate the message, as well as the message itself that can have a bearing on success. One only has to look to contemporary America - the pioneer of democracy in the modern era - to see the critical relationship between financial backing and political success. By contrast, when historians look to the formative years of democracy in the nineteenth century, there is a tendency to see political mobilisation only in terms of the ideas and allegiances that drove it. This thesis aims to redress this imbalance and will explore the idea that political mobilisation and political progress in nineteenth century Ireland owed as much to functional, as to ideological factors.

Irish nationalist movements of the nineteenth century did not come about as a result of a spontaneous upwelling of a sense of common grievance and fellow feeling. There was grievance a-plenty, but it was sectoral and divided. Catholic peasants did not have the same aspirations as the emerging Catholic middle class. In truth, movements were created by inspirational leaders. Those leaders created a message that appealed to the widest possible audience, but the key element for their success was an organised, practical structure that spread that message and enabled the movement to grow, to be controlled and disciplined. Such a model of political organisation was fuelled by money, and could not exist without money.

Those who came to realise that the means of spreading the message was as important as the message itself, and that the structures developed to spread the message could also be used to control the movement, were to prosper politically. That realisation occurred in Ireland before it happened almost anywhere else, and to study the political funding of Catholic nationalism is therefore to examine the catalyst that facilitated the emergence of popular democracy and provided the fuel for its progress through the century.

The period I have chosen is significant in two ways. Firstly, it was a period that saw a seismic shift in the fortunes of Irish Catholics, who moved from political exclusion to political dominance during this period. Secondly, liberal reforms were at the same time changing the very nature of politics. These two facts are, I believe, linked. Wider franchise and the advance of parliamentary democracy created the opportunity for Catholics to flex their political muscle provided they had the resources and organisation to do so. In Ireland, ahead of Britain, a political system that was dominated by landed wealth came under simultaneous attack from popularly funded politicians as well as liberal reforms. In my examination of this period, I hope to show that there is a direct correlation between levels of political funding, advancing electoral reform, and political progress made.

Focusing in particular on the national political movements orchestrated by Daniel O'Connell, and later by C. S. Parnell, it will posit that their success was a function of the practical, structural and organisational framework that sustained their national organisations, more so than their promotion of a coherent political agenda. It is therefore only by exploring the hitherto ignored functional aspects that we can come to fully

understand how political success was achieved during this period. By showing how flows of money into and out of political organisations shaped the relationship between those organisations and the electors, the Catholic Church, newspapers, activists and politicians themselves, it will be illustrated that money was the lifeblood flowing through the body politic. It will also be shown how - with politics being the art of the possible - financial resources became a central determinant of what was possible.

It cannot be said that the history of constitutional nationalism in nineteenth century Ireland has been subject to historiographical neglect. The primary sources used for this thesis have in the main been worked and reworked by many scholars of high repute, but while most analyses of the O'Connell or Parnell eras have made reference to the funding of their organisations, they have tended to do so obliquely. Few, if any, have looked at money as a political agent in itself, and I believe that none have considered its relevance to political change in Ireland over the span of this study. When one speaks of span, one does well to remember and acknowledge one particular work in this area, which is not alone broad in its span, but is also encyclopaedic in its detailing of the minutiae of nineteenth century Irish politics. K. T. Hoppen in *Elections, politics and society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984) provides insightful analysis on many aspects of mid-century politics. Particularly relevant to this study were his findings on the impact of electoral reform. He makes the point that O'Connell was politically hamstrung by the nature of the electorate and that it was only after the franchise reforms of 1850 that Catholic nationalism had the potential to make serious inroads into political representation. Hoppen points out that the post-1850 electorate differed chiefly in that it was less susceptible to landlord influence. It could therefore be argued that it was not the

electorate that held O'Connell, back but the costs associated with convincing them to defy their landlord. Hoppen also provides a wealth of illustrative detail on topics such as political corruption, which provided signposts to a wealth of primary source material. The book stands very much as a reference work for all who choose to research this period of Irish political history.

While Hoppen's work is possibly the only example of an in-depth study encompassing both the O'Connell and Parnell periods, the political history of the period is well served by general surveys that provide an intelligent appraisal of the forces that competed for political ascendancy in nineteenth century Ireland. Some, it has to be said, are more than just surveys. D. George Boyce provides a dispassionate guide to the complexities of a nationalism that in Ireland was shot through with sectarianism. Alvin Jackson also gives a powerful political analysis of the O'Connell and Parnell periods and the role that the two men played in shaping constitutional nationalism, balanced by the reminder that that the first half of the nineteenth century is not simply the 'story of emancipation and repeal', as he draws our attention to the survival and subsequent effectiveness of Irish Toryism.¹ Taken individually, O'Connell and Parnell have attracted considerable scholarship. Fergus O'Ferrall's doctoral thesis on O'Connellite politics spans his entire political career, but his published work deals specifically with the campaign for Catholic emancipation, and is a mine of detailed information and solid analysis. He, more than most, shows a perception of the value of political funding, suggesting that with the 'Catholic Rent', 'the philosopher's stone of Catholic politics had been at last

¹ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798 - 1998* (Oxford, 1999), p. 67.

discovered'.² He credits Thomas Wyse with making the leap that took the movement from extra-parliamentary agitation to the crusading political machine that turned the resources of the Catholic Association to winning the Waterford election in 1826. The cost of that victory, and the subsequent win by O'Connell in the Clare election in 1828 (as detailed by O'Ferrall) show that political funding was to be the key to the advancement of constitutional Irish nationalism, but this study will consider how the sheer volumes required would also prove to be the chief limiting factor to such advancement. The later O'Connell period is comprehensively covered by Angus Macintyre who details the complex relationship between O'Connell and the Whigs and the nature of O'Connell's various political organisations in the 1830s. He asserts that the 'the real ancestor of the independent party of Isaac Butt, Parnell and John Redmond was the Repeal Party as it emerged from the 1832 election',³ while J. H. Whyte puts forward a variety of reasons why O'Connell failed to build on the success of 1832. He cites 'the indifference of the Ulster liberals, the distracting effect of the tithe issue, above all the hostility of the wealthier classes and the consequent difficulty in procuring suitable candidates'. Whyte suggests that 'O'Connell, in virtually refusing to attempt the task of building up an effective parliamentary party, perhaps showed a shrewder grasp of what was practically possible'. O'Connell seems to have realised his party-building limitations, but Whyte and others are slow to acknowledge that lack of funding was a central obstacle to building an independent parliamentary party. In his history of the Independent Irish Party, Whyte can again be accused of failing to see the elephant in the room. He notes that: 'Refusal to support the government was to unilaterally cut oneself off from the system of government

² Fergus O'Ferrall, *Catholic emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the birth of Irish democracy 1820 - 1830* (Dublin, 1985) p. 77

³ Angus MacIntyre, *The Liberator: Daniel O'Connell and the Irish party 1830-47* (London, 1965), p. 70.

patronage which was such an integral part of the mid-Victorian political system.’⁴ The obvious corollary was - that to be truly independent - a party needed independent funding.

The first politician, after O’Connell, to fully realise this, was Parnell and the historiography does tend to reflect this. In his biography of Parnell, F. S. L. Lyons synthesised the best available material and produced what is still regarded as the definitive biography of Parnell. The importance of funding, particularly American funding, to Parnell’s political endeavours is acknowledged throughout this biography. Lyons makes the point, for example, that Parnell was forced to engage in a more extreme form of rhetoric ‘when reaching out [for funds] to Irish-American Fenians’, than he was given to at home in Ireland.⁵ Focusing on the land question, Paul Bew takes a cynical look at the use of American money during the land war, suggesting that even money donated specifically for relief of distress, was used strategically in order to broaden the base of popular support for the Land League.⁶ In his account of the creation of Parnell’s political machine, Conor Cruise O’Brien provides a good deal of valuable empirical information as well as an analysis of the significance of funding to the success of the Irish Parliamentary Party.⁷

The foregoing is but a small sample of a broad political historiography of nineteenth century Ireland. These and others provide a wealth of information regarding every aspect of the period, but in terms of political funding, the tendency is very often to relay details

⁴ J. H. Whyte, *The Independent Irish Party 1850-59* (Oxford, 1958), p. 45.

⁵ F. S. L. Lyons, *C. S. Parnell* (London, 1977), p. 110

⁶ Paul Bew, *The land and the national questioning Ireland, 1858-82* (Dublin, 1978), p. 113.

⁷ Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Parnell and his party 1880-1890* (London, 1968).

matter-of-factly without fully exploring the direct significance of money in the political history of nineteenth century Ireland. The first challenge for this study was to sift through these secondary sources, teasing out the relevant material upon which to build the foundations for a study that seeks to examine familiar material and to tell a familiar story but from a very different perspective.

The format of this thesis involves two principal parts of three chapters each. Each part is broadly chronological. Part one deals with the O'Connell era, while Part two looks at political funding in the time of Parnell. The concluding chapter draws together the main issues from across the entire period in a loosely comparative structure.

While this study limits itself to the period from 1823 to 1891, it is worth noting that the question of political funding and the cost of parliamentary politics has a long history that stretches back well beyond the nineteenth century. Up to Tudor times, members of parliament were paid compensation for what was regarded as an onerous duty; knights were paid 4s. a day and burgesses were paid 2s. However, the practice of paying members declined in the sixteenth century as the commons became an increasingly important organ of government. From 1600, members no longer received payment. In fact, a seat in parliament became an ever more attractive proposition as its power increased and, in order to ensure a majority for his ministers in the commons, the king was forced to lavish members with offices, sinecures, contracts and pensions.⁸ Such blandishments created competition, and candidates and electors alike began to place a value on votes. The practice of treating voters to food and drink began in the sixteenth

⁸ William B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the cost of politics in Britain, 1832-1959* (London, 1962), pp 1-8.

century, and by the end of the seventeenth century the cost of being elected had gradually risen to a point where it was causing many candidates concern. In 1673 Sir John Reresby spoke of, ‘great competitions in elections, and great charges to those that stood, insomuch as it did cost some persons from one to two hundred pounds to two thousand’.⁹ So as the power of parliament grew, the value and the cost of a seat grew commensurately, and parliamentary representation became the preserve of a wealthy, largely landed, elite. The nineteenth century in Britain would see that ascendancy challenged by assertive middle-class liberalism.

Macaulay claimed that the Reform Act of 1832¹⁰ saved Britain from revolution. He asserted that the British constitutional model allowed power to shift incrementally from aristocratic control to the middle-class, and later in similar fashion, the working classes were accommodated within the system, all the while, the system itself survived. Ireland, it might be said, was the ‘fly in the ointment’ of Macaulay’s analysis. The Irish middle-class, being largely Catholic, found themselves excluded from this constitutional transfer of power. They were not permitted to sit in parliament, so potential liberals were excluded from the nascent age of reform and they became, instead, Catholic nationalists.

In tracing the progress of this Catholic nation from its emergence in the 1820s through to political dominance by the 1880s, this work will concentrate on the two periods in which political funding played a key role in advancing the interests of this constituency through the medium of constitutional parliamentary politics. By focusing on O’Connell and

⁹ Sir John Reresby, *Memoirs*, (London, 1875), p. 90. cited in, William B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the cost of politics in Britain, 1832-1959* (London, 1962), p. 8.

¹⁰ Representation of the People Act, 1832 (2 & 3 Geo. IV, c. 45).

Parnell it is possible to concentrate on two powerful individuals who emerged as leaders of a broadly similar constituency, who both sought to advance the interests of their supporters by constitutional means, both using popular funding as the means to do so. The fact that they operated in different times makes for an interesting comparison, for we can see to what extent economic, demographic and political changes over the period changed the prospects for popularly funded political representation. That is not to say that in the years between the death of O'Connell and the emergence of Parnell political funding did not play a role in shaping events. Indeed, it will be argued that an awareness of the new realities of politics in Ireland, and lessons learned from their political tussles with O'Connell, helped the Irish Conservatives to dominate political representation into the late 1850s. It is further argued that, to some extent, they were aided in their endeavours by a corresponding inability on the part of their rivals, the Independent Irish Party, to learn those self-same lessons. In the 1860s, political funding was also instrumental in shaping events, but Fenianism did not seek to convert popular support and popular funding into political representation. The funding of Fenianism, therefore, is relevant to this study, mainly in terms of the strong lines of financial support it opened up from America, and the manner in which this resource would later be harnessed by Parnell, who would convert it from revolutionary to constitutional uses.

In the part one of the thesis, the first chapter considers the emergence of the Catholic nation in the period 1823-1829. It focuses on the campaign for Catholic emancipation and looks at the manner in which middle-class Irish Catholics were forced - by virtue of political exclusion - to adopt innovative political strategies by which to progress their case. It considers the role of the 'Catholic Rent' in creating a unique brand of inclusive

popular politics, and how public subscription could be used to challenge private wealth in high profile electoral contests.

The second chapter examines O'Connellism in its many guises in the 1830s. It looks at the way in which public support for O'Connell in the form of an initial testimonial, followed by annual 'tributes', provided him with the means to maintain an independent, if limited, presence in parliament. The issue of how old money and old systems of government patronage were pitted against new money, raised by popular subscription, and popular politics is also investigated. The questions of deference and the economic hold it gave landlords over their tenant voters are explored and the extent to which it limited the advance of popular politics is considered in terms of the cost of countering it.

The third chapter looks at O'Connell in the 1840s and considers how, having been forced out of a comfortable alliance with the Whigs, his dependence on public funding to remain in politics forced him to rekindle the repeal agitation. It charts the extraordinary success of the Repeal Association in repeating the popular mobilisation of the 1820s, outstripping the emancipation campaign in sheer theatricality and money raised by the 'Repeal Rent'. It evaluates the role played in this success by the new organ of nationalist propaganda, *The Nation*, and how its idealistic Young Irelanders would ultimately become disillusioned with the ageing and, in their eyes, venal O'Connell, rejecting pragmatism for idealism.

In part two of the thesis, the focus shifts to Parnell. Chapter four begins by linking the two periods, beginning with the failure of the Independent Irish Party in the 1850s to

appreciate the link between independent funding and independence of action in parliament. It considers the electoral reforms that helped to create the conditions that would allow Parnell to maximise the return in seats won, relative to funds available. It further explores the central role played by American money in the 'New Departure' and relates the rise in popularity of Parnell and the Land League to the flow of dollars into the hands of Irish tenant farmers. It also studies the financial exigencies that influenced Parnell's retreat from agrarian agitation. Chapter five notes how competing demands for funds would continue to dog Parnell for the remainder of his political career. It also examines the intermittent nature of American funding, and how Parnell worked to build up, and protect, financial reserves to counter this. It looks at his electoral success in the general election of 1886 and the extent to which American money made it, and the subsequent payment of salaries to the elected members, possible. Chapter six deals with the second phase of the land war. It charts the unfolding drama as the leaders of the 'Plan of Campaign' struggled for funds to assist evicted tenants in the absence of significant support from America and in the face of steadfast indifference on the part of Parnell. It considers whether their exasperation with their leader's unwillingness to part with funds was justified, and to what extent it may have contributed to the ultimate split.

The concluding chapter takes an overview of the period, comparing the role and influence of political funding in O'Connell's time with that of Parnell. It compares their approach to political mobilisation and their differing sources of funding. The obstacles that stood in the way of O'Connell when building an Independent Irish Party are looked at in the light of the subsequent political reforms, as well as the economic and demographic changes

wrought by the famine, and comparison is made with the changed political landscape in which Parnell operated.

In the final analysis, it is hoped that the evidence presented will point to the mundane truth that it was pragmatism, propaganda, and pounds that generated the greatest forward momentum in Ireland's quest for Repeal, Justice or Home Rule. It will be illustrated that - for both O'Connell and Parnell - it was a cynical exercise in determining the lowest common denominator that defined the nature of their constituency, the import of their rhetoric and the Holy Grail, for which they strove.

Chapter I: The political significance of the ‘Catholic Rent’, 1824-9

Because complete history is impossible, historians tend to focus on great events and singular individuals whose impact resonates down the years. Looking at Ireland in the third decade of the nineteenth century, Daniel O’Connell stands out as such an individual. He was, undoubtedly, a larger-than-life figure who was to dominate the Irish political scene until his death in 1847. Natural and reasonable as it is to see the history of the 1820s as the story of Daniel O’Connell and the struggle he led for Catholic emancipation, there is a danger that we lose sight of the factors that operated in the background, generating the power that enabled him to shine so brightly. O’Connell was, by any measure, an astute politician, but his rise to greatness and his one concrete success, of gaining Catholic emancipation, resulted from a conjunction of events and actions upon which he only had a partial influence. It was as much by accident as design that O’Connell stumbled into what we now know to have been popular parliamentary politics. He had an idea that popular opinion, if channelled, could force constitutional change, but it was only when he put in place the means to organise and fund the plan that it took on a momentum of its own. O’Connell had anticipated the power of public opinion but he could not have anticipated the political power generated by the Catholic rent, particularly when applied to electoral politics. It might be said that it was the Catholic rent that propelled O’Connell and his movement to greatness and that initially, in the area of parliamentary politics, it did so despite him.

The rent was the magic ingredient in a mix that was to prove even more powerful than its creator had envisaged. It was a key factor in the evolution of politics in Ireland, but it was also to provide the prototype for a model of party political organisation that would be adopted and adapted as popular parliamentary democracy developed and came to dominate much of the globe. To examine the Catholic rent is to examine that which enabled the birth of popular democratic politics. It was central to the shift in power from the aristocracy to the middle classes, and due to a complex interaction of liberal and religious factors this democratisation began to develop in Ireland ahead of Britain and Europe.

O'Connell, a barrister, was typical of a Catholic middle class that had begun to emerge towards the end of the eighteenth century in Ireland. They felt excluded from a system dominated by inherited power and privilege. It was a feeling not uncommon in Europe at the time, but in Ireland the picture was further complicated by the fact that the Catholic middle classes were doubly excluded; not alone were they not part of the *ancien régime*, but they were also excluded from parliament and high office by virtue of their religion. There had been moves by Catholics to make inroads into the residual legal impediments to their advancement since the mid 1700s and concessions had been won, not least in 1793 when the electoral franchise was extended to Catholics holding freeholds valued at 40 shillings or more. An anomalous situation was emerging; the Catholic majority now had the right to vote, but only for members of the Protestant minority.

When the Act of Union followed the 1798 rebellion, it brought with it the promise of full civil liberties for Catholics. However, in a country where the ascendancy of the minority

had been upheld by penal laws against Catholics, any concessions to liberty would inevitably be seen as a threat to that ascendancy. The British government could not fulfil its promise of civil liberties for Catholics while simultaneously preserving the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. It was a dilemma that the government would wrestle with for three decades before it was finally forced to concede. The delay was to generate a political dynamic in Ireland that would see the Catholic middle class throw their lot in with the wider Catholic population in a powerful form of extra-parliamentary agitation. Had emancipation (as it emotively came to be termed) been granted following the Act of Union, it is likely that Catholic Ireland, or at least middle and upper class Catholics, would have come to see themselves as part of the establishment under the British constitution. Pressure for change would then have had to come from the rapidly expanding rural poor and later tensions might well have developed along economic and class lines, rather than along religious lines.

In 1799, the Catholic Church signalled a willingness to engage with the British state when the hierarchy agreed to the principle of state endowment of Catholic clergy, and as late as 1825, Bishop James Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin told the select committees of the Commons and the Lords that:

We have no mind, and no thought and no will, but that which would lead us to incorporate ourselves fully and essentially with this great kingdom; for it would be our greatest pride, to share in the glories and riches of England.¹

With the benefit of hindsight, this might well be seen as a lost opportunity on the part of the British government. Strauss does not equivocate when he says that ‘the refusal to

¹ *Report from the select committee on the state of Ireland*, H.C., (129), viii, 1825, 210.
http://gateway.proquest.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:hcpp&rft_dat=xri:hcpp:fulltext:1825-009423:220

solve the Catholic question at the time of the Union and to endow the Catholic clergy was the greatest political blunder ever committed by a British government in its dealings with the Irish people'.² Certainly, rebuffing those Catholic elements who wished merely to take part, forced them to find common cause with their (potentially more radical) co-religionists.

The hardening of attitudes among the 'better class of Catholics' was exemplified by the veto issue. The Catholic representative body, the Catholic Board, tore itself apart over the question of the state's right to veto appointments of Catholic bishops. The majority of Irish Catholics, led by O'Connell, opposed the veto and the Catholic bishops, who, in 1799, had accepted the idea in principle, now rejected any extension of state control over their church. C. D. A. Leighton argues that, for those who opposed it, 'the veto was feared not so much as a proposed extension of ministerial influence, but rather as a proposed extension, at a local as well as at a national level, into an area of Irish life regarded as free from it, of the power of the members of the Protestant ascendancy.'³ The issue was divisive and pro-veto Catholics, including Richard Lalor Shiel, seceded from the Catholic Board in 1815.⁴ The schism brought about the collapse of the board, but it put O'Connell centre stage politically, and it provided him with a link to the Catholic bishops that he would exploit when he launched his campaign for Catholic emancipation.

O'Connell was impatient and advocated agitation over petition, but had no intention of stepping outside the system. The memory of 1798 was too fresh and O'Connell most

² Erich Strauss, *Irish nationalism and British democracy* (London, 1951), p. 91.

³ C. D. A. Leighton, 'Gallicanism and the veto controversy: church, state and Catholic community in early nineteenth-century Ireland'. in R. V. Comerford; M. Cullen; J. R. Hill; C. Lennon (eds), *Religion, conflict and coexistence in Ireland : essays presented to Monsignor Patrick Corish*. (Dublin, 1990), 135-58; 318-24.

⁴ S. J. Connolly, ed. *The Oxford companion to Irish history* (2nd ed., Oxford, 2002), p. 609.

likely expressed the views of many when he wrote of the rebellion: 'O Liberty, what horrors are committed in thy name!'⁵ There was no mood for extra-constitutional action, and while O'Connell saw that parliamentary methods were not working, his determination to operate within the constitution saw him steer a middle course: that of extra-parliamentary agitation. The idea was that, if appeals to parliament for Catholic emancipation fell on deaf ears, then the appeal would be made instead to public opinion. O'Connell had the foresight to see public opinion as a tool for political leverage. When re-launching the Catholic Association in 1823, his idea was to broaden the scope of the association to encompass the great mass of the people and to publicise and agitate on all Catholic grievances.

He believed that this would generate the moral force of public opinion, which would force concessions from parliament. According to O'Connell: 'There is a moral electricity in the continuous expression of public opinion concentrated upon a single point, perfectly irresistible in its efficacy.'⁶ Petitioning was to be bolstered by this extra parliamentary pressure that had the potential to be more powerful than the eloquence of any M.P. Appeals to the people, moulding of public opinion and rallying people to 'the cause' had happened before, but usually as a prelude to violence. The novelty in 1820s Ireland was that it was to be done to a plan. The powerful, yet unstable force that was public opinion, was to be moulded, controlled and used in a threatening, but legal manner to effect political change. To mould public opinion called for a propaganda-driven message, while controlling it called for disciplined organisation, and both required ample resources.

⁵ Maurice R. O'Connell, 'Daniel O'Connell and the Irish eighteenth century' in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, v (1976), p. 478.

⁶ R. F. B. O'Ferrall, 'The growth of political consciousness in Ireland 1823-1847: A study of O'Connellite politics and political education' (Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1978), p. 199.

In its early stages O'Connell's plan did not appear to be working and 1823 was an inauspicious year for the Catholic Association. O'Connell had gained control of the association, but it was a body that had become moribund and teetered on the brink of extinction. He did succeed in winning support for his plan to extend the scope of the association's concerns to general national grievances of Catholics, and not just emancipation. but having won over or seen off the doubters, he found himself the master of a very small ship with a crew, in early 1824, of no more than 160 members.⁷ He needed to expand the organisation rapidly or it risked extinction, like its predecessor, the Catholic Board.

At a meeting of the association on 24 January 1824 O'Connell unveiled a plan to extend the association. He suggested that it should have a fund 'for proceeding with such legal measures as might be found expedient for the attainment of their emancipation', with each Catholic contributing a monthly sum 'from one penny up to two shillings.'⁸ On 14 February he fleshed out the plan in more detail, saying that: 'This was all to be collected by monthly subscriptions and to be called "Catholic rent". A secretary and assistant would undertake this collection; they would open accounts with all the parishes in Ireland, appoint collectors in each, not to exceed 12, nor to be less than three'.⁹ The Catholic rent would prove to be the catalyst that would expand the organisation and spark life into the plan to mobilise public opinion.

⁷ *Dublin Evening Post*, 19 Feb 1824.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 Jan 1824.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 17 Feb. 1824.

The idea of a Catholic rent was not original. The idea had been mooted as early as 1785 when Lord Kenmare had suggested that each parish should contribute £1 per annum towards the activities of what was then the Catholic Committee.¹⁰ William Parnell proposed a scheme for a general subscription in 1811. In 1813 the Catholic Board drew up a plan for the appointment of collectors to apply to every householder for ten pence or more.¹¹ O'Connell maintained that he himself, had managed to collect £79 as part of the ten pence per household scheme, but internal divisions within the organisation led to the demise of the scheme and, as we have seen, the board itself.¹² There was, however, precedent for an organisation maintained by a national subscription from its members. In eighteenth century Britain, Methodists had developed an organisational structure based on classes, societies, districts and provinces that combined to operate on a national scale. They used the newspaper and pamphlet press to bind their societies together, with each member paying a penny-a-week dues.¹³

Closer to home, The Society of United Irishmen was also funded by members' subscriptions. All members were required to pay dues: a shilling on being sworn in and a shilling every month thereafter, though reduction based on inability to pay could be arranged. A secretary and treasurer constituted the chief officers of each local club, with each officer serving for a term of three months. The treasurer and two or three elected representatives formed the committee of finance, responsible for collecting and dispensing the society's funds. The bulk of these funds were passed to superior committees in order to fund United Irish emissaries, defray publication costs, purchase

¹⁰ Referred to by O'Connell at meeting of Catholic Association on 4 Feb. 1824 (N.A.I., proceedings of the Catholic Association, 1824, C.S.O.R.P., carton 1159).

¹¹ *Plan for parochial subscriptions*, Broadside, 26 Oct. 1813 (D.D.A., Catholic proceedings).

¹² Catholic Association meeting 4 Feb. 1824, *F.J.*, 5 Feb. 1824.

¹³ James A. Reynolds, *The Catholic emancipation crisis in Ireland 1823-1829* (New Haven, 1954), pp 1-2.

arms and provide legal fees.¹⁴ O'Connell's plan was similar in many respects. He wanted to raise money, to build a countrywide organisation and he would use the press as a means of communication. However, the Catholic Association differed from the Methodist model in that one was a religious organisation and the other, while organised along religious lines, was organised for the express purpose of political mobilisation. He also differed from the United Irishmen in his disavowal of revolutionary violence and in the open nature of the association's membership.

O'Connell had re-launched the association in 1823 and developed his new strategy for winning Catholic emancipation, but it was only when he added the rent to the formula that his plan began to work, and work it did, far better than even he could have imagined. The centrality of the Catholic rent to the plan is illustrated clearly when one examines the manner in which O'Connell had planned to use the money raised. He talked optimistically of raising £50,000 a year from the rent, and at the meeting of 4 February 1824 he set out how it would be spent. £5,000 was to be devoted to petitioning parliament on behalf of each county and parish for emancipation, but also on local or general grievances. He recommended that James Roche be appointed as a parliamentary agent to manage these petitions in London at a salary of £400 or £500 per annum.¹⁵

The petitioning of the House of Commons had a long history stretching back at least to the Middle Ages. As far back as the 1305 parliament of Edward I we find that, while important questions of policy and legislation might be dealt with in conferences between

¹⁴ Nancy J.Curtin, 'The United Irish organisation in Ulster: 1795-8', in D. Dickson, D. Keogh, and Kevin Whelan eds., *The United Irishmen, Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion* (Dublin, 1993), p. 212.

¹⁵ Meeting of the Catholic Association, 4 Feb. 1824 (N.A.I., proceedings of the Catholic Association, 1824, C.S.O.R.P., carton 1159).

the king and the *fideles* whom he summoned, ‘suits and petitions were the normal business of the parliamentary routine’.¹⁶ Originally petitions were, overwhelmingly, requests for the redress of personal grievances, but there were also collective petitions such as one from ‘the poor men of the land of England’ to the 1305 parliament. It was by means of these collective petitions that parliament developed from a court of justice into a legislative assembly. Even in modern times, a parliamentary bill is a petition up to the moment at which it is transformed into an act by royal assent.¹⁷ It was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that petitions began to be used for purposes of national agitation. While they had no legal effect, mass petitions were a means of alerting parliament to the mood of the public on a given issue.¹⁸ O’Connell had grown frustrated at the ineffectual petitioning of parliament by the old Catholic Committee on the question of emancipation, proposing agitation as an alternative. But now he chose to allocate funds to petitioning on the basis of it providing an opportunity to air a multitude of Catholic grievances as part of a broader propaganda campaign.

Organising petitions gave the Catholic Association its legal *raison d’etre*, and under that heading much could be done to mobilise Catholics. As Charles Brownlow M.P. said when bringing forward his own petition in opposition to the Catholic Association on 31 May 1824: ‘It was said that this association met for the purpose of petitioning. He believed they met for no such purpose. He believed the real object was not to petition but by a bold and menacing tone, and by the exhibition of numbers at their backs, to coerce

¹⁶ D. Pasquet, *The origins of the House of Commons* (Cambridge, 2nd. ed., 1964), p. 197.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 205-6.

¹⁸ House of Commons information office, Factsheet P7, Public Petitions, p. 5., <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/p07.pdf> (accessed 31 Mar. 2009).

the legislature into any measures they chose to dictate.’¹⁹ O’Connell’s intention certainly was to coerce the legislature, and the use of petitioning was but an element in that strategy. Petitions provided material for discussion and promulgation through the organisation, while simultaneously motivating the signatories and mobilising the organisation through the act of collecting signatures. This motivational and mobilisational element of signing and collecting was transferred to, and became magnified in, the giving and collecting of the rent. However, in the early days at least, petitions were a valuable means of ‘carrying the war into the enemy’s camp’.²⁰

O’Connell’s second priority for funding was central to the dissemination and ventilation of such propaganda. He proposed that £15,000 be earmarked for support of a liberal and enlightened press, in the Catholic interest. A further £15,000 was to be used ‘to procure legal redress for all such Catholics, assailed or injured by orange violence, as are unable to obtain it for themselves’. £5,000 was to go towards ‘the education of peasant’s children’ and further sums were to be made available for ‘erecting schools, building Catholic churches, and erecting dwelling houses for the clergy in the poorer parishes’. Finally, £5,000 was to be spent on supplying priests for Catholics in North America.²¹ It is clear from these spending priorities that O’Connell planned to use the rent as a political ‘war chest’ for, as Cicero said: ‘the sinews of war are infinite money.’²² Firstly, he would use the rent to generate propaganda by sending petitions to parliament, not just seeking emancipation, but on emotive issues, such as crippling tithes and denial of access to

¹⁹ *The parliamentary debates published under the superintendence of T. C. Hansard*, new series, 1820-29, vol ii, 31 May 1824, cc943-53.

²⁰ Resolution of thanks to Sir Francis Burdett for advocating a petition in support of the Catholic Association, Meeting of the Catholic Association, 10 July 1824, *D.E.P.*, 13 July 1824.

²¹ *F.J.*, 16 Feb. 1824.

²² Marcus Tullius Cicero, Gesine Manuwald, *Cicero, Philippics 3-9* (Berlin and New York, 2007) p. 203.

burial grounds. The rent would also pay for the cost of legal cases for Catholics victimised by the 'orange' camp. Money was devoted to these measures with the express intention of stirring up public opinion.

The next step was to disseminate the propaganda thus generated as widely as possible. This explains why the 'enlightened and liberal' press was to be funded from the rent. Newspapers were the mass media of the day, and while a hefty duty of four pence per paper made them expensive, they had wide penetration and improving literacy levels added to their power. The government had long been conscious of that power and had sought to control it. A fund known as the 'Proclamation Fund' was voted by parliament for the publication of government proclamations in the newspapers, but it was in fact a slush fund that was used to effectively buy the loyalty of newspapers.²³ O'Connell would use the rent to counter the proclamation fund, ensuring that the propaganda message of the association benefited from the oxygen of publicity. Illustrating the cynical nature of the press, O'Connell cited *The Patriot* and *Correspondent* newspapers as examples of 'honest' papers that 'support every man in authority, because they are paid for it. They get their pudding and they try to deserve it'. According to O'Connell, 'he was, with them, a scoundrel, not because they hated him, but because they thought abuse of him was grateful to their employers.' He maintained that *The Times* 'was another mercantile speculation, and money – money was the object. It abused and supported Catholics alternately, just as a purpose was to be answered by it.'²⁴ In allocating £15,000 for

²³ A. Aspinall, 'The Irish Proclamation Fund 1800-1846' in *English Historical Review*, lvi, (1941), pp 265-281.

²⁴ Meeting of The Catholic association, 4 Feb. 1824 (N.A.I., proceedings of the Catholic association, 1824, C.S.O.R.P., carton 1159).

support of the press, O'Connell was clearly prepared to provide a good deal of 'pudding' for those newspapers prepared to 'deserve it'.

O'Connell had also determined that the Catholic clergy were to be central to his plans. His allocation of money for the building of houses, schools and churches signalled his determination to woo them into supporting the plan. It was a shrewd move, because a proposal to collect a penny a month from every Catholic in the country was not going to get very far under the aegis of an association that numbered its members in tens rather than thousands. In opposing the veto and state endowment of the Catholic Church O'Connell had, according to Oliver McDonagh, manoeuvred the official church into an 'overt opposition to both the Papal and British governments'.²⁵ Thus, a politicised Catholic hierarchy had sided with O'Connell and had opted to depend on their flock to maintain them financially. Having rejected state money, the clergy were susceptible to the attractions offered by the association in the form of disbursements from the Catholic rent. In return, the association gained access to a readymade organisational structure to help put in place the collection of the rent.

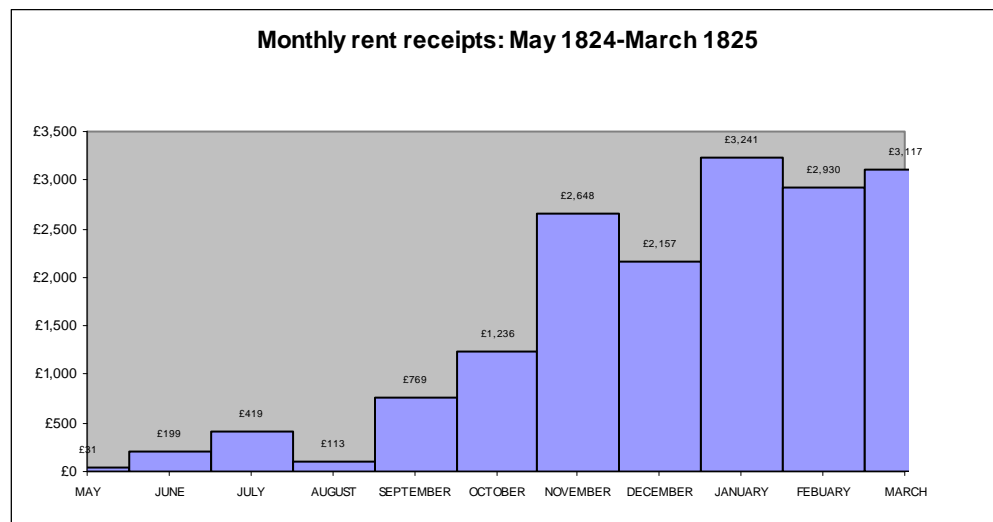
According to Thomas Wyse, who was to be a key player and later chronicler of the emancipation movement, the rent collection was 'at first awkward and ill organised: the amount fell far below the calculations of the proposers, but soon settled into a system'.²⁶ Accounts published by the association for 1824 and 1825 show that what began as a trickle soon grew into a strong and steady flow (Figure 1.1). In November 1823, reports

²⁵ Oliver McDonagh, 'The politicisation of the Irish Catholic bishops, 1800-50' in *Historical Journal*, xviii, (1975), pp 37-53.

²⁶ Thomas Wyse, *Historical sketch of the late Catholic Association of Ireland* (London, 2 vols. 1829), I, 208-209.

to Robert Peel suggested that ‘this nuisance in Dublin is about to disappear because of lack of interest among its members’, whereas, within a year he was being informed that the Catholic rent had turned the Association into ‘the most difficult problem a government had to deal with’.²⁷

Figure 1.1.



Source: Accounts of the Catholic Association published in the *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 Feb. 1825 and 27 Apr. 1826)

The rent transformed the association from an exclusive members club into something more akin to a modern-day trade union. Ordinary Catholics were now invited to pay what amounted to dues, in return for which they received the assistance and protection of the association with their immediate and local concerns. Letters flowed in with the rent outlining problems that had nothing to do with emancipation *per se*; instead they reflected a sense that Catholics felt unfairly treated under a range of headings. They complained of packed juries, partial magistrates and constabulary, the unfair imposition of tithes on them and problems with individual landlords.

²⁷ O’Ferrall, *Catholic emancipation*, p. 56.

The grievance letters that accompanied or followed the rent clearly show that there was an understanding that payment of the Catholic rent brought with it the expectation of assistance and advice from the association. A case in point was a letter received from the Catholic rent committee of Gurtnahoe and Glangoole parishes in Tipperary, seeking council's opinion in relation to a dispute over tithes. The writer seeks advice and justifies the request on the basis of rent forwarded to the association:

If sir, you in your kindness be pleased to let us know how we are to act in our present state, you will confer a favour which will not be soon forgotten, by the inhabitants of these parishes, the only apology we can offer for this trouble, is the willingness with which we have paid the Catholic rent, the moment it was announced by our worthy pastor Rev. Mr. Meighan who had the honour of forwarding to the association the sum of twenty pounds.

In closing, the writer makes it clear that a positive response would influence rent collection in the future: 'your compliance with this our humble request will much facilitate the collection of the rent hereafter as the parishioners in general expect from the association or from you its head, how they are to act on this occasion.'²⁸

In another letter, Father P. Sheehy writes to Michael Staunton, Editor of *The Weekly Register*, enclosing 'Half-notes for £8'. Sheehy explains that £1-10s is to cover his yearly subscription to the *Weekly Register*, while the remaining £6-10s represents the Catholic rent from his parish. He also recounts an incident, where soldiers and police ransacked the house of a man who collected the Catholic rent in what he maintained was a reprisal by the local magistrate. According to Sheehy, the man had done nothing to incur the wrath of the magistrate, other than to collect the Catholic Rent. He asked for the case to

²⁸ Letter from Catholic rent committee of Gurtnahoe and Glangoole parishes to Daniel O'Connell, 3 Jan. 1825 (D.D.A., C.P., 55/3/III (3)).

be brought to the attention of the association, and asks for an answer as soon as possible, promising to send the other half-notes when he receives same.²⁹

These letters reveal much in relation to the tacit agreement, the contract, that payment of the rent set up between the association and its subscribers, but they also tell us a good deal about the actual logistics of collecting the rent. Firstly, we see that the rent was sent through the post, for it must be remembered, that in 1824, the banking system had not yet developed a branch network. It was 1825, when the Provincial Bank was launched, before the first branches outside of Dublin were opened. In that year, the Bank of Ireland opened seven branches and The Provincial Bank opened four. The banking network grew very slowly in the 1820s, and by 1829 there were still only thirty-one bank branches in the entire of Ireland.³⁰ The postal system, on the other hand, was well developed, although it was not until 1840 that the universal penny-post was introduced, and as late as 1843, O'Connell complained that it took six days to send a letter and to receive a reply between Dublin and his native Iveragh.³¹ A postal money order service was not introduced until 1838, but in the 1820s, the dangers attendant on sending cash through the post were offset by an ingenious system.

The half-notes referred to in Father Sheehy's letter, relate to a common practice in the early nineteenth century, whereby two halves of a bank note were sent separately through the post. As a security measure, the sender withheld one half of the note until receipt of

²⁹ P. Sheehy P.P. Scariff to Michael Staunton, 6 Jan. 1825 (D.D.A., CP, 55/3/III (3)).

³⁰ G. L. Barrow, *The emergence of the Irish banking system, 1820-45* (Dublin, 1975), p. 220.

³¹ Daniel O'Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 17 Dec. 1843, in O'Connell, M. R., (ed.), *The correspondence of Daniel O'Connell* (8 vols, Dublin, 1972-80), vii, no. 3043.

the first half was acknowledged.³² In the case of the grievance letters, this provided a double security for the sender, as it also provided O'Connell and the association with an incentive to respond to the issues raised in the grievance letter. The fact that Fr. Sheehy's letter was addressed to the editor of the *Daily and Weekly Register* is evidence of the close relationship between the paper and the association. Staunton's papers, as well as F. W. Conway's *Dublin Evening Post*, were in effect organs of the association and acted as agents for the rent collection. In May 1825, O'Connell was able to tell the association that the agents for the *Weekly Register* around the country would forward correspondence from the priests to Dublin.³³ The response to the grievance letters seems to have been efficient and effective. On each of the letters, O'Connell made a personal note as to what action was to be taken,³⁴ and Wyse tells us, that 'every complaint was listened to, every injury was inquired into; protection was promised, and the promises made good with a precision and promptitude'.³⁵

Once the rent reached a critical mass, it became a political machine of impressive efficiency. The rent paid for the attorneys and barristers who took on cases for victimised Catholics. Between 19 June 1823 and the end of 1824, more than twenty five percent of the association's expenditure went to attorneys, such as Andrew Jennings, who received £20 in August 1824 for 'carrying on Orange prosecutions at Newry, in the case of McEvoy against Weir, when the latter was found guilty and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, and also for defending Hacket against the Orange party at Down sessions

³² The British postal museum and archive, Key dates, <http://www.postalheritage.org.uk/history/keydates/#1840> (29 Nov. 2008); Bernard Share ed., *Root and Branch, Allied Irish Banks, yesterday, today, tomorrow* (Dublin, 1979), p. 34.

³³ O'Ferrall, *Catholic emancipation*, p. 63.

³⁴ Appeals for financial aid, advice (legal) etc. (D.D.A., CP, 55/3/III).

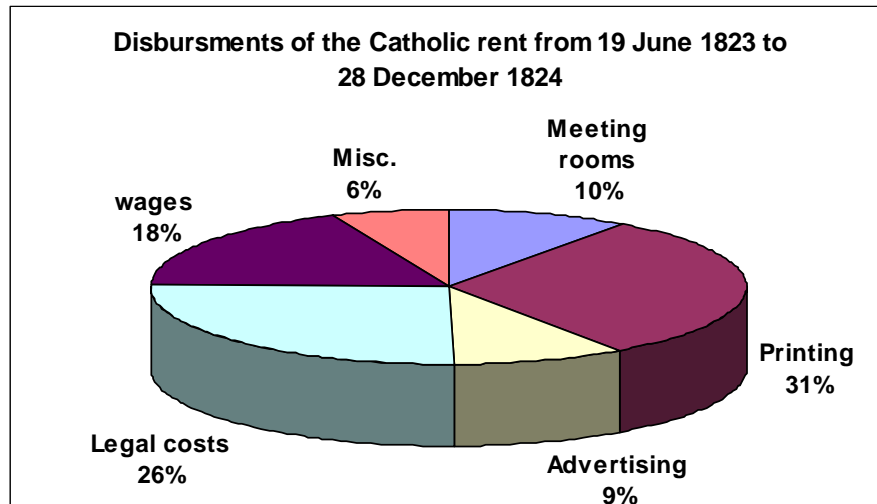
³⁵ Wyse, *Historical sketch*, i, 205.

or Assizes'.³⁶ (Figure 1.2) The rent paid for the publication of accounts of these cases, along with the propaganda of the association in the newspapers. It paid for the countrywide circulation of these newspapers, and for the use of the newspapers' network of offices to facilitate the flow of communications to and from Dublin.

Use of the newspapers to disseminate information to its members created what might be termed, a 'positive feedback loop'. The publication of lists of contributions to the Catholic Rent would have encouraged further contributions, as priests and people saw neighbouring parishes listed, while their own parishes were conspicuous by their absence. Seeing the name of one's parish printed in the newspaper would have been a source of immense pride to readers at the time. Nearly two centuries later, when one comes across a list of contributions printed in the *Dublin Evening Post*, one is instinctively drawn to the list in search of one's home place, to see if it figures, and one is inclined to search for one's own surname in the long, alphabetical, lists of names of those enrolled as members of the association, wondering if, perhaps, they were relations. If, almost two hundred years later, the lists can still generate such curiosity, one can only imagine the excitement and pride that gripped communities at the time, when they saw their parish named in the newspaper. They could read accounts of meetings they may have attended and if they were enrolled as a member their name was printed for all to see. Printing the letters, the amounts paid and the lists of new members would certainly have done much to motivate those individuals and parishes who had been slow to contribute.

³⁶ *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 Feb. 1825

Fig. 1.2.



Source: *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 Feb. 1825.

The priests were further motivated to support the rent because, according to Thomas Wyse, he ‘expected to see it return in its due season in the building of his school or the repairs to his ruined church’ and thus he was ‘personally and constantly interested’ in the rent and in the politics of the association.³⁷ It is curious to note that, despite Wyse’s comment and the promise of generous provision for church and school building when the rent was launched, very little of the rent found its way back to the parishes in the shape of bricks and mortar. In the period 19 June 1823 to 31 December 1827, detailed accounts were published and from these we see that only two sums were paid for church or school building. In 1826, £30 was ‘remitted to the Rev. Mr. Kearnes, in aid of a school at Churchtown, near Cloyne’, and in 1827, £50 was paid ‘towards erecting Tarlaghan chapel.’³⁸ A total of only £80 in over four years was hardly going to galvanize the priests of Ireland into supporting the rent, but we have to assume that other arrangements were put in place to allow the priests benefit from the rent.

³⁷ Wyse, *Historical sketch*, i, pp 236-7.

³⁸ *D.E.P.*, 29 Mar. 1827, 28 Feb. 1828.

At a meeting of the association on 1 May 1824, O'Connell advised that 'some Roman Catholic priests . . . offered to use their utmost efforts in the collection of "The Rent", provided the association allowed them to allocate to their own schools and establishments one half of the amount received in their various parishes.' and he said that 'he would advise the association to acquiesce'.³⁹ It would appear therefore that where support for the priests was forthcoming, it was most likely deducted at source, making it well nigh impossible to quantify. Whether motivated by material benefits, or merely swept along with the enthusiasm of their people, the priests, along with the middle class activists, coordinated the collection and transmission of the rent together with the grievance letters to the association, and so the loop began again. The beauty of the system was that once it was set in motion, it could provide its own energy and its design allowed it to be controlled from one central point, effectively, by one person. Between June 1824 and March 1825, nearly £20,000 was collected.⁴⁰ In a few months, the rent had transformed the moribund Association into a powerful political machine. Its effect was eloquently encapsulated by Thomas Wyse who described it in the following terms: [it was] 'not only that positive suffering was removed or that Catholic power was augmented by so large an accession of its funds; a new means of binding people in an open and visible fraternity, which extended from one end of Ireland to the other, was obtained.'⁴¹ Such was the success of the association that, according to Wyse, the people had taken to calling it 'the government.'⁴²

³⁹ Report of meeting of the Catholic Association, 1 May 1824 (N.A.I., Proceedings of Catholic Association, 1824, C.S.O.R.P., carton 1159).

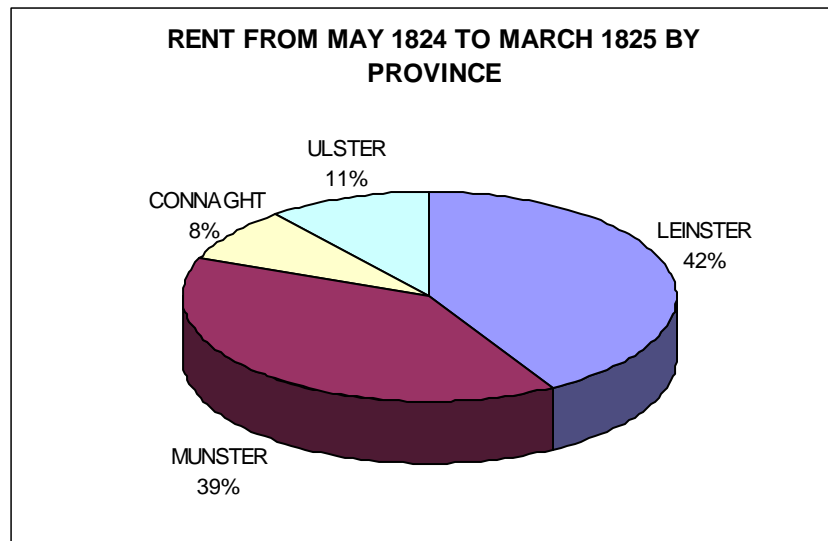
⁴⁰ *D.E.P.*, 17 Feb. 1825, 27 Apr. 1826.

⁴¹ Wyse, *Historical sketch*, i, p. 208.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 247.

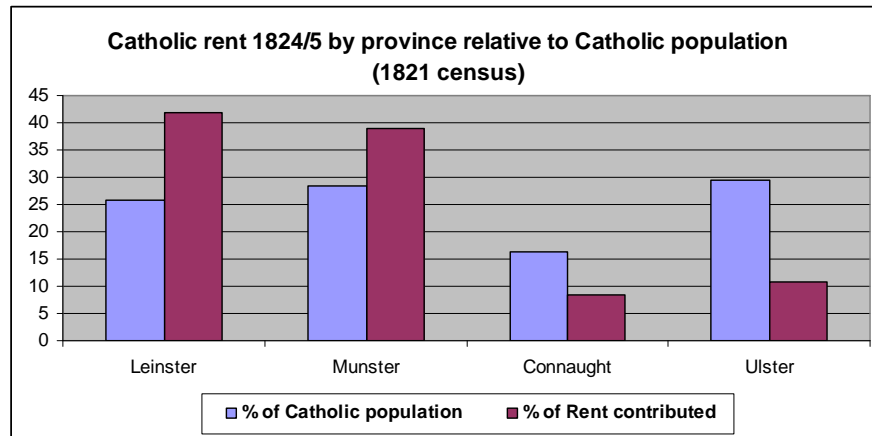
Impressive as the figures were for this first phase of the rent, it would be wrong to say that the rent and the political awakening that went with it had penetrated the entire country. Two provinces formed the core of O’Connell’s movement while in the other two the rent was to make relatively little impact. Munster and Leinster combined to generate 81% of the rent collected in the first phase up to March 1825, while Ulster and Connaught managed to collect only 11% and 8% respectively (Figure 1.3). When related to the Catholic population of each province, we see that the poor showing from Connaught is partly explained by smaller Catholic population, while the figure highlights the weakness of the movement in Ulster. (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.3.



Source: Accounts of the Catholic Association published in the *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 February 1825 and 27 April 1826.

Figure 1.4.



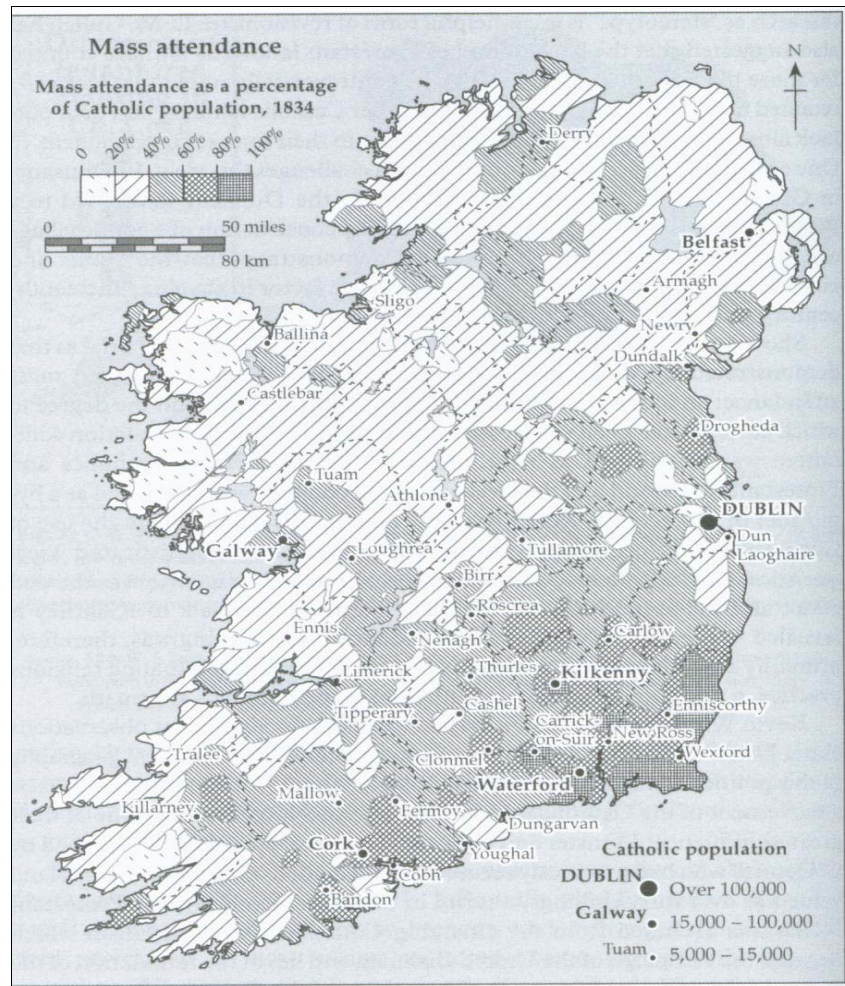
Source: Accounts of the Catholic Association published in the *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 February 1825 and 27 April 1826; W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick eds, *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), p. 53.

The weakness of support in Connaught can also be ascribed to socio-economic factors. However, the poor response from Ulster was more significant in political terms because, not alone does it reflect a response from a predominantly Protestant province, to what was in essence a Catholic nationalist movement, but it shows that even among Ulster Catholics support was weak. Munster and Leinster had seen the greatest advances for middle class Catholics and land holdings were larger than in Connaught. The money economy, based on trade of manufactures, had also advanced further, creating a cohort of merchants, shopkeepers and professionals in the towns. According to Wyse, it was in the towns that the association's real strength lay, suggesting that 'the county parishes continued more or less inert. Up to the very eve of dissolution, the towns generally furnished in a double proportion to the counties'.⁴³ The penetration of O'Connell's

⁴³ Wyse, *Historical sketch*, i, 210.

propaganda-based message would also have been more difficult in a province where the English language, literacy, and consequently, newspaper readership had not extended as widely as Munster and Leinster. The dependence, particularly in rural areas, on the priests to establish a presence for the association would also have had a bearing on the poor showing in Connaught. The influence of the priest only extended to those who he could count as members of his flock. While Connaught was predominantly Catholic, figures for mass attendance, although they relate to 1834, suggest that religious observation was significantly lower in the west than in the south and east of the country (Map 1.1).

Map 1.1: Mass attendance as a percentage of the Catholic population, 1834.



Source: David William Miller, 'Mass attendance in Ireland in 1834'. in Brown, Stewart Jay; Miller, David William, eds, *Piety and power in Ireland 1760-1960 : essays in honour of Emmet Larkin* (Belfast and Notre Dame, Indiana, 2000), p. 173.

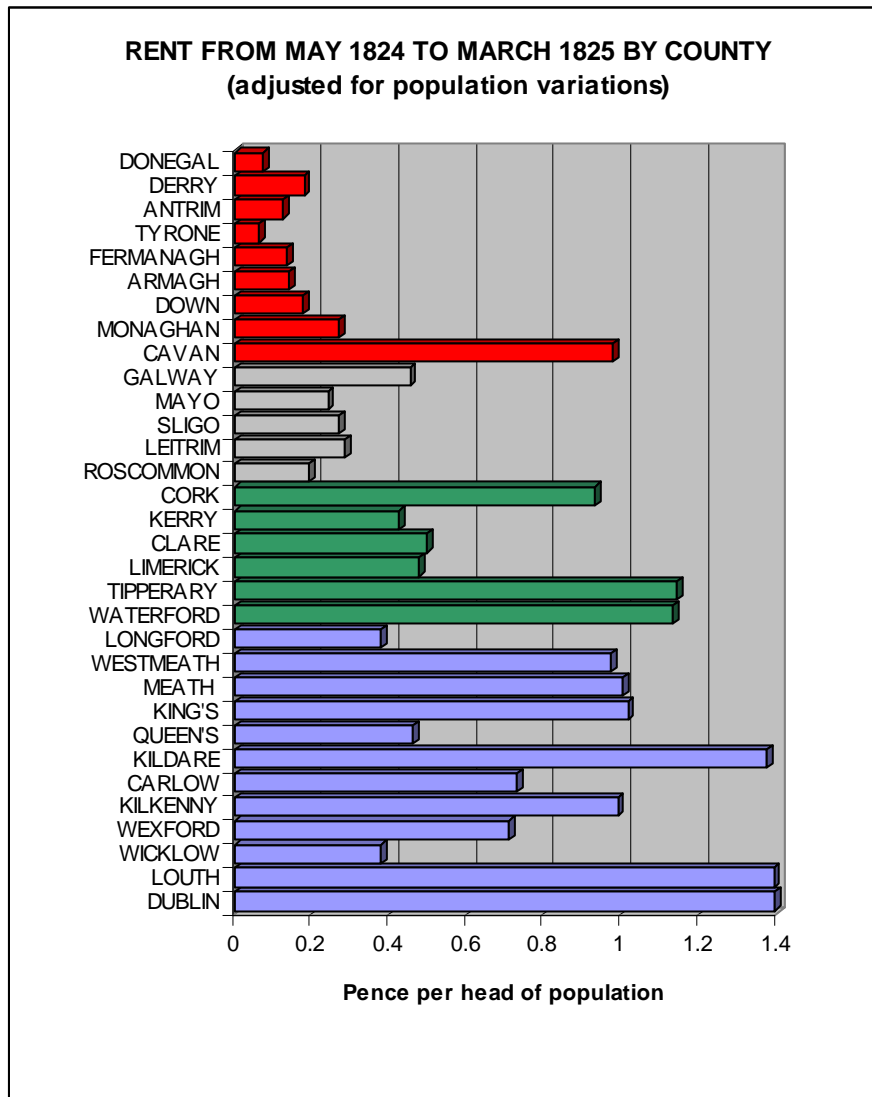
Statistical data such as this appears to indicate that in Ulster, where Catholic mass attendance in 1834 averaged approximately forty per cent, the priests would have had limited influence. This, combined with Protestant alienation would explain why Ulster was barren territory for the association. That the propaganda message was inappropriate and unwelcome to the majority population in Ulster was an awkward truth that O'Connell

chose to ignore. He could raise enough steam outside Ulster to serve his purposes and so began the myopic tradition in Irish nationalism of ignoring Ulster because it did not fit.

A county-by-county analysis of receipts (Figure 1.5)⁴⁴ shows that the strength of support in Leinster and Munster is not uniform. There are sharp variations between counties, while Cavan stands out as an exception to the weakness of support in Connaught and Ulster generally.

⁴⁴ Using the amount of the Catholic rent subscribed from each county in conjunction with the population of each county, based on the 1821 census figures, it was possible to calculate the amount subscribed per head of population in each county.

Figure 1.5



Source: Accounts of the Catholic Association published in the *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 February 1825. and 27 April 1826; W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick eds, *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), pp 5-15.

Looking at the manner in which the rent was collected is telling in terms of gaining an insight into how O'Connell's political machine was structured. The association sought to expand the membership and tap the power of the disgruntled Catholic masses, and the rent allowed them achieve both these objectives simultaneously. The very business of collecting the rent animated the members; there was work to be done: rent books and reports were printed, lists of addresses came in from sympathetic bishops, and material

was sent around the country. The bridgehead in each parish was the priest, but while critical in terms of introducing the rent scheme to the people and being a conduit to the association in Dublin, it was the well-to-do Catholics in the parish who were the backbone of the organisation. It was these lay activists, in the main, who took the initiative in calling meetings to establish the rent collection. In the months from April 1824, parishes, towns and cities held meetings of Catholics where resolutions adopting the scheme for collecting the rent were passed. Committees were formed, a treasurer elected and collectors appointed.⁴⁵ The local clergy were ex-officio members of the association and it was envisioned that theirs would be a supervisory role. 'It was not intended that the clergy should have any trouble with the collection further than that they should be satisfied with the persons appointed collectors.'⁴⁶ Referring to the rent, Bishop James Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin said that he was 'confident that the clergy would countenance the collection of it, but they are not disposed themselves to become collectors', citing as a reason: 'an apprehension lest they might appear, not only active, but prominent in public affairs.'⁴⁷ Fergus O'Ferrall warns us not to overstate the importance of the Catholic clergy to the operation of the association and it is well to remember that the message of the association was spread via meetings and through the newspapers, as much as it was from the pulpit.⁴⁸ It was the lay activists who arranged meetings and collected the rent, the 'disciplined troops' of the organisation, as Thomas Wyse referred to them, and it was they who formed the real active membership.⁴⁹ The ordinary people paid a modest farthing a week and expected either practical relief from

⁴⁵ *D.E.P.*, Apr. – Oct. 1824.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 4 Mar. 1824.

⁴⁷ W. J. Fitzpatrick, *The life, times, and correspondence of the Right Rev. Dr. Doyle, bishop of Kildare and Leighlin* (2 vols, Dublin, 1861), ii, 10.

⁴⁸ O'Ferrall, *Catholic emancipation*, p. 76.

⁴⁹ Wyse, *Historical sketch*, i, 209.

some immediate grievance, or relief in the longer term from their general plight. These, Wyse described as ‘the irregular troops of the association,’⁵⁰ and were relegated to a passive role in the organisation.

A document from Wyse’s own city of Waterford provides us with a more detailed picture of who these ‘disciplined troops’ actually were.⁵¹ The document lists every person in the city who contributed more than six pence to the collection in support of O’Connell’s candidacy in the 1828 Clare election. Each person’s occupation is stated, and from this we are able to build a social profile of O’Connell’s support in that city (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6.

Waterford City contributors to O’Connell election fund 1828 by occupation	
Other/unspecified	181
Tradesmen	123
Shopkeeper/Huxter	32
Publican	23
Liberal Protestant	23
Merchant	21
Labourer/servant	16
Teacher	6
Professional	3
Farmer	1
Priest	1

Source: Meeting in support of O’Connell election, Waterford, 5 July 1828 (D.D.A., C.P., 56/1, ii).

It is notable that in their anxiety to show that Protestants were also involved in supporting the cause, the association in Waterford effectively set them apart by classifying Liberal Protestants as a group unto itself. Looking at the breakdown of these groups we see that, in this urban setting, the core of O’Connell’s support was drawn from the ranks of the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Meeting in support of O’Connell election, Waterford, 5 July 1828 (D.D.A., C.P., 56/1/II).

skilled artisan class, with shopkeepers, publicans and merchants also featuring strongly. It was from these latter groups that the active membership was usually drawn, but even these activists lacked any great power within the organisation, as the collection of the rent was organised by parish, with no organisational links between parishes, and no intermediate structure between the individual parishes and the association in Dublin. All monies and communications went directly to Dublin, and in this manner all resources and power were centralised and control rested with the association in Dublin, which was dominated by O'Connell.

Outside of the towns, the association was appealing to the people who had previously resorted to agrarian violence in response to their grievance, and the manner in which it did so was, according to Fergus O'Ferrall, to create the basis of the clientelist model of politics that has survived in Ireland to the present day.⁵² The association offered an alternative to localised violence. By taking on and winning cases in court and then advertising the case, the issues involved and their ability to deliver on it, in the national press they created a mood that spread across the country. The association linked Catholics in the town and the country, payment of the rent brought all classes into membership, and their attachment to a common cause inspired in them a mood of optimism. That growing sense of unity and optimism was the genesis of Catholic nationalism, for not only did Catholics see that there was now someone to fight their corner in individual cases of victimisation, but they saw - and the association was at pains to show them - that injustice might be overturned in its entirety if all Catholics united in their support of demands for emancipation.

⁵² O'Ferrall, *Catholic emancipation*, p. 281.

The rent for ordinary Catholics was their membership of a mutual protection association, but it was also their membership of the Catholic nation. Emancipation was held out as a type of Holy Grail, which, when achieved, would deliver Catholics from the plight they had long endured at the hands of a Protestant ascendancy. O'Connell had the 'single point' upon which he wanted to focus public opinion. By deliberately keeping its definition vague, he managed to unite Catholics across the class divides. The political implications of this achievement were to be significant and far-reaching. Those who paid the rent were united by a bond that transcended their class divisions; it was however a bond that was forged on the anvil of sectarian rhetoric. O'Connell had found a common denominator that would unite the majority of the people, but it just as firmly alienated the minority. While, as can be seen from the situation in Waterford, great play was made of welcoming the support and membership of liberal Protestants, the fact was that the movement and its objectives were specifically Catholic.⁵³ O'Connell went to great pains to identify those Protestants he set about demonising as being part of 'the Orange faction', but he was prepared to stoop very low when so engaged.

On 2 June 1824 O'Connell announced to a meeting of the Catholic Association that he 'had a communication of much importance to make to the meeting'. He told the meeting that 'he was enabled to disclose to them the Orange pass-word'. 'He then advised that the password was part of the 68th psalm and quoted the appropriate verses:

Verse 23.: 'The Lord said I will turn them from Baran. I will turn them into the depth of the sea.'

⁵³ Thomas Wyse estimated that one in ten members of the Catholic Association were Protestant; Wyse, *Historical sketch*, ii, p. 83.

Verse 24: 'That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thy enemies - that the tongue (sic) of thy dogs be red with same.

'The 24th. verse', continued O'Connell:

contains the sanguinary principle which induced the horrid murder of poor Grumly, on the 12th July 1822, in Armagh and which has occasioned his sister to wander ever since through her neighbourhood, a wretched maniac. When the poor heart sickened girl told that she had seen one of the persons who shot her brother get some of his blood and mix it with water and make his dog drink it on the spot where the murder was committed, her frightful tale was not believed.⁵⁴

O'Connell cannot be held responsible for the religious divisions in Ireland, but such tales, written into the minutes of the association's meeting and circulated countrywide in the press, were bound to intensify sectarian divisions, and through the Catholic rent, he did manage to create a Catholic national identity, which forced middle class Catholics into an alliance with those whom they could never see as equals, while simultaneously alienating them from those liberal Protestants with whom they wished to be equal. The alliance of Catholics across class divisions might not have lasted, but the definition of the nation as being Catholic would endure. Ordinary Catholics had been introduced to the concept of a Catholic nation, they had been introduced to the principles of parliamentary democracy as an alternative to violence and even if emancipation was to prove to be a disappointment to them, constitutional politics would always remain a firm fixture in Irish politics from that point on.

In as far as it went O'Connell's organisational model was most impressive, but he had limited his vision to the creation of an extra-parliamentary pressure group that could be controlled by him and used to achieve a single stated aim before being stood down. Once

⁵⁴ *D.E.P.*, 3 June 1824.

again the trade union analogy is apposite. O'Connell was the charismatic, yet autocratic leader, not unlike many trade union leaders of the twentieth century. The objective was to win concessions for the middle ranking members who lacked muscle, by using charisma and rhetoric to convince the rank-and-file members, who had muscle, that the fight was their fight too. A good trade unionist would have recognised O'Connell's *modus operandi* of raising the pressure and releasing it in a controlled manner. Trade unions are still with us, but they operate outside of politics, in the main. They see their role as lobbying politicians and using the built up pressure to do so. These were effectively the same limits that O'Connell had placed on his own organisation in the 1820s. In 1823, at the very time he was about to launch his plan, he canvassed for Henry White, a wealthy liberal protestant who contested a by-election in County Dublin.⁵⁵ White won the election and O'Connell went on to re-launch the Catholic Association. The experience in County Dublin inspired O'Connell in terms of what could be achieved with organised effort, yet he did not make the obvious connection between his own plan to mobilise resources and putting M.P.s into parliament. That leap of imagination was left to Thomas Wyse.

If O'Connell was slow to see the further potential of the rent, the home secretary, Robert Peel, was not. On 10 February 1825, during the debate on the bill that would see the suppression of the Catholic Association, he spoke of how 'such a vast and co-ordinated piece of machinery might be converted into a political engine.'⁵⁶ The bill passed both houses and in March 1825 the association was suppressed. The rent ceased to flow until the new Catholic rent was launched in July 1826 and it was in that year that the true value of the Catholic rent was to emerge. In the general election of that year, local elements of

⁵⁵ Daniel O'Connell to his wife, 11 Feb. 1823 (*O'Connell corres.*, ii, No. 996).

⁵⁶ *Hansard* 2, xii, c. 260, 10 Feb. 1825.

the association in Waterford attempted to challenge the political dominance of the Beresford family in the county by supporting a pro-emancipation candidate. It was a local initiative spearheaded by Thomas Wyse, and it was planned and organised for months in advance of the election. The association at national level, not sharing Wyse's vision, made no such preparations for the election. Wyse saw an electorate that was overwhelmingly Catholic, in a county constituency that returned one Whig and one anti-emancipation Tory M.P. He then set about educating the Catholic freeholders in order to get them to cast their votes in the Catholic interest. It is difficult at this remove to see anything radical in such a plan, but at the time, what Wyse proposed was truly revolutionary.

In 1826, the mindset of the *ancien regime* was still firmly entrenched, even in the minds of those who sought to challenge it. In 1793, Catholic tenants with a freehold valued at 40s. and over were given the vote, resulting in a huge Catholic electorate in county constituencies. The Protestant landed establishment saw this, not as an extension of democratic principles and a threat to their ascendancy, but as a bolstering of their own political clout, believing that, as they controlled the tenants, so too could they control the tenant's vote. Deference to, and dependence on, the landlord ensured that tenant, landlord and even Daniel O'Connell could not conceive of tenants exercising free will at the polls.⁵⁷ If O'Connell had broken new ground by using the rent to mobilise public opinion, Wyse would use it and the structures put in place to collect it, to mobilise the electorate in a manner that was unprecedented.

⁵⁷ *D.E.P.*, 1 Dec. 1825.

In the early nineteenth century, the high cost of winning a seat in parliament ensured that politics remained the preserve of the independently wealthy. The individual candidates had to bear all the costs associated with elections. Polls could last up to fifteen days and the sheriff, returning officer, Justices of the Peace and even interpreters had to be paid for by the candidates.⁵⁸ Candidates also had to cover the cost of transporting, feeding and ‘treating’ their voters. Such were the costs, that elections were only contested when the challenger believed he stood a good chance of victory.⁵⁹ Where they did occur, canvassing did not tend to extend beyond approaches to landlords who pledged the votes of their tenants in return for the promise of some political favour.⁶⁰ In Waterford, the plan was to use the human and financial resources of the association rather than those of the candidate, to canvass each and every one of the forty-shilling freehold voters and to focus on national rather than local issues to convince them to vote for Henry Villiers Stuart. There had been instances of tenants defying their landlord in previous elections, and P.J. Jupp has demonstrated from an analysis of elections and parliamentary debates between 1801 and 1820, that a Catholic interest had been developing, and that there was evidence of candidates supporting emancipation in order to win the Catholic vote.⁶¹ But nothing that had gone before, compared to the co-ordinated challenge of Waterford in 1826.

What was done in Waterford was the democratisation of the electoral process, people power was pitted against the power of inherited privilege. It was however, a hugely

⁵⁸ *Bill for regulating trial of controverted elections of members to united parliament, for Ireland [as amended on re-commitment]* 1816 (296), ii, 829, <http://www.bocpris.ac.uk/eppi/ref2492.html> (accessed 22/02/05).

⁵⁹ Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, *British political finance 1830-1980* (Washington, 1981), p. 18.

⁶⁰ J. H. Whyte, ‘Landlord influence at elections in Ireland, 1760-1885’ in *English Historical Review*, lxxx (1965), pp 742-743.

⁶¹ P. J. Jupp, ‘Irish parliamentary elections and the influence of the Catholic vote, 1801-20’, in *Historical Journal*, x, no. 2, 1967, pp 183-196.

expensive exercise. In preparation for the election, a county committee as well as branch committees in each of the seven baronies were set up. Each branch employed two local agents to canvass the freeholders; an attorney was employed to check the legality of voter registration, while polling agents, couriers and even a trumpeter were employed to regulate the voters on polling day. Bianconi coaches were hired to transport voters, rooms were rented and money was allocated for 'treating voters'. Wyse referred to it as 'election warfare',⁶² but if war it was, then landlords had a very powerful weapon to fight back with. That weapon was the threat of eviction.

There were instances of reprisals against Stuart supporters long before polling took place. The committee had to provide alternative employment, financial assistance, and even build houses for freeholders who suffered from Tory vengeance. A local priest summed it up at the time when he said that 'Patriotism may fill a man's heart, but cannot fill the belly.'⁶³ It was in response to demands for financial assistance to assist the Waterford freeholders that a 'new' Catholic rent was instituted in July 1826. O'Connell held out against those who insisted that the unused monies from the 'old' rent should be employed in relieving distress in Waterford. For a man notoriously profligate with his own money,⁶⁴ he proved to be very protective of the old rent, and it caused a rift between him and Wyse. Of course the idea that Wyse was implementing a plan that was not of O'Connell's making was reason enough to upset the leader, but it was also a plan that O'Connell would not have implemented, for he and Wyse were very different in political outlook.

⁶² Wyse, *Historical sketch*, i, 286-9.

⁶³ Rev. R. Murphy to W. Barron, 31 May 1826 (N.L.I., Wyse Papers, Ms 15,023 (4)).

⁶⁴ For details of Daniel O'Connell's personal finances see: M. R. O'Connell, 'Daniel O'Connell: income, expenditure and despair' in *I.H.S.*, xvii, no. 66 (1970), pp 200-220.

O'Connell was a pragmatic liberal who had grave doubts about the wisdom of such a wide franchise as existed at the time. He did not believe that the forty-shilling freeholders could be counted on, given their dependence on their landlords. He had, he said, 'seen them in the County Clare, brought in by scores, and reckoned according to the state of the election, at so much a head'.⁶⁵ He favoured a narrower franchise where he could gain greater control over the electorate. He may also have appreciated from his experience with Henry Whyte in Dublin in 1823 that a successful electoral revolt by the freeholders against their landlords could only be achieved at great expense. Thomas Wyse was an idealist; he had a vision of political education that was truly democratic in its scope. He saw the potential of putting in place an organised political structure, a permanent network that would educate and influence individual voters. His proposals for Liberal clubs anticipated the branch structure that lies at the heart of our modern day political parties, a system of political organisation that only began to emerge in Britain after the reform act of 1867.⁶⁶ He was also to see at first hand in Waterford that his new democratic approach to electioneering was to be an expensive one. It was the pre-existing structures set up to collect the rent that pointed the way for Wyse, and he could not have embarked on such an ambitious venture were he not also able to count on the financial muscle of the Catholic rent to provide him with the 'sinews of war'.

Other constituencies had watched the developments in Waterford and been inspired. Electoral revolts took place in Monaghan, Westmeath, Cavan and Louth. It was in many ways a sea-change, not just in Irish politics, but in the world of politics, for instead of

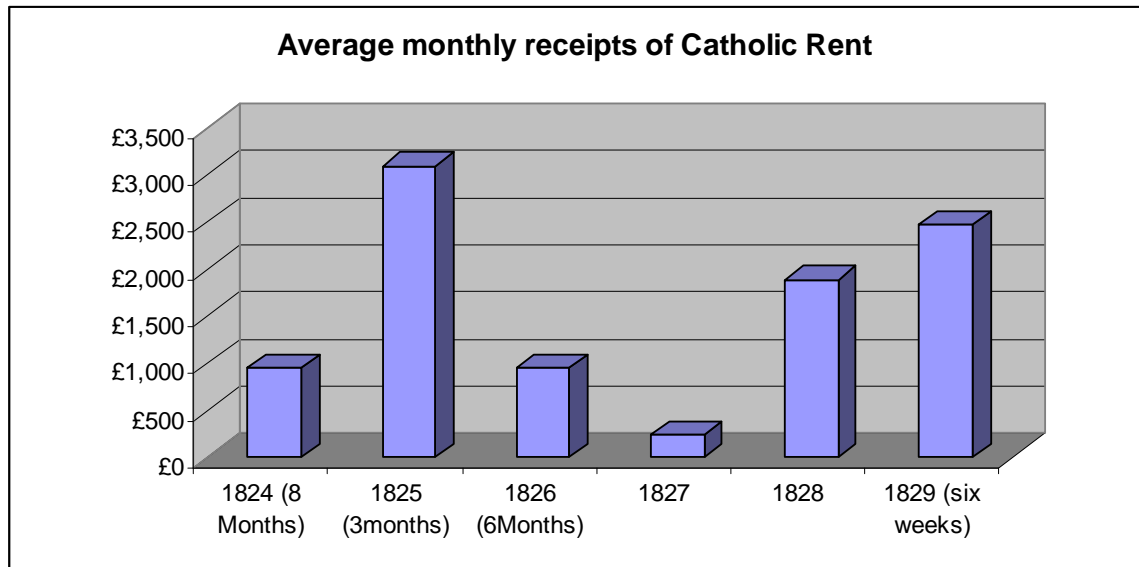
⁶⁵ *D.E.P.*, 1 Dec. 1825.

⁶⁶ Representation of the People Act, 1867 (30 & 31 Vict. c. 102).

seats in the boroughs being impregnable, and the county constituencies being merely the foci of inter-family squabbles among the aristocracy, now national issues were being brought into play and Waterford had shown that the freeholders could deliver electoral success. However, now while their value was understood, so also was the cost of their protection sorely felt.

O'Connell, ever conscious of the psychological as well as financial benefits of the rent collection was loath to dip into the ample funds that the association had invested. A balance of £14,896 in securities and cash remained on hand when the old Catholic Association was suppressed in March 1825, and O'Connell insisted that it be retained for its original purpose of progressing court cases and supporting the press and education. He advocated that a new drive be initiated to deal with the reprisals against the freeholders. Despite the division he created within the association as a result of his perceived parsimoniousness, the wisdom of his policy was borne out by events. The protection of the freeholders proved to be a great motivating force for the collection of the new rent and just as the old rent had done before, it served the dual purpose of raising the funds critical to the cause, while simultaneously revitalising the organisation. However, the receipts in 1826 did not match the generous figures recorded in early 1825. The monthly average for 1826 was £947, compared to an average of £3,096 in 1825. (Figure 1.7)

Figure 1.7.



Source: *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 Feb. 1825, 27 April 1826, 29 Mar. 1827, 28 Feb. 1828, also weekly figures in 1828 and 1829.

Nevertheless, O’Connell had reasserted his control over the association in the tussle over whether the old rent should be tapped into or not. He proclaimed his fealty to the forty-shilling freeholders and he promoted the new rent, which animated the priests and the Catholic people of Ireland, whom O’Connell now defined as ‘the Nation’ and he spoke of the new rent in terms of it being ‘in the nature of a national treasury’.⁶⁷ The original plan to use the rent to manipulate public opinion had been upgraded in light of its newfound utility as a powerful political weapon. It was now clear to all on both sides of the Irish Sea, that the Catholic Association in county constituencies had the potential to control the majority of the seats. The economic hold that the landlords had exerted over their tenants had been broken by the rent, and voting against the landlord’s wishes no longer meant economic suicide for tenants. However, victory did not come cheaply, and of the £5,680 raised by the new rent in 1826, £3,361 was spent in support of victimised freeholders. £1,200 went to Waterford, £874 to Louth, £550 to Monaghan, £523 to Westmeath and

⁶⁷ *D.E.P.*, 11 July 1826.

£211 to Cavan.⁶⁸ It was the power of the rent to counter the landlords that convinced Wellington and Peel that concession was now inevitable. If in 1825 they feared insurrection, now in 1826 they faced the prospect of ‘a secessionist parliament constituted of mandated but unlawful Catholic M.P.s, returned by well drilled Catholic freeholders.’⁶⁹

Events in Ireland did not go unnoticed outside the country, and it is worth noting that in 1826 the sum of £367⁷⁰ or 6.46% of the total rent came from abroad, much of it from Irish-America. Already a significant Irish-American community had developed, and it is estimated that perhaps 60,000 emigrated to America in the 1820s alone.⁷¹ They read about the drive for Catholic emancipation in Irish American newspapers such as *The Truth Teller* and were exhorted to contribute to the rent. The result was the setting up of Friends of Ireland associations across the United States and by 1829 there were 24 branches, with the New York branch having more than 1,000 members. The *Truth Teller* listed \$10,400 in contributions over the period to 1829, of which, approximately \$6,000 found its way to the association in Ireland.⁷² This American rent, from 1825, was the first welling up of a spring that would sometimes trickle and sometimes flow through the Irish body politic in support of an array of nationalist causes over the ensuing decades and centuries, very much to the present day.

⁶⁸ *D.E.P.*, 29 Mar. 1827.

⁶⁹ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 301.

⁷⁰ *D.E.P.*, 29 Mar. 1827.

⁷¹ Thomas F. Moriarty, ‘The Irish American response to Catholic emancipation,’ in *Catholic Historical Review*, lxvi, no. 3, 1980, p. 353

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 372.

The political revolution that was taking place in Ireland also inspired advocates of reform in Britain. In 1827 and 1828, parliamentary reformers recommended that associations should be founded with a national subscription like the Catholic rent. At Radical meetings the Irish example was cited and was finally imitated in the Birmingham Political Union in December 1829.⁷³ The new approach to politics was later to inspire the Chartists and the Anti-Corn league. The Chartist movement grew out of the London Working Men's Association, founded in 1836. The association drew up a petition to parliament in favour of radical electoral reform that was to form the basis of a People's Charter, published in May 1838.⁷⁴ On 7 June 1837 O'Connell was part of a twelve-man committee set up by the L.W.M.A to redraft the petition as a parliamentary bill seeking annual parliaments, universal suffrage, equal constituencies, payment of members and the abolition of property qualifications.⁷⁵ O'Connell's support for Chartism was, however, short-lived, as it took a more radical direction and came under the increasing influence of Fergus O'Connor, a disillusioned former O'Connellite M.P. O'Connor had, according to W. J. O'Neill-Daunt, once 'entertained the expectation of superseding O'Connell in the popular leadership', but had lost support in Ireland by publishing a pamphlet against O'Connell.⁷⁶ O'Connell's own distaste for Chartism may have owed something to his antipathy towards O'Connor, but also stemmed from a liberal-minded concern at extending reform to the lower classes. A small piece in the *Freeman's Journal*, some years later serves to remind us that there were strict limits to the reform agenda of O'Connell and his supporters. Headed 'Chartism in Loughrea', it read:

⁷³ G. I. T. Machin, *The Catholic question in English politics 1820-1830* (Oxford, 1964), p. 191.

⁷⁴ Norman Gash, *Documents of modern history, the age of Peel* (London, 1968), p. 91.

⁷⁵ J. T. Ward, *Chartism* (London, 1973), p. 83.

⁷⁶ William J. O'Neill-Daunt, *A life spent for Ireland; being selections from the journals of the late W. J. O'Neill Daunt, edited by his daughter* (London, 1896), p. 14.

Some enemies of popular liberty from the lowest grade of society have established a chartist association in the flourishing town of Loughrea. . . The liberal gentry and Roman Catholic clergy should immediately adopt some effective steps to crush the association, for the good cause of reform must not be injured by Chartism.⁷⁷

Perhaps more interestingly, the first concrete example of the methods of the Catholic Association being imitated came from its immediate opponents. Irish Tories, determined to resist concessions to Catholics, began to organise and formed 'Brunswick Clubs' that were based on the Liberal Club model developed by Wyse and even collected a 'Protestant rent'. Such evidence suggests that observers of the phenomenon that was the Catholic Association were quick to appreciate that success lay in the methods employed more so than the cause to which they were applied. The Brunswickers clearly believed that the rent and a locally based political organisation could also be used to animate their own political constituency.

O'Connell had certainly broken new ground in the field of constitutional politics and where he took the lead, many were to follow, yet, he was not the only national figure to discover the power of popular politics. At the same time as O'Connell was mobilising Catholic Ireland, Andrew Jackson was appealing to the ordinary people of the United States of America in his efforts to win the presidential election there. There is no evidence to suggest that either man was influenced in any way by the other, yet there are certain parallels between the two campaigns that are worthy of comparison. Both men were larger-than-life characters, whose brash and unconventional approach to politics tended to appeal to the great mass of the people, while simultaneously engendering revulsion among a certain class of people. In America it was said that 'nearly all the talent, nearly all the learning, nearly all the

⁷⁷ *F.J.*, 10 Sept. 1841.

ancient wealth, nearly all the business activity, nearly all the book-nourished intelligence, nearly all the silver-forked civilisation of the country, united in opposition to General Jackson, who represented the country's untutored instincts'.⁷⁸

These, broadly, were the sentiments of the Adams camp, who through *The National Journal* attacked Jackson's reputation. He was accused of 'every crime, offence and impropriety that man was ever known to be guilty of', including murder, adultery and duelling.⁷⁹ In O'Connell's case, it was the Tories who heaped opprobrium on him, often in the pages of *The Times*, which in a typical editorial, referred to: 'the fickle, inconsistent, unreflecting, indiscreet, loquacity of Mr. O'Connell,' and spoke of 'fear, anger, mingled with disgust, being the sentiments now rising everywhere throughout England against the Catholics, their rent, their priesthood, their demagogues and their pretensions.'⁸⁰

In both cases, the outrage came from that class that had most to lose, were there to be a shift to a broader, more inclusive, democracy. In America, commentators bemoaned the fact that 'there was an immense number of people in the country who were not intelligent enough to be moved by arguments addressed to the understanding. There were voters who could feel but not think; listen to stump orations, but not read. . . . This was the fatal class of voters. Here was the field of the managing politician. These were the voters who were the hope of the schemer, the despair of the patriot.'⁸¹ These words could as easily have been written about supporters of O'Connell. Haughty

⁷⁸ James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson* (3 vols, New York, 1860), iii, 150.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 140

⁸⁰ *The Times*, 25 Jan. 1825, 6 Dec. 1824.

⁸¹ Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson*, iii, 119.

arrogance greeted the rise of popular democracy on both sides of the Atlantic, and the vulgar leaders it threw up. It was argued that men like O'Connell and Jackson were duping ignorant voters into supporting them, and in O'Connell's case, handing over their hard-earned cash to boot. Much as they had in common, the Jackson election campaigns do not appear to have benefited from any form of popular subscription. His Democratic - Republican Party 'developed the first sophisticated national network of party organisations. Local party groups sponsored parades, barbecues, tree plantings and other popular events designed to promote Jackson.'⁸² Money tended to be donated by wealthy individuals, and party workers were incentivised by the promise of appointment to some lucrative position, should the candidate be elected. Jackson is credited with introducing the spoils system to national government, with his friend Senator Marcy popularising the phrase: 'to the victor belong the spoils'.⁸³ O'Connell also came to utilise the spoils system when the opportunity arose in the 1830s, but he bears the distinction of having been the first to develop a model of popular politics that was funded by popular subscription.

Evidence that the mood of Catholic nationalism that swept the country with the rent was contrived, rather than spontaneous, can be seen in the manner in which O'Connell was able to regulate the mood, raising or lowering the pressure as the political climate dictated. In 1827, O'Connell toned down agitation, hoping for concessions from a new administration in London and rent receipts dropped to £2,898.⁸⁴ (Figure 1.8)

⁸² Eric Foner and John Arthur Garraty, *The reader's companion to American history* (New York, 1991), p. 334

⁸³ Carl J. Friedrich, 'The rise and decline of the spoils tradition', in, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 189 (Jan., 1937), p. 10.

⁸⁴ *D.E.P.*, 28 Feb. 1828.

Figure 1.8.

Catholic Rent Receipts	
May 1824 - Dec. 1824	£7,572
Jan. 1825 - Mar. 1825	£9,288
July 1826 - Dec. 1826	£5,682
Jan. 1827 - Dec. 1827	£2,900
Jan. 1828 - Dec. 1828	£22,700
Jan. 1829 - Feb. 1829	£3,700
Total	£51,842

Source: *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 Feb. 1825, 27 April 1826, 29 Mar. 1827, 28 Feb. 1828, also weekly figures in 1828 and 1829.

O’Connell turned up the pressure again, when by 1828, no progress had been made.

Richard Lalor Sheil, who had previously devised schemes such as the education survey and the Catholic census, which had proven very effective in engaging and animating the membership, came up with the idea of holding simultaneous meetings in all the parishes around the country. The meetings held on 13 January 1828 saw approximately one and a half million Catholics converge on their parish churches, and sent out a powerful message that underlined the level of organisation, discipline and power that the association now had at its fingertips.⁸⁵

January 1828 also saw a system introduced whereby churchwardens were appointed to supervise the rent collection. Within the space of a week from the appointment of thirty-nine churchwardens, the weekly rent collected rose from £199 to £604.⁸⁶ The churchwardens also had a defined range of duties that reflected the new focus on electoral politics. Each month they completed a standard report sheet, that included information ‘on the progress of the rent, the collectors, the number of registered and unregistered

⁸⁵ Oliver McDonagh, *The hereditary bondsman: Daniel O’Connell 1775-1829* (London, 1988), p. 247, based on an estimate from the *D.E.P.*

⁸⁶ O’Ferrall, *Catholic emancipation*, p. 178.

freeholds and the state of the parties with a view to the next elections'.⁸⁷ It is noteworthy that the churchwarden system, while maximising rent receipts and heightening political activity on the ground, was still based on direct communication with Dublin, and far from the model that Wyse envisaged for his liberal clubs, it facilitated tight centralised control.

The political pressure built up as the year progressed, coming to a head on 24 June, when O'Connell declared his candidacy in the Clare by-election. The rent would now be employed for specifically electoral purposes and the money raised from June 1828 was with the express intention of maximising the vote for O'Connell in Clare. The association voted that £5,000 and 'as much more as might be required'⁸⁸ be put towards fighting the election and the rent receipts shot up to £2,000-£3,000 each week. The money raised was phenomenal, but the scale of the undertaking was going to require vast resources. The accounts for the election illustrate the scale of the costs involved (Figure 1.9). These accounts show that 650 payments were made 'for refreshment and support of Freeholders', totalling £6,245, and further payments made to tallymen, election agents and polling clerks came to almost £600.⁸⁹

Figure 1.9.

Financial accounts of Clare election 1828-9
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⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁸⁸ 'Catholic Association Minutes of meetings', 1828 (D. D.A., C. P., 60/1/I).

⁸⁹ Clare election account books', 1828 (D.D.A., C.P., 390/2/x).

Account of expenditure of Charles S. Cahill, 30 Jul 1829 in support of freeholders. Lists amounts paid to 81 named individuals, mostly priests.	£671
Account of registry costs	£729
Clare election 1828 No 4 Account Lists Payments to 127 named agents tally and poll clerks	£595
Expended by treasurer Chas. Mahon Esq.	£510
No 5 A/c, Amounts expended by Richard Scott in support of freeholders during election lists 119 names individuals	£1,239
No 3 A/c, 358 individual payments to freeholders by Richard Scott	£1,968
No 2 A/c, payments to committee members for support of freeholders and inspecting agents	£1,088
No1 A/c 114 payments to clergymen for refreshment and support of freemen totalling	£1,962
<i>Clare Sentinel</i> account for advertising	£247
<i>Clare Sentinel</i> account for printing work	£300
Total	£9,309

Source: Financial accounts of Clare election (D.D.A., C.P., 390/2/X).

The records suggest that volunteer election workers were few and far between in 1828. Indeed it was material reward that motivated the most critical elements of the political machine that won emancipation. Newspapers and priests played a vital role in spreading the message, with both benefiting materially in the process. That is not to say that the priests and the newspapermen were anything other than wholehearted supporters of the cause, but it is clear that for many, the rent meant that the good of the cause was also good business.

Priests dragooned their parishioners into voting for O'Connell and for their religion, marching them with military discipline to the polls. Accounts of the election describe how, for five days, Ennis was *en fete*, as the freeholders partook of the generous hospitality laid on by the association. It was also marked by the manner in which the

crowds were organised and controlled. The lord lieutenant's *aide-de-camp* reported from Ennis that:

Thousands and thousands of people were marched into the town this morning by priests, and returned to their *bivouacs* this evening in the same good order in which they entered it. No army can be better disciplined than they are. No drunkenness, or any irregularity allowed.⁹⁰

Once again, it was the financial resources to counter the economic hold of the landlords, combined with the pre-existing organisational structure built around the rent collection at parish level, that delivered victory in Clare. It was now clear that the Catholic Association had developed a political formula that guaranteed them victory in the vast majority of the county constituencies. For Tories, it opened up the appalling vista of the 'popish parliament', as they had mockingly referred to the Catholic Association, becoming a reality. The defeated Vesey Fitzgerald wrote to Anglesey: 'The priests have triumphed!, and through them their brethren, the Catholic parliament will dictate the representatives of every county in the south of Ireland.'⁹¹

After O'Connell's election in Clare, there was no question but that emancipation would be granted. The king and the ultra Tories resisted but were forced to bow to the inevitable. Wellington and Peel, who struggled to get the measure through parliament, did not do so because they had been won over to the cause of Catholic emancipation by the weight of argument, nor even by the moral force of public opinion, but by the simple fact of political necessity. The Catholic Association had used the rights granted by the system to gain sufficient power to force change upon the system. O'Connell had set out

⁹⁰ Tuyll to Anglesey, 29 June – 4 July 1828, in, The Marquess of Anglesey, *One-leg, The life and letters of Henry William Paget, 1768-1854* (London, 1996), p. 199.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

to tap public opinion, and ended up tapping into popular politics. It delivered the prize, but O'Connell and his middle class colleagues were uneasy democrats, and when the raising of the franchise to £10 became the quid pro quo for emancipation, they were quick to turn their backs on the forty-shilling freeholders. The disenfranchised freeholders may not have been all that unhappy to lose the right to vote. Voting had been a dubious privilege that presented them with a moral dilemma at election time. Neighbours and priests put Catholic tenants under pressure to vote for the candidate who supported emancipation, but their landlords expected them to support their choice of candidate or face the possibility of a demand for arrears of rent. Moral pressure competed with economic pressure, and the tenant found himself in a no-win situation.

In the rush to embrace emancipation, little effort was made to resist their disenfranchisement. Thomas Wyse was advised by his brother that even the Catholic rent collectors were 'all heartily sick of the forty-shillings, the specimen of the last election is the best cure of their patriotism, besides the peasantry are even in favour of the change'.⁹² Comparison of the old and the new Catholic rent makes it is easier to understand why, like the collectors in Waterford, O'Connell may have lacked enthusiasm for the forty-shilling freehold franchise. The first phase of the rent was generated by, and devoted to, agitation on the emancipation question. The money raised was more than adequate to meet the cost of the agitation and the association was even able to invest a surplus of £14,000 in securities.⁹³ The second phase of the rent, on the other hand, was instituted to raise funds to assist freeholders who had been victimised for defying their landlords at the 1826 election, and far from generating a surplus, it showed that, while the

⁹² George Wyse to Thomas Wyse, 23 Mar. 1829 (N.L.I., Wyse papers, MS 15023 (9)).

⁹³ Minutes of Catholic Association, July 1824 – Feb. 1825 (D.D.A., C.P., 60/2/XI).

forty-shilling freeholders provided the potential to win all the county seats, the landlords could ensure that the price was too high for even the most generous rent to meet.

O'Connell realised that he could not afford to win elections using the freeholders.

Popular politics and popular subscription had proved a winning formula for what he had set out to do, which was to pursue a single issue, using a propaganda based appeal to public opinion. The money spent to compensate the victimised freeholders after the 1826 election and the huge cost of the 1828 Clare election could be justified in terms of expenditure directed at the emancipation campaign, but it could not be replicated on a countrywide scale in the context of a general election campaign. O'Connell seems to have realised that agitation had the power to generate financial support, but that electoral politics, where he depended on tenant farmers for support, could prove very expensive indeed.

The success of the emancipation campaign was nonetheless a major breakthrough for constitutional nationalism and the events of those six years from 1823 to 1829 would have a profound impact on the subsequent shape of Irish history. The struggle for Catholic emancipation was a unique example in its time of mass political mobilisation channelled along democratic constitutional lines, and the Catholic rent was the key to its success. By extending the rent to all Catholics it created a broad attachment to constitutional politics, and while the strength of that attachment waxed and waned thereafter, it remained a strong and stabilising force in Irish politics through difficult and often testing times for democracy and the rule of law. Its legacy can be traced in the political traditions and structures that have persisted in Ireland to the present day. In the Catholic rent lie the origins of such political institutions as the church gate collection

which until recent years was the mainstay of party political funding in Ireland. It also laid the foundations for the peculiarly clientelist model of political representation. As Fergus O’Ferrall reminds us: ‘Dealing with immediate local and often individual “practical” grievances became an essential part of Irish popular politics’,⁹⁴ and parish-pump politics might well be traced back to the grievance letters that accompanied the first remittances of the Catholic rent in 1824.

The rent was also seminal in the development of the position of the priest in Irish society. Their role, as agents for the collection of the rent and as conduits for the Catholic Association, enhanced their standing in their communities and established their leadership role. The new breed of priest that had emerged from Maynooth since its establishment in 1795, were more open to, and became more politicised than their conservative continental-trained predecessors. John Foster summed it up in less than flattering terms in a letter to Peel in 1825:

Maynooth has enabled him to construct his organisation. The students who enter it are literally peasants. They leave it with as great an ignorance of the world as they brought to it, but they acquire in it an *esprit de corps*, which it is impossible to describe, of which a taste for religious controversy and a keen anti-British feeling are the leading features. These are just the men to lead the people and to be led themselves by a bold demagogue.⁹⁵

The rent saw the priests combine a role as leaders of the people with a cooperative role with the middle classes. This liaison was to form the basis of a partnership between the priests, the urban middle class and the larger farmers that would dominate the Irish political scene until the late twentieth century.

⁹⁴ O’Ferrall, *Catholic emancipation*, p. 73.

⁹⁵ John L. Foster to Peel, 20 Jan. 1825 (British Museum, Peel Papers, 40372, fol. 154-155.) cited in James A. Reynolds, *The Catholic emancipation crisis in Ireland 1823-1829* (New Haven, 1954), p. 45.

The rent signalled a break with the politics of power based on privilege of the *ancien regime*, and heralded an era where the up-and-coming middle class would use democracy to gain an increasing grip on power. In Ireland, class divisions were overlaid with religion, and as the Catholic rent had delivered the first victory, it was going to be Catholic resources that would continue to fund and drive a nationalism that had clearly defined itself as Catholic. However, if the rent contributed to creating a Catholic nation, as opposed to an Irish nation, it would be unfair to lay the blame for the confessionalisation of Irish politics entirely at the feet of the Catholic Association. As a body it represented that element of Catholic Ireland most eager to share the benefits of the British constitution, and ironically, the creation of the Catholic nation was a by-product of their strategy to gain full membership of the British nation.

One should always be wary of historians who speak in terms of events or phenomena that herald a new era or that represent a watershed in history, yet it is tempting to consider the Catholic rent in such exalted terms. The years from 1824 to 1829 did not see a clean break from the power of privilege to democracy, but what did happen was revolutionary, not because Catholics won emancipation, for emancipation was merely a chimera, it meant little to most Catholics and was just a step on the road to middle class hegemony. Nor was it the binding of Catholics in one movement across the class divide, for that too was less than it seemed. It was an exploitative, rather than symbiotic relationship, which inevitably broke down when the booster rocket had launched the command module into orbit. But the Catholic rent was exceptional, it powered a new and innovative form of political lobbying that stretched the democratic potential of the British constitution. It was not new in itself, but as part of O'Connell's plan, it combined to create something

where the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. O'Connell had inadvertently introduced the spark that was money to the tinder that was popular democracy. When middle class liberals such as Thomas Wyse then applied money to their assault on power via parliamentary politics, the results were staggering. Money paid for propaganda, and propaganda generated more money, and propaganda and money combined to deliver votes. It was a winning formula that still works today, but in 1829 it was ahead of its time and when the formula delivered its immediate objective, emancipation, its creators dismantled the apparatus, believing, perhaps rightly, that the financial cost of electoral victory over the landlord class was still too high in 1829. It would require other alchemists in the art of politics to recreate the formula when they managed to assemble the ingredients again.

Chapter II: Testimonial, tribute and ‘Justice for Ireland’, 1830-41

In 1829 Daniel O’Connell and the Catholic nationalist movement he had created stood at a crossroads. It was a movement that had been created out of the necessity to overcome an obstacle to the advance of the liberal middle class in Ireland. The bar to Catholics sitting in parliament had meant that the gradual process of democratisation that was developing in Britain could not run smoothly in Ireland. Exclusion meant that the Catholic middle class who might otherwise have been accommodated comfortably in the Whig liberal fold were obliged to create an alternative approach to political advancement. O’Connell’s mass mobilisation of public opinion in the 1820s, driven by propaganda and fuelled by voluntary subscription, was unprecedented in the manner in which it succeeded in effecting peaceful constitutional change from outside parliament. Having now overcome the obstacle that had been its *raison d’être* the question was whether O’Connell’s movement would meld back into Whig liberalism. And there were signs that it might, for as late as February 1829, O’Connell had told the Knight of Kerry that ‘if I get in I will be a Whig but certainly one of the *des plus pronounces* because my opinions upon reform are of the most strong description.’¹

¹ Daniel O’Connell to Knight of Kerry, 6 Feb. 1829 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1513a).

emancipation had been achieved, The Catholic Association had been dissolved, agitation suspended, the Catholic rent no longer being collected and perhaps most importantly, the forty shilling freeholders had been disenfranchised. But if the organisation, the funding and much of the electorate had gone, the central element that defined the movement, O'Connell himself, stood at the peak of his popularity. Hailed as 'The Liberator' he had become the hero of Catholic Ireland and while O'Connell as a liberal had, and would continue to have, close ties to the Whigs, he had now defined his own constituency. That was Catholic Ireland and the future for O'Connell lay in promoting the interests of that constituency. The manner by which he did so would define the nature of Irish politics over the subsequent two decades and beyond.

O'Connell's political credo centred upon his belief in the power of public opinion, 'There is' he said, 'a moral electricity in the continuous expression of public opinion concentrated on a single point, perfectly irresistible in its efficacy'.² That single point had been emancipation. It had served as a rallying cry, a focal point upon which to focus agitation. O'Connell seemed to believe that agitation was the means to achieve political ends. The formula involved identifying a specific, if ill-defined, focus for agitation, forming an association to work for its achievement and using the funds generated from the membership of the association to fund the operation. The purpose was to generate propaganda that would whip up public indignation, the nature and extent of which would put pressure on the government to concede the point at issue. This had worked for emancipation but it was only after the machine designed for agitation had been applied to the task of winning elections that the British government were forced to conciliate. In the

² W. E. H. Lecky, *Leaders of public opinion in Ireland* (2 vols, London, 1903), ii, 242.

process, O'Connell the agitator had become O'Connell the parliamentarian and even if he had wanted to take his seat as a Whig liberal, the manner of his arrival in parliament, his election having been paid for by popular subscription, placed him in a unique position. He was answerable to those who placed him there in a manner unlike his fellow members and he was now becoming part of a system that would find it difficult to absorb him.

It was a system based on patronage, where allegiance to the party was not fixed or to be taken for granted and the concept of the party whip did not exist. Apart from O'Connell, elected members generally owed their seats to private wealth or economic influence. In borough constituencies the electorate was usually small enough to be controlled by a rich individual with sufficient influence or cash to sway the voters. Hence the term 'pocket borough'. He could be elected himself or alternatively sponsor a candidate who would do his bidding in London. That a borough seat in parliament was regarded very much as a commodity is clearly illustrated by this advertisement which appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* in 1841. It informs the readers of an auction to be held in the Gresham Hotel and it describes one of the lots as follows:

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY PUBLIC-HOUSES, DWELLING HOUSES
AND COTTAGES all within the BOROUGH TOWN OF MALLOW.
The influence is too manifest to require a commentary. The purchaser need not be
under the slightest apprehension as to
THE SEAT IN PARLIAMENT.³

A further example of the proprietary nature of borough constituency representation is that of the borough of Enniskillen, which was subject to an official inquiry into its affairs in 1836. The electorate consisted of the fifteen members of the corporation, all

³ *F.J.*, 7 June 1841.

of whom were appointed by the earl of Enniskillen. The fifteen included himself, his son, his brother, a nephew, his land agent and his doctor along with various other friends and connections.⁴

County constituencies, with a larger electorate, were in the main beyond simple bribery. The pattern there was for a group of influential landowners to combine to support a candidate, pledging the votes of their tenants as if they were their own. The aristocracy's hold on power had long been based on economic dominance and they used political funds that often did not even involve the exchange of money. The relationship between landlord and tenant was a case in point. The exercise of political power on the part of a landlord involved his economic hold over his tenants. It was in the tenant's interest to vote according to the landlord's wishes to ensure the landlord's continued benevolence towards them. The value of this economic hold was to be seen in the manner in which the landlord was able to use it to negotiate political favours and its cash value was quantified in the Waterford election in 1826 and Clare in 1828, in terms of the amount of money it took to counter it. The more enfranchised tenants a landlord had at his disposal, the greater his bargaining power at election time and such was the confidence that tenants would vote as instructed, that landlords were tempted to create more forty shilling freehold tenancies on their estates. This practice was acknowledged as a factor contributing to the excessive sub-division of properties, which in turn contributed to the decline in living standards among the rural population. Giving evidence in 1825 to the Committee appointed to inquire into the disturbances in Ireland, Major Francis Blackburne stated 'that in the subdivided state of the property in Limerick, it appears to

⁴ *Municipal corporations, (Ireland.) Appendix to the first report of the commissioners. Part III.-- Conclusion of the north-western circuit, 1085, [26] [29], H.C. 1836, xxiv, 297.*

me, that the rents are a great deal too high, and such as the vast population upon it cannot afford to pay, and subsist themselves in decency and comfort.' When asked about the causes of the subdivision Major Blackburne replied: 'I am sure electioneering purposes have contributed to subdivisions.'⁵

In his article on the electoral power of landlords in nineteenth century Ireland, J. H. Whyte suggests that for the most part, it was out of deference to their landlord that tenants followed his advice at election time and that there were very few examples of a tenant being punished for voting against his landlord's will.⁶ There is, however, evidence that would seem to suggest that, when the 'natural' allegiance of the tenant to the landlord was challenged, the response from the landlords was not one of acquiescence. They were quick to point out to their tenants where their economic interests lay and to warn of dire consequences if a tenant was to defy them.

In the run up to the 1835 general election, the following advertisement appeared in the Conservative *Carlow Sentinel*: 'Electors of Carlow, will you run the risk of being turned out of your comfortable firesides as paupers on the world? ... Calculate on the number of

⁵ Evidence of Major Francis Blackburne, *State of Ireland. Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the disturbances in Ireland, in the last session of Parliament; 13th May--18th June, 1824*, 13, [20], H.C., 1825, vii.

⁶J. H. Whyte, 'Landlord influence at elections in Ireland, 1760-1885' in *English Historical Review*, lxxx (1965), p 749.

unfortunate people who will be left without a house to shelter them if they oppose their landlords.’⁷

The result of the Carlow County election was overturned on petition and when the election was re-run in June the warning was repeated:

It is quite true that we warned the electors of the inevitable consequences that would ensue if they again oppose their landlords; and we repeat that warning. Let them recollect, that on the principle of self-preservation the landlords **MUST AND WILL** encourage those only whose fidelity and character they can place reliance on when the hour of the contest arrives. No man is bound under the social system to confer favours on **HIS ENEMY**, . . . landlords are justified in securing their own rights by **EJECTING THEIR REFRACTORY TENANTRY**. We are therefore, the real friends of the farmers, when we advise them, **BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE**, to look to their own interests, by voting in strict accordance with the **WISHES OF THEIR LANDLORDS**.⁸

The son of one Carlow landlord, John Alexander junior, warned tenants, who might dare to vote contrary to his father’s wishes, ‘That so help me God, I will extirpate themselves and their families, and if it were in twenty years to come, I will have revenge on them.’⁹

Nor does it appear that these were idle threats on the part of the landlords. The aforementioned John Alexander Jr. admitted to having ‘served a latitat’ on every person who voted against his father’s wishes¹⁰ and in January 1836, in a petition to parliament, Nicholas Alexander Vigors detailed 338 cases of eviction or notice to quit in the county in the previous few years. Of the 1,886 individuals involved, it was claimed that 1,874 were Catholics and that ‘of the lands of which they were dispossessed, every acre, with

⁷ *Carlow Sentinel*, 10 Jan. 1835.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 June 1835.

⁹ *Committee on bribery at elections*, p. 563, [547], H.C., 1835, viii.

¹⁰ *A statement on Tory persecutions in the county of Carlow, A petition of N.A. Vigors esq. Presented to the House of Commons 15/2/1836* (London, 1836), p. 38.

one or two exceptions, was transferred to a Protestant'. Ninety three of the cases, or 503 individuals, were on the estate of the Conservative candidate Colonel Henry Bruen, and the petition attested to the fact that 'in a great proportion of the cited cases the parties were ejected evidently and avowedly for their vote, or that of their friends or connexions.'¹¹ Further evidence of how Colonel Bruen reacted to tenants who failed to support him at the polls came after his success in a by-election in 1840. He drew up a list of his tenants who had voted against him, together with the amount of arrears each owed and on a separate list he noted the legal proceeding taken against each of these tenants.¹²

Such was the manner in which the landed aristocracy controlled parliamentary representation. Consequently, parliament was filled, in the main, by wealthy people who could afford a borough seat, or those who, by virtue of their membership of the landed aristocracy, held a county seat. While the reformers tended to focus on the area of representation and suffrage, it was in many respects the economic impediments that impeded democratic advances in the nineteenth century. The cost of fighting elections, defending petitions in the case of contested elections, the fact that M.P.s were unpaid and the property qualifications requiring that candidates have an income from property of £600 per annum in county constituencies and £300 in boroughs, ensured that long after parliament had nominally been opened up to the middle classes, representatives continued to be drawn, in the main, from the ranks of the landed gentry.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp 58-9.

¹² List of tenants who voted against Bruen (N.L.I., Bruen Papers, MS 29778 (6)).

¹³ *Bill to amend laws relating to qualification of M.P.s: (as amended on third re-commitment)* [553], H.C., 1837-38, iii, 587.

The system worked, in as much as it confined parliamentary power, and the benefits of same, to a wealthy elite. Personal wealth was used to secure a seat and, in return, members expected to, and did, benefit from the outlay. In the absence of a developed party system, the government of the day could not count on members' allegiance. Support for the administration and the measures it wished to promote had to be secured by dealing with each member for that support. The tool used to win members over was patronage, which involved the sharing out of 'the spoils' of government. Official positions in the gift of the administration were allocated to members in return for their support. The member in question was then in a position to share out these posts among their family, friends and supporters in the constituency, thereby cementing their local power-base. An analysis of government patronage, albeit for a later period, found that '532 aristocratic families, found 13,888 patronage jobs for 7,991 relatives from 1850 to 1883 worth £108 million.'¹⁴

If landlord influence over their tenants at election time was a form of electoral capital whose monetary value was revealed when the Catholic Association was forced to expend over £10,000 to counter it in 1826 and 1828, then government patronage was also a form of economic power that must also be regarded as political funding. Having countered the economic power of the landlords to win his seat, O'Connell would now, as an M.P., be exposed the other indirect form of political capital, that of government patronage.

O'Connell, therefore, found himself at a financial as well as a political crossroads; the association and the rent that had funded him thus far was gone, and despite a handsome

¹⁴ William B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the cost of politics in Britain, 1832-1959* (London, 1962), p. 220.

income from his practice at the bar, he had lived beyond his means and accumulated huge debts. An inheritance of £15,000 on the death of his uncle in 1825 had greatly improved his circumstances but failed to fully clear his debts.¹⁵ Now in 1829, taking his seat in parliament would involve him in a great deal of expense as he would have to move to London for part of the year and would, as a result, miss out on a good deal of legal work at home. In such straitened circumstances, he would find it difficult sustain a political career, the expense of which, in the early nineteenth century, was calculated to maintain its exclusivity and without further support he would be susceptible to offers of patronage, the acceptance of which would neutralise him as an independent political voice.

Early in 1829 a scheme was devised to provide financial assistance to O'Connell. On 10 February Cornelius McLoughlin wrote to advise O'Connell of the plan. 'Let me know how things go on, as in the event of your taking up your seat, I have a proposition to make that will tend to your future ease and comfort and enable you to devote your entire time to your country'¹⁶ This was to take the form of a National Testimonial and on 25 March 1829, a meeting under the chairmanship of Lord Gormanston resolved that:

The distinguished and valuable services rendered by Daniel O'Connell, Esq., to the cause of civil and religious freedom, have imposed on every Roman Catholic in particular, and on every friend of civil and religious liberty in general, a deep debt of obligation and gratitude which is incumbent on them to discharge.

A committee of 270 named individuals was proposed to make arrangements for the collection,¹⁷ seven individuals 'of the very first mercantile rank' were elected treasurers, Edward Groves and Nicholas P. O'Gorman were made joint secretaries and Edward

¹⁵ Maurice R. O'Connell, 'Daniel O'Connell: income, expenditure and despair', in *I.H.S.*, xvii, no. 66 (1970), p. 214.

¹⁶ Cornelius McLoughlin to O'Connell, 10 Feb. 1829 (*O'Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1518).

¹⁷ *D.E.P.*, 29 Mar. 1829.

Dwyer assistant secretary of the fund, the collection of which immediately got under way.¹⁸

£300 was quickly contributed from Cork and a committee was set up in Dublin to oversee the collection there, but on 21 April 1829 an editorial appeared in the *Dublin Evening Post* expressing disappointment ‘at not seeing in the Connaught journals, the necessary requisitions, &c., to set the subscriptions for the National Tribute on foot, in that province.’ It went on to urge the cities and towns in the other provinces, ‘that have not yet made their arrangements,’ to be ‘prompt and active’.¹⁹ The pressure to subscribe was relentless. Editorials and notices testifying to the debt of gratitude owed to the ‘Great Chieftain’ appeared in the *Dublin Evening Post*, and the promoters were not above moral blackmail when they wrote:

It only requires that the provinces shall embody the spirit that universally pervades them, to produce a sum of at least ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS. Protestant Englishmen, eminent for station and worth, are giving a noble example, which will be extensively followed by the Liberals of every denomination, throughout the Empire. It is unnecessary to say, that Ireland should not permit herself to be exceeded in this rivalry of national gratitude.²⁰

By the beginning of May, their efforts seemed to be paying dividends and the collection began to gain momentum, with large sums acknowledged from Tralee, Clonmel, and £711 from Waterford.²¹ Reporting the progress of the collection to O’Connell, Edward Dwyer informed him that all the editorials, heaping praise on O’Connell and exhorting

¹⁸ Ibid., 9 April 1829.

¹⁹ Ibid., 21 April 1829.

²⁰ Ibid., 25 April 1829.

²¹ Ibid., 7 May 1829.

contributions to the tribute, had been ‘concocted and published by Pat Fitzpatrick’.²²

O’Connell was clearly impressed, for Patrick Vincent Fitzpatrick, a barrister who had been prominent in the Catholic Association, was soon to become an invaluable financial manager and close personal confidant of O’Connell.

The money that two months earlier had been flowing into the Catholic Association was now diverted to provide a once-off thank you to the ‘Liberator’ and to compensate him for loss of income while serving the people. O’Connell’s need appears to have been great, and as early as 25 April 1829 he was writing desperately to his agent in Kerry asking that, ‘whatever money is collected in Kerry should be sent up and lodged in the Hibernian Bank to my credit as rapidly as possible.’ It is also clear that O’Connell was not planning to employ the money on political projects, as he added hopefully, ‘I think it is likely that the subscription will be sufficient to get me quite out of debt and to pay my daughters’ fortunes’.²³

The initial wave of contributions subsided however, and from May 1829 there seems to have been little activity, with only occasional notices appearing in the press, urging committees to forward money collected to Edward Dwyer. In November the collection was recommenced in Cork, which suggests an effort to revitalise it. The amount received for week ended 19 November 1829 was £333 but by April 1830, more than a year into the testimonial, the weekly take was down to £155 and O’Connell was still desperate for

²² Edward Dwyer to O’Connell, 16 May 1829 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1567).

²³ O’Connell to John Primrose Junior, 25 April 1829 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1557).

funds.²⁴ In May 1830 he wrote to Patrick Vincent Fitzpatrick begging him to ‘send a particular note to each of my own connections who have not subscribed, stating that the subscriptions of others is delayed in consequence of the non receipt of theirs’.²⁵

O’Connell’s anxiety in relation to the progress of the collection suggests that what had already been collected may have been dissipated. No final account for the testimonial was published but according to W. J. Fitzpatrick, who published two volumes of O’Connell’s correspondence in 1888, he had it on the authority of William Murphy, one of the trustees of the fund, that between 1829 and 1834 the total amount collected was £91,800.²⁶ If the amounts O’Connell is known to have received in 1831, 1832 and 1833 are deducted, along with £12,000 as an approximation for 1834, we are left with a balance of £27,585 as an estimate of the amount raised by the 1829 testimonial. O’Connell’s personal finances would continue to be a concern throughout his life and the diversion of something in the order of £27,500 from public subscription to O’Connell’s personal account did not augur well for a renewed campaign of political agitation.

The testimonial served only as a means to keep O’Connell solvent and to allow him take his seat in parliament. In the longer term he would need an ongoing source of funding to fill the gap left by the Catholic rent. The importance to O’Connell of a body such as the Catholic Association was emphatically stated in a letter to Michael Staunton, editor of the *Register*:

²⁴ *D.E.P.*, 21 Nov. 1829, 7 Apr. 1830.

²⁵ O’Connell to P.V.Fitzpatrick, 10 May 1830 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1674).

²⁶ W. J. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Correspondence of Daniel O’Connell* (2 vols, London, 1888), i, 212.

A permanent society is absolutely necessary in order to collect funds in *primo loco*, to collect funds in *secundo loco*, and to collect funds, thirdly and lastly, because we have both mind and body within us and all we want is the means of keeping the machine in regular and supple motion. Corruption was said by Burke to be the oil that makes the wheels of government go. Money is as necessary to keep in due operation the springs of popular excitement.²⁷

He also wrote to Thomas Attwood of the Birmingham Reform Union, advising him that ‘the two principal means of attaining our constitutional objects’ were to ‘avoid anything like physical force or violence’ and

the other is to obtain funds, by the extension of a plan of collection which shall accept from no man no more than he can, with the utmost facility, spare, even in these times of universal distress. The multiplication of small sums, of very small sums, should be the proper, as it would be the efficacious popular treasury.²⁸

On 1 January 1830, he seemed to identify repeal of the Act of Union as the issue upon which he would focus a renewed political campaign. In a letter addressed to the Protestants of Ireland he argued that ‘a domestic government can alone sufficiently attend to the wants of Ireland.’ and spoke of ‘Ireland a nation, “great, glorious and free.”’²⁹ However, having declared for Repeal, he struggled to establish an organisational body to agitate and fundraise for it. On 3 January 1830 he announced the establishment of a parliamentary agency run by Edward Dwyer ‘in order to facilitate the preparation and forwarding of petitions.’ He advised that a subscription would be required to defray costs and that in order to correspond with Mr. Dwyer, one had to be a subscriber. Subscriptions were one pound per year in Dublin and ten shillings for country subscribers. He goes on to say that, ‘the subscribers will, I trust, soon form themselves into a Parliamentary Society’ and that these subscribers would form the basis of a national society that will

²⁷ O’Connell to Michael Staunton, 11 Oct. 1830 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1716).

²⁸ O’Connell to Thomas Attwood, 16 Feb. 1830 (*O’Connell corres.*, Fitzpatrick, i, 199).

²⁹ *D.E.P.*, 5 Jan. 1830.

render 'Repeal of the Union peaceable and tranquil'. He says that he would instantly commence the formation of that society were it not for the existence of the 'doubly algerine act'; a reference to the 1829 'Act for the suppression of dangerous associations or assemblies in Ireland.'³⁰

On 6 April 1830 he took a step further, and set up The Society of the Friends of Ireland of all Religious Persuasions. At its launch, O'Connell listed twenty five reforms that were to be the objects of the society. Significantly, repeal only featured at number eighteen.

Despite its innocuous title and its less than radical agenda, the association was proclaimed within three weeks. Citing the act referred to by O'Connell as the 'doubly algerine act,' the lord lieutenant declared the society to be 'dangerous to the public peace' on 24 April 1830.³¹ Without an organisation O'Connell would not be able to focus public opinion on repeal, or indeed any issue, as the central object of a renewed agitation, nor would be in a position to raise the money 'necessary to keep in due operation the springs of popular excitement'.

Lack of a fundraising organisation was to become more pressing as the king's health declined and the prospect of a general election loomed. The king died in June and the election was held in July, with O'Connell being elected for County Waterford. However, his eldest son Maurice, who stood for Drogheda Borough, was defeated by the Tory candidate, John Henry North, who, according to O'Connell's son-in-law, Christopher Fitzsimon, had 'raked together freemen from all quarters of the United Kingdom at great

³⁰ *D.E.P.*, 7 Jan. 1830; Dangerous Assemblies (Ireland) Act, 1829 (10 Geo. IV, c. 1).

³¹ *F.J.*, 27 Apr. 1830.

expense.’ Fitzsimon maintained that ‘it cost him near £10,000.’³² By the time of the election, Fitzpatrick had come up with a strategy to address O’Connell’s funding problem. His plan was to turn the tribute into an annual event. He proposed that a ‘Collection Sunday’ would be identified and that the tribute would be taken up throughout the country on that day.

O’Connell expressed approval of the plan but suggested that it not be implemented until later in the year. ‘Your plan of a “Collection Sunday,” he wrote to Fitzpatrick, ‘I highly approve of, but it cannot be realised in the present state of starvation. We must prepare our grounds in August for an arrangement in September- rather late in that month too, it should be. I will communicate with you again upon this invaluable suggestion.’³³ As soon as the election was over, he and Fitzpatrick conspired to set in motion and to maximise the effectiveness of the plan. On 31 August 1830 O’Connell wrote to Fitzpatrick, ‘The elections are over - I say triumphantly over. The harvest is getting in. The periodical distress is for the present over. This is the time to do something for the Fund’. He stressed that Fitzpatrick keep the contents of the letter secret, saying that, ‘This, of course, is confidential; that is, it must not be known to come from me.’ He then goes on to outline strategy:

There should be a communication with each bishop, and first with the most friendly. I think in Waterford it should, if possible, commence. You should therefore feel your way there. Let us commence in action at all events. Cork diocese is favourable. The Bishop would give his aid, and has indeed already recommended it to his friends. I think it would be well to put forward the idea that one shilling each from one seventh of the Irish Catholics would be one million of shillings or £50,000; more, in fact , than could be necessary.³⁴

³² Christopher Fitzsimon to O’Connell, 13 Aug. 1830 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1702).

³³ O’Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 24 June 1830 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1682).

³⁴ O’Connell to P.V.Fitzpatrick, 31 Aug. 1830, *Ibid.*, no. 1707.

Fitzpatrick's letter in reply to O'Connell showed him to be a shrewd and cynical operator. He agreed with O'Connell that Waterford is 'the most eligible point from whence to originate our movements.' He went on to explain that, 'My project is to induce, if possible, the bishop of Waterford to sanction the plan for a Sunday collection,' then get the 'most respectable members of the committee in Dublin to resolve that they highly approve of the Waterford proposal as a means of completing the Tribute.' Then he planned to get a select deputation to solicit the cooperation of Dr. Murray, 'which, if obtained, will almost beyond doubt secure the rest of the bishops.' Fitzpatrick also suggested to O'Connell that letters to the papers on 'attractive topics' or declarations of intent for the next parliament are 'useful stimulants' and he advises that: 'It may be well timed to pay a compliment in some of your earliest papers to the bishops and clergy. There will be little difficulty in doing this from the general admission that no praise can in their regard savour of flattery.'³⁵

Over the years that followed Fitzpatrick devoted himself to managing 'The Fund', of which he retained a percentage,³⁶ and tending to O'Connell's private financial affairs, so much so, that he came to describe himself as 'your Chancellor of the Exchequer' and referred to his office as 'The Treasury'.³⁷ The 'Tribute' like the 'Testimonial' before it, was hugely successful and Fitzpatrick was clearly delighted with himself when he wrote to O'Connell 'Indeed I cannot refrain from felicitating myself on having devised and so

³⁵ P.V.Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 3 Sept. 1830 (*O'Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1708).

³⁶ Angus Macintyre, *The Liberator: Daniel O'Connell and the Irish party 1830-1847* (London, 1965), p.78.

³⁷ P.V.Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 21 Feb. 1831 (*O'Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1770).

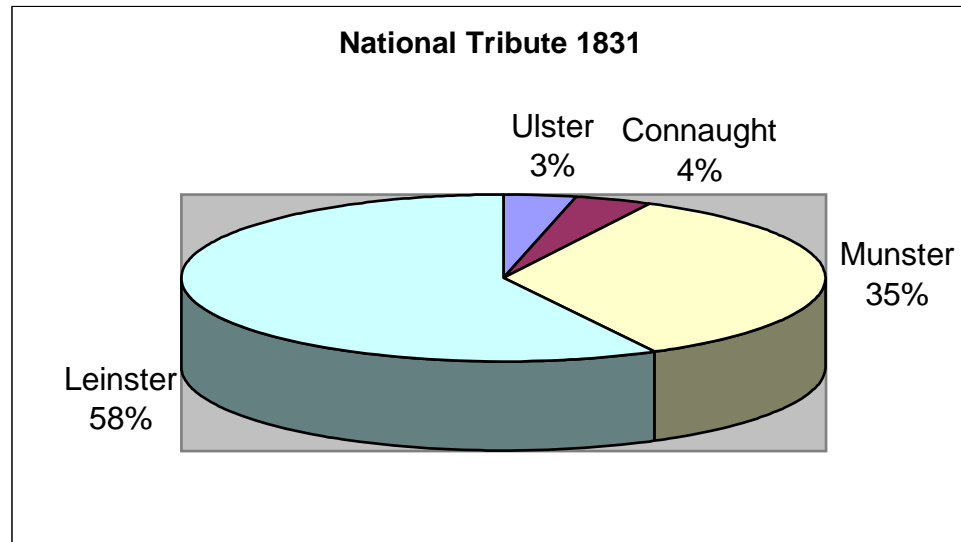
successfully accomplished the splendid coup that has been made.’³⁸ When all the receipts were tallied in February 1831, P.V. Fitzpatrick published a report listing all the payments which came to a grand total of £24,524 16s. 9d.³⁹

Analysing a sample of these payments confirms that the geographical spread of support for O’Connell had not altered greatly from the pattern established by the Catholic Rent, with Leinster and Munster dominating. (Figure 2.1)

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *F.J.*, 14 Apr. 1831.

Figure 2.1



Source: *Freeman's Journal*, 14 April 1831.

The amount of money donated is testament to O'Connell's continuing popularity, the continued strength of his organisational network and it suggests that the clergy, who had been advised by their bishops to disengage from political activity, were, at least in matters related to fundraising, still prepared to get involved.⁴⁰

While Fitzpatrick struggled to assemble the means to keep O'Connell in funds, the man himself struggled against a government determined to thwart any attempt by him to re-launch his novel model of political organisation. In October 1830, buoyed up by the popular revolutions in France and Belgium, O'Connell, once again, attempted to launch a new society. On 2 October 1830 the *D.E.P.* published a letter from O'Connell to Edward Dwyer calling on him to assist in the formation of the 'Irish Society for Legal and Legislative Relief', but it too was short-lived. The society was proclaimed on 18

⁴⁰ J.H. Whyte, 'The influence of the Catholic clergy on elections in nineteenth century Ireland', in *English Historical Review*, lxxv, 1960, pp 241-2.

October.⁴¹ Having replaced the Peel government in November 1830, the Whigs too sought to deprive him of an organisation and funding. Melbourne, the home secretary wrote to Anglesey, the lord lieutenant in Ireland, saying that ‘if they should form committees and in any manner raise money... I then equally see no course ...but that of exercising the power vested in you by law, of prohibiting by proclamation any such assembly.’⁴²

In such circumstances O’Connell would not be able to repeat the great campaign associated with emancipation under the banner of repeal. But O’Connell’s true commitment to serious repeal agitation at this time comes into question. His pragmatic approach to the issue is revealed in his comments to Bishop McHale in December 1830.

‘The Repeal of The Union’ he wrote,

is good for everything. It is good as the means of terrifying the enemies of the people into every concession practicable under the present system. If there were no agitation on that measure, then the men in possession of power would enjoy their state in repose and adjourn to the Greek Calends all practical improvement.⁴³

O’Connell realised that the prospects of achieving repeal were not great, but that it could prove useful as a tool. Rather than agitate for repeal, his new approach saw agitation replaced with the threat of agitation and seeking concession of reforms on that basis. He spoke of ‘Justice for Ireland’ which effectively meant the extension of the principles of emancipation into every aspect of Irish society, leading to the ultimate dismantling of

⁴¹ *D.E.P.*, 2, 19, Oct, 1830.

⁴² Macintyre, *The Liberator*, p.22.

⁴³ O’Connell to Bishop McHale, 3 Dec. 1830 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1738).

Protestant ascendancy.⁴⁴ Ever the pragmatist he now resolved to use Repeal as a lever to achieve what he could in the circumstances.

The lack of a fundraising organisation was mitigated by the success of the tribute. The Catholic rent had paid for the seat and now the tribute covered the cost of taking it, but it was also critical in one other important area. Both the Tories and the Whigs had determinedly, and successfully, denied O'Connell the opportunity to recreate his model of popularly funded, propaganda-based agitation, but the Whigs went further, using both carrot and stick as part of their strategy to neutralise the political threat posed by O'Connell. On one hand, they suppressed any organisation that might have provided him with a source of political income, while on the other, they offered him an attractive source of private income. In December 1830 O'Connell was offered a judgeship, a position that would have secured his financial future but would have ended his political career. O'Connell turned down the offer, forcing Anglesey to write: 'he is not to be had. He is flying at higher game than a judgeship and he is secure of a better income from the deluded people than any government can venture to give any person whatever.'⁴⁵

O'Connell leaked details of the offer and his rejection of it, making political capital from his great sacrifice in the interests of Ireland. The timing perfectly suited the launch of 'The Fund', which was to be taken up in on 16 January 1831, and no doubt added to its success. The incident reveals the critical role played by patronage in the working of government and how it represented a further, hidden, financial impediment to the rise of

⁴⁴ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland; 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999), p.40.

⁴⁵ Lord Anglesey to Lord Melbourne, 21 Dec. 1830, Marquess of Anglesey, *One leg, The life and letters of William Henry Paget, 1768-1854* (London, 1996), p. 378.

popular democracy. Had the Testimonial not attended to O'Connell's debts and the Tribute been instituted to provide him with an ongoing income, he would most likely have succumbed to the Whig's tempting offer.

Whether deluded or not, O'Connell's supporters had created another milestone in political funding. The Catholic rent had been a subscription to an extra-parliamentary organisation, but the tribute was a payment to sustain their political representative in parliament. It was, in effect, an annual church gate, national collection on behalf of their political party in the shape of O'Connell, who had now become a paid, professional politician. The resources that heretofore had been directed towards a specific cause were now being funnelled into O'Connell's own account. It indicated a major shift in O'Connell's political approach but it did not mean that this money ceased to be classified as political funding. Rather, it brings into sharp focus the complex and ill-defined nature of political funding in the 1830s and it has to be acknowledged that politics was often funded in ways not always immediately obvious to the casual observer.

O'Connell had not fought the 1830 and 1831 general elections on a repeal platform but rather on an anti-Tory platform, going as far as to say that he had, 'turned the attention of the rest of the country from the overpowering question of Repeal to the suitable one of Reform.'⁴⁶ For as long as there was a Whig government in place, O'Connell seems to have felt that reforms, beneficial to Ireland, could be anticipated and for most of the decade he suspended agitation in favour of parliamentary politics, to some extent failing to maximise the political potential of

⁴⁶ O'Connell to Lord Duncannon, 4 Dec. 1831 (*O'Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1853).

the formula he had developed and which so concerned the government. In general he did not apply the formula to election politics, maintaining the distinction between political campaigns, such as emancipation or repeal, and election campaigns.

For the former an association was formed to raise money for the cause but for the latter, he seems to have accepted that candidates needed to be of independent means and that they would fund their own elections. O'Connell's failure to build on the spirit of electoral revolt, begun in 1826 and triumphant in 1828, lay in the fact, that on a purely practical level, he lacked the resources to do so. The abolition of the forty-shilling freehold franchise had disenfranchised a huge swathe of his supporters. It could, however, be argued that the reduced electorate was just as capable of returning O'Connellite candidates and, given their reduced numbers and nominally higher economic status, such elections should prove less expensive. However, with or without the forty shilling freeholders, the reality was that Waterford and Clare, while signalling a breakthrough for popular politics, had just as clearly signalled the enormous cost of such victories.

O'Connell knew that in a system of closed boroughs and county constituencies, controlled by wealthy landlords, he would need a hefty war chest to win even a single seat. The Catholic Association had provided him with a powerful national organisation and the Catholic rent had provided a political war chest, but even that was limited in terms of meeting electoral costs. He had failed to replace the

organisation, but the tribute, at least, had supplied an adequate replacement for the rent. As generous as this financial support was, no more than the rent before it, it would not have provided O'Connell with the funds to extend his model of popularly funded political representation beyond the narrow confines of his own immediate family. Yet, this in itself was a significant development, for while he had not set out to build a political party grouping around Repeal, he was the acknowledged leader of a loose grouping of liberal M.P.s who came to be referred to derisively as his 'tail', and O'Connell and his 'tail' of Repealers were the first traces of an Independent Irish Party in Westminster.⁴⁷ If public subscription had paid to elect and maintain even one of these members of parliament in 1830 it was one more than 1829 and while decades would pass before the aristocratic dominance of parliament would be seriously challenged, O'Connell in 1830 had certainly created a precedent.

It was therefore, not altogether surprising that, when O'Connell cast around looking for potential candidates at election time, he tended to be as concerned that they had means as he was that they might be good Repealers. His letter to William Scott in October 1832 provides a good example of how money matters dominated the business of candidate selection. He tells Scott that he will support his candidacy 'and I will aid a subscription for the expenses of the contest, putting down in the first instance £50 for Ruthven and £50 for your return. I will besides, get you some, probably several volunteer agents. The election, even if contested, cannot last more than two days. We shall bribe none, and therefore I do reckon with confidence that less than £500 will cover all you can

⁴⁷ J.H. Whyte, 'Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Party' in *I.H.S.*, xi (1959), p. 297.

personally have to pay.’ It is clear that O’Connell is endeavouring to play down the potential expense to encourage Scott. Yet, it suggests that with the aid of a subscription, volunteer agents and spending no money on bribes, a candidate would require a minimum of £500 to stand. In fact, evidence suggests that it cost a lot more and expenses of £2,000 might be closer to the minimum expense incurred by candidates per election.⁴⁸ Perhaps Scott realised this, for O’Connell failed to persuade him to stand.

Certainly, borough elections were more expensive. Referring to the period 1832 to 1853, Serjeant Cox, the author of one of the best-selling election manuals of the day, declared that ‘the cost of every borough is known’ and estimated that a metropolitan borough ‘involves the expenditure of £5000 at the least’ and we know that Maurice O’Connell’s opponent in the 1830 Drogheda election was reputed to have spent double that.⁴⁹ When O’Connell’s advisor and regular correspondent from Waterford, Rev. John Sheehan, wrote in December 1834 recommending Nicholas Power as a candidate, he stressed the fact that, ‘he will support himself and Captain Stuart’.⁵⁰

O’Connell himself got embroiled in quite a controversy in 1835, when he sought a wealthy candidate to stand in Carlow county and was accused of trying to sell the seat for £2,000. The London sheriff, Alexander Raphael had agreed to pay £1,000 on being nominated and promised to pay a further £1,000 on being returned, in what O’Connell

⁴⁸ K. T. Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society in Ireland 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984), p. 84.

⁴⁹ Charles R. Dod, *Electoral facts impartially stated, 1832-53*, Introduction by J. H. Hanham (Brighton, 1972) xlviii; Christopher Fitzsimon to O’Connell, 13 Aug. 1830 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1702).

⁵⁰ Rev. John Sheehan to O’Connell, 8 Dec. 1834 (*O’Connell corres.*, No. 2156). (Captain William Villiers Stuart was not a candidate in Jan. 1835 but he did take the seat in Waterford in September 1835, on the death of Power.)

had described to him as ‘a safe speculation’.⁵¹ When the election of Raphael and Nicholas Alyward Vigors was challenged on petition, a dispute arose over the payment of the second £1,000 and O’Connell suggested to Raphael that ‘you shrink from performing your engagement with me’.⁵² The money was eventually paid over, but a petition challenging the result saw 105 votes for Raphael and Vigors being struck off and the election result was reversed.⁵³ An aggrieved Raphael published his correspondence with O’Connell causing something of a scandal, although a subsequent committee of enquiry found that ‘no charge of a pecuniary character can be attached to Mr. O’Connell’.⁵⁴

When the Irish Reform Act of 1831 only increased the Irish representation from 100 to 105 seats and failed to reinstate the forty shilling freehold franchise, a disappointed O’Connell reactivated the Repeal agitation in advance of the 1832 election. O’Connell had founded a new body, the National Political Union, in November 1831 primarily to lobby for parliamentary reform but this body was now converted to the cause of Repeal agitation and was also to play a central role in the 1832 election.⁵⁵ This was the closest O’Connell came to applying the formula developed for manipulating public opinion to building up a parliamentary party. The National Political Union was simultaneously the focal point for Repeal agitation as well as being an electoral organisation.

⁵¹ O’Connell to Alexander Raphael, 29 May 1841, in Henry Stooks Smith, *The parliaments of England from Ist. George I, to the present time* (3 vols, London, 1850), i, 189.

⁵² O’Connell to Raphael, 27 July 1841, in Smith, *The parliaments of England*, i, 192.

⁵³ Henry Stooks Smith, *The parliaments of England*, i, 189; *The Carlow election. Third edition: Mr. Raphael’s charge, Mr. O’Connell’s reply and Mr. Vigors explanation* (London, 1835).

⁵⁴ *Select committee on Carlow election petitions, report, minutes of evidence*, p. iii, [89], H.C., 1836, xi, 1.

⁵⁵ Macintyre, *The Liberator*, p. 78.

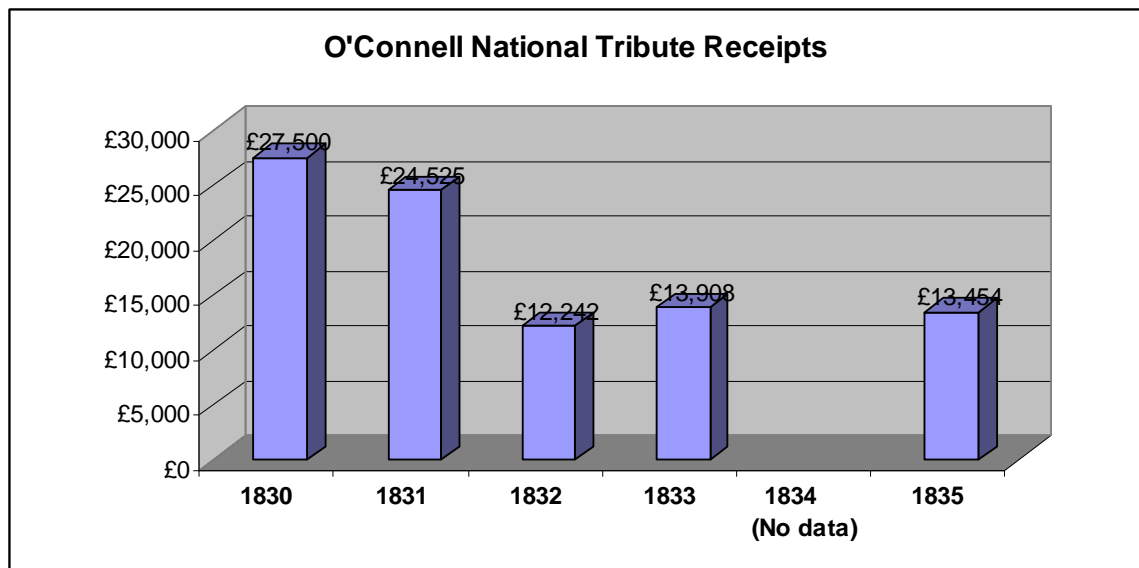
By merging agitation with electioneering a clear political message in the shape of Repeal was presented to the voters. Repeal provided a political identity in much the same manner as the political party does today. Candidates were invited to partake in this political franchise by taking the 'Repeal Pledge', swearing that they would support repeal if they were elected. It was clear that attaching oneself to the Repeal cause would attract votes and the beginning of party politics in Ireland may well be traced to the 1832 election when O'Connell's tail metamorphosed into the Repeal Party.

This return to popular agitation in the context of a general election paid dividends for O'Connell with 39 Repealers being returned. J.H. Whyte has argued that this number could have been greater to the tune of ten or twelve and that the quality of the Repealers returned might have been better were it not for the difficulty in attracting independently wealthy candidates. He makes the point that because a political career was so expensive it was from the wealthier Whigs that candidates would have had to come. He suggests that these wealthy liberals were less supportive of Repeal, believing in many cases that their prosperity was more secure within the union. They were, accordingly, loath to become candidates.⁵⁶ This shows once again the difficulty O'Connell's brand of popular politics faced in the 1830s. He could only guarantee the loyalty and independence of those M.P.s who were directly funded by the repeal movement via the tribute. That being limited, he was forced to seek candidates of independent means who, to some extent, could only be counted as nominal Repealers, for with personal income came personal interest.

⁵⁶ Whyte, 'Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Party' in *I.H.S.*, xi (1959), p. 311.

With regard to his own personal income, it seems that in 1832 O’Connell may have come close to solvency; he writes ‘I have £5,000 lent on a mortgage of stock to keep by me. This I do not touch. . . . Blessed be to the great God I expect soon to be quite independent and not to have my income cut down by auditors.’⁵⁷ That he was still not quite out of the woods financially is another indication of his enormous capacity for spending money, for he had received, between the Testimonial and the National Tribute, more than £50,000 in preceding two years. (Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2: O’Connell National Tribute receipts 1830-5.



Source: 1830, W. J Fitzpatrick, *Correspondence of Daniel O’Connell, The Liberator* (London, 1888), i, 212; 1831, *Freeman’s Journal* 14 April 1831; 1832, *Detailed Report of the contributions (Parochial and Personal) to the O’Connell National Annuity for the year 1832* (Dublin, R. Grace, 1833); 1833, *Detailed Report of the contributions (Parochial and Personal) to the O’Connell National Annuity for the year 1833* (Dublin, R. Grace, 1834); 1835, *Pilot*, 7 September 1835.

The take from the tribute was significantly lower in 1832. Collectors ran into difficulty in Dublin where a number of parishes refused permission for the tribute to be taken up

⁵⁷ O’Connell to John Primrose, 14 Apr. 1832 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1886).

before and after Sunday mass and a deputation to Archbishop Murray failed to reverse the decision.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Fitzpatrick advised in September that ‘I am sanguine at getting up the annuity to the ‘round dozen’ of thousands so as to constitute a national subsidy of £1,000 per month.’⁵⁹ Fitzpatrick was true to his word and the total National Tribute for 1832 came to £12,242, just half of the amount collected in the previous year.⁶⁰ The reduction suggests a decline in support over a period during which O’Connell had supported the Whig Reform Bill and had dropped agitation at home.

There were other factors at play that may have made inroads into the collection and by extension, on O’Connell’s popularity. A tithe war was raging in the country since 1830. It was an issue that O’Connell was slow to adopt and while it became an issue in the election of 1832 it was not before it had seen an upsurge in support for secret societies, who had long been seen as localised defenders of the rural poor. In the northern half of the country Ribbonism, which evolved out of the Defender network after 1815, was well organised and more sectarian in outlook than the local based agrarian secret societies of Munster.⁶¹ It was also strong in Dublin where it operated more like a form of trade union.⁶² In rural areas, land was the focus for Ribbonism, and according to Jennifer Kelly the overall picture was ‘one of lower farming and labouring classes battling each other for better access to land.’⁶³

⁵⁸ *Dublin Times*, 10 Mar. 1832.

⁵⁹ P. V. Fitzpatrick to O’Connell, 4 Sept. 1832 (*O’Connell corres.*, iv, no. 1917).

⁶⁰ *Detailed Report of the contributions (Parochial and Personal) to the O’Connell National Annuity for the year 1832* (Dublin, R. Grace, 1833).

⁶¹ Tom Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics* (Dublin, 2005), p. 42.

⁶² Donal McCartney, *The dawning of democracy: Ireland 1800-1870* (Dublin, 1987), p. 84.

⁶³ Jennifer Kelly, ‘A study of Ribbonism in County Leitrim in 1841’, in, Augusteijn, J, Lyons, Mary Ann and MacMahon Deirdre, eds, *Irish History, a research yearbook*, no. 2, (Dublin, 2003), pp 32-42.

Ribbonism appealed to a constituency that O'Connell had looked to when he extended the scope of the Catholic Association in 1823 and sought to excite popular opinion. This group, the lower middle class and labouring Catholics, were also the people who were most likely to have been disillusioned with their lack of progress following the granting of Catholic emancipation. There was a danger of O'Connell's influence over them being lost to the violent sectarianism of Ribbonism. He genuinely abhorred violence but his opposition to Ribbonism was also founded on political rivalry and the fact that while they might not be competing for votes, they were competing for that which could be converted into votes, namely, money. Ribbon societies had an organised structure of local groups or 'bodies' and each member was required to pay membership of 5d. per quarter.⁶⁴

Passwords were also changed every three months, which provided an incentive for members to keep up to date with their payments. Given that membership ran to many thousands at its height, the sums of money involved would have been considerable and constituted a layer of political activism and funding that lay beneath and to some extent overlapped with O'Connellism.

In terms of competition there was no question of overlap with O'Connell's true political nemesis, the Tory, or as O'Connell himself would have referred to them, the Orange party. In the 1830s, Irish Tories were faced with the twin challenge of Whig liberalism on one hand and Catholic nationalism on the other; the one threatening to bring democratic reforms and the other to demolish Protestant ascendancy. Such was the threat that conservatism in Ireland was forced to change. It had met the challenge of the Catholic Association by forming Brunswick Clubs adopting the tactics of the enemy even to the

⁶⁴ Ibid.

extent of collecting the ‘Protestant Rent’. The challenges were even greater in the 1830s. parliament was dominated by the Whigs and by 1831 the Tories had lost their hold on the majority of the Irish representation. It had been economic might that had sustained their political power and it was now to be a weapon in their struggle to defeat the challenger to that power, O’Connell.

The 1832 Reform Act provided the incentive for a new wave of political organisation in Ireland.⁶⁵ It required that all voters re-apply for the right to vote. O’Connell appreciated the importance of getting his supporters to re-register and in August 1832 he launched the new ‘National Rent’ and called for ‘a parochial committee in each parish and a county Independent Club in each county’ to attend to the registration of voters and to collect the rent, which O’Connell hoped would be ‘amply sufficient, after indemnifying all those who are unjustly prosecuted or persecuted in person or in property [as a result of a refusal to pay tithes], to assist the repeal candidates in the coming elections’⁶⁶

Irish Toryism also came to recognise what Hoppen has referred to as ‘the new politics’ and 1832 would bring quite an advance on the *ad hoc* organisational and funding arrangements that had been in place for previous elections. In 1831 a group of London conservatives came together at a house in Charles Street with the intention of supervising Conservative electoral arrangements. The ‘Charles Street gang’ as they were known, provided financial assistance to individual Conservative candidates, including some in Ireland. During the 1831 election, a member of the group, Charles Arbuthnot,

⁶⁵ Representation of the People (Ireland) Act, 1832 (2 & 3 Will. IV, c. 88).

⁶⁶ *Pilot*, 24 Aug. 1832.

corresponded with the earl of Farnham, one of the leading Conservatives in Ireland. He advised Farnham that ‘zealous friends have put some funds at our disposal; already we have promised what we were told would be sufficient for Drogheda, Wm. North, for Co Louth, Fortescue, and for Westmeath, Colonel Rochford.’ and he went on, ‘We have it in our power to give £5,000 more for the general interests of our cause in Ireland.’

Arbuthnot wrote again two days later to say that he had been asked for assistance by Lord Forbes for Longford and by Lord Beresford on behalf of Percival for Sligo. He maintained that ‘Forbes would be safe with £1000 and that Percival would not require a great deal in Sligo.’ He also promised to add £1000 to the £5000 he offered in his earlier letter.⁶⁷

A year later, with another election in the offing, Irish Conservatives would no longer have to go cap in hand to the Charles Street gang or the Carlton Club as it had become by then. A Conservative Committee was formed on 17 January 1832 in the Mansion House and on 13 March the Irish Protestant Conservative Society was founded with a view ‘to calm the passions of the lower orders, turn the tide of democratical revolution into that of social order and industry, and be the means of frustrating the machinations of our enemies’.⁶⁸ In June 1832 Thomas Lefroy, M.P. for Dublin University, suggested to the earl of Farnham, ‘a plan for raising a fund on very easy terms and organising a system which might be brought to bear on every election where there was the least chance of a Protestant candidate.’⁶⁹ Shortly afterwards the Protestant Conservative Society issued a circular suggesting that an ‘election club’ be formed in each county and to promote this

⁶⁷ Charles Arbuthnot to Earl of Farnham, 4 May 1831 (N.L.I., Farnham papers, MS 18606(1)).

⁶⁸ *Dublin Times*, 19 Jan., 16 Mar. 1832.

⁶⁹ Thomas Lefroy to Earl of Farnham, 4 June 1832 (N.L.I., Farnham papers, MS 18611(3)).

object, that an annual fund be formed and it proposed a contribution of ‘five shillings for every 100 acres’.⁷⁰

The fund came to be referred to as the ‘Protestant Rent’, reflecting the fact that the society modelled itself very much along the lines of the Catholic Association. It put in place plans to appoint a treasurer in every barony in Ireland, who in turn was to procure, in each parish within his barony, one or more persons to act as voluntary collectors for receipt of subscriptions to the Protestant National Fund. It was even agreed that each collector be supplied with a newspaper containing the proceedings of the society.⁷¹ In the run up to the general election of December 1832, the society drew up detailed plans for local clubs, registration drives, sectarian solidarity in employment, and patronage.⁷² The Protestant rent, which was averaging £822 per week as the election approached and which managed to raise £1,926 in one week in October, was used to assist candidates in the general election, such as the successful Tory candidate in Waterford city who benefited from £1,300 sent down from Dublin.⁷³

O’Connell’s organisations were also raising funds but the effectiveness of the National Political Union centrally, and the constituency based Independent or Liberal Clubs, was compromised by the fact that they were raising funds in competition with the collection of the O’Connell National Annuity. The Tribute raised a total of £12,242 in 1832, while

⁷⁰ Circular from Captain E. Cottingham, secretary Protestant Conservative Society, Tim’s, Grafton St., 17 June 1832 (Ibid., MS 18610(7)).

⁷¹ *Dublin Times*, 18 Oct. 1832

⁷² Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, p. 280.

⁷³ Based on weekly figures published in *Pilot, Dublin Times*, Oct.-Nov. 1832; *D.E.P.*, 18 Dec. 1832.

the collection of the national rent by the N.P.U. was averaging a mere £61 per week.⁷⁴ In October 1832, O'Connell addressing the N.P.U. exhorted them to collect the national rent, goading them with the reminder that the Conservatives 'have taken up our old plan of the Catholic Rent' and Edward Dwyer informed the meeting that in the previous week, 'the aristocracy had handed in £1,900 to the Conservative fund.'⁷⁵ In truth, the lines between rent and tribute tended to be blurred as O'Connell controlled the N.P.U. and Fitzpatrick, who masterminded the collection of the tribute, also served as treasurer to the national body. The net effect was that O'Connell maintained an overall control of funding and very little was spent on elections other than his own and those of his immediate family.

O'Connell's propensity for dissipating funds left him vulnerable to attack from an opponent whose chief asset was ample financial backing. So it was in 1835 when the Conservatives made a point of contesting not only O'Connell's own election for Dublin City but also those of his sons; Maurice who stood in Carlow County and Tralee, Morgan in Meath, and John in Youghal as well as his son-in-law Christopher Fitsimon who stood in County Dublin. The expense of the elections and the prospect of defending expensive petitions without much prospect of financial assistance caused O'Connell to despair: 'I see nothing but ruin staring me in the face. . . the Orange party has presented petitions against every one of my sons - all to run me down - after having put me to the expense of five contested elections'⁷⁶ He spoke of:

⁷⁴ Based on weekly figures published in *Pilot*, Oct.-Dec. 1832.

⁷⁵ *Pilot*, 12 Oct. 1832.

⁷⁶ O'Connell to Laurence Finn, 14 Mar. 1835 (*O'Connell corres.*, v, no. 2222a).

desertion of a great contest . . . I shall be put in for £1,000 to £1,500 for the Dublin election petition, from £500 to £1,000 for the Tralee election petition, a like sum for the Youghal petition, a like sum for my half of the Meath election petition, and you perceive how little prospect I have of any species of assistance . . . so much coldness and indifference that if anything could possibly induce me to abandon the contest, it would be such conduct.⁷⁷

He held out little hope of raising the money for the Dublin petition locally, saying to Fitzpatrick that ‘I perceive distinctly enough we shall get but little money from Dublin to defray the expenses of the petition. I see I must ruin myself in these expenses and I will.’⁷⁸ The Tories came close to achieving their objective and O’Connell was only saved from financial ruin as a result of a fund raised in England and sponsored by the Radicals Joseph Hume and Henry Warburton, who provided £8,489 towards costs said to have run to £12,500.⁷⁹ How much was spent on the Tory side can only be surmised. However, O’Connell himself gives us a clue when, referring to his expenses, he says that, ‘they are frightful although certainly not more than a fifth of the costs incurred by the petitioners.’⁸⁰

In the subsequent general election of 1837 the Tories again sought to stretch O’Connell’s resources, and were to ‘threaten a contest everywhere’ in order to make the opposing candidates ‘spend money’.⁸¹ They were aided in this endeavour by help from England , most notoriously in the shape of the famous Spottiswoode fund raised by the Queen’s Printer in 1837 to help Tories attack their opponents by means of election petitions,

⁷⁷ O’Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 7 Mar. 1835 (Ibid., no. 2218).

⁷⁸ O’Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 13 Mar. 1835, Ibid., no. 2222.

⁷⁹ William Fagan, *The life and times of Daniel O’Connell* (2 vols, Cork, 1848), ii, 537-9

⁸⁰ O’Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 14 Apr. 1835 (*O’Connell corres.*, v, no. 2229).

⁸¹ O’Connell to Pierce Mahony, 14 July 1837 (*O’Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2432).

especially in Ireland⁸² and London Tories provided £2,400 towards the cost of the Dublin election.⁸³ When one considers that single elections had the potential to cost candidates in excess of £10,000, and given the relative financial comfort of the Tories, it is little wonder that O'Connell needed to draw upon all the financial resources he could muster, and the 'round dozen' of thousands that Fitzpatrick worked so hard each year to amass begins to appear like an altogether more modest sum.

In 1833 the Tribute yielded £13,908, the sum for 1834 was probably similar while the total for 1835 was £13,454.⁸⁴ According to John O'Connell more than half the tribute was spent on election expenses in an election year.⁸⁵ On that basis, O'Connell's own election budget for 1835 would have been less than £7,000 and that to cover the expenses of his sons as well as his own. It would appear therefore that O'Connell, even if he wished to do so, had little chance of building a strong Repeal Party representation in parliament. The sheer scale of the costs meant that beyond the four or five seats he and his immediate family could fund he was limited by the number of wealthy liberals he could convince to commit their money to the Repeal cause.

Indeed electoral success was a mixed blessing for O'Connell. The thirty-nine members elected on the Repeal ticket in 1832 gave him bargaining power in the sense of his block holding the balance of power but they were by no means a disciplined grouping that were

⁸² Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, p. 300.

⁸³ Macintyre, *The Liberator*, p. 96.

⁸⁴ Detailed Report of the contributions (Parochial and Personal) to the O'Connell National Annuity for the year 1833 (Dublin, R. Grace, 1834); *Pilot*, 7 Sept. 1835.

⁸⁵ John O'Connell, *Recollections and experiences during a parliamentary career from 1833 to 1848* (2 vols, London, 1849), ii, 23-4, cited in Macintyre, *The Liberator*, p. 120, note 4.

whipped into voting the party line. Far from it, such was the lack of control that O'Connell in 1834 was forced by pressure from his own members to put a repeal motion before the house against his own better judgement. It may well have been the case that O'Connell realised that even if Repealers won all 105 seats in Ireland they would still be a minority within parliament and that, what he could achieve with sixty M.P.s, he could manage just as well with the thirty-two Repealers elected in 1837 as long as it was enough to secure a majority for the Whigs.

If the elections of 1835 and 1837 showed how expensive winning and holding on to ones seat was, then the period of the alliance with the Whig government was to reveal the rewards that flowed from such expense. Between 1835 and 1841 O'Connell again broke new political ground. Even if financial constraints had limited his efforts to build a Repeal Party, he was able to maximise the political advantage accruing from the group he did control by entering into what was, in effect, a coalition arrangement with the Whigs. The Lichfield House Compact restored the Whigs to power with O'Connell's aid, on the understanding that they would implement reforms identified by O'Connell. The results in terms of legislation were less than O'Connell might have expected but for five years he had access, if not directly to power, at least to those in power. He used his position to lever patronage in the form of jobs and sinecures for his family and supporters.

As early as June 1835 he was writing to his daughter Betsey about the possibility of securing a place for her husband, Nicholas J. Ffrench: 'There is a prospect of an appointment of commissioners to superintend the improvement of the Shannon at a salary

of about £300 per annum . . . *We* are a great support to the Ministry so that I am able to think, as I know I am willing, to be of use to him.’⁸⁶ A sympathetic administration in Dublin Castle opened the way for Catholics to the spoils system. The Castle controlled the appointment to all judgeships, paid and unpaid magistracies, legal posts in Dublin and assistant –barristerships in the provinces, posts under the Irish Poor Law Commission after 1838 and to all ranks in the army and in the rapidly growing police force.⁸⁷ There is a sense during this period of a place hunger on the part of O’Connell and his members and of a willingness on the part of the government to gratify it. Ten of the thirty-nine members received offices, places or titles.⁸⁸ In some respects this represented ‘justice for Ireland’, in as much as it was the enjoyment by Catholics of privileges hitherto reserved for Protestants, but there was a political price to be paid.

By 1837 they were so bound up in supporting the government that O’Connell and his party ran the risk that has bedevilled all junior partners in subsequent coalition arrangements: that of loss of identity. They were no longer Repealers; they had become largely indistinguishable from other Whigs. In 1836, O’Connell formed the General Association and renamed the rent, the Justice Rent. The membership reflected the thoroughly collaborative role of the association and of O’Connell himself in supporting the Whig ministry. Among its members were many Liberal M.P.s; at least forty-two M.P.s were members and between a quarter and one third of the members were Protestant. In its nine months existence the association raised just over £7,500, more than half of which was made up of subscriptions from middle and upper class members, with

⁸⁶ O’Connell to his daughter Betsey, 23 June 1835 (*O’Connell corres.*, v, no. 2260).

⁸⁷ Macintyre, *The Liberator*, p. 159.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

many, such as bishops and M.P.s contributing £5 or more.⁸⁹ Many of the legal profession were members and it is clear that it was not repeal of the Act of Union that attracted them. In December 1836, one reminded the association of the services rendered by the solicitors of Ireland and expressed the hope that they would not be forgotten ‘when the loaves and fishes were distributed.’⁹⁰

O’Connell’s change of political direction lost him much of his popular support. The once loyal artisans in Dublin were less than happy with the sidelining of repeal and O’Connell further alienated working-class support when he denounced trade unions in November 1837.⁹¹ The launch in 1838 of the Precursor Society was an attempt to reassert an element of independence but even the name was apologetic, avoiding the word repeal, so as not to upset their Liberal partners. The Society was short lived, being wound up after the government put pressure on O’Connell and announced that ‘no repealer would be considered for official appointments’⁹²

In August 1839 he sank into despondency and confided to P. V. Fitzpatrick that ‘My own prospects appear to me to be daily darker and more dark. It does mortify me but it does not surprise me to find that I have exhausted the bounty of the Irish people’ he continues, ‘it is plain I have worn out my claim on the people.’ ‘I am on the verge of illness – the illness of despondency.’⁹³ He considered giving up politics saying that ‘I, of course,

⁸⁹ Gerard J. Lyne, ‘The General Association of Ireland 1836-7’ (M.A. thesis, University College Dublin, 1969), pp 112-29.

⁹⁰ *D.E.M.*, 23 Dec. 1836.

⁹¹ *F.J.*, 7 Nov. 1837.

⁹² MacIntyre, *The Liberator*, p. 163.

⁹³ O’Connell to P.V. Fitzpatrick, 8 August 1839 (*O’Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2646).

dislike the idea of terminating my political career and shrinking into obscurity but, my excellent friend, it is inevitable.’⁹⁴

While much of this may have been a ploy to get Fitzpatrick to redouble his fundraising efforts it does at least indicate that such a redoubling was required. As well as being short of personal funds O’Connell also lacked an agitating body that would have raised political funds at national level. The body that had replaced the Precursor Society was dedicated purely to registration of electors and the Loyal Registry Association was itself short of funds, so much so that O’Connell was forced to write to Richard More O’Ferrall seeking payment of the balance of the £1,000 he had promised to attend to the registry in Ireland. O’Connell asked for the remaining £800, stating that ‘all we want is money. The machinery in Dublin is excellent, not one shilling is misspent but we want your share of the funds.’ ‘there is nothing wanting but money, and not much of that, to secure Ireland to the Melbourne cabinet.’⁹⁵ That O’Connell was appealing to the Whigs for money is an indication of his desperation, for such as it was, central Whig party funds had not been made available to O’Connell in the past. As early as the 1831 general election the Whigs had maintained a ‘secret committee’ for Irish elections and gave grants to Irish candidates through the London based Loyal and Patriotic Fund Committee. Then, and later in 1837 when Thomas Drummond controlled election matters in Ireland, these subsidies were directed to non-O’Connellite Liberals.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ O’Connell to P.V. Fitzpatrick, 9 August 1839 (*O’Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2648).

⁹⁵ O’Connell to Richard More O’Ferrall, 29 November 1839 (*O’Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2665).

⁹⁶ Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, p. 258.

The Melbourne cabinet itself was far from secure and clinging on to power, and was no longer in a position to reward the loyalty of the Irish members either by delivering reforms or maintaining the level of patronage that had compensated for the suspension of agitation. The viceroy Lord Ebrington's rejection of O'Connell's request for a stipendiary magistrate position for his son-in-law, Charles O'Connell in the same month suggests that government patronage was drying up.⁹⁷ O'Connell himself confirmed it in November 1840 when he wrote to George Lynch in Tralee, apologising that 'I am not in a condition to get a situation for anyone'.⁹⁸

Without Repeal as a rallying point or an association to conduct the agitation, it was inevitable that the third element of the formula, funding, would suffer. The period of the Whig alliance had been years of political largesse on the part of O'Connell rather than of constant accumulation of funds. In 1835 the tribute had yielded £13,454, which was about the average for the years from 1832 to 1834. However, no figures were published for the period 1836 onwards. That the tribute continued to be collected, there is little doubt but the lack of publicity in either *The Pilot* or the *Freeman's Journal* was probably to avoid the embarrassment of publishing a declining total. It is certainly clear that, as the election of 1841 approached, the lack of funds was again troubling O'Connell as he writes to Fitzpatrick:

I fear exceedingly the result of an approaching election For my part I will have to sustain four elections. Where shall I get the money? The tribute has not been successful this year and the second attempt appears more inefficient in its results than the first although you are unabated in zeal, tact and friendship.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Lord Ebrington to O'Connell, 22 February 1840 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2690).

⁹⁸ O'Connell to George Lynch, 5 Nov. 1840 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2761).

⁹⁹ O'Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 19 Feb. 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2815).

Fitzpatrick's reassuring response gives us the next firm indication of the yield from the tribute.

You are most *satisfactorily* mistaken as to the tribute now in course of collection. It has been already *very* successful inasmuch as that I have cleared off claims which accrued since the cessation of the former collection, about the first of September last, amounting to close on £9,000. I persevere in expecting further funds during the year¹⁰⁰

It is probably safe to say therefore, that in the years 1836 to 1840 the tribute dropped from £13,454 per annum, but given Fitzpatrick's figure for 1840 of more than £9,000, it is possible that even in these lean years sums approaching £10,000 may have been achieved. Certainly much more would be needed as the new decade and a new political reality dawned on Ireland and O'Connell.

Without a political organisation, popular support or money and with his declining political influence about to be eclipsed altogether with the prospect of a Tory administration in London, O'Connell had good cause to be despondent. To revive his political career he turned again to popular agitation and with prospects for 'justice for Ireland' fading as a Tory government hove into view, the issue would again be Repeal.

On 15 April 1840 he launched the 'National Association of Ireland for full and prompt Justice or Repeal'. The cumbersome title of the organisation was indicative of the complicated political position O'Connell found himself in. He knew that the future lay in agitation at home in Ireland but at the same time he was determined to do nothing that would precipitate the fall of the ministry. By July he had defined it as a purely Repeal

¹⁰⁰ P. V. Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 21 Feb. 1841 (Ibid., no. 2816).

organisation and on 13 July 1840 it became 'The Loyal National Repeal Association'. Once again the word Loyal in the name betrays an unwillingness to sever all links with the Whigs. Nevertheless, as he launched the association it was clear where he saw it heading. O'Connell's aim was to repeat the success of the emancipation campaign of the 1820s and he modelled the Repeal Association on the Catholic Association. However, the sad fact for O'Connell was that he had been detached from his political base for the previous six years, his organisation was lacking its former efficiency, money was in short supply and he was about to take up a cause that he had felt he could not win ten years earlier. The irony was that, ten years on, the prospects of winning Repeal had not improved.

To understand why O'Connell reverted to repeal agitation when success seemed unlikely one must consider his funding model. While in alliance with the Whigs he immersed himself in the system of government patronage which enabled him to maintain support on the strength of favours he had been in a position to extend. Now that the Conservatives were in power, the system required that Whig members fall back on their own personal resources to maintain and retain their seat. But this was the element of the system that O'Connell had breached. He had beaten the system by winning and holding a number of seats on funding provided, not from personal resources, but from popular subscription. For this reason, he could not simply join his Whig colleagues on the opposition benches; he had no option but to revert to his original source of support, a source that he had neglected while he embraced the system. Without funds he would not have been able to continue in politics and the way to raise funds, he knew only too well, was to agitate.

O'Connell's return to Repeal agitation in 1840 was therefore, less a political decision, and more a practical necessity.

Chapter III: Agitation anew and the Repeal Rent, 1841-7

In 1840, as the prospect of an election came closer, O'Connell had inched in the direction of Repeal. The parliamentarian was facing the prospect of once again becoming an agitator. The gradual evolution of the names of his associations, from 'Precursor' to 'Justice or Repeal' to 'Repeal' bear testament to his lack of enthusiasm for this latest political change of direction. Indeed he was torn by competing imperatives. If the Whigs failed, he needed an agitating association in place to fall back on, and to fund him, but he did not wish to beat the Repeal drum too loudly in advance of the election lest it alienate liberal voters. The one thing that was not contingent on whether the Whigs or the Conservatives were in power was his need to raise funds. Even before he fully committed himself to a full-blooded Repeal campaign he went to great lengths to put in place an effective system for collection for what was to be the 'Repeal Rent.'

In April 1840, when O'Connell launched The National Association for Justice or Repeal, he devoted much of his address to the need to raise funds. 'It was the Catholic rent that secured emancipation.' he said, and 'The Repeal rent will restore our DOMESTIC LEGISLATURE.' He went on to set out in detail how the rent was to be collected. Every person who subscribed £1 would qualify as a member of the association but it was possible to become a member by collecting the £1 from others and 'every person, male or female, who subscribes a sum of not less than one shilling annually, will have his or her

name registered on our books as a Repealer.’ Parishes were urged to put in train a monthly collection of one penny in order to allow all, ‘even the most humble, the opportunity of displaying their patriotism and zeal by contributing to the Repeal fund’. Parochial lists of subscribers were to be returned to the association and every parish transmitting the subscriptions of 200 Repealers was to be furnished with a weekly newspaper, containing the proceedings of the association. O’Connell concluded by telling the meeting that, ‘The Repeal rent will be the means of exhibiting the numerical strength and the sincerity of the people of Ireland for Repeal.’¹ Once again it appeared that O’Connell would use the rent as the motor and the measure of his political progress. However, in 1840 that progress would be slow indeed.

Having embraced Whig liberal reform and eschewed Repeal agitation for six years, O’Connell found that his Catholic constituency did not automatically lend its support when he sought to resume his position as tribune of the people in 1840. He had to compete for their support and for their money. Ironically, the modest gains made by Catholics in the 1830s served to undermine support for Repeal. To some extent, O’Connell had himself to blame, as his own political pragmatism might not readily transfer itself to his supporters. When in 1837 he raised money in the form of the ‘Justice Rent’ it was, very much, as a Whig liberal and the money was subscribed, not so much by Repealers, but by Whigs. Now O’Connell seemed to be suggesting that they become Repealers again, but not everyone could or would change political direction as adroitly as O’Connell. He had spent six years encouraging his supporters to become Whig

¹ *The Pilot*, 22 Apr. 1840.

supporters and with some success. Now he would find it difficult to turn them back into Repealers.

This point was brought home to O'Connell in a letter from Joseph Hayes in August 1840. Hayes gives a pessimistic and cynical appraisal of support for Repeal, saying that 'the legal profession in Cork will have nothing to do with Repeal lest it jeopardise their chance of a place.' The trades he says are no longer a force, 'some of the best of them given situations through Beamish and [as a result] of course they are hors de combat . . . In fact', he says, 'a process of corruption has been going on through the instrumentality of place giving and, wherever a member of a family has been started a candidate for public employ, the whole division of kindred deem it necessary to eschew Repeal, lest of its embarrassing the speculation'²

The belief that support for Repeal could be detrimental to the career prospects of Catholics was confirmed by Lord Ebrington when he declared that 'whatever favour or patronage the government were wont to bestow on its supporters, for those who take part in this agitation, whatever other claims they may have to consideration no application will on any account be attended to.'³ And John Greene, the proprietor of the *Wexford Independent*, reported that the middle class and the clergy are 'nobly flocking to our banners' but that 'Our Quondam leaders, almost to a man, are studiously keeping aloof from the present national movement'.⁴ From this we learn that the role of patronage in controlling the political system was not confined to its application within parliament. The

² Joseph Hayes to O'Connell, 14 Aug. 1840 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2735).

³ *F.J.*, 1 Oct. 1840.

⁴ John Greene to O'Connell, 10 Oct. 1840, (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2755).

example from Cork shows how in an urban setting, patronage was a means to exert influence over the electorate in a manner not dissimilar to the methods employed by landlords to influence their tenants. The risk of losing one's job was just as powerful a hold over a voter as was the 'hanging-gale'. The difference was that, unlike the landlord – tenant relationship, patronage at this level was a new phenomenon among O'Connell supporters. That Catholic members of the legal profession in Cork were in a position to be considered for a place was as a direct result of O'Connell's success in winning reforms during his alliance with the Whigs.

Of course, it was not just his supporters who had grown comfortable supporting the Whigs and enjoying the benefits of the spoils system. O'Connell himself was concerned at the financial implications of a return to Repeal. Writing to P. V. Fitzpatrick and referring to the tribute, O'Connell acknowledged that 'A Repeal association or any permanent body will injure your operations for me as the parishes in general will not make double contributions'.⁵

Not only would the tribute have to compete with the Repeal rent but also, in 1840, the parishes were being asked to subscribe to a host of worthy causes. O'Connell had mobilised Catholics in the 1820s, raising their political consciousness, affirming the leadership role of the Catholic clergy and in the years after emancipation Catholic society was beginning to assert itself with a growing sense of self confidence. When O'Connell took a collaborative political turn in 1835 the momentum he had generated was not entirely dissipated. It found new avenues of expression. Committees sprang up to raise

⁵ O'Connell to P.V. Fitzpatrick, 9 Apr. 1840 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2700).

subscriptions for church building, school building, funding for the care of the poor and the sick. Money was collected for the association for the Propagation of the Faith and Catholics enrolled in Fr. Theobald Mathew's temperance movement with phenomenal zeal. Catholics had used money in the form of the Catholic rent to assert their political identity and independence and now money was again the medium by which they sought to stamp their Catholic identity on society by developing a separate confessional infrastructure.⁶

One tangible expression of this newfound self-confidence was the extraordinary boom in church building, which took place in the first half of the nineteenth century. It has been estimated by Emmet Larkin that between 1817 and 1847 something in the order of four million pounds was spent on building.⁷ The diocese of Tuam, for example, in 1825 had only fifteen slated chapels and some eighty inadequate thatched chapels but within twenty years no less than sixty new chapels and a new cathedral had been built.⁸ In the newspapers notices relating to Repeal meetings or collection of the tribute jockeyed for prominence beside reports of charity sermons in aid of school and church building. On one day alone the front page of the *Freeman's Journal* carried no fewer than eight separate fundraising notices on behalf of Catholic organisations. There were charity sermons on behalf of the Teresian Orphan Society, the General Female Orphan House and Day School for the Poor in Harold's Cross as well as the General Magdalen Asylum

⁶ See R. V. Comerford, *Ireland* (London, 2003), p. 111.

⁷ E. Larkin, 'Economic growth, capital investment, and the Roman Catholic church in nineteenth-century Ireland' in *American Historical Review*, lxxii (1966-67), pp 856-8.

⁸ Evidence of Archbishop Kelly in *report from the select committee appointed to inquire into the state of Ireland, more particularly with reference to the circumstances which may have led to disturbances in that part of the United Kingdom*, H.C. 1825 (129), viii, 255-6 ; *Cork Examiner*, 10 Apr. 1843.

in Donnybrook. A dinner was to be held in aid of Golden Bridge Free Schools, an appeal for the Female Penitents Retreat in Mecklenburgh Street, A Christmas festival raised £117 19s 6d. for the Sisters of Charity in St. Vincent's Hospital and a grand fancy and full dress ball was announced in aid of The Franciscan Orphan Institution.⁹

In Mallow, County Cork, in February 1841, Fr. Mathew delivered a charity sermon. The sermon raised £57 2s. 2d. and Fr. Mathew was thanked for a further donation of £10 'for the use of the temperance band' and £5 for the poor of the parish.¹⁰ Tellingly, a month later, a separate report from Mallow reproduced a letter from John Ahern to Thomas Lyons which gave details of the O'Connell tribute from Mallow for 1840 which amounted to £64 18s. 6d. Ahern apologised stating that: 'This sum would be considerably more if not for the many calls on the inhabitants of this town and parish during the past year - some of which were - the finishing of our chapel, supporting schools, and distress of a large unemployed population.'¹¹ Similarly, James O'Driscoll forwarding £20 from the parish of Kilmichael said that 'The amount remitted would certainly have been much larger, but that a chapel collection - in progress in part of the parish - interfered.'¹²

The national schools system, introduced to Ireland in 1831, was to provide state funded primary education to all, on a non-denominational basis. This latter aspect of the scheme drew opposition from both of the principal denominations in Ireland and they continued to fund their own denominational schools until a compromise was reached that allowed

⁹ *F.J.*, 1 Feb. 1842.

¹⁰ *Southern Reporter*, 27 Feb. 1841.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11 Mar. 1841.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16 January 1841.

the state schools to function as denominational schools. This issue too, impacted on O'Connell's fundraising efforts. He was effectively barred from Connaught because of opposition from Archbishop MacHale of Tuam who, unlike most of his fellow bishops, had rejected National Board of Education funding. MacHale clearly saw fundraising by O'Connell as a threat to his own efforts to raise funds for school building. O'Connell had done his utmost to win MacHale over and tried to allay his fears over money when he wrote in April 1839:

There is at present one ingredient which seems to operate against 'Precursor' cooperation from Connaught, and it is this - the condemnation of the national Education scheme by your Grace, which would require parochial contributions for the purposes of education and, as an apparent consequence, the prevention of any part of the funds of any parish being diverted into the "Precursor" treasury. On this subject, however, I can say, *experto crede roberto*. I can give your Grace the result of thirty years and more of experience and it is this, that once get a parish into a mood of contributing to public purposes, the more such purposes are brought before them the more liberal will be each aggregate contribution. So many persons will not give pounds or five shillings, but many more will give one shilling. It will and has uniformly become a habit to contribute, and thus a precursor subscription would, according to my experience, augment your school contributions.¹³

MacHale was slow to come around and it was only in April 1840 that O'Connell was invited to Connaught: 'Come then among us as early as you find it convenient and you will have a *cead mile failte*'.¹⁴

It was not just to projects at home that Catholics were subscribing. A real indicator of Irish Catholics asserting their pride in their religion was their willingness to contribute as generously as they did to the Association for the Propagation of the Faith. This was an organisation founded in France in 1822 to raise funds to aid Catholic foreign missions. It became established in Ireland in 1837 and figures for the year 1840 show that of the

¹³ O'Connell to Archbishop MacHale, 4 Apr. 1839 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2600).

¹⁴ Archbishop MacHale to O'Connell, 11 Apr. 1840 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2703).

£98,943 raised worldwide £6,549, or six and a half per cent of the total, came from Ireland.¹⁵ This was more than double the £2,688 Repeal rent collected between April and December of the same year. Such were the pressures of competing demands on Catholic funds and reservations with regard to Repeal that O'Connell's political rebirth was by no means assured. Even the usually sanguine Fitzpatrick seemed to be allowing things to get on top of him when he wrote to O'Connell in June 1840. Fitzpatrick talked of money being scarce, 'The failure of last year's harvest appears now to make itself really felt, not only through the general complaints from all parts of the country but also by its political apathy and the cessation of remittances to me.'¹⁶

Of all the outlets for Catholic self-expression that had sprung up to replace that which had cultivated it in the first place - the Catholic Association under O'Connell - the temperance movement had the potential to pose the greatest threat to O'Connell's attempt to regain his status as popular leader of a national popular movement. Founded by the Capuchin friar, Father Theobald Mathew, in 1838, the rise of the temperance movement in 1839 coincided with O'Connell's despair at the failure of his own Precursor Society. His equivocation between Repeal and reform had not inspired popular support, and in the temperance movement he saw the very thing he struggled to achieve; a popular movement that attracted mass support from lower and middle-class Catholics. Paul A. Townend, in his book on Father Mathew, describes how the popularity of this humble priest came to rival that of O'Connell but how, despite Father Mathew's best efforts,

¹⁵ F. J., 20 May 1841.

¹⁶ P. V. Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 16 June 1840 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2719).

O'Connell succeeded in harnessing the power of the temperance movement to revive his own Repeal agitation.

People were flocking to Father Mathew to take a pledge of total abstinence from alcohol as he toured the country on a crusade against the evils of drunkenness. The scale of the popularity of his movement is seen by the numbers he managed to enrol on just one trip to the north of the country in March 1841. In Carrickmacross 80,000 took the pledge, in Monaghan 40,000, Kilbeggan 80,000, Turbatstown 70,000, Trim 60,000 and Athboy (while changing horses) 2,000.¹⁷ Hardly surprisingly, O'Connell sought to attach himself to Father Mathew's success. When he returned to Ireland in the autumn of 1839 he began to make glowing references to the temperance movement and to link sobriety to the achievement of political ends. At a meeting in Killarney on 29 September he reminded his audience of how: 'In Clare, in 1828, I saw that, during eight of the sultriest days that a summer's sun shone down upon that country, not one drop of ardent spirits entered the lips of the virtuous and brave electors on that memorable occasion (great cheering). That was the election that carried the emancipation.'¹⁸ By April 1840, O'Connell was beginning to use the term teetotaller and Repealer almost interchangeably and as he concluded his address to the meeting that launched the National Association for Full and Prompt Justice or Repeal, it was to teetotallers, not to Repealers, he referred; 'Thank God' he said, 'there will soon be three millions of teetotallers to dignify their native land, and to place Ireland in the high rank she should hold among the nations of the earth.'¹⁹ At

¹⁷ Ibid., 08 Apr. 1841.

¹⁸ *D.E.P.*, 3 Oct. 1839; Paul A. Townend, *Father Mathew, temperance and Irish identity* (Dublin, 2002), p. 197.

¹⁹ *F.J.*, 16 Apr. 1840.

the launch of the Loyal National Repeal Association in July, he again invoked Father Mathew's name, declaring to the meeting that, 'Father Mathew has raised the standard, and two million Irish men and women are pledged to perfect sobriety. Can such people', he asked, 'continue constantly as slaves?'²⁰ Mathew strove to keep his movement apolitical and he tried strenuously to avoid links forming between his total abstinence crusade and O'Connell's Repeal movement. He ordered teetotallers not to meet in Repeal reading rooms and not to allow their bands to provide music at Repeal demonstrations;²¹ he even tried at times to convince teetotallers not to join the Repeal movement.²² But O'Connell was a wily adversary and there was little Father Mathew could do as the two causes became increasingly entangled after 1840.²³

O'Connell may have grafted his Repeal tree of liberty onto the root structure of the temperance movement but while Father Mathew had succeeded in creating a burgeoning popular movement he had singularly failed to put in place any proper fundraising mechanisms. Both the temperance and the Repeal movements would struggle for funds in 1840 and it would be Father Mathew who would ultimately lose out. He had used money to extend the movement rather than *vice versa*. Temperance missions were popular because the priests of the parish reaped the rewards, benefiting from the proceeds of the sermon and usually a contribution from Mathew himself towards a parish charity or building project. He handed out thousands of medals to his converts to sobriety but was paid for very few of them. He ran up debts of £7,000, which a testimonial in 1843 failed

²⁰ Ibid., 16 July 1840.

²¹ Elizabeth Malcolm, 'Temperance and Irish nationalism' in F.S.L. Lyons and R.A. J. Hawkins eds., *Ireland under the union: Varieties of tension* (Oxford, 1980), p. 76.

²² J. J. Cantillon to T. M. Ray, 30 May 1843 (N.L.I., O'Connell Papers, Ms 13625 (56)).

²³ Townend, *Father Mathew*, p.213.

to cover, and while a further collection in November 1844 raised £8,300, Mathew continued in financial difficulties until his death.²⁴

Having in some respects hi-jacked Father Mathew's movement, O'Connell encountered similar difficulty in extracting funds from it, as contributions to the Repeal rent were also disappointing. In its first week in April 1840, when £79 17s was raised, O'Connell felt obliged to point out that the Catholic rent had raised less in its first week, yet the following week the total was only £41 18s. Not alone were the totals disappointing but the regional spread, or indeed the lack of it, would also have been a cause for concern to O'Connell. Of the £2,688 raised between the establishment of the association in April 1840 and the end of the year, £1,949 12s. 4d., or approximately three quarters, came from Leinster, while contributions from Munster, which had been an O'Connell heartland in the 1820s, at only £256 14s fell short of the £355 14s raised in Britain.²⁵

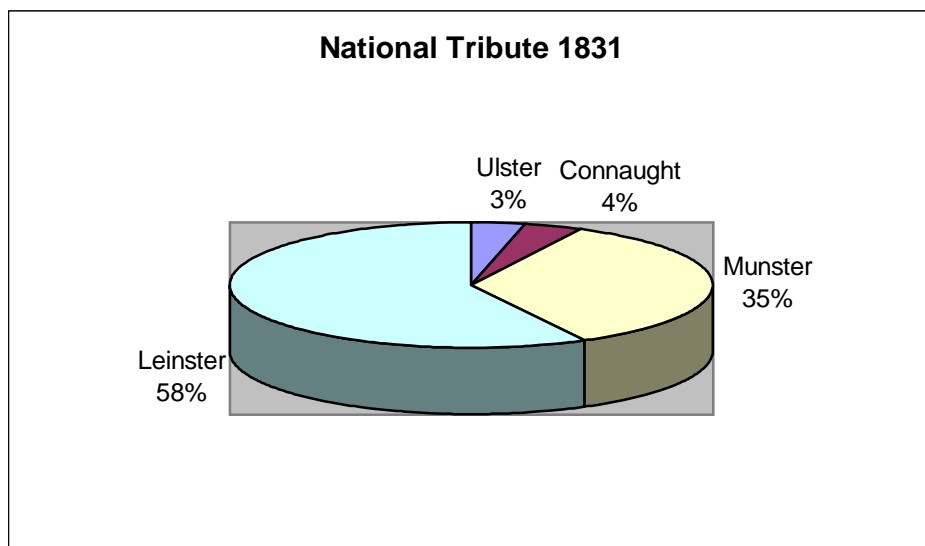
It is worth comparing the geographical spread of subscriptions to the Repeal rent with subscriptions being made to other Catholic causes. Looking at a sample of the monies paid in to the association for the Propagation of the Faith in 1840 (Figure 3.2) we see that the money was coming from the four provinces in very similar proportions to subscriptions to the O'Connell Tribute ten years earlier in 1831 (Figure 3.1). This suggests that the massive drop off in support for the Repeal rent in Munster was not characteristic of general support for Catholic causes and was specific to Repeal. One cannot discount the fact that Munster was also the heartland of Father Mathew's

²⁴ Ibid.; O'Connell to James Haughton, 26 Oct. 1844 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 3104, note 1).

²⁵ *Longford Journal*, 16 Jan. 1841.

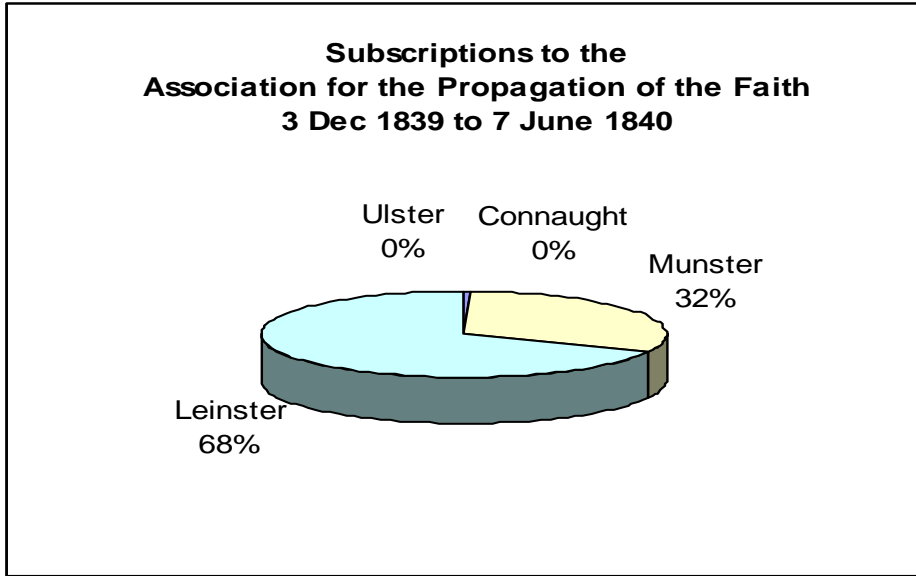
temperance movement and perhaps in 1840 Munster had not fully transferred its allegiance from the Apostle of Temperance to the Liberator. However, when figures for Repeal rent receipts early in the following year, 1841, are examined (Figures 3.3 and 3.4), one finds that this regional imbalance has been largely corrected and the proportion of the rent coming from Munster is broadly similar to levels achieved by the tribute and the Association for the Propagation of the faith.

Figure 3.1



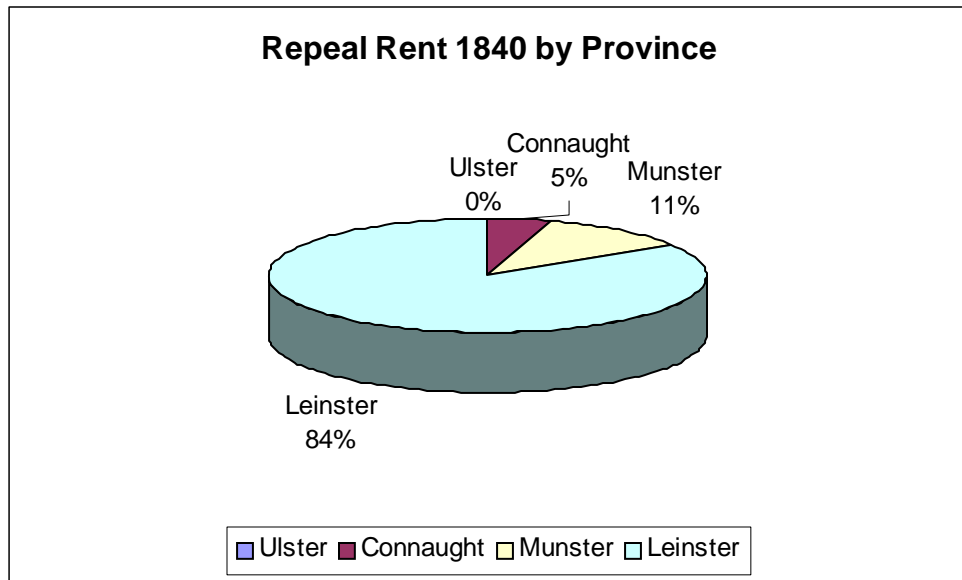
Source: *Freeman's Journal*, 14 April 1831.

Figure 3.2



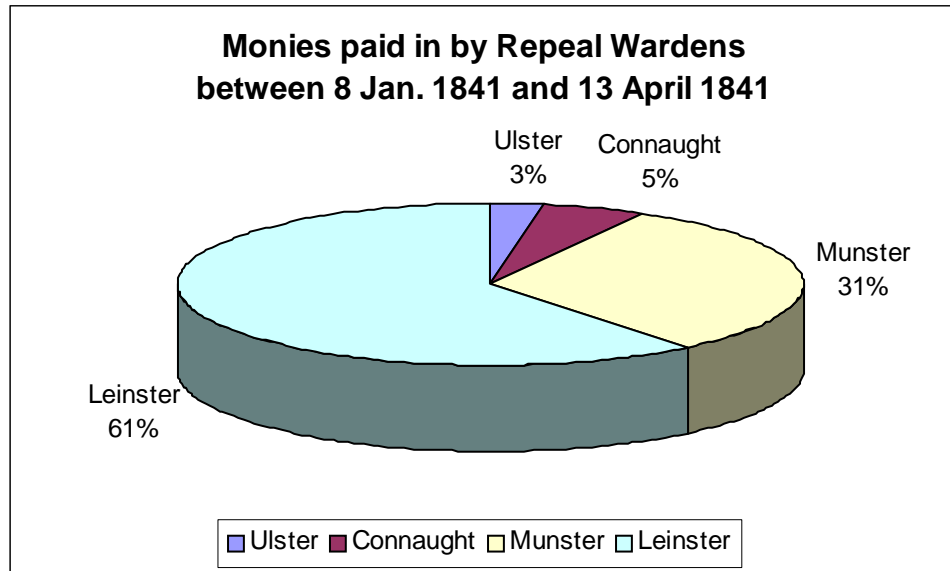
Source : Monthly figures published in *F.J.*, Dec. 1839 to June 1840

Figure 3.3



Source: *Longford Journal*, 16 January 1841.

Figure 3.4



Source: Returns from Repeal wardens published in *F.J.*, 16 Apr. 1841.

The proportion coming from the various provinces may have been restored to the pattern set by the Catholic rent and the O’Connell tribute, but the volumes coming in were disappointing and he had failed to make any headway in Ulster and Connaught. Ulster was always going to be difficult terrain for O’Connell, but he must have been disappointed at the poor returns from west of the Shannon. Having overcome Archbishop McHale’s opposition to his fundraising in Connaught, O’Connell did go west, and in August 1840 he held a Connaught provincial meeting in Tuam, but the figures for the rent in 1841 show that the west was still not awake to Repeal.

The poor returns from the rent were, no doubt, affected by O’Connell’s reticence to engage in wholehearted Repeal agitation while hope remained for the Whigs remaining in office, but matters were not helped by the various financial scandals which, by now, had

attached themselves to O'Connell. As well as the 'Raphael affair',²⁶ which in 1836, had seen him accused of attempting to sell a seat in parliament, he had also been accused of appropriating the funds of the Precursor Society by one of its members. On 5 January 1839, in a letter to the *Freeman's Journal*, Peter Purcell set out in detail the events that had led up to his resignation from the Precursor Society. He had, he said, discovered that all the funds of the society were being paid into O'Connell's personal bank account in the National Bank in Tralee. Having raised the matter with O'Connell, he said that he had received assurances that the matter would be rectified. Purcell then arranged for three treasurers to take responsibility for the funds which were to be transferred to a new account in the Hibernian Bank. According to Purcell, he later discovered that the money had not been transferred, and that funds continued to be lodged to O'Connell's account in Tralee.

When he confronted O'Connell again Purcell maintained that 'his answers were vague and unsatisfactory'. He also wrote to O'Connell but received no reply and was left 'with only one course to adopt, and that is, relieving myself of all future responsibility by separating forever from the Precursor Society.'²⁷ O'Connell's response came at the meeting of the Precursor Society on the following day. The meeting was addressed by the three treasurers referred to by Purcell, and they claimed to have had the accounts of the society, 'vouched before us, item by item, and we find them perfectly regular and

²⁶ See Chapter ii, p. 76.

²⁷ *F.J.*, 7 Jan. 1839.

correct.’²⁸ The defence of O’Connell and the castigation of Purcell dominated the three days of adjourned proceedings of the meeting, but the funds still remained in O’Connell’s bank account in Tralee.

A Dublin liberal newspaper, the *Dublin Monitor*, broadened the attack on O’Connell. It suggested that the investment of the precursor funds in O’Connell’s bank account awakened ‘recollections of the part played with the funds of the Catholic Association, and with the other various clubs and societies which he had from time to time organised, not one shilling of which has ever been satisfactorily accounted for’, and it challenged O’Connell ‘to produce the satisfactory account, if it is at all in existence.’²⁹ Responding to the challenge from the *Monitor*, O’Connell raised the matter at a meeting of the Precursor Society on 15 January 1839, declaring that ‘I have brought here with me the accounts of that rent, and the books of the Catholic Association, and I am prepared to show that every shilling of the Catholic rent which was received or paid can be most regularly accounted for.’ He then proceeded to give the meeting a garbled and somewhat inaccurate account of the Catholic rent. He maintained that between 1824 and 1827, £4,534 6s. 5d. was received, £21,841 10s. 9d. in 1828, and that ‘on the whole the receipts of the association amounted to £28,000. This figure grossly understates the amount raised, particularly in the first phase of the Catholic rent, when, between 1823 and March 1825, the association was able to invest £14,000 from the money raised. O’Connell admitted that £13,000 had remained on hands at the dissolution of the association in

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9 Jan. 1839.

²⁹ *Dublin Monitor*, 17 Jan. 1839.

February 1829 but went on to recount that the Clare election had cost ‘nearly £15,000’ and that ‘£10,000 was sent down in draft for its uses,’ but he added that ‘We raised about £7,000 by subscriptions, and two or three additional thousands were added.’³⁰ Rather than explain the destination of the £13,000 surplus, O’Connell, by introducing vague figures relating to the Clare election, which of course predated the surplus by eight months, only confuses the issue, which was more than likely his intention.

At the launch of the Repeal Association these accusations were clearly still a matter of concern and at only the second meeting of the association, on 29 April 1840, O’Connell felt it necessary to read to the meeting an auditor’s report which accounted for how the funds which had been ‘placed in my hands’ when the Precursor society broke up, had been spent. The report found that O’Connell was in fact owed £1-7s when all the bills were accounted for.³¹ A year later the position appears to have been little better. On 15 April 1841 a meeting was held at the Corn Exchange in an attempt to improve the rent collection. The rumours about O’Connell still had sufficient currency to warrant the intervention of Thomas Steele who addressed the meeting in an attempt to counter ‘the fiendish efforts made by the enemies of Ireland to impute or insinuate a malversation of the funds by O’Connell,’ and again O’Connell, by way of defence, read a letter from the auditors which in this instance claimed that he had paid £72 18s. 1d. over and above the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *The Pilot*, 29 Apr. 1840.

receipts of the Repeal Association and accordingly, as treasurer, he was owed that amount by the association.³²

Repeal wardens had been introduced by the association on 8 January 1841 and between that date and 13 April 1841 the association had only received £561 1s. 7d. from the wardens. The breakdown of this figure shows that £75 8s. 11d. came from Dublin, £110 14s. 4d. from England while the remaining £367 18s. 4d. represented the total for the rest of the country. Only ninety-one parishes outside of Dublin had wardens and their collection rate in these early months of 1841 was averaging a mere six shillings per week.³³ O'Connell exhorted the wardens to do better and also introduced a further initiative to try to improve the take from the rent. He launched 'the Revived Volunteers of 1782' on 13 April 1841 with membership open to those who collected or subscribed £10 or more to the Repeal rent.³⁴ In May he wrote to his son John telling him to say to Thomas Davis that the lack of funds was 'a decisive reason for not urging the Repeal as we otherwise would' and was 'really the secret of our weakness'.³⁵ The reason for not urging the Repeal may also have been linked to a desire not to alienate the liberal vote with a general election in the offing. However, the lack of money was real enough and it would play a critical role in preparations for the general election of July 1841.

³² *Southern Reporter*, 20 Apr. 1841.

³³ Breakdown of returns from Repeal wardens published in *F.J.*, 16 Apr. 1841.

³⁴ *The Pilot*, 14 Apr. 1841.

³⁵ O'Connell to John O'Connell, 29 May 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2877).

O'Connell had to find funds for four elections, his own and those of his three sons. As ever, he turned pleadingly to P. V. Fitzpatrick: 'I fear exceedingly the result of an approaching election . . . For my part I will have to sustain four elections. Where shall I get the money? The tribute has not been successful this year and the second attempt appears more inefficient in its results than the first, although you are unabated in zeal, tact and friendship.'³⁶ Money was central to candidate selection and election strategy and O'Connell went to great lengths to minimise the expense on himself by dint of his strategic manoeuvring in the run up to the election. In May O'Connell was advised that in Carlow County, John Aston Yeates might be persuaded to stand if O'Connell's son John was put up as a candidate with him. The idea was that the O'Connell name would ensure the election of both, while Yeates would cover the costs, '£1,000 for the actual expenses, and £1,000 to create an indemnity fund for the electors who might be pressed for their rent and much of which would be repaid.'³⁷ In the event, O'Connell ran his younger son Daniel junior in Carlow County, and despite Yeates' money, O'Connell was clearly concerned at his prospects. Daniel Junior's chances of election were not helped by his physical absence from the country. It was rumoured that he was forced to remain on the continent to avoid a judgement of £1,000 against him in a breach of promise case.³⁸

O'Connell's other two sons were in the happy position of standing for uncontested borough seats, Maurice in Tralee and John, whom O'Connell moved from Athlone, which needed cash spent on it, to Kilkenny city where O'Connell had been invited to

³⁶ O'Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 19 Feb. 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2815).

³⁷ Christopher Fitzsimons to O'Connell, 25 May 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2872).

³⁸ *Longford Journal*, 10 July 1841.

stand himself.³⁹ The advantage of winning an uncontested seat is illustrated by the significantly lower costs incurred by O'Connell on behalf of Maurice in Tralee. The election expenses came to a modest £58 2s. 0d. but lest the electorate felt they were being taken for granted, O'Connell was advised that a further £150 or £200 'be lodged with Dr McEnery by way of a loan fund to be advanced from time to time on good security to such of the voters as may stand in need of assistance. This would protect the poor fellows and secure their votes in future.'⁴⁰ Such was the financial incentive to avoid a contested election that O'Connell appears to have entered into an arrangement with Lord Ffrench, whereby Ffrench prevented 'certainly a contest and probably the return of a Tory' in Roscommon County, in return for which, O'Connell had promised to see to it that his son would be appointed as a resident magistrate. O'Connell does not seem to have lived up to his side of the bargain and Ffrench wrote in August 1841 demanding his son's appointment.⁴¹

In constituencies that were contested, personal wealth was the best hope of success, as in Cork city where the determination of the wealthy Murphy family to get their son elected saw to it, that despite a 'wicked contest', young Murphy and Daniel Callaghan, liberal and Repealer, respectively, were returned ahead of their Tory rivals.⁴² The lack of money was even causing concern in secure constituencies like Clare. Five days before the election a worried John Scott was writing that even though the Tory candidate,

³⁹ Oliver MacDonagh, *The Emancipist; Daniel O'Connell 1830-47* (London, 1989), p. 195.

⁴⁰ Daniel Supple Jr. to O'Connell, 9 Aug. 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2910).

⁴¹ Lord French to O'Connell, 16 Aug. 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2912).

⁴² Christopher Fitzsimons to O'Connell, 24 May 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2870).

Vandeleur, 'cannot beat O'Brien [Repeal candidate] but by bribery' he says that 'his money is flying freely and heavily in all directions' and that 'I fear for the result as we are without money for even the ordinary election expenses as we have no Liberal club, or bond of union between us',⁴³

For his own part, O'Connell tried to find a running mate in Dublin city who might be able to shoulder a greater share of the costs than Robert Hutton had done in the 1837 election. Hutton had then done a deal with O'Connell that had limited Hutton's liability to £700.⁴⁴ O'Connell dismissed Hutton's contribution to his election saying that 'Hutton is a lucky fellow to have so cheap a seat for such a constituency.'⁴⁵ Hutton's £700 would not have gone very far, as O'Connell also had to find the funds to defend an election petition against the Tories who he said, 'are fighting, to use the vulgar phrase, "on velvet". They have the bulk of the Spottiswode money, while I am left like a boat on the strand with the tide out.'⁴⁶ This was a reference to a fund initiated by, and named after, the Queen's printer, to aid Conservative candidates in launching petitions to challenge results in the 1837 general election. In 1841 Robert Hutton was passed over in favour of the marquis of Kildare. The plan came unstuck, however, when the marquis turned down the offer and O'Connell was forced into an embarrassing *volte-face* and had to revert to Hutton as a running mate.⁴⁷ Feverish efforts were made to mobilise supporters and raise money for the election in Dublin city. On 10 June 1841 his letter to Richard Barrett asking him to

⁴³ Richard Scott to O'Connell, 9 July 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2902).

⁴⁴ O'Connell to William Woodlock, 11 Aug. 1837 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2451).

⁴⁵ O'Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 26 Mar. 1838 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2520).

⁴⁶ O'Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 16 Mar. 1838 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2515).

⁴⁷ *F. J.* 23, 24 June 1841.

'assist me to rouse the people of Dublin' was reproduced in the *Freeman's Journal*. In it O'Connell exhorted the people to form election clubs in every street, parish and ward. He urged people to pay their taxes and he wanted certificates of registry to be submitted to T. M. Ray, who he said would see to it that they would be available at the booths.⁴⁸

O'Connell was particularly concerned that his supporters were up to date with payment of their municipal taxes, as his own election in Dublin in 1835 was overturned on petition after some of his votes were rejected on the grounds that the electors had not paid their pipe-water and wide-street taxes.⁴⁹

On 14 June at a public meeting at the reform rooms, the Whig central office in Fleet street, it was resolved to open a subscription to defray the expenses of the liberal candidates and a notice was placed in the newspapers by the election committee advising that the treasurers would attend daily at the reform rooms 'at half past three o'clock in the afternoon to receive subscriptions'.⁵⁰ Responding to O'Connell's request, the parishes began to convene meetings and form committees to make arrangements for the election. In addition to the subscription opened by the city election committee, each parish raised a separate subscription to cover election expenses at parish level. Many parishes published details of the subscriptions received and although these were, no doubt, the better organised parishes, the figures do indicate that attendances at these parish meetings could exceed one hundred electors and with most subscribing either £1 or 10s, seventy or

⁴⁸ *F. J.* 10 June 1841.

⁴⁹ O'Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, May 1836 (*O'Connell corres.*, v, no. 2334).

⁵⁰ *F.J.*, 15 June 1841.

eighty pounds was often raised on the night.⁵¹ These parish funds were raised, controlled and spent locally, O'Connell, however, moved quickly to secure control of the city election committee by getting them to agree to the formation of a joint committee made up of six members of the election committee and six members from the Repeal Association 'to carry on the business of the forthcoming election effectively'.⁵²

He also made it clear that the funds of the Repeal association would be available for election purposes. Speaking at the association's meeting on 14 June he referred to 'a fund for the indemnifying of voters' and he promised that 'all available funds of the association would be applied to that purpose, as one of their legitimate objects.'⁵³ This was consistent with O'Connell's opportunistic approach to funding. It made little difference to him whether Repeal money aided liberal candidates or if liberal funds could be extracted from London to aid Repealers. He was happy to blur the lines between the rent and the tribute and he tended to regard all resources available to him as means to further whatever cause he chose to champion. Thus he dismissed objections to the use of the Repeal rent for registry purposes. It had been argued that this only benefited liberal candidates. O'Connell declared that: 'The objection to the application of the Repeal funds to the Registry in Dublin County is not well founded. It is not for Evans or Brabazon we are acting but for the cause . . . and I hope that we will soon have money enough to carry

⁵¹ Ibid., 19, 23, 26 June, 1, 3, 5, 6 July 1841.

⁵² Ibid., 23 June 1841.

⁵³ Ibid., 16 June 1841.

on the registries in every county in Ireland.’⁵⁴ Even the funds raised by the parishes to cover their own election expenses were not entirely beyond his grasp. In 1837, realising that some of this money remained unspent he gave instructions ‘to send Ray round to the parishes to beg that any such surplus may be applied to the expenses of the election’.⁵⁵

Carlow County and Dublin City were to prove to be the real cockpits of the 1841 election. O’Connell focused his attention and as much of the resources of the movement as he could manage into the two constituencies. In Carlow he sought to raise the political temperature by trying to rally the faithful from the surrounding counties to converge on Carlow during the election. In terms of funding, O’Connell sought to augment the financial resources of John Ashton Yeates by appealing to the liberals for funds and in June Lord Duncannon replied saying that ‘I am sure they will try to send some further means if they can be got at, but I fear the drain has been great - some of the seats have been lost unexpectedly, but there has been lavish use of money on the Tory side that surpasses anything I ever heard of.’⁵⁶

O’Connell was all too aware of the Conservatives’ greater level of central organisation and fundraising, it having been used against him in the elections of 1835 and 1837. He had asked the liberals to send money from central funds to support their own candidates

⁵⁴ O’Connell to his son John, 19 Sept. 1840 (*O’Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2750). George Evans and William Brabazon were the sitting Whig M.P.s for county Dublin.

⁵⁵ O’Connell to William Woodlock, 11 Aug. 1837 (*O’Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2451).

⁵⁶ Lord Duncannon to O’Connell, 29 June 1841 (*O’Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2896).

in the 1837 election but while such funds existed, the Whigs lagged well behind the organisation and wealth of the London Carlton Club which, as we have seen, was established in 1832 by ‘the Charles Street Gang’ as a central Conservative body that raised funds and assisted in the centralised organisation of elections. As early as 1833 it had 800 members paying £10 in annual membership and looking at an extract from the proceedings of its select committee in August 1841 it is clear that it played a role that ranged from modest electoral funding up to determining who the Conservative candidates would be.

Five pounds was voted to Mr. Ross, to pay the charge for his gig when he canvassed the electors of Tiverton.... A new coat, waistcoat and breeches were voted to Mr. Bonham, as a reward for his active and daily abuse of the Whigs...recommended to the consideration of the club that if a vacancy occurred in any borough, which is completely under Tory influence, that Sir G. Murray, Right Hon. G Dawson, and Mr. Benjamin Bond Cabbell, be allowed to stand, so that one of these gentlemen should at last get into parliament.⁵⁷

As he appealed to the people of Dublin for support O’Connell again anticipated monetary assistance from London for his enemies. Referring to Grogan and West he says, ‘But what do they care? They will get money from the dupes of the Carlton Club, and they will have the advantage of the expenditure. Much good may it do them!’⁵⁸ His own concerns were not just confined to the need to raise money; he needed to tackle the underlying political apathy if he were to have any chance of raising money and attracting votes. A month before the election, reports from Dublin were not encouraging. His son John wrote: ‘There is, I repeat, a hesitation, an irresolution and I will plainly say something of incapacity only too visible here...what I must call perhaps mistakenly, a want of resolution and of energy on the part of the local men. Money too is wanting, at

⁵⁷ Report of a meeting of the select committee held at the Carlton Club, *F.J.*, 25 Aug. 1841.

⁵⁸ *F.J.*, 10 June 1841.

least is said to be wanting, to provide for getting men out of the way etc.’⁵⁹ It is not clear what John O’Connell means by ‘getting men out of the way’, but we must assume that it involved paying bribes to those who might otherwise aid the opposition. There were of course instances of incentives being offered to get prospective candidates ‘out of the way’. O’Connell was himself accused of sacrificing a seat in County Meath in return for a place for his son Morgan.⁶⁰ Morgan had held the seat until 1840 when he was appointed first assistant-registrar of deeds for Ireland, at a salary of £1,200, leaving the way open for Matthew Elias Corbally to take the seat.⁶¹

Efforts were made to mobilise the Dublin parishes; a subscription was organised by the city election committee, but money continued to be a problem. The subscription does not appear to have been a great success as, unlike the parish subscriptions, no totals or lists of subscribers were published in the press in the run up to the election by the central committee. As late as 1 July Christopher Fitzsimons, O’Connell’s son-in-law and trusted political ally, confirmed that ‘Money is scarce and we are husbanding all for the City, where all will be wanted.’⁶² For their part, the Tories faced somewhat of a dilemma. They too had developed an organisational structure designed to maximise electoral success. The Metropolitan Conservative Association held weekly public meetings in Dublin and at election time district, parish and street committees were set up.⁶³ In previous elections these bodies had raised money and it had even been referred to as ‘the

⁵⁹ John O’Connell to O’Connell, 13 June 1841 (*O’Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2890).

⁶⁰ *Carlow Sentinel*, 10 July 1841.

⁶¹ Oliver McDonagh, *The Emancipist, Daniel O’Connell, 1830-47* (London, 1989), p.184.

⁶² Christopher Fitzsimons to O’Connell, 1 July 1841 (*O’Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2899).

⁶³ *D.E.M.*, 31 Mar. 1841.

Protestant rent'. In 1841, however, fundraising was a more delicate matter. The Tory press had long derided O'Connell as little more than a money-grubbing beggar, referring to the Repeal agitation as 'a device to extract money from the many for the benefit of one... a family concern - as private and domestic a job as any political swindler ever dared to propose to a duped and infatuated country.'⁶⁴

Great play had also been made of O'Connell's efforts to get a suitable running mate for the election in Dublin city. Referring to the issue, the *Dublin Evening Mail* in its editorial of 23 June 1841 says that 'it is money and not a man that is wanted' and separately publishes a highly derogatory ten verse poem headed 'Election Ditty -being a dialogue between dan and the Shan van Vaught'

Verse two gives a flavour of the sentiments expressed therein.

Then who will pay my share? says the dan van vaught
Then who will pay my share? says the dan van vaught
I wont says Lord Kildare;
Then you'd better look elsewhere
Since there are fools enough to spare, says the Shan van vaught.⁶⁵

It is not surprising, therefore, that Conservative funding was much less public in nature and money was more likely to flow from the candidate to the committees, rather than *vice versa*. In keeping with this holier than thou attitude to funding, neither the Metropolitan Conservative Association nor the Protestant Operatives Society appear to have initiated subscription funds in the run up to the elections. The conservative candidate, Edward

⁶⁴ Ibid., 28 Sept. 1842.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 23 June 1841.

Grogan, no doubt concerned at the drain on his own resources, let it be known that he would not be offended by fundraising among conservative supporters.⁶⁶ At a meeting of the Corporation of Joiners on Friday 25 June for the purpose of adopting measures for the approaching elections Grogan addressed the meeting and made reference to an idea that was, he said, being promoted by a Catholic priest in County Clare. The priest had recommended that his parishioners open an election indemnity fund and Grogan told his supporters that it was a suggestion 'which they might prudently follow, as some of our brethren had sustained losses owing to their adherence to the Protestant cause and they should be indemnified', Grogan was almost apologetic in suggesting that they adopt the tactics of the opposing camp, and attempting to pass it off as casually as possible, he added that 'He threw out this idea as one worthy of the attention of the local committees.'⁶⁷

There is nothing to suggest that Grogan's suggestion was acted upon and he may well have had to rely on his own resources together with whatever came his way from the Carlton Club. The evidence from the 1841 general election suggests that the *D.E.M.* may not have been entirely wrong when they referred to O'Connell's fundraising as a 'family concern'. In this election, with money so scarce, O'Connell's policy was to avoid expense where possible, mainly by pairing Repeal candidates with wealthy liberals, doing deals to avoid a contest and focusing available resources on just two contests; his own and his son, Daniel junior. As a result, relatively few Repeal candidates took the field. Ironically, of the twenty identifiable Repealers who stood, it was only Daniel O'Connell

⁶⁶ Ibid., 28 June 1841.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 28 June 1841.

senior and junior who were defeated. The fact that O'Connell spent most of his time and energy campaigning in Carlow, and the fact that he had made contingency plans to run in Meath and Cork, suggests that he may have felt that Dublin was not winnable. He was subsequently elected for Cork County while Luke White was unseated in Longford on petition, leaving 18 Repeal M.P.s. O'Connell's approach to the election was, characteristically, pragmatic. A large Repeal party in parliament would be of relatively little use to him were it not shoring up a Whig ministry. Since a Tory administration was anticipated, electoral gains were not really a priority for O'Connell and hard won funds were not spent on other than the essential electoral costs, his own and those of his immediate family.

No sooner had the dust settled on the general election in July than O'Connell was back on the hustings again. This time it was the elections being held under the new Municipal Reform Act of 1840.⁶⁸ The act had proved a disappointment in that it limited the powers of the new councils in comparison to their English counterparts and the weakness of the Whigs in the House of Commons combined with the Tory dominance in the Lords saw to it that the property qualification for municipal voters was kept high, at an annual valuation of £10. That Irish municipal reform had come at all was a considerable achievement on the part of O'Connell, for as Jacqueline Hill has shown, Irish urban corporations had, for the most part, been 'bastions of Protestant privilege'.⁶⁹ Through the 1830s the corporations engaged in a desperate rearguard defence of that privilege. In

⁶⁸ *An Act for the Regulation of Municipal Corporations in Ireland*, 3 & 4 Vict., c. 108 (10 Aug. 1840).

⁶⁹ Jacqueline Hill, *From patriots to unionists: Dublin civic politics and Irish Protestant patriotism, 1660-1840* (Oxford, 1997), p.362.

1831 a member of the Dublin city commons moved that: ‘should the proposed plan of reform . . . be carried into effect . . . it will in its effects disenfranchise the freemen of Ireland . . . and give the entire and exclusive power of returning the members to the popish priests and democracy.’⁷⁰ Between 1835 and 1840 no fewer than five bills were defeated but reform eventually came and on 10 August 1840 the Irish Municipal Reform Bill became law and in the process swept away most Irish corporations.⁷¹ Fifty-eight were dissolved and the elections under the revised franchise provided a great opportunity for O’Connell and his supporters to dominate most of the remaining southern Irish corporations.⁷² O’Connell concentrated his energies on Dublin where his Conservative opponents were determined to retain their hold on municipal power. More so than ever, the winning of the election depended on organisation and funding as the extension of the franchise meant that a huge logistical exercise had to be undertaken to get voters registered. At a meeting held in the Corn Exchange on 24 August 1841 to review progress in advance of the elections, T. M. Ray presented a report that showed the extent of what was involved. Copies of the rate books had to be made and the valuations checked ward by ward. Parochial lists were made with the amounts of tax due under the various headings of, ministers money, parish cess, grand jury, wide streets, pipe water, poor rate and police taxes.⁷³ If any supporter owed money under any of these headings it would have to be paid before they could be registered as voters.

⁷⁰ (Dublin Civic Archives, C1/JSC/12, f. 10), cited in *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁷¹ Hill *From patriots to unionists*, p. 366

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 379.

⁷³ *F.J.*, 25 Aug. 1841.

Ray recounted how difficulties had been encountered in getting information from the city authorities in relation to some of these taxes and how several thousand notices, two for each burgess⁷⁴, had to be served. According to Ray ‘to accomplish these objects, a very numerous staff was requisite.’⁷⁵ While the association was making every effort to organise and fund the municipal elections it was still troubled with the financial fall out from the general election. The demands of the Carlow voters who had been victimised for voting for Daniel Junior were putting a strain on limited resources. In the run up to the election in Carlow an indemnity fund had been set up in an attempt to reassure the electors. At a county meeting on 6 July 1841 a subscription was opened with ‘Captain Bryan subscribing £500 and Col. Butler £100, besides many minor subscriptions’.⁷⁶ The following day at a public meeting the Rev. Maher reassured the crowd that ‘if a necessity existed, the sum of thirty thousand pounds would be forthcoming to protect them.’⁷⁷ After the election it became clear that the promised protection would be called for and an attempt was made to spread the burden by extending the indemnity fund beyond Carlow. At the association’s meeting on 26 July 1841 O’Connell launched what he termed the ‘Counties League’ calling for rallies to be held and subscriptions raised ‘not on account of Carlow alone ... but on account of other places as well.’⁷⁸ The response was not impressive and the association was forced to dip into its own funds to assist the Carlow voters. From 9 August 1841, it was agreed that half of the Repeal rent over one hundred pounds each week would go to the counties league.⁷⁹ Even this appears to have been

⁷⁴ The official title for a qualified municipal voter.

⁷⁵ Report by T.M. Ray to meeting held on 24 Aug. 1841 to review progress of municipal election campaign, *F.J.* 25 Aug. 1841.

⁷⁶ *F.J.*, 7 July 1841.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 July 1841.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 July 1841.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 10 Aug. 1841.

grudging as the promised amount was quickly reduced and in the last week of August 1841 when the rent came to £277 10s. 8d., only £50 was voted to the counties league.⁸⁰

O'Connell maintained that 'The demands from Carlow are exorbitant' but added resignedly, that 'as far as we have means, they must be met . . . The association would send you three or four times as much but for the enormous expense of carrying Dublin at the municipal election.'⁸¹ The contrast in the electoral issues confronting O'Connell in Carlow as compared with the Dublin municipal elections is striking. Both were costly but for very different reasons. Carlow was, of course, a county constituency and the obstacle to winning the popular vote was the familiar one of voters fearing landlord retribution if they were to vote for a Repealer, or for that matter, a liberal. It was normal practice for tenants to pay their rent up to six months in arrears. This was referred to as the 'hanging-gale' and it meant that a tenant could be hard pressed if the landlord called on him to pay these arrears at short notice. For this reason, the greatest expense in this election came after the polls had closed. In fact, over two months after the election, O'Connell's lieutenant in Carlow, K.T. Buggy wrote to warn that;

There is every prospect of our worst fears being realised regarding the threatened prosecutions in County Carlow. A very large sum has already been expended in relieving electors from the pressure of ruinous demands; but the claims which have been made on the counties league, though very numerous, are trivial when compared with those impending, for the "hot Season" of vengeance did not commence until yesterday (the 29th).⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid., 31 Aug. 1841.

⁸¹ O'Connell to Edmond Smithwick, 9 Oct. 1841 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2921).

⁸² *F.J.*, 5 Oct. 1841. Buggy's reference to the 'hot season' of vengeance commencing, is most likely a reference to the commencement of the Carlow (Michelmas) quarter sessions.

In Dublin lack of money was also an obstacle to electoral success but in this instance the principal expense came in advance of the election. To exercise their right to vote electors had to involve themselves in a good deal of effort and expense. They were required to present themselves at the revision court together with documentary evidence of their property valuation and proof that they had paid all of their municipal taxes. There were up to sixteen different taxes to be accounted for and each aspiring burgess was likely to be challenged by counsel engaged by the opposition. The Tory monopoly of power in the city was being challenged by the extension of the franchise. Freemen lost their municipal franchise when the 1840 Municipal Reform Act replaced it with a £10 householder franchise. The effect was to give Catholics a two to one electoral majority and was the reason why Dublin Corporation opposed the reform on the grounds that it would create 'a popish ascendancy' in all the corporate towns in Ireland.⁸³ As had been the case in the county constituencies, the best defence against a majority popular vote was to use financial disincentives to deter voters from voting for their preferred candidate. In Dublin this rearguard action was less effective than it had been in the county constituencies. If voters were prepared to go to the trouble and expense of paying their taxes and registering as a burgess they were unlikely to encounter a great deal of intimidation, for, while some employers did attempt to influence their workforce, there tended not to be an urban equivalent of the 'hanging gale' and accordingly, the ultimate sanction of eviction could not be held over voters.

⁸³ Jacqueline Hill, 'The protestant response to repeal: the case of the Dublin working class', F. S. L. Lyons & R. A. J. Hawkins eds., *Ireland under the Union: varieties of tension* (Oxford, 1980), pp 35-68; John Dallas Edge, *An epitome of the case of Irish corporations* (Dublin, 1839), p. 50.

The key to success in this more democratic environment was the ability to get one's supporters registered, paying their expenses if necessary, ensuring that they paid their taxes, advancing funds for that purpose if necessary, and defending them at the revision court against the efforts to have their claims struck out. Municipal taxes had to be paid by 31 August 1841 and in the days and weeks running up to the deadline the newspapers had given detailed instructions as to the procedure for becoming a burgess⁸⁴ and printed notices in bold print urging voters to pay their taxes.⁸⁵ The revision courts began sitting on 1 October and the *Freeman's Journal* reported that 'there was no circumstance connected with the court in any way which was not protested against' by the Tory barristers, 'the constitution of the court, the manner of furnishing the lists, the lists themselves, the acts of the churchwardens and the town clerks'⁸⁶ On the second day, fifty liberal voters had their claims to become burgesses struck out for non payment of taxes, with a like number of Tory voters struck out for the same reason and the opposing counsel continued to dispute some other cases.⁸⁷

Both sides did their best to minimise the expense placed on their supporters. For example, a potential Tory voter, Mr. Thomas Wilson, solicitor, of 7 Lower Gloucester Street sought to be enrolled as a burgess. He was challenged on the grounds that he did not have a receipt for the minister's money. The collector a Mr Warburton who was sympathetic to the Tory cause, stated in evidence that 'I find Mr. Wilson marked paid'. On cross-

⁸⁴ *F.J.*, 11 May 1841.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 27 Aug. 1841.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 Oct. 1841.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 Oct. 1841.

examination Mr. Warburton admitted to having given Mr Wilson credit and the claim was rejected.⁸⁸ In other cases it was the practice for agents of the candidates to pay the tax on behalf of the voter on the understanding that it would be repaid at some later stage. This was the case with a Mr Shanley who was opposed by barristers for the Tories but evidence was given by Edward Hogg, that on 31 August he had paid the minister's money on behalf of Shanley and others to Mr McCormack the collector. In such cases the claim succeeded.⁸⁹

These legal tussles went on for the twenty-five days the revision courts sat and apart from the time and effort involved it was also an expensive exercise involving claimant's expenses, advances to pay taxes and the cost of legal counsel. The level of organisation involved in the run up to the election was a testament to the electoral abilities of O'Connell and his lieutenants, particularly T.M. Ray who was responsible for most of the administrative groundwork. The local organisations also played their part. The wards convened meetings and nominated representatives who convened under the aegis of the association and selected the candidates. Four candidates were selected for each of the fifteen wards, each was required to pay fifty pounds towards the cost of the election and the individual wards also raised subscriptions to cover their costs. These were again coveted by O'Connell who was quick to suggest that a ward club might assist voters with their outstanding taxes by advancing 'its members a loan from the general

⁸⁸ Ibid., 6 Oct. 1841.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 9 Oct. 1841.

contributions.’⁹⁰ It was also made abundantly clear to voters that success lay in voting the entire ticket and that ‘a refusal to support the four selected candidates will be considered a dereliction of duty in any liberal elector.’

The effort and the expense paid off and O’Connell was swept to victory winning 47 of the 60 seats on the corporation and becoming the first Catholic lord mayor of Dublin since 1688. The centralised control of the association over all aspects of the election, from voter registration, candidate selection, down to vote management, was an example of the type of organisation that would become the hallmark of machine politics. The accounts of the Repeal Association reveal that the ‘Expenses of municipal revision and election and preparation for same including the expenses of clerks, stationery etc.’ came to £1047 16s, of which £205 was advanced by the ward clubs, while ‘cash advanced to the counties league and relief of other cases of oppression’ came to £2085 9s. 5d.⁹¹ Not alone did the municipal elections cost less than Carlow but they involved expenditure that could be estimated, measured and controlled unlike Carlow or other county constituency contests, where the cost of the election could depend on the relative vindictiveness of the landlords. The Dublin municipal elections of 1841 provided a window to electoral politics of the future. They showed how democratic reforms would be translated into political progress by those who had the resources to mobilise the expanded electorate.

⁹⁰ Meeting held on 24 Aug. 1841 to review progress of municipal election campaign, *F.J.* 25 Aug. 1841.

⁹¹ Report by T.M. Ray of Repeal association income and expenditure for the period 1 Jan. 1841 to 25 Mar. 1842, to meeting of the association 4 Apr. 1842. *F.J.*, 5 Apr. 1842.

During O'Connell's mayoralty Repeal agitation was effectively suspended as he devoted himself to the impartial administration of his municipal duties. He acquitted himself well, even earning a unanimous vote of approbation from the corporation when he retired, but the effects of his Dublin diversion were clearly reflected in the modest amounts subscribed to the rent while he was in office.⁹² In the twelve months of his term, the Repeal rent came to £5,440,⁹³ which was well below the total for 1841 of £8,685.⁹⁴ His high profile on the Dublin stage saw to it that the take for the tribute in October 1842 was a respectable £2,033⁹⁵ for the city but the lack of activity nationally and the absence of published figures suggest that the take from the rest of the country was low. Certainly O'Connell's personal finances seem to have reached a new low about this time. In February 1842 he found himself in the embarrassing position of being asked by the Board of the National Bank, of which he was a governor, to address his debt to the bank of almost £30,500,⁹⁶ and by July he was writing to Fitzpatrick saying: 'Want is literally killing me. I have grown ten years older from my incessant pecuniary anxiety.'⁹⁷ And also in July, he was desperately embarrassed by his inability to pay a bill of £426 to Edmond Smithwick, a loyal supporter and lynchpin of his organisation in Kilkenny.⁹⁸ But if his term as mayor had sapped his financial resources, it does seem to have renewed his political appetite. He no longer equivocated between agitation and alliance. The Whigs were out of office, and unable to advance his agenda in Westminster, he finally decided to throw himself wholeheartedly into Repeal agitation at home.

⁹² *F.J.*, 2 Nov. 1842.

⁹³ Based on weekly figures published in the *F.J.* between 1 Nov. 1841 and 31 Oct. 1842.

⁹⁴ 'Abstract of Repeal rent', O'Connell Papers, N.L.I., Ms. 13636 (8).

⁹⁵ *D.E.M.*, 31 Oct. 1842.

⁹⁶ Oliver MacDonagh, *The Emancipist; Daniel O'Connell 1830-47* (London, 1989), p. 217.

⁹⁷ O'Connell to P. V. Fitzpatrick, 11 July 1842 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2967).

⁹⁸ O'Connell to Edmund Smithwick, 25 July 1842 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2970).

The funds of the Repeal association were a mere £253 12s. 2d. on 1 September 1842⁹⁹ and the rent for the week ended 5 September was only £45 14s. 10d.¹⁰⁰ Yet, in the space of a short few months these modest sums would be eclipsed in what was to become a phenomenon in political mobilisation and funding. O’Connell’s renewed zeal manifested itself in his reorganisation of the association and the measures he took to spread the agitation across the country. The move that, above all, was to kick-start the Repeal agitation was the decision to launch Repeal missions into the four provinces. At the association’s meeting of 5 September 1842 the mission ‘to organise the agitation of the Repeal of the union and the collection of the rent’, was launched.¹⁰¹ John O’Connell was sent to Connaught, T. M. Ray went to Munster and W. J. O’Neill Daunt was appointed Repeal director for Leinster in place of O’Connell, who was still engaged in his mayoral duties. Thomas Steele was to go to Ulster but was asked to ‘delay his mission’ until his doctor gave him permission to travel. The other three set out armed with letters of introduction from O’Connell addressed to influential Repeal sympathisers; more often than not these were the local bishop or priest. O’Neill Daunt recalls in his journal how they set out as ‘hopeful adventurers’ to ‘Repeal the union with the sum of £8 sterling each (the amount of the *viaticum* given us by the association).’¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Audited accounts of the Repeal association for the period 25 Mar. 1842 to 1 Sept. 1842, *F.J.*, 6 Sept. 1842.

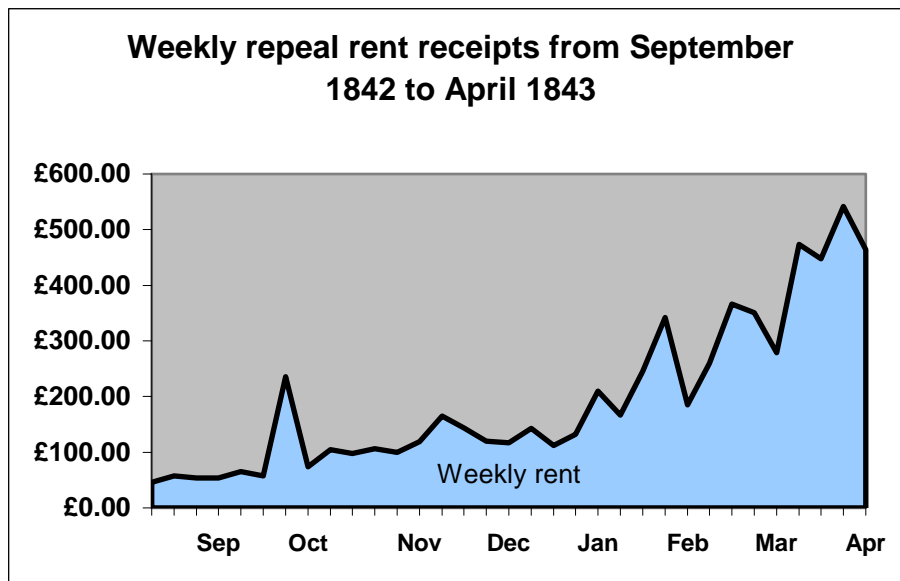
¹⁰⁰ *F.J.*, 6 Sept. 1842.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² William J. O’Neill Daunt, *A life spent for Ireland; being selections from the journals of the late W. J. O’Neill Daunt* (London, 1896), p.28.

They need not have worried, for such was the hospitality extended to them that they would have incurred few expenses. When O'Neill Daunt reached Mullingar, the first town on his trip, he was greeted by the bishop of Meath and stayed in the bishop's house, moving on the following day, to the bishop of Ardagh.¹⁰³ In each town they visited the missionaries held a public meeting where Repeal wardens were appointed and they 'urged upon the auditory the necessity of perseverance and energy in carrying out the system of organisation by wardens and collectors' which was 'fully explained'¹⁰⁴. The success of the mission was soon reflected in the Repeal rent receipts, which went from less than sixty pounds per week when they set out in September to over five hundred pounds per week by April 1843. (Figure 3.5)

Figure 3.5



Source: Weekly figures for Repeal rent published in *Freeman's Journal* between Sept. 1842 and Apr. 1843.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ Report of Repeal meeting held in Kilrush, Co. Clare on 15 Jan. 1843, *F.J.*, 19 Jan. 1843.

Putting in place a network of wardens and collectors throughout the country was the key to O'Connell's strategy, and as had been the case with the Catholic rent, the cooperation of the clergy was critical to the success of the Repeal rent. Reports back from the missionaries, listing the priests who joined them on public platforms in support of the agitation, attested to the fact that such cooperation was not lacking.¹⁰⁵ It was not just the increase in rent receipts that pointed to the success of the new wave of agitation. As early as 28 September 1842 the Tory press was showing signs of concern. The *Dublin Evening Mail* in its editorial referred to the agitation as 'a swindling transaction' and said that whether one takes the view that it is 'a scheme to extort money from the people, or a plot to organise disaffection and revolt' it is the duty of the govt to put a stop to proceedings that at once 'rob the people of their money and tend to disturb the peace'¹⁰⁶. It considered that it had, as yet, not taken hold of the peasantry, the gentry were opposed to it but it was concerned at the level of clerical support and it printed a list of the catholic clergy who had backed the agitation. It went on: 'It cannot be denied that, weak and unorganised as Repeal is at present, it is now backed with two very influential bodies - the Roman Catholic priests and the new radical corporations.'¹⁰⁷

It was the support of the parish priests and their curates that allowed the Repeal agitation break out of the towns. An example of this is seen in the promise made by Michael Leahy when writing from Newcastle (County Limerick) to invite O'Connell to a dinner and meeting in the town. He assures him that all the surrounding parishes would be

¹⁰⁵ *D.E.M.*, 28 Sept. 1842.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

represented, for it was the intention of all the Catholic clergy ‘to join the procession at the head of their respective flocks.’¹⁰⁸ There were some dissenting voices and when T.M. Ray addressed the people of Kilrush as part of his Munster mission, some people objected to ‘Catholic clergymen taking part in public meetings.’ In response Rev. Mr. Kelly P.P. Cooraclea, stated that ‘if they absented themselves from such meetings they would not act in accordance with their duties to the people.’¹⁰⁹

In Britain, Lord Shrewsbury, a leading Catholic Whig, voiced his concerns at what he perceived as O’Connell’s dangerous radicalism and the clergy’s role in stirring up the people. On the clergy he said ‘Nay, most persons would consider it the duty of all, both clergy and others, rather to allay than to irritate, - to endeavour to make the people contented even under real grievances, than to sour and exasperate them, as is now too often done, under those which are either fancied or at least grossly exaggerated. There are circumstances when ignorance is bliss, and I think if the people of Ireland were less instructed in their grievances, they would be much less conscious of them’¹¹⁰ and taking a swipe at O’Connell he said: ‘have not people long surmised that a continuance of the agitation in Ireland, is much more likely to augment “the rent”, than to benefit the country’.¹¹¹ Shrewsbury’s pamphlet drew a response from O’Connell who referring to

¹⁰⁸ Michael Leahy to O’Connell, 17 Dec. 1842, *F.J.*, 6 Jan. 1843.

¹⁰⁹ *F.J.*, 19 Jan. 1843.

¹¹⁰ John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, *A second letter to Ambrose Lisle Phillipps, Esq. from the Earl of Shrewsbury. On the present posture of affairs* (London, 1843), p. 23.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

the tribute wrote that ‘the labourer is worthy of his hireYes: I am - I say it proudly - I am the hired servant of Ireland; and I glory in my servitude.’¹¹²

What Shrewsbury failed to understand about the rent was that instead of the agitation augmenting the rent, the reality was that it was the rent that was augmenting the agitation. In many respects the rent was the agitation. In the booklet of instructions and duties for Repeal wardens published in 1843, four of the first five duties relate entirely to the collection of the rent.¹¹³ The organisation of the association was geared to one purpose; expansion. Rent meant members and members meant power. It was a simple formula that had worked for emancipation and O’Connell clearly believed that he could again wring concessions from a Tory ministry by similar means.

In November O’Connell took a no nonsense approach to reorganising the Dublin wardens and showed clearly that he made little distinction between agitation and funding. On 4 November the Repeal wardens from the city were again summoned to a meeting in the Corn Exchange ‘for the purposes of ascertaining what parishes were most active in the agitation’. A list of the amounts collected by each warden was read out and O’Connell declared that he had come to the meeting ‘to ascertain what parishes had struggled for the Repeal agitation with the greatest ardour and zeal’ and he let it be known how he measured zealous agitation, stating that ‘only three or four of the wards which had made

¹¹² *The Nation*, 22 Oct. 1842.

¹¹³ Loyal National Repeal Association, *Instructions for the appointment of Repeal wardens and collectors of the Repeal fund, their duties &c.* (Dublin, 1843).

satisfactory returns.’ In a move clearly designed to embarrass the under performers, it was resolved that the wardens would meet once a week and read aloud how much had been collected by each of them and that the secretary of the association would keep a book into which would be entered the weekly amount collected by each warden and collector.¹¹⁴

The more dramatic increase in the rent occurred from the beginning of 1843 when O’Connell added his personal effort to the campaign. After his term as mayor had ended he spent some time in Derrynane but on 12 January he penned an address to the people of Ireland in which he declared that 1843 would be ‘emphatically the Repeal year’ In the address he cited the progress being made by the anti corn law league. ‘It has adopted its anti corn law league rent, of which our Catholic rent was the prototype’ and he called for three million enrolled Repealers. ‘The funds that would thus be contributed by the impoverished people of Ireland would be three times greater than what the anti Corn Law league proposes to raise for its purposes.’ He went on to link every popular issue to the cause of Repeal, promising:

Give me three millions of Repealers and these will be the consequences:

1. The tithe rent charge will be abolished
2. Conscience will be free
3. Education will be free
4. The poor rates having become unnecessary will be abolished

¹¹⁴ Report of meeting of Repeal wardens held at the Corn Exchange, 4 Nov. 1842, in, *The Nation*, 5 Nov. 1842.

5. The grand Jury cess will be abolished
6. The landlord's rights will be respected
7. The honest tenant's possession will be secured
8. The franchise will be extended to all male adults
9. The vote by ballot will be established
10. Irish manufactures will revive and flourish
11. The absentee rents and surplus revenue will be expended in Ireland to the amount of six millions a year
12. THE UNION WILL BE REPEALED AND IRELAND WILL BE FREE.¹¹⁵

This populist catch-all manifesto further boosted the support for Repeal and while he addressed himself to the people of Ireland there was little doubt but that, essentially, it was the Catholic people of Ireland who were listening. In theory there was no reason why Repeal could not have been supported by Protestants, indeed Jacqueline Hill has suggested that the Protestant working class in Dublin had good cause to support Repeal given the economic decline that affected their trades after the union.¹¹⁶ That they did not had more to do with the confessionalisation of Irish society than any economic imperatives. O'Connell was after all 'the Liberator', the hero of Catholic Ireland. Those who opposed Repeal did so, in the main, because they feared an Ireland dominated by a Catholic parliament in College Green while those who supported Repeal looked forward to such a prospect. O'Connell's year as mayor was a foretaste of what Repeal might bring. Every effort was made to reassure the Protestant minority that the new order would

¹¹⁵ Letter from Daniel O'Connell to the people of Ireland, 12 Jan. 1843, *F.J.*, 20 Jan. 1843.

¹¹⁶ Hill, 'The protestant response to Repeal: the case of the Dublin working class', p. 35.

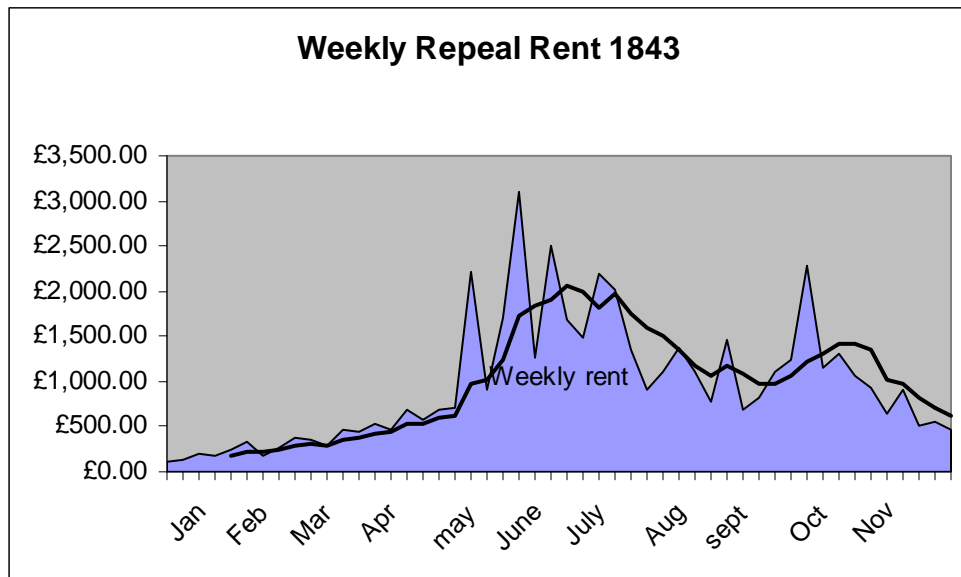
be fair and even-handed but nothing could diminish the fact that O'Connell commanded eighty percent of the seats. Even before Repeal became the rallying point, the temperance movement had shown how Catholic Ireland had adopted a cause and made it their own. It had given a very clear signal that mass mobilisation along religious lines was possible and that if O'Connell was prepared to lead, Catholic Ireland was prepared to follow.

The one exception to the overwhelming sense of confessional polarisation in the political sphere was the emergence of *The Nation* and the group of young ideologues who were to become associated with it. Chief among them was Thomas Davis, a Protestant who espoused a form of inclusive cultural nationalism. The timing of the launch of *The Nation* on 15 October 1842 could not have been more opportune, for it proved to be an organ for nationalist propaganda that would help to swell the ranks of the Repeal Association as no other newspaper had done before. Equally, Davis and his Young Ireland colleagues, as they became known, were to lend a more radical and youthful aspect to the association. However, their youth, their idealism and their brand of romantic nationalism, which proved an asset through the heady days of 1843, would ultimately bring them into conflict with O'Connell, the old, pragmatic liberal.

In February 1843 O'Connell engaged in a three-day debate in the corporation and his motion in favour of Repeal was carried by 41 votes to 15. The publicity surrounding the debate further added to the intensity of the agitation and from that point the political

temperature continued to rise. The first of the great meetings, termed ‘Monster Meetings’ by *The Times*, took place in Trim, Co. Meath on 16 March¹¹⁷ and the rent flowed in to the association in Dublin in such volumes that T. M. Ray had to increase his permanent staff of clerks from ten to fifty over the course of 1843.¹¹⁸ The Repeal rent came to £48,706 in 1843, which was more than twice the amount raised by the catholic rent in 1828. The weekly rent peaked in the third week of June when a staggering £3,103 was received. (figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6



Source: Weekly totals for the Repeal rent published in *Freeman's Journal* 1843.

As the funds increased so too did the scale and complexity of the events being staged. The meetings were preceded by a formal procession involving horsemen, carriages, bands, trades marching behind their banners and thousands on foot. O’Connell was met

¹¹⁷ Oliver MacDonagh, *The emancipist: Daniel O’Connell, 1830-47* (London, 1989), p. 227.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

outside the town and transported as the centrepiece of the procession to the site of the meeting. The oratory at the meeting was directed more towards those who would read it in the newspapers the following day, for though stirring, the sheer scale of the gatherings meant that only a fraction of the crowd could actually hear the speeches.¹¹⁹ But that hardly mattered for this was politics as theatre. O'Connell was a celebrity, that in itself drew the crowds. The meetings were entertainments, just as the election campaigns of the 1820s had been: there were 42 bands at the Tara meeting, 10,000 horsemen, a harpist.¹²⁰ They came as they would to a fair or carnival; there was excitement, spectacle and conviviality. It was as much a social event as it was political and it drew the community together in fashion similar to sporting or religious gatherings.

The religious parallels extend also to funding. O'Connell not only enlisted the Catholic clergy as his link to the rural communities but he adopted the methods of the church to some extent in the manner in which he raised funds. Publishing lists of names and amounts, was the equivalent of the priest reading the list of dues from the altar; it served the dual purpose of advertising the generosity of the local luminary who gave five or ten pounds or the humble artisan who gave more than the average for his class while at the same time it shamed those who were seen to give less than their station in life allowed or who were conspicuous by the absence of their name. From its launch in 1840, O'Connell had made it clear that he wanted the Repeal Association to reach out to 'even the most

¹¹⁹ Gary Owens, 'Hedge schools of politics: O'Connell's monster meetings' in *History Ireland*, Spring 1994, pp 35-40.

¹²⁰ Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 47.

humble'.¹²¹ The evidence of the monster meetings and the Repeal rent illustrate the extent to which he succeeded. Reports from the wardens show that much of the rent was subscribed in modest amounts. In Dublin a warden in Summerhill related to a Repeal meeting how he and a colleague had initially got eight subscriptions in one or two small streets in the parish, called again and got forty six and 'this day got in his list seventy-six subscribers and collected fourteen shillings,'¹²² which means that these hard won subscriptions averaged less than two pence per subscriber. Another tireless warden in Carrick-on-suir reported that he was 'collecting from 150 of our women here at one penny a week, and ere many weeks expect to have that number trebled'¹²³ The women of Ringsend in Dublin also sent a number of modest subscriptions to the Repeal rent,¹²⁴ and the 'the workmen of St. James's parish' placed a notice of a meeting in the newspapers, 'the operatives of the parish having expressed a wish to cooperate and assist in the collection of the compensation fund.'¹²⁵

Support for the Repeal rent came therefore almost exclusively from Catholics but within that community it is fair to say that at its peak the rent was coming from across a wide spectrum. The regional variation was also less pronounced (Figure 3.7)

¹²¹ 'The address of the National Association of Ireland. To the people of Ireland', *F.J.*, 22 Apr. 1840.

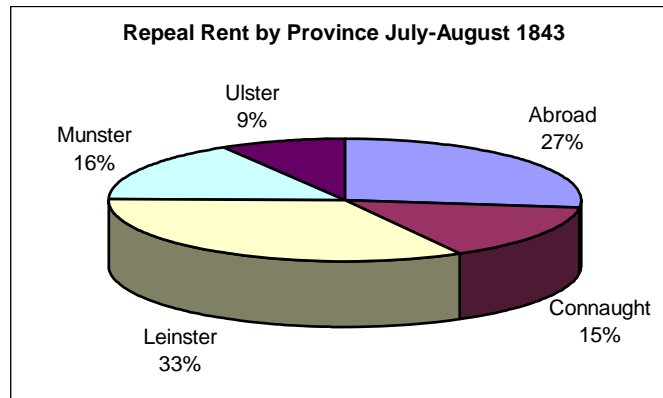
¹²² Report of meeting of Ballybough/Summerhill Repeal wardens, *F.J.*, 28 Apr. 1841.

¹²³ Account of proceedings of Repeal association meeting on 24 May 1841, *F.J.*, 25 May 1841.

¹²⁴ 5s. 7d. in week ended 11 sept. 1843, *F.J.*, 15 Sept. 1843 and 5s. 1d. in week ended 25 Sept. 1843, *F.J.*, 29 Sept. 1843.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11 Nov. 1841.

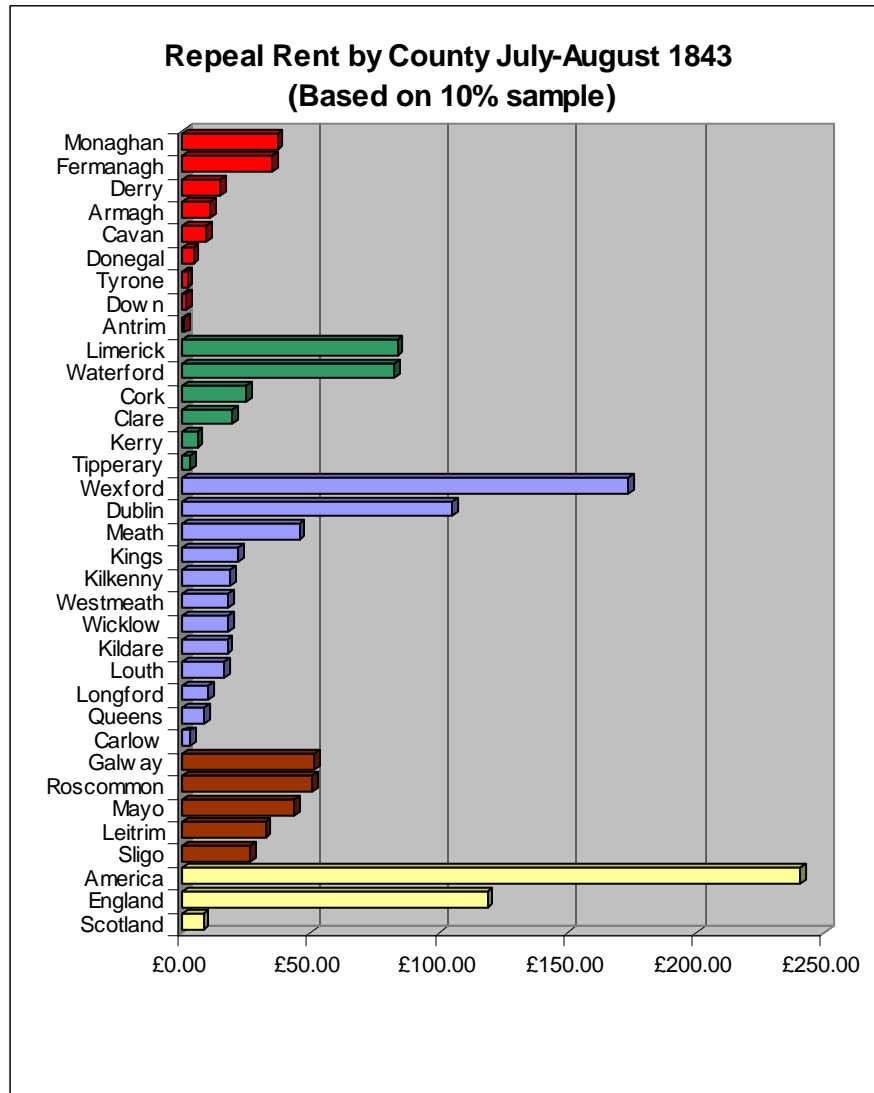
Figure 3.7.



Source: Listings of payments to the Repeal rent published in *F J.*, July-August 1843. (Based on a sample of 320 payments which represents 10% of the total payments in the period.)

Leinster still dominates but to a lesser extent than previously. The returns from Connaught show that strong progress had been made there and also to a lesser extent in the northern counties (Figure 3.8). While these figures are based on a sample of the payments made, and further analysis of the figures needs to be done, it does, nevertheless, suggest that support in Munster may not have been as solid as some commentators would have suggested and contributions from abroad, particularly America, had increased dramatically in 1843.

Figure 3.8.



Source: Listings of contributions to the Repeal rent published in *F.J.*, July-August 1843.

The strong financial support from America came at a price, however. With every contribution came a communication from the organisers of the subscription in America and the general tone of these epistles suggests a degree of anti-British militancy that ran well ahead of even O’Connell’s most provocative outpourings. One such letter from New York on 15 June 1843 threatened that if ‘England should persist in putting down Repeal by physical force’ they would ‘besides raising a force of fifty or sixty thousand men to

march into Canada, They will purchase as many Baltimore clippers as will make reprisals upon British commerce; yes, and send one hundred thousand stand of arms- besides ordnance and munitions of war – into Ireland.’¹²⁶ The Irish-American newspapers were also given to hyperbole when it came to the national question. The response of the *Boston Pilot* to the Tory victory in the 1841 general election was to relate the dire consequences for the people of Ireland, upon whom it said ‘Every species of outrage upon the feelings and freedoms of the people will be daily committed by the orange sheriffs and servile police, hirling ingrates, and minions of a rapacious and blood loving faction’ and identifies Robert Peel as ‘The demon prince of this unholy but triumphant league’.¹²⁷ While American dollars could span the Atlantic, the problem for O’Connell was that his control over Irish-America could not. Because of distance he could never hope to maintain the level of control he held over the organisation at home. Even in Britain O’Connell could influence matters directly by his physical presence and his ability, or his agent’s ability, to deal with the activists face to face. The lack of direct access to his supporters in America allowed for disputes to develop such as the problems that arose over O’Connell’s opposition to slavery.

The very different views held by the American Repeal associations is illustrated by a letter from Gerrit Smith from New York State who wrote to O’Connell in July 1843 to say that the reason so little money is sent to him by the American abolitionists is because they are generally poor but also because ‘we cannot connect ourselves with the Repeal

¹²⁶ Letter read at Repeal association meeting 10 July 1843, *F.J.*, 13 July 1843.

¹²⁷ Report from *The Boston Pilot* 7 Aug. 1841 reproduced in *F.J.*, 10 Sept. 1841.

associations of this country... I need not say to you that our Repeal associations are generally proslavery'.¹²⁸ At a Repeal Association meeting on the 10 May 1843

O'Connell clarified the association's position in relation to slavery and said that 'We may not get money from America after this declaration, but even if we should not, we do not want blood-stained money ... those who commit, and those who countenance the crime of slavery I regard as enemies of Ireland, and I desire to have no sympathy or support from them.'¹²⁹ This was an example of where O'Connell's idealism overcame his pragmatism and it is a testament to his liberal credentials that he was prepared to jeopardise the very valuable support from America rather than compromise on the slavery issue. As it happened, the American support continued strongly in the months that followed. For example, of the £2,496 received in the week ended 3 July 1843, £1,099 or almost half came from America¹³⁰ and over the following ten weeks money from America accounted for eighteen percent of the total received by the association.¹³¹

The meetings grew over the summer, the crowds getting larger and the anxiety of those who favoured the union intensifying. Commenting in his diary on O'Connell's triumphant entry into Limerick in April 1843, John Locke, a Protestant from Newcastle West, estimated that the parade, which he viewed from a friends drawing room window in the crescent, came to 30,000 or 40,000 people and while he remarked that there was no rioting or drunkenness, he concluded that: 'The repetition of these vast assemblages must

¹²⁸ Gerrit Smith to O'Connell, 28 July 1843 (*O'Connell corres.*, vii, no. 3027a).

¹²⁹ *The Pilot*, 12 May 1843.

¹³⁰ *F.J.*, 7 July 1843.

¹³¹ Based on a ten percent sample of all monies received between 26 June and 4 Sept. 1843, published in *F.J.*

end in bloodshed and civil war.’¹³² The season of meetings was to culminate with a massive gathering in Clontarf, outside Dublin, on 8 October 1843. At the eleventh hour the government proclaimed the Clontarf meeting and O’Connell and the association cancelled the gathering late on the 7 October. It has often been suggested that it was the cancellation of the Clontarf monster meeting that signalled a decline in the fortunes of Repeal. The figures reveal that, in fact, the decline in the rent had begun in early July 1843 and that the cancellation of the meeting and the subsequent arrest of O’Connell and eight others actually had the effect of reviving the Repeal rent, suggesting a wave of support for O’Connell rather than disappointment at what might have been seen as a climbdown on his part. (See fig. 3.6)

The recovery was, however, short lived and by the end of 1843 the weekly take was again being measured in hundreds rather than thousands of pounds. In terms of popular politics, what O’Connell had achieved in 1843 was truly phenomenal. He had in part created and in part capitalised on the rise of Catholic Ireland. He had emancipated Catholics in 1829 and spent a decade trying to put that into practical effect, seeking ‘Justice for Ireland’ or fair play for Catholics. In the forties, circumstances dictated a change of approach and he set out to restore a parliament in College Green. He convinced Catholics that he would lead them to their own Irish nation with its own parliament where they would control eighty percent of the representation. What he was really trying to do in 1843 was to convince his old rival Peel that, such was his hold over the people of Ireland that it could

¹³² Diary of John Locke, Valuer, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, containing informed observations on contemporary political and social affairs including the Devon commission, the famine and O’Connell’s monster meetings. December 1840- July 1849, (N.L.I., MS 3566).

not be governed without his acquiescence and that realising this, Peel would be forced to the negotiating table. O'Connell knew that to succeed he had to stay within the law but his faith in the law was too great. He had not considered that his staying within the law did not stop Peel bending the law, as he did when he proclaimed the Clontarf meeting and arrested O'Connell.

1843 was not the Repeal year nor was it ever likely to have been, but O'Connell must have been disappointed at the poor return for a campaign that had seen him at the peak of his powers in mobilising public opinion. Clontarf was therefore a watershed, for despite the increase in the Repeal rent that followed it, and the fact that financial support in early 1844 was solid enough (£7,598 in the first 3 months of 1844),¹³³ it would have been an embarrassment if compared to the sums being recorded twelve months earlier. The financial fortunes of the association took a dramatic turn on 30 May 1844 when O'Connell and his fellow traversers were imprisoned. The rent immediately leapt from £500 per week to £2596 15s. 8d. in the first week in June, although this included a single payment of £1,000 from Boston.¹³⁴ The following week the rent came to £3229 13s. 4d. and it was pointed out that the largest single amount from outside the country had been £17.¹³⁵ The wave of support continued through June, £3389 14s. 9d. being recorded in the third week and £3,178 11s. 1d. in the fourth week. It would have been hard to sustain such incredible amounts and the *Freeman's Journal* said as much when it pointed out that

¹³³ Calculated from weekly totals published in *F.J.*, Jan. to Apr. 1844.

¹³⁴ Repeal rent for week ending 3 June 1844, *F.J.*, 4 June 1844.

¹³⁵ Repeal rent for week ending 10 June 1844, *F.J.*, 11 June 1844.

even at the height of the monster meetings in 1843 only once had the rent exceeded £3,000.¹³⁶

When O’Connell and his fellow martyrs were released on 6 September the flow of funds had reduced from a torrent to a strong flow but in the absence of any new initiative it quickly fell back to the more modest pre-incarceration levels. O’Connell scaled back on agitation, he toyed with the possibility of a federalist solution, telling a meeting of the Repeal Association on 27 May 1844 that he regarded federalists as political friends.¹³⁷ The impetus that had driven the movement in the summer of 1843 was gone and in its absence divisions that had remained beneath the surface began to emerge. The faction that had developed around *The Nation* lost patience and dissented from the federalist idea. When O’Connell’s overture to the federalists failed he was forced into a holding position, trying to sustain the Repeal association while he most likely awaited the return of the Whigs. In the absence of agitation or any other initiative the Repeal rent declined dramatically in 1845 with £17,824 being the total to 22 December 1845.¹³⁸

O’Connell was now seventy and his health was beginning to fail. The young men who had helped revitalise the movement in 1843 were now a distinct and disaffected group within the association. The public spat between O’Connell and Davis on 26 May 1845 brought the split into the open while at the same time Robert Peel was using the Colleges

¹³⁶ *F.J.*, 25 June 1844.

¹³⁷ *D.E.P.*, 28 May 1844.

¹³⁸ Abstract of Repeal rent (N.L.I., O’Connell papers, MS 13636 (8)).

Bill to divide and conquer, creating a split in the ranks of the bishops and the association.¹³⁹ In August 1845, O'Connell, seeing the prospect of an election in the offing, tried to re-orientate the organisation and put it on an election footing. Earlier in 1845 he treated the association to a characteristically upbeat assessment of how the cost of returning Repeal members of parliament could be minimised. Acknowledging that 'Meritorious men are frequently deterred from presenting themselves at the hustings, and constituencies are often deterred from selecting the best man by an apprehension that contests cannot fail to involve great expense', he went on to break these expenses down under four headings. Firstly, he cites the sheriffs' expenses for setting up polling booths etc, which he maintained, should come to no more than £100 for each candidate. Secondly he maintained that the payment of agents could be discounted as an expense if the professional agent, required in each booth by law, were to volunteer his services. Thirdly he considered the cost of 'treating' voters. Payment for transport and refreshment for voters by the candidate was, he said, illegal and that each parish should send their electors to the poll without any expense to the candidate.¹⁴⁰ The fourth expense, that of books and printing, he dismissed as merely incidental and concluded that Repeal members can, therefore, be returned at the expense of 'only a few hundred pounds'.¹⁴¹

By August registry wardens had replaced Repeal wardens and T.M. Ray was reporting that 'We are doing all that we can to work out the Registry Plan. We have sent the

¹³⁹ Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁰ O'Connell's assertion that the 'treating' of voters was illegal is only valid if interpreted in the strictest terms, that is, as bribery. In fact the 'treating' of voters did not become illegal until the passing of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1883 (46 & 47 Vict. c. 51).

¹⁴¹ *The Nation*, 4 Jan. 1845.

enclosed circular to the clergy to get “Registry Wardens” named, and the Instruction Papers etc. are printing in quantity.’¹⁴² Replacing agitation with registration did not sit well with many in the association and there were signs that O’Connell was losing his grip on the organisation as disputes and divisions began to emerge. On 8 September Ray was writing again but to recount how in Limerick ‘there is as usual sad disorganisation’ and he concluded tellingly that ‘The rent is low today.’¹⁴³ Another striking example of how O’Connell’s fortunes had declined came from his home county. On 26 May 1845, J. McCarthy, the treasurer of the O’Connell tribute in Tralee wrote complaining that he and a colleague named Bourke had gone to Dr. McEnery ‘to ask him to apprise the people that they intended to collect the O’Connell tribute the following week. He replied that he had a more urgent collection that was nearer home and then one for the schools. They reminded him that they had already postponed theirs in deference to the collection for Killarney cathedral.’ The writer concluded by expressing the view that he considered Dr. McEnery’s action shameful.¹⁴⁴ This was of course the same Dr. McEnery who was entrusted with ‘£150 or £200 by way of a loan fund’¹⁴⁵ for voters after Maurice O’Connell had been returned unopposed for the Tralee borough in the 1841 election.

O’Connell’s apparent determination to renew an alliance with the Whigs was denounced by *The Nation*¹⁴⁶ and when Russell succeeded Peel as prime minister in July the chances

¹⁴² T. M. Ray to O’Connell, 25 Aug. 1845 (*O’Connell corres.*, vii, no. 3159).

¹⁴³ T. M. Ray to O’Connell, 8 Sept. 1845 (*O’Connell corres.*, vii, No. 3163). The rent that week was £173-2-11, *The Nation*, 13 Sept. 1845.

¹⁴⁴ J. McCarthy to O’Connell, 26 May 1845 (*O’Connell corres.*, vii, no. 3145).

¹⁴⁵ Daniel Supple Jr. to O’Connell, 9 Aug. 1841 (*O’Connell corres.*, vii, no. 2910).

¹⁴⁶ *The Nation*, 13 June 1846.

of a split in the association increased. O'Connell forced the issue and the schism came on 29 July 1846 when William Smith O'Brien led the Young Irelanders out of Conciliation Hall. Immediate reaction to the split actually saw the rent increase from £109 4s. 8d. for the week prior to the split to £409 15s. 0d. in the week following and were it not for the intrusion of the famine O'Connell may have managed to return to the style of politics he had engaged in between 1835 and 1841. The crisis in the country quickly overtook any crisis in the Repeal Association as a cause for concern. P.V. Fitzpatrick struggled valiantly to collect the tribute but acknowledged the impact of the famine on his efforts, when he advised O'Connell that 'The alarm respecting the food of the people which pervades the country has checked my operations as a matter of course. I am however, "mending my nets" for an appropriate season and I felicitate myself greatly on having achieved what has been effected in the face of difficulties so peculiar and so formidable.'¹⁴⁷

By October those peculiar difficulties had become even more formidable as the second failure of the potato crop became apparent and O'Connell told Fitzpatrick that 'it would be the absurdest of all absurd things to think of a tribute in such times as these'.¹⁴⁸ As the famine took hold, the Repeal rent also collapsed, averaging less than £50 per week in early 1847, it dropped to an embarrassing £6 in the week ended 1 March 1847,¹⁴⁹ and O'Connell, as a result, was forced to dip into his own meagre resources to keep the association afloat. As early as September 1845 T. M. Ray was acknowledging his 'draft

¹⁴⁷ P. V. Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 7 May 1846 (*O'Connell corres.*, viii, no. 3206).

¹⁴⁸ O'Connell to P.V. Fitzpatrick, 5 Oct. 1846 (*O'Connell corres.*, viii, no. 3299).

¹⁴⁹ *F.J.*, 2 Mar. 1847.

on the Hibernian Bank for £727 to pay our accounts etc. and for which we are much obliged.’¹⁵⁰ And in May 1846 he wrote in relation to a claim for compensation for lost earnings of £50 from an attorney named O’Dowd, who had acted as counsel at the Mayo election. Ray tells O’Connell that ‘If you approve of his claim I will have to request a draft as we are so low in funds here.’¹⁵¹ It was a cruel irony that the association was forced to look to O’Connell for financial assistance. He who, for so long, depended on public subvention to keep him on the right side of bankruptcy, now found that even his lands in Kerry had gone from being a source of income and had also become a drain on his purse, as he sought to shield his tenants from the worst effects of the famine. He warned Maurice that ‘we must at all events secure our own tenants from destitution’ adding that ‘any money they necessarily pay out for provisions, will be allowed as part of their rent.’¹⁵²

A final attempt to heal the rift in the Repeal Association failed in December 1846 and in January 1847 the seceders formed a rival organisation, the Irish Confederation. By then O’Connell was no longer concerned about the political issues that had so concerned him for the previous decades. His health was in decline, and ‘his last parliamentary performances were rambling and tragic’.¹⁵³ In a cruel twist, the powerful demagogue had become the frail dying old man who instead of demanding a ‘parliament in College Green’ was reduced to pleading for assistance for his sick and starving people.

¹⁵⁰ T.M. Ray to O’Connell, 9 Sept. 1845 (*O’Connell corres.*, vii, no. 3165).

¹⁵¹ T.M Ray to O’Connell, 13 May 1846 (*O’Connell corres.*, viii, no. 3210).

¹⁵² O’Connell to Maurice O’Connell, 26 Mar. 1846 (*O’Connell corres.*, viii, no. 3196).

¹⁵³ Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 55.

O'Connell's death on 15 May 1847 saw the effective end of O'Connellite politics with the rent and the tribute central to its operation. John O'Connell tried to carry on the work of the association, but he was no replacement for his father and the political mantle now passed to the Irish Confederation. They would eschew the O'Connell tactic of trawling the country for funds and popular support. They too took their influences from Europe but theirs was a more romantic vision where the emphasis lay in raising political awareness rather than raising political funds.

The death of O'Connell was very much the end of a political era. The emergence of Young Ireland would have seen a change in direction in any event, but the coincidence of the famine was to bring about a sudden step-functional change, not alone in the political arena, but in the very shape of Irish society in the second half of the nineteenth century. O'Connell had been a political innovator. In 1824 he discovered the power of public opinion and through the Catholic rent he devised the means to manipulate, organise and harness it as a political force. Because access to parliament via the electoral process was barred to him O'Connell had created a mechanism to short-circuit the system. The model of extra parliamentary lobbying he had devised would provide an example for the Anti-Corn law League in Britain and for interest groups to follow down to the present day. Farmer's organisations, Trade Unions, indeed anyone who seeks to influence government decisions without challenging at the ballot box still adopt a similar approach to that developed by O'Connell. The Catholic rent and later, the Repeal rent were instrumental in creating this new political machine which had succeeded in winning Catholic

emancipation and generated a fervour among the people that fuelled a burgeoning sense of Catholic nationhood. By extending the membership to Catholics paying a penny a month, O'Connell had introduced constitutional democratic politics to Catholics of all classes and created a lasting attachment to democratic principles that survived in Ireland long after O'Connell's passing. A whole generation became versed in the mechanics of funding and organising popular politics, and when emigration took them to America many would put the knowledge to productive use as the Irish came to the fore in organised politics there.

The real challenge to the political system came in an area that O'Connell seems to have regarded as secondary to the funding of popular agitation, that was the area of electoral funding. It was when the combined pennies of the Catholic rent were put behind the local Liberal Club in Waterford that the old order's defences were breached. The message was hammered home in 1828 that, even if the old order could not be overrun, organised popular politics had the means to pick them off one by one. When O'Connell entered parliament on foot of an election funded by popular subscription and continued to be sustained there by similar means, it opened up an appalling vista to those who had counted on their independent wealth to act as a buffer against such interlopers. So threatened were they that both Tories and Whigs sought to remove O'Connell from the political stage. Offers of money in the form of judicial office were trumped by the Tribute and attempts to bleed his finances dry came close to success, but the bridgehead popular politics had created in parliament was maintained.

It was to be the organisational structures that built up around the fundraising as much as the funds themselves that created the new politics and became the template for the political party system familiar to us today. O'Connell's associations, the independent or liberal clubs and parish committees were the prototype of the party headquarters, the constituency organisation and local branches of the modern party system, and of course, the church-based collection of the rent and the tribute became, and still is, the annual national church gate collection on behalf of the major parties.

While Young Ireland would go on to inspire generations of revolutionaries it was O'Connell's innovations in the area of political funding and organisation that laid the foundations upon which Parnell and others would build.

Chapter IV: The rise of Parnell and the emergence of nationalist cohesion, 1879-82.

Within ten years of being first elected to parliament, Charles Stewart Parnell had become the undisputed leader of Irish nationalism. Many factors contributed to his meteoric rise, not least of which was his association with the 'new departure'. Essentially, a plan by American Fenians to adopt a political wing and to exploit Parnell's political profile to boost their own organisation, leading members of Clan na Gael felt that they could employ Parnell in the 'regular work' of advocating separatism.¹ Instead, they unwittingly provided Parnell with the means to develop a political movement that dwarfed and overtook their own. The American dollars Parnell gained access to as a result of the new departure were to become the motive power, firstly of the Land League, and later, to sustain a highly organised and successful parliamentary party. Since the time of Daniel O'Connell, American-Irish money had been made available to support nationalist movements in Ireland and James Stephens had dreamed of using American money to fund an army of liberation. The 'new departure' too depended on American money although its purpose was not as well defined as the earlier Fenian initiative. The ultimate goals of those supplying the funds, those benefiting from the funds and those administering the funds were all at variance with one another. For many the 'land war' was a means to reduce rents, others saw it as a war on landlordism and looked forward to land nationalisation, while for some, particularly those who provided most of the money, the hope was that the 'land war' would provide the spark for a popular uprising.

¹ William Carroll to John Devoy, 27 Sept. 1877, *Devoy's post-bag*, (eds), William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan (2 vols, Dublin, 1979), i, p. 272.

The political events that unfolded in the four years following the 'new departure' can only be fully understood when one analyses the key players and events in the context of the money that shaped those events and influenced the actions of all the players. The flow of money must be followed from its origins in Irish-America, where John Devoy's reformed Fenian grouping, Clan na Gael, backed the 'new departure' in the hope of fomenting an insurrection in Ireland by funding elements within the country that would stoke popular grievance.² Parnell was to be their agent, rural distress became the grievance, and the Land League became the vehicle for the project.

The 'land war' must then be considered in the light of this conscious determination to manipulate the difficulties of the Irish tenant farmer, using American money to achieve an outcome beyond the stated aims of the organisation being funded. Parnell used the American money as the 'sinews of war' for the Land League but it was used strategically, not to win the land war, nor to ferment revolution, but to turn localised agrarian unrest into a broad popular movement. The twists and turns of this movement can be directly linked to the ebb and flow of American funding. Policy shifts that were designed to widen the appeal of the movement can be seen to involve the substitution of cash for genuine resolve and sacrifice on the part of the tenants. It can be argued that it was the guiding hand of Parnell that determined the direction of the movement, but it can be shown that money from abroad was the principal tool in this endeavour. It created the illusion of unity and solidarity among Irish tenants and it would be the limitations of that

² R. V. Comerford, 'The land war and the politics of distress, 1877-82'. in Vaughan, W. E. (ed.), *A new history of Ireland. vol. 6: Ireland under the Union, pt. 2, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996), p. 29.

funding that would determine the tipping point when compromise became inevitable and Parnell retreated from the semi-revolutionary Land League.

In the thirty or so years between the death of O'Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell's emergence on the political stage, Irish nationalist politics took on many guises. After the failure of Young Ireland in 1848, the romantic and revolutionary was rejected in favour of parliamentary politics. The Independent Irish Party sought to build a strong parliamentary party that would remain aloof from any alliance with either party in Westminster. This reflected a belief that Irish interests would be best served by constitutional methods and the hope that nationalist candidates could dominate Irish parliamentary representation as a result of the 1850 reform act, which increased the county electorate from 31,832 to 135,245 and decreased the borough electorate from 40,234 to 28,301.³

Any hope Daniel O'Connell might have had of building a strong parliamentary party had been frustrated by a limited franchise and the powerful hold of the landed class on the representation. The Independent Irish Party had the electorate that O'Connell had lacked but did not have a leader of O'Connell's stature who might have capitalised on the changed circumstances. Backed, as it was, by the Tenant League and the Catholic Defence Association its candidates could count on strong electoral support from liberal voters who were predominantly Catholic tenants. Securing candidates was however,

³ See *Return of no. of parliamentary electors .. 1848-9 and 49-50*, H.C. 1850 (345), xlvi, and *Registered electors (Ireland)* H.C. 1851 (383), i. cited in, J. H. Whyte, *The Independent Irish Party 1850-59* (Oxford, 1958), p. 63. K.T. Hoppen suggests that the electorate had actually dropped to 45,000 before the 1850 act. See K. T. Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society in Ireland, 1832-85* (Oxford, 1984), p. 17.

difficult for the Independent Party. Its tenant right land policy alienated the Whig landlord class who had traditionally been a source of Liberal candidates.⁴ The party did not provide funds for electioneering⁵ and the policy of non-alignment in parliament meant that successful candidates, who had paid up to £2,000 on election expenses⁶, were denied access to government patronage, the traditional form of compensation for such personal expense. Various factors contributed to the demise of the Independent Irish Party; personality failures may have been a factor, and as Alvin Jackson has observed, ‘the Independents lost ground in the context of relative agrarian tranquillity’ and were ‘damaged by the rising rural prosperity of the later 1850s’.⁷ However, the idea that an independent parliamentary party could be sustained without independent funding was naïve and it was perhaps apt that it was the lure of government patronage that was to signal the beginning of the end for the party when two of its M.Ps, Sadlier and Keogh, broke ranks to accept government jobs.

In fact it was the Conservative party that led the way in electoral funding in the 1852 election. Subscriptions were raised in Cork City and Kildare amounting to £1,000 and £1,440 respectively and elsewhere candidates benefited from central funding from the Carlton club, £400 in Monaghan and £900 in Mayo.⁸ Most Conservative candidates did, of course, fund their own election, the cost of which, according to Andrew Shields, ‘in part, explains the landed domination of the Irish Conservative representation during this

⁴ J. H. Whyte, *The Independent Irish Party 1850-59* (Oxford, 1958), p. 49.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁷ Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 90.

⁸ J. H. Whyte, *The Independent Irish Party 1850-59* (Oxford, 1958), p. 55.

period'.⁹ However, to fully understand why landlords dominated Conservative representation and why the Conservative party remained a powerful force in post-famine Ireland, we need to remember the particular advantages enjoyed by landed, or landlord backed, candidates at election time. As we have seen, the most expensive aspect of elections for O'Connell was the raising of 'indemnity' funds to compensate voters who suffered economic loss having voted against the wishes of their landlord. Political funding in the case of the Conservatives has to be considered, therefore, in the context of the economic power and wealth of its representatives and their supporters. The party did respond to the altered political circumstances of the 1830s by developing a rudimentary party organisation and the Protestant Conservative Society, founded in Dublin in 1832, had some success in collecting the 'Protestant Rent'. But while the Conservatives adopted some of O'Connell's methods in the area of organisation and funding, their need for funds was almost in inverse proportion to his. A Conservative candidate with landlord support could count on the votes of those landlords' tenants whereas O'Connell had to be prepared to pay the 'hanging gale', the tenant's rent arrears, if he hoped to entice him to vote against the landlord's candidate.

The Irish Conservative party had the advantage, in terms of funding, of having access to wealthy candidates who could cover their own election costs and who in turn could use economic influence, rather than party funds, to attract votes. It has been shown that seventy-three per cent of Conservative M.P.s elected between 1852 and 1868 were landowners or sons of landowners.¹⁰ The biggest threat to the Conservative party was the

⁹ Andrew Shields, *The Irish Conservative Party, 1852-68* (Dublin, 2007), p. 10.

¹⁰ Shields, *Irish Conservative Party*, p. 1-2.

dilution of landlord influence over the electorate and in the 1852 general election that threat came from the Independent Irish Party who, to some extent, were able to counter the economic influence of the landlords, with the moral influence of the clergy. The priests played a prominent role in the election campaign, giving rise to concern in Conservative circles. There were indignant complaints that ‘the franchise bestowed upon Roman Catholic voters did not belong to them, but to their spiritual pastors’ and there were calls to restrict the franchise ‘to such [voters] as would be above the threats of the priests’.¹¹ It was very much a case of the Conservative kettle calling the Independent Irish pot black, but seats were lost by the Conservatives. The Independent Irish Party won forty-eight seats while the Conservatives only managed to take forty-one.¹²

The failure of the Independent Irish Party to build a successful national political movement allowed Irish politics to retain its local focus and facilitated the continued domination of electoral representation in county constituencies by the landlords. In the 1859 general election landed influence reasserted itself, the losses of 1852 were reversed, and 55 of the 105 Irish seats were won by the Conservatives. As K. T. Hoppen has illustrated, elections and politics during the 1850s and 1860s were ‘shaped by considerations more pragmatic than ideological’. The relationship between ‘brokers’ and ‘clients’ more often than not determining the outcome.’¹³ In the absence of a national political movement, political funding, to a great extent, remained rooted in the grubby realms of bribery in the boroughs and in the power of personal wealth in the county constituencies.

¹¹ *D.E.M.*, 2 Aug. 1852.

¹² Shields, *Irish Conservative Party*, p. 124.

¹³ Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, p. 456.

After the demise of the Independent Irish Party, the impetus for the next nationalist initiative came largely from outside the country. Having returned from France in 1856 James Stephens turned to friends in America to fund his Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood. The famine and the wave of evictions that followed it greatly swelled the numbers seeking a future in America and by the late 1850s the number of Irish born Americans was approaching the two million mark.¹⁴ As well as being more numerous they were now more embittered against a British government that had, in their eyes, presided over the calamity that had forced them to leave Ireland.¹⁵ Long before the famine Irish Americans had been generous in their support of O'Connell and more strident in their rhetoric than Irish based nationalists,¹⁶ and with their support of the Fenian movement they showed their willingness to fund a movement in America that sought to overthrow British rule in Ireland by force of arms.

The raising of funds was central to Stephens' endeavour from the outset, but initial returns from America were disappointing, averaging a mere £250 per annum, and in the summer of 1863 he set up the *Irish People* with the express intention of it being a money-making proposition.¹⁷ That too failed to deliver the levels of funding that Stephens had hoped for, and it has been estimated that the paper only contributed a total of £547 to the I.R.B..¹⁸ Turning once again to America, Stephens went to extraordinary lengths to

¹⁴ R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London, 1988), p. 356.

¹⁵ Thomas. N. Brown, *Irish-American nationalism 1870-90* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 19.

¹⁶ See chapter I, p. 38.

¹⁷ R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in context: Irish politics and society, 1848-82* (Dublin, 1985), p. 97.

¹⁸ Kevin J. Quigley, 'American financing of Fenianism in Ireland, 1858-67' (M.A. thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 1983), p.142.

generate money. In March 1864, a week-long fair took place in Chicago and according to R. V. Comerford, 'Irish-Americans paid over good money for a bizarre assortment of ethnic junk' which included such collectable items as a 'toothpick belonging to Daniel O'Connell' and memorabilia of 'Fionn MacCumhail'.¹⁹ Having raised, possibly as much as \$50,000, Stephens embarked on a fundraising tour of America. His promise of imminent action in Ireland loosened purse strings in America and the money raised facilitated a rise in numbers and morale in the organisation at home. The effect of Stephens' fundraising initiative is summed up by R. V. Comerford who says that: 'The euphoria of the Fenians in Ireland was based on assumptions about aid from the brotherhood in America. In turn, enthusiasm there depended on the impression that Ireland was about to rise'.²⁰ From the beginning of 1864 to March 1866 £35,460 was sent to Ireland, a huge increase on the £1596 sent in the period 1858-63.²¹ Stephens, not unlike O'Connell, had managed to make the act of raising funds a motivational tool in itself, and his use of American money to expand the organisation in Ireland anticipated Parnell and the growth of the Land League.

The Fenians proved, however, that with the best will in the world, a pan-Atlantic Irish nationalist movement was not sustainable. The American organisation was influenced by and responded to, the political realities of the Irish-American community. Their aspirations and needs were naturally at variance with those of their brethren 'at home' and in his study of Irish-American nationalism, Thomas N. Brown concludes that 'Irish-

¹⁹ Comerford, *The Fenians in context*, p. 120.

²⁰ Comerford, *The Fenians in context*, p. 122.

²¹ Quigley, 'American financing of Fenianism', pp 142-5.

American nationalism was directed chiefly toward American, not Irish, ends.’²²

However, even if Irish-American political culture could not readily be brought to harmonise with domestic Irish nationalism, American dollars readily converted to pounds sterling and those in Ireland who realised this and were prepared to make the appropriate adjustments to their rhetoric could tap into a hugely valuable political resource. In terms of constitutional politics, Parnell would be the first since O’Connell to fully realise the value of this resource.

While nationalist aspirations towards any form of Irish independence from Britain had made little progress in the period between O’Connell and Parnell, progress of a different kind was, however, taking place. The nature of politics itself was changing over the course of the nineteenth century and the significance of funding in the context of Parnell’s political success cannot be fully evaluated without reference to a series of electoral reforms in the period from 1850 to 1885. Already it has been noted how the Independent Irish Party failed to fully capitalise on the Irish Franchise Act of 1850 which had quadrupled the Irish county electorate.²³ Hoppen cites this electoral reform as the critical building block for the development of constitutional nationalism. ‘It was precisely the kind of electorate – compact, politically aware, shorn (at least in the counties) of the most bribable, the most fickle, and the most subservient, slowly expanding but still a recognisable elite – which gave particular prominence to those elements most likely to respond with enthusiasm and steadiness to the campaigns of the 1870s and 1880s.’²⁴

²² Brown, *Irish-American nationalism*, p. 41.

²³ Representation of the People (Ireland) Act (13 & 14 Vict., c.69).

²⁴ Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, p. 33.

Changes were taking place, and by Parnell's time Ireland would be a more modern, better educated, more homogenous society than that which O'Connell had mobilised in the 1820s.

But change was slow in coming. The profile of the typical M.P. was still that of the wealthy individual who balanced the cost of gaining and maintaining his seat with the material gain that could be had by way of patronage and private members bills. This 'aristocratic' model, as Pinto-Duchinsky refers to it, proved very resilient and served to retard the movement towards party politics in the nineteenth century.²⁵ A self-funded landowning M.P. was guided by the principle of self-interest rather than that of party loyalty. The Irish Franchise Act of 1850²⁶ went some way towards undermining the aristocratic model. It overhauled registration, introducing an efficient and rational system based on occupation of property to a certain poor law valuation rather than possession of a property. The franchise was extended to occupiers of property to a value of £12 in counties and £8 in boroughs and it increased the electorate from 45,000 to 163,546.²⁷ With a larger electorate, it was in the interests of candidates to have an organised approach to voter registration and canvassing, and in that regard the individual candidate was at a disadvantage compared to a candidate supported by a political party and who had access to the legal, financial and human resources provided by the organisation.

²⁵ Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, *British political finance 1830-1980* (Washington, 1981), p. 15.

²⁶ Representation of the People (Ireland) Act, 1850 (13 & 14 Vict., c. 69).

²⁷ K. Theodore Hoppen, 'Politics, the law, and the nature of the Irish electorate, 1832-50', in *English Historical Review*, xciii, no. 365 (Oct. 1977), pp 746-776; Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, pp 17-8.

The increased electorate delivered results for the Independent Irish Party in 1852 but landed influence was quick to reassert itself when, by the 1857 election, many Independents drifted back to the Liberal fold. Other legislation would help to chip away at aristocratic dominance of parliamentary representation. The Parliamentary Elections Act 1868 introduced various amendments to the petition system.²⁸ The most significant of these was that jurisdiction over petitions was transferred from a House of Commons committee to election judges, drawn from a rota.²⁹ Then the hugely significant Secret Ballot Act of 1872 further weakened the hold of the landed class over the electorate.³⁰ The increased electorate made it less practical to gain advantage by providing financial inducements or by applying moral or economic pressure on particular voters, and the secret ballot made it well nigh impossible to check how they voted. But Graeme Orr reminds us that the Ballot Act of 1872 was ‘no more a “silver bullet” than had been the adoption of voting tablets in ancient Rome’. It would seem that, rather than eradicate bribery and undue influence from the electoral process, the 1872 act may in fact have added to the amount of money being spent on elections. Instead of paying money to individual voters in the now outlawed manner, politicians were forced to spread their largesse across the wider electorate, supporting initiatives that benefited supporters and non-supporters alike.³¹

Cornelius O’Leary has illustrated quite clearly that the 1872 Act failed to stamp out bribery and suggests that following the hugely expensive 1880 general election, ‘a sense

²⁸ Parliamentary Elections Act, 1868 (33 & 34 Vict., c. 81).

²⁹ Graeme Orr, ‘Suppressing vote-buying: the ‘war’ on electoral bribery from 1868’ in, *Journal of Legal History*, xxvii, no. 3, Dec. 2006, pp 289-314.

³⁰ Ballot Act 1872 (35 & 36 Vict., c.33).

³¹ Orr, ‘Suppressing vote-buying’, p. 306.

of shame at the unpleasant facts unearthed by the election judges and commissioners of 1880' influenced the Liberal government to introduce what he terms 'the most stringent [Act] ever passed in Britain against electoral malpractices'.³² This was the Corrupt and Illegal Practices (prevention) Act 1883 which greatly limited the cost of standing for election by setting strict limits on campaign expenditure as well as making illegal the practice of treating voters.³³ It also provided stricter regulation of practices that had often raised concerns about covert bribery, such as the numbers and types of campaign employees, conveyances, and the use of licensed premises as committee rooms. The following year brought the Representation of the People (Ireland) Act 1884³⁴ which extended the right to vote in Ireland to all householders in both counties and boroughs, and to lodgers in the counties, increasing the Irish electorate from 225,999 to 737,965.³⁵ This was followed by the Redistribution of Seats Act 1885,³⁶ which created single seat constituencies and threw all but nine of the largest boroughs into the new county divisions.³⁷ All of these measures worked to the advantage of the political model that Parnell was to develop, the well organised, well disciplined and, critically, the well funded parliamentary party.

In this changed political environment Isaac Butt's Home Rule League, formed in November 1873 from the Home Government Association, stood as shining example of how **not** to capitalise on electoral reform. At its inaugural conference it had been agreed

³² Cornelius O'Leary, *The elimination of corrupt practices in British elections, 1868-1911* (Oxford, 1962), p. 175.

³³ The Corrupt and Illegal Practices (prevention) Act 1883 (46 & 47 Vict c. 51).

³⁴ The Representation of the People (Ireland) Act 1884 (48 & 49 Vict. c. 3).

³⁵ Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922*, xiii.

³⁶ The Redistribution of Seats Act 1885 (48 & 49 Vict., c. 23).

³⁷ Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, p. 87.

to set up a special fund to ‘promote the organisation throughout Great Britain and Ireland’,³⁸ However, when it was suggested that this fund could be used to defray the expenses of candidates, Butt rejected the idea, saying: ‘I must earnestly hope that not a penny of the fund will be expended on electioneering purposes’.³⁹ This attitude along with the fact that it completely lacked a network of local branches ensured that the Home Rule League could not compete effectively in electoral politics, a fact which, no doubt, added to the growing frustration of the ambitious Parnell. There is no evidence to suggest that it was these deficiencies that coloured his thinking when he embarked on the political adventure referred to as the ‘new departure’, but the new departure certainly marked a turning point in his political fortunes and it allied him to a political organisation that, unlike the Home Rule League, had ample funding and which developed a nationwide branch structure. The ‘new departure’ of 1878 promised American funding for Parnell’s constitutional approach to demands for Irish self-government. It would assist him in his aim to build a strong Irish parliamentary party but on the understanding that if constitutional demands fell on deaf ears, the Irish representatives would withdraw as a body from Westminster and set up an Irish parliament in Dublin.⁴⁰ Certainly the first part of the arrangement would have appealed to Parnell, and while he never openly committed to the latter proposal he did enough to convince John Devoy that he supported the policy. Devoy claimed that he, Davitt and Parnell entered into a verbal agreement but this was denied by Parnell and Davitt agreed with Parnell. According to T. W. Moody, the fact that Parnell ‘used the Fenians in the interests of parliamentary action and did not permit himself to be used by the Fenians in the interests of revolutionary action’, suggests that

³⁸ *The Nation*, 31 Jan. 1874

³⁹ *F.J.*, 22 Nov. 1873.

⁴⁰ Thomas N. Brown, *Irish-American nationalism, 1870-90* (Philadelphia & New York, 1966), pp 87, 91.

Parnell's relations with the Fenians were not as intimate as Devoy would have us believe.⁴¹

The founding of the Land League the following year was not the 'New Departure' set in train. The Land League was as much a response to desperate conditions arising from the economic downturn of the late 1870s, as it was a coherent plan to progress a new nationalist agenda. Events in Ireland elevated the land question from being only one of a series of subsidiary Fenian objectives and gave it an immediacy that could not be ignored. With or without the 'New Departure', some form of agitation would likely have emerged, particularly in the hard-pressed western counties. However, Parnell's adoption of the cause of 'the land for the people' might well be seen as a cynical political move that provided him with a springboard from which he could launch a national movement. Parnell was not a natural land agitator; he was a constitutional parliamentary politician whose priorities lay in building a strong Home Rule party in Westminster. He had a political pragmatism not unlike O'Connell's, and he, too, was what might be termed a gradualist, and, like O'Connell, Parnell was vague as to the precise nature of his objectives. The key players in the Land League all had different aspirations for the movement. Devoy and Dillon saw it as leading to a rising of the people, Davitt hoped for nationalisation of land while Parnell sought to channel its power into the safer realms of constitutional politics and into his own control.⁴²

⁴¹ T. W. Moody, 'The new departure in Irish politics, 1878-9', in H. A. Cronne, T. W. Moody and D. B. Quinn (eds), *Essays in British and Irish history in honour of James Eadie Todd*, (London, 1949), pp 303-33.

⁴² R. V. Comerford, 'The land war and the politics of distress, 1877-82'. In Vaughan, W. E. (ed.), *A new history of Ireland. vol. 6: Ireland under the Union, pt. 2, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996), p. 51.

This was not going to be easy for Parnell, for although he was president of the Land League, he wielded very little power in the organisation in its early stages⁴³ and he was not going to receive much support from his Land League colleagues in his efforts to build a strong parliamentary party. Two of the decisions taken by the Land League at its founding conference on 21 October 1879 made this point abundantly clear. It was resolved 'That the president of this League, Mr. Parnell, be requested to proceed to America for the purpose of obtaining assistance from our exiled countrymen and other sympathisers for the objects for which this appeal is issued.' However, this resolution was immediately followed by one which stated 'That none of the funds of this League shall be used for the purchase of any landlord's interest in the land or for the furthering of the interests of any parliamentary candidate.'⁴⁴ According to Davitt this second resolution was influenced by American opinion; the belief being that the more revolutionary the platform the greater would be the support in America,⁴⁵ and Parnell was to be accompanied on the trip by John Dillon whose links to Irish Fenianism would have sent, what F. S. L. Lyons refers to as, 'a discreet signal to Clan na Gael'.⁴⁶ So it was that on 21 December 1879 when Parnell set sail for America he was on his way to raise huge sums of money but none of it for the purpose for which he would have chosen to use it.

⁴³ Paul Bew, *Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-1882* (Dublin, 1978), p. 99.

⁴⁴ *F.J.*, 22 Oct. 1879.

⁴⁵ M. Davitt, *The fall of feudalism in Ireland* (London and New York, 1904), p. 173.

⁴⁶ F. S. L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1977), p. 106.

Davitt had written ahead to his American contacts to drum up support for Parnell's trip and to try to ensure that 'nothing will be done to compromise him.'⁴⁷ He wrote to James J. O'Kelly, Fenian and *New York Herald* journalist, as someone he regarded as 'a medium between the Revolutionary and Moderate parties' and suggested that 'it is in the hands of such a man that Parnell should be placed' and he asked him to establish committees in all the cities in which Parnell was to speak, stressing that 'What we want is money – money – money'.⁴⁸

The trip to America to raise funds for the operation of the Land League was complicated and potentially compromised from the outset by the increasing prospect of famine in Ireland. When Parnell and Dillon arrived in America they were put under pressure by the Fenian element to concentrate their efforts exclusively on raising funds for the Land League and to leave the relief fundraising to the charitable funds already set up for the purpose. At home two competing funds were in operation. The first was established by the duchess of Marlborough, wife of the then lord lieutenant, in December 1879 and went on to raise a total of £135,000 under the able secretary-ship of their son, Lord Randolph Churchill.⁴⁹ Rather than let the credit for aiding the poor of Ireland rest at the door of the viceroy, a second fund was established under the auspices of the lord mayor of Dublin, Edmund Dwyer Grey, who was editor of the *Freeman's Journal*. This, the Mansion House fund, managed to raise in excess of £180,000 and could be said to have represented the liberal response to the crisis. Further pressure came from the *New York*

⁴⁷ Davitt to John Boyle O'Reilly, 22 Oct. 1879, *Devoy's post-bag*, eds William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan (2 Vols, Dublin, 1979), I, p. 455.

⁴⁸ Davitt to James J. O'Kelly, 22 Oct. 1879, *Ibid.*, p. 456.

⁴⁹ R. V. Comerford, 'The land war and the politics of distress, 1877-82'. In Vaughan, W. E. (ed.), *A new history of Ireland. vol. 6: Ireland under the Union, pt. 2, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996), pp 26-52.

Herald, which had launched its own relief fund. Its owner, James Gordon Bennett had launched the fund with a personal donation of \$100,000 after he fell out with Parnell over a request for money for the Land League.⁵⁰ Bennett attacked Parnell, suggesting that he should abandon his political fundraising and devote his efforts to relieving the distress at home.⁵¹

Parnell found himself in a delicate position. He had left home with severe limitations having been placed on the nature of the fundraising and now he faced the prospect of even further distance being placed between the funds and political uses. He managed to steer a middle path. On 4 January 1880 addressing an estimated crowd of eight thousand people at Madison Square Garden he announced that:

Our objects in visiting this country, and I may say the intention we originally formed, have been considerably modified by the pressure of circumstances. Originally we proposed only to address you on behalf of our political organisation, but the course of events in Ireland has culminated so rapidly, a terrible, far, and wider spread famine is so imminent, that we felt constrained to abandon our original intention, and leave ourselves open to receive from the people of America money for the purposes of our political organisation and also money for the relief of the pressing distress in Ireland.⁵²

He went on to explain that they planned to form two funds, one for the relief of distress and one for purely political purposes and assured his audience that ‘these funds will be kept entirely distinct, so that donors will be afforded the opportunity of doing as they please in the matter.’⁵³ It was an ideal compromise and it was characteristic of the man who would continue to show ability to blend causes to his own advantage. Using

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*,

⁵¹ *New York Herald*, 2 Jan. 1880, cited in Bew, *Land and the national question*, p. 75.

⁵² Davitt, *Fall of feudalism*, pp 193-4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

references to ‘terrible famines sweeping across the face of our island’⁵⁴ he was able to play on the natural concerns of audiences who had been directly affected or whose lives were influenced by the great famine. A purely political appeal would not have had the same effect on the purse strings and by combining the plaintive appeal for aid with an allied request for the means to challenge the causes of the distress, Parnell managed to maximise the overall take from his tour even if the majority was donated to the relief fund. Between 14 Jan 1880 and 30 Jun 1880 £66,217 was received from America, of which £56,350 was specifically designated for the relief of distress with the remaining £9,867 for the use of the Land League.⁵⁵

The unseemly public and private battle conducted by Parnell in order to direct money away from the rival funds suggests that he appreciated the value to him of funds raised under either heading. At the end of January 1880 he wrote to the *New York Herald* warning that ‘where money is sent to the Dublin Mansion House Committee [it] will be indirectly used for political purposes in bolstering up a tyrannical and expiring Land system and that all aid from it will be refused to those of the starving peasantry who had actively participated in the present agitation movement.’⁵⁶ It was clear, therefore, that even if the monies were to be kept separately Parnell was quite prepared to mix the rhetoric of politics and relief, and wires were sent on ahead to the west coast in order to secure money for his funds. Dillon notes one such in the journal he and Parnell kept in America: ‘Wire San Francisco – Start Parnell Relief Fund – let no money go mansion

⁵⁴ From Parnell’s address to the American House of Representatives, *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁵⁵ *Special Commission Act 1888; reprint of the shorthand notes of the speeches, proceedings and evidence taken before the commissioners appointed under the above named Act* (London, 1890), vi, p. 343.

⁵⁶ Dillon Papers, T.C.D., Ms 6536.

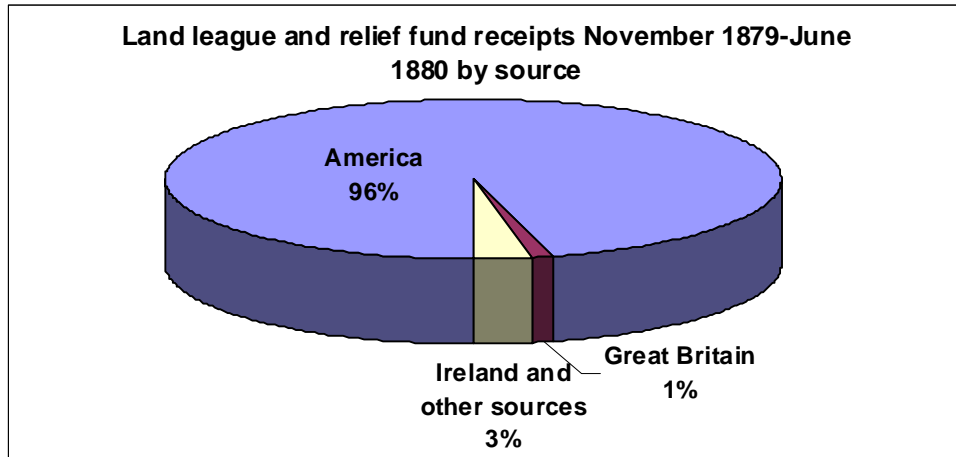
House or Herald – Ask Irish Societies give proceeds Parnell relief fund – Shall visit in April -'.⁵⁷

Parnell tailored his message to his American audience in order to maximise the money raised and he said things on American platforms that he would not have said at home. His notorious speech in Cincinnati on 23 February 1880, where he was reported to have spoken of destroying 'the last link which keeps Ireland bound to England', may have outraged British opinion but in America it had the effect of boosting the flow of donations, particularly to the League fund.⁵⁸ Up to that point less than £1,000 had been donated to the League fund but after 20 February large sums began to come in from the major cities, £900 from New York on the 26 February and £411 10s. 5d. from Boston on 4 March. It is noteworthy that the source of the money for the two funds varied significantly, with Boston featuring strongest in support of the relief fund while the major donor to the League's fund was New York. This may be explained to some extent by the fact that funds donated through Patrick Ford's *Irish World* newspaper strongly favoured the League fund and it was New York based. The significance of the money raised in America is seen in sharp relief when compared to funds raised in Ireland in the first half of 1880 (Figure 4.1).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ R. Barry O'Brien, *The life of Charles Stewart Parnell*, (London, New York, 1898).

Figure 4.1.



	America	Great Britain	Ireland and other sources
Land League	£11,324	£262	£1,340
L.L. Relief fund	£54,893	£486	£857
Total	£66,217	£748	£2,197

Source: Special Commission Act 1888; reprint of the shorthand notes of the speeches, proceedings and evidence taken before the commissioners appointed under the above named Act (London, 1890), vi, p.343

From June 1880 to 7 September 1882 when the Land League accounts were closed, a further £192,108 was received and while it is not possible to break the figure down by country of origin, all indications are that the lion's share continued to come from America.⁵⁹ Michael Davitt maintained that over the period of the Land League £250,000 was received from America, which suggests that America continued to provide nearly all of the league's funding.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Special Comm. proc.*, vi, p. 345

⁶⁰ Davitt, *Fall of feudalism*, p. 173.

The sheer amount of money coming from America and the almost total dependence of the Land League on it for its continued survival shows how vulnerable the Irish organisation was to being held to ransom by the more radical shade of opinion in America. Conscious of this danger and fully aware of the historic and continued faction fighting that convulsed Irish-American politics, Parnell sought to bypass the factions and channel the money into an organisation of his own. On the eve of his departure from America he hastily convened a meeting in a New York hotel with a view to setting up the Irish National Land League of America. Parnell proposed that each American branch should send its money directly to Ireland, thus ensuring that the balance of power would lie across the Atlantic.⁶¹ It would have been a masterstroke if he had succeeded but as Dr. William Carroll put it, ‘V.C. [Clan na Gael] men were on hand in sufficient force to capture and throttle it in its attempt to play the old game of “wooden horse”.’ Clan na Gael would not hear of Parnell’s proposal and sought a centralised American organisation with control over its own finances. The compromise agreed upon was that all money forwarded to Ireland would go through the office of a central treasurer, and this was further diluted in January 1881 when the constitution was changed to allow branches forward money directly to Dublin if their members so wished.

The Land League were at pains to keep the relief money separate from monies donated for its own purposes. Payments were acknowledged separately in *The Nation*, and the accounts furnished to the Parnell/*Times* Commission in 1888 show that inter-fund

⁶¹ Brown, *Irish-American nationalism.*, p. 105.

transfers were made to allow for remittances that needed to be split between funds.⁶² The sensitivity on this point is evidenced by a letter to the secretary of the Land League from the Irish Famine Relief Fund New York in relation to £600 from the Ancient Order of Hibernians that was put in the organisation fund when it had been intended for the relief fund. The New York correspondent expressed concern ‘that if this is discovered it would have a bad effect’.⁶³

As the year progressed and the threat of famine receded the American donors began to leave the allocation of the money more to the discretion of the Land League. On 25 July 1880 the Irish Volunteers of Brooklyn sent 200 dollars to be used ‘where most needed and will do most good to relieve the present suffering or to prevent a recurrence of same by removal of the causes’.⁶⁴ In any case, there was much potential, on the ground in Ireland, for blurring the lines between funds used for relief of distress and funds used to further the cause of the Land League. Where the League was seen to relieve distress or aid evicted tenants it was bound to boost its standing within that community whether the money came from the relief or the organisational fund. From the outset the Land League used the relief fund strategically to further the movement. Its stated policy was to avoid areas where the other relief funds were most active.⁶⁵ It might be argued that this was an attempt to avoid overlap and to ensure that no area got left out, but given the rivalry between the funds, it appears more likely that the League wanted to gain maximum effect

⁶² *Special Comm. proc.*, vi, pp 349-57.

⁶³ Irish Famine Relief Fund New York to Land League, Irish National Land League papers, N.L.I., MS 8291 (American connection, 5).

⁶⁴ Irish Volunteers of Brooklyn to Land League, 25 July 1880, Irish National Land League papers, N.L.I., MS 8291 (American connection, 1).

⁶⁵ *F.J.*, 19 Mar. 1880.

by directing funds to 'virgin' territory. According to Davitt, the administration of the relief funds was used successfully to spread the League and to involve the clergy in League activities.

The distribution of relief and of seed-potatoes in the most distressed districts gave the organisation a growing prestige, especially among the clergyWhere no League organisation existed the parish priest, or curate, was made the medium for the distribution of grants, the result being, in most instances of this kind, the formation of a branch of the movement.⁶⁶

The League's role in distributing financial assistance to evicted tenants naturally tended to attract community leaders to its ranks and where aid was sought it seemed only natural that a branch would be formed to request and to administer it. Every application for assistance had to be submitted formally, the details of the case set out, and the worthiness of the applicant vouched for by the secretary of the branch. It was only natural under these circumstances that the applicant, the local community and the Land League in Dublin, would aspire to having none but the most respectable members of the community preside over such matters. Thus the local League officials and those called upon to make additional representations on behalf of the applicants, usually the Catholic priest, were placed in a most responsible and powerful position within their community. They had the power to rescue their neighbours from destitution and in so doing to affirm their own status as leaders within the community. So, for example, we see that on an application for assistance on behalf of John Hayes from Clonakilty, who was evicted in April 1880, the branch secretary signed himself John Dineen, T.C. P.L.G. to indicate that he is also a member of the town commissioners and a poor law guardian. To lend further weight to

⁶⁶ Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism*, p. 211.

the application, a further plea on Hayes' behalf was added by the president of the branch who happened to be the local Catholic curate. The response of the League in this case was to send £10, via Dineen and the branch, to assist Hayes who was 'living near the farm in a miserable hut which cannot be called a house'.⁶⁷ The process was repeated in case after case, in parish after parish, across the country, and as long as the league had funds to dispense, its popularity and hold on communities, through the engagement of its respected members in the process, could only increase.

Some within the League questioned the nature of this rapid expansion. At a meeting of the Land League on 27 February 1880 J. J. Loudon expressed the opinion that 'some of the so-called branches were merely phantom associations, which would dissolve when the relief fund ceased to be distributed'.⁶⁸ Loudon was responding to letters from three or four districts stating that branches had been formed. Noting that in two instances, the letters enclosing the subscriptions were accompanied by requests for assistance, Loudon argued that 'before affiliation was accepted the branch should declare their adhesion to the principles and rules of the League.', and he added that: 'Some persons, he knew himself, had joined branches though they were bitterly hostile to the land agitation.' Not inclined to turn away members, fair weather or otherwise, the meeting overruled Loudon and voted unanimously to accept the new branches.⁶⁹

Parnell's determination to involve the League in relief fundraising in America against the wishes of more revolutionary elements of Clan na Gael can be seen, therefore, as inspired

⁶⁷ Eviction form, 28 Apr. 1880 (N.L.I., Irish National Land League papers, MS 8291, Cork).

⁶⁸ Meeting of the Irish National Land League, 27 Feb. 1880, *F.J.*, 28 Feb. 1880.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

and was paying dividends at home by, amongst other things, softening the clergy's instinctive distrust of the League with its Fenian leanings. But Davitt's contention that, 'most of the opposition from that quarter had died out in presence of prompt and effective measures which were taken by the League executive to cope with the partial famine,'⁷⁰ may have been a little optimistic. Still, it is curious to note that in the 1820s Daniel O'Connell politicised the clergy by getting them to collect money, while in 1880 Parnell did so by getting them to distribute it.

Breaking off his fundraising trip to America, Parnell returned to Ireland to fight the 1880 general election. It was his intention to purge the parliamentary party of moderate Home Rulers and replace them with his own followers, but he faced a number of obstacles.

Parnell's association with the Land League had won him popular support but he still had to overcome clerical opposition to Parnellite candidates. He was further constrained by the fact that his association with the League had not delivered the financial support he would have expected to follow on the 'new departure.' A good example of the first of these problems can be seen by looking at the candidate selection process in Queen's County.⁷¹ There, the sitting M.Ps, who were Whig home-rulers, were opposed by a Parnellite dominated Independent Club but supported by the priests.

The conservatism of the priests points up the great chasm that still existed between Parnell's support and those he had yet to win over. One priest, Fr James Sinnott, wrote to the *Freeman's Journal* complaining of 'political aspirants with whose antecedents we are

⁷⁰ Davitt, *Fall of feudalism*, p. 221.

⁷¹ J. W. H. Carter, *The land war and its leaders in Queen's County, 1879-82* (Portlaoise, 1994), Ch. 3.

imperfectly acquainted'⁷² while another, a Fr. Nolan, defended the sitting M.P.s, at a meeting of the club on 19 November 1879, describing them as 'men of status in society, men of property, and it is such men of conscience, honour and religion they wanted for their representatives and not feather-headed people who have got nothing to lose and are not worth a farthing'.⁷³ Even supporters of the Parnellite candidate Richard Lalor, showed how strongly influenced they could be by issues of deference and class.

Patrick Cahill, who was secretary cum treasurer of the Independent Club, wrote to his friend Lalor agreeing that one of the Home-Rule M.P.s, Kenelm T. Digby, should be ousted but with regard to the other sitting M.P., Edmund Dease, he wrote, 'Dease's very presence and vote is of immense weight . . . We have, unhappily, too many adventurers in our ranks, and there are far too few of hereditary position and high personal character. A single vote from a man like Dease outweighs the whole vote of seven obstructionists . . . When men like Dease take their proper place in our ranks we cannot be cried down as mere jacquerie.'⁷⁴ At the meeting to select candidates on 15 March another priest, Fr. John Magee, parish priest of Stradbally, questioned the candidature of Arthur O'Connor, the second Parnellite nominee. O'Connor's means he said 'may not be sufficient to carry out this contest, and I am not willing to subscribe for a stranger'. Instead he proposed for consideration a Walter Fitzpatrick from Portarlinton who was a nephew of the parish priest of Mountrath and who, with an annual income of £600, 'had sufficient means'.⁷⁵ The clergy held a meeting of their own later that day and Fr. John Magee advised the

⁷² Fr. James Sinnott letter, *F.J.*, 18 Mar. 1880

⁷³ *Leinster Express*, 22 Nov. 1879.

⁷⁴ Cahill to Lalor, 22 Jan. 1878, (N.L.I., Lalor papers, MS 8566 (8)).

⁷⁵ *Leinster Express*, 20 Mar. 1880.

Leinster Express of its deliberations. ‘At a meeting of the Catholic clergy of the Queen's County assembled at Maryborough on 15 March, it was decided that the candidates selected this day by the Queen's County would not be acceptable. It was arranged that a more desirable selection should at once be devised.’⁷⁶

Despite the impression from this notice that the clergy held a veto, the selection was not overturned, and in what might be termed a *volte-face* all the meetings where Lalor and O'Connor spoke were chaired by the Catholic clergy and even Fr. John McGee, the source of much of the opposition to O'Connor, chaired the meeting attended by Parnell on 2 April in Maryborough.⁷⁷ The Queen's County row gives a good insight into the complex political changes that were unfolding across the country as a result of Parnell-led initiatives. Parnellite candidates were standing as advanced home-rulers challenging not only the Conservatives or Liberal opponents of Home Rule but also moderate or ‘whig’ Home Rulers. This radical heave within the Home Rule party was further complicated and further radicalised by the fact that it was being played out against the background of the land war. As Parnell was president of the Land League, Parnellite candidates were inevitably associated with the war on landlordism. Already the lines between ‘the land for the people’ and ‘Ireland for the Irish’ were being blurred, for Parnell stood for both.

Queen's County shows how in an electoral environment where, for the first time since O'Connell, the electorate was being asked to vote on national issues by an emerging

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ J. W. H. Carter, *The Land War and its leaders in Queen's County, 1879-82* (Portlaoise, 1994), p. 49.

national leader, it would no longer be accepted as the norm that the local whig grandee would be returned to represent the Home Rule aspirations of the electorate. It also shows that there was a hardly surprising nervousness at the prospect of adopting instead, candidates like Arthur O'Connor, a London barrister, who was drafted in by Parnell as one of what came to be referred to as his 'carpetbaggers'.⁷⁸ The problem for Parnell was that in opposing the class from whence electoral candidates had traditionally been drawn, the landlord class, he had to find another source of candidates.

Money was a central consideration, for, as the priests of Queen's County had made clear, they were 'not willing to subscribe for a stranger'. Parnell had raised thousands of dollars in America, but such was the complicated nature of the overlapping causes and political groupings that he was now straddling, that this money was earmarked exclusively for Land League purposes even though Parnellite candidates like O'Connor campaigned on Land League as well as Home Rule issues, calling for the 'disestablishment of landlordism' as he campaigned across Queen's County.⁷⁹ It was lack of funds that led to the candidacy of O'Connor and his ilk in the first place. Denied access to the American money Parnell needed men who could afford to spend half the year in London and keep themselves while they were there. Those in Ireland who had sufficient wealth to allow them to do so were also those most likely to oppose the Land League. The solution to the funding issue was the selection of men like O'Connor who, because they lived in London, could keep their business or profession going and still attend parliament. In all, ten of the twenty-four M.P.s who would support Parnell after the election lived

⁷⁸ *Irish Times*, 27 Mar. 1880.

⁷⁹ *Leinster Express*, 20 Mar. 1880.

permanently in England, among them Captain William O'Shea, who stood for Clare, as well as Justin McCarthy and T.P. O'Connor, both journalists, who stood for Longford and Galway City, respectively.⁸⁰

The Land League's opposition to funding parliamentary politics was relaxed somewhat and £2,000 was advanced to Parnell, who was to say later, that 'it was about all we had'.⁸¹ This and a further £300, £200 of which, came from the unlikely sources, Cork Tories trying to split the nationalist vote, was to make up the entire election budget in 1880. Parnell did well considering the desperate lack of funds. After the election he was able to count on the support of twenty-four of the sixty-one Home Rule M.P.s elected. Of these, nineteen had been elected for the first time in 1880,⁸² only four lived in the constituencies they represented, no fewer than ten lived in England⁸³ and only one owned more than 500 acres.⁸⁴ Had the League been able to overcome its antipathy to parliamentary politics and been more generous with election funds, Parnell would have many more seats, but as it was, the votes of his 'carpetbaggers' were enough to win him the chairmanship of the party. Parnell now led a much-altered Home Rule party, shorn of many of the landed interest and replaced by many of the Land League interest, and he had the nucleus of the group around which he would build a much more powerful party in the next five years.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and his party, 1880-90* (Oxford, 1957), p. 32; Brian M. Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978), pp 122-7.

⁸¹ *Special comm. proc.*, vii, p.27.

⁸² O'Brien, *Parnell and his party*, p. 26.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁸⁵ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 123.

While the election of 'Parnellite' candidates shifted the balance of the parliamentary party to the left, it has to be remembered that it was still far removed from the radicalism of the Land League, and while both organisations shared a common leader they were, in 1880, entirely distinct entities. There were signs however that Parnell was beginning to bridge the gap between left and right. He may have received only £2,000 from the Land League towards his election costs in 1880 and his association with the Fenian element made the Catholic Church wary of him, but he did of course benefit electorally from his association with the Land League. He was travelling the country as the head of a movement that was growing in strength and geographical coverage, and the thousands of pounds that was propelling the movement forward was simultaneously propelling the profile of its leader into the realms of a national figure. As his popularity grew the greater the tendency for the clergy to adopt the approach of Bishop Butler of Limerick who, reversing his earlier denunciation of Home Rule, declared that 'We must go with the people'.⁸⁶ A further sign that Parnell was attracting broad popular support came when he was prosecuted in October 1880 for Land League related activities. The defence fund set up to cover his legal defence raised £21,000 much of which was raised through the *Freeman's Journal* and subscribed to by senior members of the hierarchy, a sure sign that he was making inroads into the more conservative Catholic constituency.⁸⁷

However, if the League was to become a truly national movement, it needed to break out of its Connaught base and attract support from the tenant farmers of Munster and Leinster. This was achieved by using the American money to minimise the sacrifice

⁸⁶ Hoppen, *Elections, politics*, p. 242.

⁸⁷ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 139.

required of these farmers who, having bigger holdings, had more to gain in terms of rent reductions but also had more to lose were they to be evicted. The policy adopted by the League to appeal to these more substantial grazier farmers of Munster and Leinster was known as ‘rent at the point of a bayonet’; a term that resonates with images of resolute resistance but which in truth was something of a sham, to use the word Anna Parnell was later to apply to the land war in general.⁸⁸ The policy was first mooted by Patrick Egan and it harked back to an earlier agrarian campaign, the tithe war of the early 1830s. Egan suggested that they ‘should compel the landlord to collect the rents at the point of a bayonet as the tithe rents were formerly collected’.⁸⁹ However, Paul Bew points out that, for all his militancy, Egan had advocated a policy that was ‘perfectly suited, with its low level of risk and easy martyrdoms, to the rural bourgeoisie of South Leinster’.⁹⁰

The new policy asked only that farmers delay paying their rent rather than refuse to pay. When the legal process ran its course and eviction loomed the farmer could then pay the rent ‘at the point of a bayonet’ and the League would pay the legal costs incurred. It was a win-win situation for the tenant. The farmer could seek a rent reduction, which if it succeeded would see him better off. And if it did not, he still managed to avoid eviction and did not have to pay legal costs. The Land League found it easier to get farmers to support this almost painless form of resistance and the League itself was seen as the ‘knight in shining armour’ when it intervened at the last moment to save the man’s farm and stock by bidding against the ‘emergency men’ at sheriffs’ sales. The ‘emergency men’ were the representatives of the landlord backed Property Defence Association. The

⁸⁸ See Anna Parnell, *The tale of a great sham* (Dublin, 1986).

⁸⁹ *F.J.*, 11 Aug. 1880.

⁹⁰ Bew, *Land and the national question*, p. 122.

P.D.A. was established in January 1881, to counter the activities of the Land League, and a standing committee met weekly in Dublin ‘to receive information from all persons, whether landlord, agent, tenant, shopkeeper, farm labourer or other person who shall be aggrieved or molested by the action of the Land League, and that the committee shall inquire into the circumstances of each case, and have the power, when they deem it expedient, to afford legal advice and pecuniary aid, so far as the funds shall permit.’⁹¹

The P.D.A. provided men to work on the farms of evicted tenants and representatives of the P.D.A. attended sheriffs’ sales and forced the League to bid for seized animals up to the amount of the rent owing to the landlord. These auctions provided an occasion for a public rally and the ‘Indignation meetings’ that followed allowed all to feel self-satisfied at having ‘nobly vindicated the League and its principles,’⁹² by standing up to the landlord, who it might be added, was also a winner because he had gotten his rent arrears from the tenant and the sheriffs’ costs had been paid by the Land League.⁹³

Such largesse on the part of the League was only possible due to the steady flow of money from America. The relief fund had been closed on 25 August 1880 allowing the League to use all funds donated as it saw fit. Daniel O’Connell had been forced to raise funds to indemnify voters who defied their landlord by voting for O’Connellite election candidates. In 1880 the Land League was also using funds to indemnify tenants who stood up to their landlord. The major difference was that in O’Connell’s time the funds were raised in the main, from within the ranks of the movement. Parnell, it seems, faced a

⁹¹ *Irish Times*, 12 Jan. 1881.

⁹² *L.E.*, 7 May 1881.

⁹³ A cheque in the sum of £57 0s. 9d. was issued by the League on 28 July 1881 to cover costs arising from four sheriff’s sales held in Tralee on 30 June 1881 (N.L.I., Irish National Land League papers, Ms. 8291, Kerry).

more cynical body of nationalists. Looking at the records of the correspondence between the League and its branches preserved in the National Library, one is struck by the scale of the financial operation involved.⁹⁴ The correspondence from some 150 branches, mostly dating from mid-1880 to September 1881, relates, invariably, to money, and in virtually all cases, the direction of flow is from the centre to the branches.

A complicated bureaucracy built up around the dispensing of the money. Detailed pre-printed forms were completed, some headed 'Form of application for costs and expenses' others 'Imprisonment and prosecution form' and 'Eviction forms.' The applications for costs and expenses related primarily to sheriffs' costs arising from the 'rent at the point of a bayonet' policy. Each case cost the League between eight and ten pounds to cover the Sheriff's charges for conducting the sale.⁹⁵ The forms were issued by the Land League's legal department and carried strict warnings that applications for costs or expenses were only to be submitted on the official form, that all applications had to be verified by 'The President, Secretary and Treasurer' of the local branch, and all claims were to be 'supported by vouchers'. For every eviction case, a standard form was required detailing the facts of the case and attesting to the level of distress being endured by the victim. In each case the League executive adjudicated and grants of five pounds on average were usually awarded.⁹⁶ Individuals brought before the courts under the Protection of Person and Property Act 1881⁹⁷ were defended at the League's expense and applications were processed using a standard, 'Imprisonment and Prosecution Form'. A solicitor might

⁹⁴ Correspondence with branches (N.L.I., Irish National Land League papers, MS 8291).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, (County Kerry).

⁹⁶ Nine eviction forms, Apr. – Sept. 1881 (N.L.I., Irish National Land League papers, MS 8291, Kings County).

⁹⁷ Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act 1881 (44 & 45 Vict., c. 4).

expect to be paid £10 per case and the form also served for applications on behalf of the dependants of those who were convicted.

Apart from the standard, form based applications, there were also many individual cases brought to the attention of the League, such as that of Thade Foley, a labourer who was 'turned out of his employment by his landlord for refusing to mow hay on the farm of an evicted tenant'. The letter making the case for Foley was sent by James Sheahan, the Catholic curate and secretary to the Castlemaine branch of the League, on 4 August 1881 and in response a cheque for £3 was issued on 12 August 1881.⁹⁸ The impression is given of something akin to a highly organised insurance company paying out on claims, except that the premiums of the beneficiaries could in no way fund the constant payouts being made.

The files also contain many examples of the branches' monthly returns to head office. These set out the number of members, new members, money raised, money spent and money forwarded to head office for the month in question. An example of such is the 31 August 1880 return for the Kanturk branch in north Cork. It is their inaugural return and it states that they had enrolled fifty-three members, who between them had subscribed £3 8s. 0d., none of which had been forwarded to head office. Instead, in the section headed 'general report', the branch complained that they have not received a reply to one 'deserving case' that they 'had recommended for consideration'. Another example that illustrates the tenor of the correspondence also involved a branch in north Cork. The

⁹⁸ James Sheahan to I.N.L.L., 4 Aug. 1881 (N.L.I., Irish National Land League papers, MS 8291, Kerry).

parish priest of Boherbue, Rev. M. McMahon had submitted a case to the Land League and had been advised by the League to engage a good local solicitor and send the League ‘particulars of costs’. To this came a reply on 2 May 1881 from James O’Keefe who referred to the Land Leagues response to the Rev. McMahon and advised that there were no funds in their branch at present. O’Keefe said that he borrowed £3 on the strength of the Land League letter and sent it to the attorney and concluded: ‘So I trust you won’t leave it to me to pay it.’ He was not left to pay, for scribbled on his letter, a note records: ‘filled cheque £3, 11/5/81’.⁹⁹

Such was the culture of dependence that characterised the relationship between the Land League and its members. There was a feeling abroad that America would provide an inexhaustible flow of money. Patrick Egan complained to the *Irish World* that ‘one of the bishops a while ago stated that there was £300,000 in the fund and the clergy seem to act as if these exaggerated statements were true’.¹⁰⁰ Of course it suited the League to encourage the belief that tenants could, and would, be supported. John Dillon spoke of ‘a considerable organisation’ in America that would supply evicted tenants with a ‘steady income’¹⁰¹ and at indignation meetings encouraging references were made to £6,000 per week being sent from America to enable the tenants to sustain their agitation.¹⁰² Money and the promise of more money had been used to bolster solidarity among the tenantry. With the shift to the policy of ‘rent at the point of a bayonet’ the League signalled its willingness to incur greater costs and reduce demands on tenants in order to

⁹⁹ James O’Keefe to Sec. I.N.L.L., 2 May 1881 (N.L.I., Irish national Land League papers, MS 8291).

¹⁰⁰ *Irish World*, 13 May 1882.

¹⁰¹ *F.J.*, 21 Jul 1880

¹⁰² *L.E.*, 7 May 1881.

maximise support for the movement. This policy shift also reflected a response to the reality on the ground that in many cases the Land League ‘rule’, whereby all tenants on an estate would withhold rent if one among them was evicted after a rent reduction had been sought, was being honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The case of the Ballyadams and Wolfhill branch, Queens county, reported in the *Leinster Leader* on 30 April 1881, which involved the expulsion of ‘some members of this branch of the I.N.L.L.’ who ‘acted individually . . . paid their rents in full having previously agreed to act collectively with their fellow tenants’ was not an isolated example.

As the weeks and months went by in 1881 financial pressures on the League mounted inexorably. The ‘rent at the point of a bayonet’ policy involved the League in huge legal costs, which included solicitors fees, auctioneers fees, payment to bailiffs, poundage, travelling expenses for the sheriff and advertising. For example, a sample of thirteen tenants in Queens County, whose landlords instituted legal proceedings against them for rent totalling £560 3s. 2d., all resisted paying until they were about to be evicted, then they paid their rent plus the legal costs, which added £105 2s. 9d., or nearly one fifth again to their debts.¹⁰³

Meanwhile the demand for support for evicted tenants, which should have reduced as a result of the new policy, actually increased. The reason for this was twofold. Firstly, there had been a dramatic rise in the rate of evictions in 1881. In the last quarter of 1880 the number of evictions had been 954, but in the first quarter of 1881 the figure rose to 1732

¹⁰³ Carter, *The land war and its leaders*, pp 178-9.

before jumping to 5263 in the second quarter of the year.¹⁰⁴ The second aspect relates to the number of ‘charity cases’ being supported by the League. The League was only liable to support tenants who were evicted as a result of standing up for Land League principles, therefore, the increase in the number of evictions at this stage should not have impacted on League finances, as the new policy was to pay costs and avoid evictions. The reality was that the evicted tenants being supported by the League had not been evicted because they supported League principles, but because they were unable to pay their rent arrears. Anna Parnell maintained that when the Ladies Land League took over operations in October 1881 all the applications for relief were from what were termed ‘poverty cases’ and she could find no cases where the eviction was due to Land League policy.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, as evictions increased, so too did the applications to head office on behalf of ‘hard cases’. It was through this benevolent expenditure that the League maintained its support among the poorer tenants while it attracted the support of the stronger farmers by covering their costs and averting eviction. Land League resources were now divided between two very different types of expenditure and as long as it had the resources to keep up the payments it was possible to gloss over the great differences between the two categories of beneficiaries.

As early as March 1881 the strain on the financially maintained alliance of tenants began to tell. At a League executive meeting Tim Healy pointed out that the League could no longer afford to pay out cash to what were, in effect, charity cases. He suggested that they should apply for outdoor relief from the poor law guardians and force some of the costs

¹⁰⁴ Bew, *Land and the national question*, p. 160.

¹⁰⁵ Parnell, *The tale of a great sham*, p. 91.

of maintaining the people they evicted back on the landlords.¹⁰⁶ The following day Anna Parnell, clearly still ignorant of the ‘sham’ she was to uncover later, reassured tenants that ‘Half the money collected by the Land League will be to assist the tenants. So long as they act on the instructions of the League they will be assisted.’¹⁰⁷ It gave little comfort to the hundreds of tenants now turning to the League for assistance who had been evicted for arrears.

On 21 June 1881, Thomas Sexton calculated that in the first three weeks of June the executive had been forced to spend £2,700 on ‘legal resistance, relief to evicted tenants, assistance of payment of costs at sheriffs’ sales, maintenance of prisoners and their families and generally keeping the League at a high pitch of efficiency.’¹⁰⁸ A week later he warned that, while the league had reserves of roughly £30,000 or £40,000, at the present rate of expenditure, this amount would be quite soon drastically reduced unless the branches assisted the central body.¹⁰⁹ It was a vain hope. The monthly returns of the branches show that the only money being raised locally was membership subscription of a shilling per annum and only a portion of this was remitted to central funds, the balance being retained by the branch to cover its expenses.¹¹⁰ It was reported that in the entire month of July 1881 the Irish tenantry contributed only £163 to the Land League¹¹¹ and while £2,436 15s. 9d. was subscribed to the League in the first week of August, of that, only £87 12s. 7d. came from Ireland.¹¹² Suggestions that the subscription be raised to 2s.

¹⁰⁶ *F.J.*, 30 Mar. 1881.

¹⁰⁷ *Spec. comm. proc.*, III, p. 109.

¹⁰⁸ *F.J.*, 22 June 1881.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 29 June 1881.

¹¹⁰ Branch monthly returns (N.L.I., Irish National Land League papers, MS 8291).

¹¹¹ *F.J.*, 16 Sep. 1881.

¹¹² *Western News* 6 Aug. 1881.

6d. and 5s.¹¹³ and that farmers might pay the League a percentage of any rent abatement achieved,¹¹⁴ fell on deaf ears.

By the end of June 1881, the crisis of escalating costs had forced the League to abandon its expensive ‘rent at the point of a bayonet’ policy. The league could not afford to continue paying the legal costs and besides, the theatrics surrounding the sheriffs’ sales were becoming more and more farcical.¹¹⁵ The new policy was to allow the farms be sold to the agents of the Property Defence Association. On 2 July W. Abraham informed a Land League meeting in Limerick that ‘a new phase had arisen in the movement’, and went on to explain that the Land League’s central branch had resolved, ‘except in peculiarly exceptional circumstances, to let Mr. Goddard and Co. of the Emergency Committee, buy the interest of these farms and put on those gentlemen the onus by and by of getting tenants for them.’¹¹⁶ The plan was that the ‘emergency men’ would be left holding properties that no one would touch, and the landlord, not having got his legal costs and getting no benefit from the land, would be forced to come to an agreement with the tenant. This policy had the distinct disadvantage of demanding real sacrifice from the tenants, and many, particularly the stronger farmers in Munster, were loath to sacrifice their farms. At a League meeting held in Kilfinane, County Limerick on 23 August 1881 angry farmers threatened that: ‘If the Land League executive did not change their course, they [the farmers] would change theirs and they would not go behind doors to tell it out

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *Cork Weekly Herald*, 9 July 1881.

¹¹⁵ Bew, *Land and the national question*, p. 173.

¹¹⁶ *Limerick Reporter*, 5 July 1881.

either'.¹¹⁷ At the other end of the spectrum, the smaller tenants in the west were disgruntled as a result of the League's increasing reluctance to assist evicted tenants on the grounds that their eviction was due to arrears. From Mayo, James Daly complained in August 1881 that 'the Castlebar branch of the Land League had made six ineffectual appeals to the central office for assistance'.¹¹⁸ The need to conserve funds was putting strain on support for the League among its two distinct tenant groupings.

The prospect of a land act also contributed to internal opposition to the League's new policy of 'letting the farms go'. The strong farmers in particular were concerned that if they let the farm go, they would lose their rights to compensation for improvements under the new act. The passing into law of the act in August 1881 shattered any semblance of unity and solidarity among the tenantry and put the unity of the entire movement at risk. Parnell played a masterful political game in these difficult circumstances. He had to promote concession yet appear belligerent, and he did this to such good effect that he managed to hold the movement together. In what Alvin Jackson refers to as 'a brilliant piece of Parnellite ambiguity' he called for the Land Act to be tested in the courts.¹¹⁹ Having convinced the doubters to accept the Land Act 'on approval' he then proceeded with a series of belligerent speeches to deflect attention from the compromise. The fact that the speeches led to his imprisonment only added to the effect Parnell sought to achieve and secured for him the status of martyr that would appeal very much to his American supporters.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *Limerick Reporter*, 26 Aug. 1881.

¹¹⁸ *Connaught Telegraph*, 20 Aug. 1881.

¹¹⁹ Jackson, *Ireland*, p. 121.

¹²⁰ Bew, *Land and the national question*, p. 196.

The next move was cynicism itself. The ‘no rent manifesto’ issued from Kilmainham jail by Parnell and his Land League colleagues called on their now disunited and leaderless foot soldiers to embark on a course that, even when the agitation was at a peak, the organisation had not dared suggest. The no rent policy could not work. Parnell knew that. He had said as much when he wrote to Katherine O’Shea on the day of his arrest saying that ‘the movement is breaking fast and all will be quiet in a few months, when I shall be released.’¹²¹ He cannot have been so candid with his sister Anna to whom it fell to carry on the fight at the helm of the Ladies Land League. The playing out of events in the later days of the Land League serve as a good example of the difference between the pragmatic, chameleon like approach to politics of the brother as compared with the idealistic and ultimately blinkered view of politics of his sister Anna. With the League suppressed, its leaders imprisoned and little support for the ‘No Rent’ manifesto the task that faced the Ladies Land League was indeed intimidating. Anna Parnell faced the frustration of trying to sustain a movement that was losing support while implementing an unpopular policy that seemed doomed to failure and all the while facing a financial crisis, whereby ‘The deluge of costs was rapidly rising and the impossibility of keeping their wholesale promises as to the payment thereof had become daily more obvious.’¹²²

Although she did not realise it at the time, Anna Parnell and the Ladies Land League were not expected to succeed and she would later testify bitterly as to the cynical manner in which they had been used. The ‘No Rent’ manifesto was, she wrote in 1907,

¹²¹ K. O’Shea, *Charles Stewart Parnell : His love story and political life* (2 vols, London, 1914) ,i , 207.

¹²² Anna Parnell, *The tale of a great sham* (Dublin, 1986), p. 91.

‘ostensibly a measure of retaliation for the practical suppression of the Land League; in reality it was the only cover under which they could withdraw from the impossible position they had created for themselves, and at the same time keep up some semblance of a continuous policy.’¹²³ It is also difficult to argue with the logic of her analysis, again with the benefit of hindsight, when she detailed the invidious position the ladies found themselves in, in late 1881. ‘Whatever we might do’ she wrote,

we were equally certain to be blamed for it . . . Should we give the tenants a chance of following the counsels contained in the No Rent manifesto, we should be blamed for wasting money; on the other hand, should we do as I believe the framers of that manifesto wished us to do – save the Land League money for them to spend whenever they might come out of prison, on parliament or otherwise, the failure of the Land League would of course be ascribed to the Ladies Land League neglecting the evicted tenants and starving out the spirit of the people.¹²⁴

Her brother and his colleagues would be left in no doubt as to which course the Ladies Land League chose to take, for they certainly were not to be accused of saving the Land League’s money. In just over eight months between 26 December 1881 and 7 September 1882 the Ladies Land League spent £69,372 5s. 10d. (Table 4.1), while the Land League, over its almost two years of operation, had expended no more than £71,256 19s. 4d.¹²⁵ The average expenditure under the Ladies Land League was therefore in excess of £2,000 per week, a figure well beyond the levels that had given Thomas Sexton such cause for concern in July and it coincided with the level of expenditure the *Irish World* reporter, O’Neill Larkin, had forecast would put the league in severe danger.¹²⁶

¹²³ Ibid., p. 104.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 116.

¹²⁵ *Special comm. proc.*, vi, p. 343.

¹²⁶ Bew, *Land and the national question*, p. 172.

Table 4. 1.

Ladies Land League expenditure during the year after 26 Dec. 1881	
Evicted Tenants	£20,849-19-4
Families of coercion prisoners	£ 5,123- 2- 0
Families of ordinary law prisoners	£ 1,449-11-11
Building	£ 9,469- 3- 5
Providing for coercion and ordinary law prisoners from 26 Dec 1881	£21,637-16- 4
Ordinary law prisoners, catering from 26 Dec	£ 1,603-12- 1
Legal costs by the ladies Land League	£ 1,508-17- 7
Miscellaneous grants	£ 187- 7- 0
Grants made by the L.L. since its suppression	£ 7,542-16- 2
Total	£69,372- 5-10

Source: *Special comm. proc.*, Vol. x, p. 608.

The fact that this level of expenditure could be maintained was testimony to the giving power of Irish-America. T. P. O'Connor and Tim Healy were already in the United States on a fundraising mission when news of the Parnell's arrest and the proscription of the Land League reached America. It provided a powerful stimulus to their fundraising efforts and a special convention was convened in Chicago which even managed to unite the opposing factions in the American organisation. The convention endorsed the no rent manifesto and pledged its delegates to raise a special fund of \$250,000 within twelve months for the movement in Ireland.¹²⁷ Parnell would, no doubt, have been pleased to see the funds roll in from America but it must also have irked him to see them being dissipated on a policy that he outwardly espoused but inwardly had moved on from. He revealed some of his frustration in a letter to Katherine O'Shea on 14 February 1882 when he wrote: 'When I was arrested I did not think the movement would have lasted a

¹²⁷ Davitt, *Fall of feudalism*, pp 365-6.

month, but this wretched government have such a fashion of doing things by halves that it has managed to keep things going in several of the counties up till now.’¹²⁸

His retreat to constitutional politics was to be expensive but that is not to say that Parnell would have regarded Ladies Land League expenditure as a dead loss. On the contrary, the Ladies Land League’s zealous pursuit of Land League principles in their advocacy of the no rent manifesto deflected attention from the real compromises being made as Parnell negotiated the ‘Kilmainham treaty’ with Gladstone. In May 1882 following the release of the Land League prisoners, there were no moves to relieve the ladies from their duties. It seems that Parnell was happy to let the Ladies Land League continue to deal with the tenants the League still had responsibilities towards. However, he was not happy to allow the haemorrhaging of League funds to continue and soon the ladies found their requests for advances from Patrick Egan being ignored. They were, according to Anna Parnell, ‘to make the bricks, but henceforth to make them without straw.’¹²⁹ Undeterred, the Ladies Land League proceeded to run up a significant overdraft.

Matters came to a head in August when Parnell undertook to cover the overdraft, then standing at £16,000, but sought to ring-fence any future spending by the Ladies Land League by agreeing only to cover ‘any further overdraft which an expenditure of £300 per week by the ladies may necessitate.’¹³⁰ Parnell still wanted the ladies to continue with their work but without the power to decide on grant applications or to draw down funds.

¹²⁸ Parnell to O’Shea, 14 Feb. 1882, O’Shea, *Parnell*, i, 236.

¹²⁹ A. Parnell, *Tale of a great sham*, p.153.

¹³⁰ Parnell to Dillon, 9 Aug. 1882 (T.C.D., Dillon Papers, MS 6745 (11)). Parnell’s handwriting makes it difficult to tell if this figure is £300 or £700.

He told Dillon on 11 August that he considered it ‘absolutely necessary that no further grants should be made, except after investigation by yourself and myself.’¹³¹ When he was informed that the ladies were no longer prepared to continue under such conditions, Parnell’s response was dismissive. ‘Should the ladies resign now,’ he wrote to Dillon, ‘I think they will be acting very badly, and may do considerable mischief. But as I have never heard that anybody could persuade a woman to do, or not to do, anything which she had made up her mind to do, no matter what the consequences to herself or others might be, I cannot help it if they do resign.’¹³²

The ladies did resign and on 7 September 1882 their bank account was closed and a debit balance of £6 5s. 9d. was transferred into a holding account set up by Parnell. Thus ended the rocky relationship between the Land League and the Ladies Land League but it also ended what had been a much closer and fonder relationship, that between Parnell and his sister Anna. Her idealism had in the end proved too expensive and even looking back in 1907 she remained bitter and even then she was only peripherally aware of the bigger picture that her brother had sight of in 1882. He had seen the expenditure of Land League money not in terms of how it affected the tenants, but in terms of how it advanced the broader political agenda. Somewhere between July 1881 and May 1882 League expenditure had passed the point of diminishing returns and certainly after Kilmainham, Parnell knew that nothing could be gained politically from further expenditure. Besides, he knew that the money would be needed for other purposes as the movement entered its constitutional phase.

¹³¹ Parnell to Dillon, 11 Aug. 1882 (T.C.D., Dillon Papers, MS 6745 (12)).

¹³² Parnell to Dillon, 9 Aug. 1882 (T.C.D., Dillon Papers, MS 6745 (11)).

Dissolving the Ladies Land League was only one element in Parnell's systematic move to gain control of the League's funds. In a letter to Parnell in 1890, Monroe & Co., the League's bankers in Paris, referred to a letter they had received in June 1882. The letter which was signed by Parnell, J. G. Biggar and Justin McCarthy, 'recites that the bonds had been in the first instance vested in the names of Messrs. Parnell, Biggar, McCarthy, Egan and Davitt subject to the order of any two of them and enjoins us to vary the arrangement so as not to part with the bonds except on your signatures i.e. those of Messrs. Parnell Biggar and McCarthy in addition to that of Mr Egan or that of Mr Davitt.'¹³³ Having thus isolated the two trustees most likely to use the funds for non constitutional purposes, the task was completed when first Davitt, in a letter to Monroe's dated 18 August 1882¹³⁴ resigned his trusteeship and then Egan the League's treasurer resigned on 14 October 1882 and handed over £31,900, being the balance remaining of the £244,820 that had 'passed through my hand since I undertook the position in October 1879'.¹³⁵

In setting up the Irish National League in that same month of Oct 1882 Parnell had replaced the defunct Land League with an organisation that was firmly under the control of the parliamentary party, but he went a step further with the League's money. That remained, beyond even the grasp of the parliamentary party, in the Monroe account in Paris. Such was Parnell's control over the former Land League money, that the I.N.L. was in the habit of applying to him for monies which he paid to it by way of grants from

¹³³ Monroe's to Parnell, 31 Mar. 1890 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8930 (1))

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ M. Davitt, *Fall of feudalism*, p. 373

the Paris fund.¹³⁶ He had now in place all the ingredients for pursuing effective parliamentary politics that had been lacking just three years earlier. He was leader of the parliamentary party that had behind it an organised branch structure, and he had at his disposal funds that could be used for electoral purposes. His newfound independence did come at a cost. It had been American money that made him a national figure through its support for the Land League and when Parnell showed his willingness to compromise on the land question it was always going to affect American support. In 1883 receipts from America dropped to £2,129 for the eight months from April to December and in 1884 only £3,101 was received for the year.¹³⁷

What is significant in these figures is not that the flow of American money slowed, but that it continued at all in the light of the distance Parnell had taken the movement from the ideals of the new departure. In three short years Parnell had gone from M.P. to party and national leader, from fundraiser to fund controller. He had managed to combine radical agrarian agitation with conservative Home Rule principles in a united and strengthened parliamentary party that no longer was regarded as a pawn of the Land League and its backers, but was now itself the vehicle for Irish nationalist political expression, with the Land League successor organisation, the Irish National League, playing a purely supportive role. Money had been key to all these developments and no one appreciated this better than Parnell. Having seen at first hand the huge potential for fundraising in America he was initially frustrated by his inability to put that money to greater use in the 1880 election.

¹³⁶ Affidavit of T. M. Healy, 26 Apr. 1892 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8930 (2)).

¹³⁷ *Special comm. proc.*, vi, pp 327-8.

It was almost exclusively American money that allowed the Land League become a national movement. The money papered over the cracks in the supposedly united front of the Irish tenantry, but only for a short while. Ultimately, the lack of conviction and cohesion within the land movement was exposed as the money became scarce and when Parnell retreated from the semi revolutionary Land League, he did so clear in the knowledge that the majority of its supporters were happy to follow. Turning back to constitutional politics he sacrificed £70,000 and used the Ladies Land League to ensure the retreat did not become a collapse and he was able to bring the movement with him. He had subverted the 'new departure', hijacked the movement using its own money and even managed to retain a substantial portion of that money to fund the next stage of his political odyssey.

Chapter V: Parnell and the political machine, 1883-6

Compared to what had gone before, the years between 1882 and 1886 were unspectacular in political terms. Parnell had positioned himself as the undisputed leader of Irish nationalism, which under his leadership had become and would continue to be firmly constitutional in its aims and operation. But while he had established himself as a popular leader and guided popular sentiment in the direction of constitutional politics, questions still remained as to what shape his political organisation would take. His thinking was initially coloured by his determination to leave behind all links with the semi-revolutionary past and it seems that he had considered not replacing the Land League.¹ That he should have considered proceeding with no formal organisation beyond the parliamentary party, suggests that in 1882, Parnell was not possessed of a grand plan to develop an organised political party in the modern sense. While such a move would have been consistent with Parnell's tendency to draw power and money to the centre under his own control, it would have been foolish to deprive the Home Rule movement of a pre-existing organisational structure that had a presence in nearly every parish in the country.

In August 1882, at the time he was actively winding down the Ladies Land League, Parnell gave an indication of the direction he planned to take. On 17 August he and Dillon attended a large public meeting in the Mansion House presided over by Lord

¹ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and his party, 1880-1890* (Oxford, 1968), p. 127.

Mayor Dawson. The main business of the meeting was to launch a fund for the assistance of evicted tenants; however, a second fund was also mooted. A resolution was passed in favour of the formation of 'a fund to meet the election expenses of Irish members, with a view to obtaining an efficient national party in parliament'.² With the money from the first fund Parnell would have hoped to attend to the demands that, through the L.L.L., had been draining the financial resources of the organisation and with the second he would have hoped to raise a separate stream of funding that would be specific to the furtherance of parliamentary politics. If his plan worked, the Land League and the L.L.L. would be no more, the Lord Mayor's Mansion House Fund would take care of the evicted tenants and supporters at home and abroad would fund his parliamentary party. But rather than simply allow the party to replace the league, Parnell, typically, took the middle way.

In replacing the Land League with the Irish National League, Parnell retained the benefits of the old organisation, while carefully ensuring that the new organisation was bound to, and controlled by, the parliamentary party. The new League would not be autonomous nor would it be agrarian. The programme approved at its foundation conference placed 'national self-government' as its first objective with 'land-law reform'³ relegated to second. It was to have been governed by an elected council but this was never carried through and instead the League continued to be controlled by the organising committee, chaired by Parnell, which had been set up as a temporary measure pending the election of the council. Branches operating at parish level had the right to send four delegates to county conventions convened for the purpose of selecting election candidates. Even this

² *N.Y.T.*, 18 Aug. 1882.

³ *F.J.*, 18 Oct. 1882.

power was less than it seemed; for while the conventions were attended by delegates from the branches and by the local clergy, all conventions were chaired by an M.P. despatched from Dublin with clear instructions as to who the candidate should be. Conventions were therefore, for the most part, rubber stamping exercises with candidate selection firmly controlled from the centre.⁴

The Irish National League, not unlike the various O'Connellite organisations, was a top down organisation and, as had been the case in O'Connell's time, the one area where provision was made for flows from the periphery to the centre was in the matter of funding. Members were required to pay an annual subscription that 'shall be at a rate of 1s. for every £5 valuation, and in no case shall it be less than 1s. or more than £1'. Of this, 'the treasurer of each branch shall forward 75 per cent of all subscriptions received'⁵ to head office. However, no more than had been the case with the Land League, the new organisation never showed any signs of delivering significant funds to head office. On 17 January 1883, three months after its establishment, the League's treasurer, Alfred Webb, reported that receipts amounted to £1,723 8s. 11d., but it was noted 'that 343 country branches had been formed to date but only 200 have complied with the fundamental rule of the League, namely to send up 75 per cent of the money received to the central committee'.⁶ Two weeks later the organising committee was advised that a further £270 6s. 10d. had been received by way of subscriptions from branches. With subscriptions

⁴ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 260.

⁵ Irish National League, Rules for branches (N.A.I., Police reports 1848-1921, Irish National League proceedings 1883-90, Carton 6).

⁶ *F.J.*, 21 Feb. 1883.

from branches yielding less than £200 per week, the League was in a very weak position financially.

The League's cash flow problems were exacerbated by the separate existence of the Mansion House evicted tenant's fund. At the inaugural conference of the League in October 1882, £4,000 had been taken from the remaining Land League funds and given to the lord mayor for the evicted tenants,⁷ but branches and individual members of the League continued to make contributions to this fund. Not alone did such contributions deflect resources from the League itself, but because the lord mayor's fund was paying out more in grants to the evicted tenants than it was receiving in contributions, the League was obliged to intervene financially. Of the £1,023 11s in receipts acknowledged by the Mansion House fund at its meeting on 5 February 1883, £1,000 was received from the trustees of the Irish National League. Subsequent meetings show that the unsustainable imbalance between incoming contributions to the fund and the outgoing grants continued (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1.
Mansion House Evicted Tenants Fund

Meeting Date	Contributions Received	Grants Made To Tenants
24/02/1883	£183	£230
22/03/1883	£3	£116
06/04/1883	£4	£90
15/05/1883	£0	£493
17/05/1883	£0	£103
Total	£190	£1032

Source: *F.J.* Feb. – May 1883.

⁷ Interview with Patrick Egan from the *New York Herald* of 14 Mar 1883, *F.J.*, 27 Mar. 1883.

The separation of the League and the evicted tenants fund was a conscious attempt to ring-fence the political funding of the former from the financial drain of the latter, but at this early stage it was proving difficult to put clear blue water between the new parliamentary priorities and the old Land League liabilities. At its meeting on 15 May 1883 the Mansion House Evicted Tenants Fund agreed to meet on 17 May to consider a notice of motion to amalgamate the fund with the National League. That meeting took place on the following Thursday 17 May, but adjourned to 4.00 p.m. on the 18 May before reaching the amalgamation motion. No report of the adjourned meeting appeared in the press but it seems clear that the fund was wound up as there were no further reports of meetings, while in the accounts of the National League for the period 30 April to 31 December 1883, the sum of £3,682 0s. 9d. is listed as an item of expenditure under the heading 'Grants to evicted tenants'.⁸ This incorporation of the evicted tenants fund into the National League had the potential to consume the all too meagre funds of the new organisation.

It would not have come as a great surprise to Alfred Webb, treasurer of the National League, that funds were slow in coming from the branches, as the real source of funding had always been from outside the country. American money had been the mainstay of the Land League, but the rapid shift to the right during 1882 had alienated much of the American support and in early 1883 Parnell attempted to put the American organisation on a sound footing by replacing the American Land League with the Irish National League of America. If he had hoped to replicate in America an organisation to mirror the

⁸ *Special Comm. proc.*, vi, p. 327.

disciplined and docile League he had created in Ireland, he was to be sorely disappointed. Of course he knew that his ability to shape the destiny of the League in America had always been extremely limited. He may have held out the hope that he could reassert some degree of control over the American organisation for he had planned to go there in person to launch the new League. His hopes and his travel plans were quickly jettisoned when details emerged of the unseemly events that marred the meeting held to prepare for his welcome.

On 19 March 1883 the *New York Herald* reported on a meeting of the Committee of Ways and Means of the Irish National Land League of America to take steps to arrange a suitable reception for Mr. Parnell. At the meeting, the Ancient Order of Hibernians nominated James Oliver as president of the organisation being set up to arrange for the visit. Dr. W. B. Wallace had already been nominated for the position and 'the meeting at this point split fairly into two camps, the A.O.H. on one side and the remaining organisations on the other. Mr Oliver claimed that the A.O.H. contributed two-thirds of the money and men and were entitled to the right of the line and the naming of the president'. Then the chairman reminded the meeting that 'they did not come to honour themselves, but Ireland and the person of its greatest leader. "Let us for God's sake sink our private differences and jealousies" he said'. His efforts were in vain and when the question was put to a vote there were scenes 'of the wildest confusion. The delegates shouted and yelled at each other, drowning out the secretary's voice as he tried to call the roll. The A.O.H. withdrew Mr Oliver's name for the presidency, and Dr. Wallace was called to the chair. The A.O.H. representatives then withdrew under the leadership of Mr

Murray from the meeting, stating that they would organise an independent reception'.⁹

News of this most recent rumpus in Irish-American politics would have brought it home to Parnell that the shape of the new organisation would be determined not by him, but by the playing out of the ongoing feud between the two factions within Irish-American politics.

On 12 April the parliamentary party met to consider the leader's visit to America and voted twelve to five against his going. It was resolved to write to America advising that the invitation to the Philadelphia Convention was being declined on foot of a resolution of the parliamentary party asking Parnell 'not to withdraw at the present time from the discharge of his parliamentary duties'.¹⁰ The National League of America came into being on 26 April 1883 at the convention in Philadelphia. Unfortunately for Parnell, the new League came to be dominated by Alexander O'Sullivan and his Clan na Gael faction. With O'Sullivan as its president, Parnell could not count on support from the American League for his constitutional aims and the chasm between the two elements of the organisation on either side of the Atlantic now seemed as great politically as it was geographically. Parnell in his role as leader of the parliamentary party could not be seen to be too closely linked to Americans accused of supporting the dynamite campaign in Britain, and while the height of political activity in Ireland was limited to fighting an occasional by-election, American support and funding would remain conspicuous by its absence. In the first six months of its existence, the National League received a mere £937 from America, or less than £40 per week compared to £2297 or just under £100 per

⁹ *N.Y.H.*, 19 Mar. 1883; *F.J.*, 2 Apr. 1883.

¹⁰ Irish Parliamentary Party minute book 1880-5 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 9233).

week from the Irish branches and a very respectable £1050, or an average of £40 per week, from Australia and New Zealand.¹¹ All in all, however, less than £200 per week was not the level of funding that would drive a burgeoning political movement.

Parnell did, of course, have access to the 'Paris Fund', the balance handed over to him by Patrick Egan on the winding up of the Land League. The fund according to Egan amounted to £31,900 in October 1882. It was increased by some small amounts received afterwards but reduced by the £4,000 given to the lord mayor of Dublin for the relief of evicted tenants. This according to Egan was followed by smaller payments and he estimated that the fund stood at between £25,000 and £26,000 in March 1883.¹² With the evicted tenants' fund threatening to swallow up money at a prodigious rate and with subscriptions slow in Ireland and drying up in America, Parnell would have been loathe to loosen the Paris purse strings, lest his political reserve fund be decimated. It is clear that during the lean financial years between 1882 and 1885 Parnell did draw on the fund, but the amounts were modest and he managed to maintain an ongoing reserve. In his affidavit to the high court in 1892 when the ownership of the balance of the Paris funds were in dispute, T. M. Healy confirmed that 'from 1882 the No. 1 or general account with Messrs. Monroe & Co. Paris . . . had been drawn on jointly for the parliamentary Party and to assist the National League'. He went on explain that 'Mr. Parnell from 1882 and 1890 drew the income of the No. 1 Fund then existing in Paris. The League was in the habit of applying to him for moneys and he made grants to it from the accumulations thus in his hands'. Healy also indicated that prior to 1885, when a dedicated parliamentary

¹¹ *Special Comm. proc.*, vi, pp 326.

¹² *N.Y.H.*, 14 Mar. 1883; *F.J.*, 27 Mar. 1883.

fund was established, ‘any member of the Irish party had similar recourse to him if he could establish a claim for funds for parliamentary purposes’. But he made it clear that ‘prior to 1886 only a very few members of the Irish Party received moneys to defray their sessional expenses’.¹³

The Irish National League had come into being in the political calm after the storm of the land war and motivating the membership of the new organisation would have been difficult enough given the retreat from the radical politics of agitation that had occurred. But Parnell was in no mood to rouse popular sentiment. He chose instead to concentrate political activity on the gradual and unspectacular process of expanding the parliamentary representation of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Parnell’s iconic status as party leader and the organisational structure of the Irish National League enabled the party to win fourteen of the sixteen by-elections it contested between November 1882 and the general election of 1885,¹⁴ but this approach to political progress did little to inspire or animate the rank and file membership at a national level and it was not likely to bring about a change to the pattern seen under the old League, whereby branches served more as conduits for the flow of funds from the centre to the periphery of the organisation than *vice versa*.

Only in the case of the Dublin county by-election, held in February 1883, does it appear that an organised fundraising drive was embarked upon at constituency level. The County Dublin Election Fund was set up and throughout the county local meetings were held. In the week immediately prior to the election there were meetings in Tallaght, Kilmainham,

¹³ Affidavit of Timothy M. Healy in the case of Kenny and others vs. McCarthy and another, 26 Apr. 1892 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8930 (2)).

¹⁴ B.M. Walker, (ed.), *Parliamentary election results in Ireland 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978), pp 127-9.

Balrothery, Lucan, Dalkey, Blackrock, Naul, Rathfarnham, Skerries, Baldoyle, Blanchardstown, Malahide, Lusk and Newcastle. At each of the meetings a subscription were taken up, generating sums that ranged from £7 8s. 6d. at Rathfarnham to £35 8s. at Kilmainham.¹⁵ But, despite this largesse on the part of his supporters, the Home Rule candidate, Edward McMahan, was defeated by his Conservative rival. Elsewhere in the country, meetings were held to vouch support for Home Rule candidates and popular support was clearly in evidence, as in the case of the Sligo county by-election in August 1883 when the candidate, ‘Nicholas Lynch accompanied by Thomas Sexton and others, was cheered at every station from Mullingar’. Public meetings were held in Sligo town and Tubbercurry, and while Lynch defeated the Conservative candidate by a comfortable 1545 votes to 983, not a penny appears to have been raised by way of popular subscription towards defraying his election expenses and it was this, rather than the Dublin county approach, that seems to have been the norm for the other by-election contests. The accounts of the League for the period to 30 April 1883 show a figure of £500 under the heading of election expenses which translates to an average of £100 for each of the five by-elections held in the first three months of 1883.¹⁶ This modest contribution would scarcely have covered the candidate’s obligations to the returning officer, but given the poor record of branches in remitting subscriptions to the League, it was probably as much as could be spared.

Apart from the outpouring of support for Parnell that found expression through the Parnell National Tribute, 1883 would see no great upsurge in nationalist political

¹⁵ *F.J.*, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27 Feb. 1883.

¹⁶ *Special Comm. proc.*, vi, p. 326.

sentiment, no attempt to regain the political momentum of the Land League years. Rather, it was a time of political consolidation, a time to regroup and rebuild. Political progress was made and there was drama on occasion but, even then, limited funding demanded financial prudence. The political highlight of the year was probably Tim Healy's victory in the Monaghan by-election in June. Parnell, uncharacteristically, took an active part in the campaign, going to Monaghan and canvassing actively for Healy. For a Home Rule candidate to win a seat in a northern county was quite an achievement and it was indicative of a changed and changing political landscape. The campaign in Monaghan was hard fought and once again it underlined a lack of political funding. Healy however, managed to make a virtue out of necessity, claiming in his victory speech that 'I have to return my thanks to the volunteers who helped me in this contest. We did not employ a single paid agent; we did not employ a single cab; we did [not] employ a single paid solicitor. Everything won has been won by the aid of voluntary efforts. Of that I am proud'.¹⁷

Significantly, he had first thanked 'the Catholic priests of Monaghan'. His thanks to the clergy acknowledges the phenomenal support and local leadership provided by the Catholic clergy, not alone in Monaghan, but in every part of Ireland. They were instrumental in raising thousands of pounds for the 'Parnell Tribute' and in Monaghan the lack of political funds, which, ironically, was due in part to the shift in donations from the League to the tribute, was counteracted by the voluntary effort of the priests. John Monroe, the defeated Conservative candidate, even alluded to it in his speech to his supporters following his defeat. He said that 'in the ranks of those struggling for national

¹⁷ *United Ireland*, 30 June 1883.

independence were the Catholic clergy of this county to a man. The chapels through its entire extent were the committee rooms of Mr. Healy. The priests of the county were his sponsors, his canvassers, his personation agents, and his poll clerks'.¹⁸

Healy also expressed a vote of thanks to 'that independent band of Protestant and Presbyterian electors who have aided their Catholic fellow countrymen'. This may well have been diplomatic eyewash rather than any genuine acknowledgement of votes from that quarter. Prior to the election, there was a clear expectation that the electorate would vote along confessional lines. John Monroe, addressing a Conservative meeting on 19 June, put it in stark terms. He told his supporters that at the previous election 'the liberal got 2,800 votes while the conservative got 2,200 which meant that only 300 Protestants voted for the liberal as there were 2,500 Catholics on the register'. He went on to underline the fact that 'The Catholics would vote in a solid phalanx for Mr. Healy' and that if Pringle, the Liberal, was to stand, it would take 318 Protestant votes from him and allow Healy to win the election. 'He believed' he said that 'Mr Pringle was the tool of those who wished to see the nationalist candidate returned'.¹⁹ In the event, Pringle did stand and attracted a modest 274 votes. Healy got 2,376 and Monroe 2,011 which meant that Monroe's assessment was not quite accurate. Even if Pringle had not run, the extra 274 votes, had they fallen to Monroe, would not have put him past Healy.

The telling aspect of these exchanges between the Conservative and Liberal camps in Monaghan was the manner in which pressure was put on Liberal voters not to split the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7 July 1883.

¹⁹ *Northern Standard*, 23 June 1883.

Protestant vote in the face of a Catholic nationalist challenge. This was an example of a political shift that was to lead to the decline of the Irish Liberal Party and the polarisation of political opinion on the island along nationalist/unionist, Catholic/Protestant lines. Monroe's comments in relation to the Catholic clergy were also telling, for they confirm the fact that Parnell's latest 'new departure' had found favour with the Catholic church. Parnell had worked hard to bring the middling class of Irish Catholic on board when he broadened the appeal of the Land League and the scale of his success in making Parnellism popular and respectable across the spectrum of Catholic opinion is recorded in pounds, shillings and pence in the monies contributed to the Parnell National Tribute.

It was the embarrassing state of Parnell's personal finances that gave rise to the National Tribute. In early 1883 an order for the sale of his estate in Wicklow was made on foot of debts amounting to £18,000.²⁰ William O'Brien promoted the idea of the tribute in the pages of *United Ireland* and Parnell's local branch of the National League in Avoca put the wheels in motion when they resolved that 'in order to manifest our undying admiration of Mr. Parnell, we propose to open a subscription list for the purpose of clearing off the inherited mortgage on his estate'.²¹ The tribute reveals much on many levels about nationalist politics in 1883 and the particular phenomenon of 'Parnellism'. Even the word 'tribute' is significant; it has connotations of royalty and in the Irish context, it is redolent of the gaelic chieftain or *tanaiste* exacting tribute from his vassal chiefs. The fact that the meagre offerings to the Irish National League were now to compete with a national drive to collect money on behalf of the leader, to cover his

²⁰ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 247.

²¹ *U.I.*, 10 Mar. 1883.

private needs, tells its own story. We are immediately reminded of ‘the O’Connell Tribute’ of the 1830s. Parnell, like O’Connell, was now bigger, it would appear, than the political organisation he controlled; he personified the movement, completely overshadowing the toothless National League. We are reminded also that O’Connell too had a great knack of dissipating personal resources and depending on the generosity of his supporters to keep him afloat. Not that Parnell would have wished to be compared with O’Connell in that respect. He was nonetheless, a tribune of the people, hailed as ‘the uncrowned king of Ireland’ and there were many old enough to remember the heady days of the early 1840s. They might have been forgiven for thinking that Parnell was the new ‘Liberator’ and the ill defined, catch-all, rallying cry had changed from Repeal to Home Rule.

The tribute also confirmed yet another parallel between the two men, that is, their ability to win over, and dragoon the Catholic clergy into supporting their respective organisations. In 1880 Parnell was regarded by the Catholic Church as a radical and as often as not the clergy backed moderate Home Rule or Liberal candidates in opposition to Parnell’s candidates in the general election of that year. Less than three years later, Parnell was centre stage, having shaken off the suspicion of revolutionary leanings, and was very much a political leader that could, and did, attract support from the Irish bishops. The extent of this support became clear in March 1883 with the launch of the ‘Tribute’. A. J. Kettle, who became one of the secretaries to the organising committee of the tribute, referring to the testimonial in a letter to the *Freeman’s Journal* on 4 March,

announced that ‘the clergy are leading’.²² This point was reinforced ten days later when Archbishop Croke wrote endorsing the testimonial and enclosed a £50 contribution. The *Freeman’s Journal* in its editorial in the same edition undertook ‘to open today an account in the National Bank in the name of the Parnell Fund’ and stated that ‘Those who are for Ireland will send their subscriptions to it’.²³

The support of the Catholic clergy for the venture was soon to be tested. Subscriptions in March and April had built steadily to a total of £2594 by 28 April, but two days later the fund was nearly doubled with the acknowledgement of a single amount of £2492 6s. 7d. subscribed by the priests and people of the diocese of Cashel and Emly.²⁴ This massive injection of support from Archbishop Croke’s diocese was countered by a sharp rebuke from no less an authority than the pope himself. On 11 May 1883 a papal rescript, signed by Cardinal Simeoni, was issued which made it clear that ‘the collection called the "Parnell Testimonial Fund" cannot be approved by the sacred congregation; and consequently it cannot be tolerated that any ecclesiastic, much less a bishop, take any part whatever in recommending or promoting it’.²⁵ Emmet Larkin argues that, while the intervention from Rome may have been sparked by exasperation at Archbishop Croke’s outspoken political opinions, the real reason for issuing the circular was to influence British public opinion in the interests of re-establishing diplomatic relations with the British government. It was according to Larkin, ‘a blunder of the first magnitude’ and far from turning his bishops and priests away from political activity, the intervention by

²² *F.J.*, 7 Mar. 1883.

²³ *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1883.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28, 30 Apr. 1883.

²⁵ *Northern Standard*, 19 May 1883.

Cardinal Simeoni, had the opposite effect.²⁶ It was seen as an unwarranted and unwelcome intrusion into the affairs of the Irish people. Individuals, editors and public bodies contributed copy to a flood of condemnation in the press.

At a meeting of Tralee Urban Sanitary Authority, its chairman, Mr P Hayes, called for a public meeting to promote the Parnell Testimonial Fund. He added that 'he had intended to subscribe to the Parnell testimonial but would now make his subscription much larger in consequence of a recent communication from Rome'.²⁷ The Limerick branch of the National League met on 16 May and having considered the circular from Rome decided that 'the promoters of the Parnell Testimonial and the League branches throughout the country should spare no effort to make the testimonial in question as great a success as the Irish people possibly could'. William Nunan from Ballyclough, Limerick wrote to advise the editor of the *Freeman's* that 'the people of this parish (Monaleen) have already contributed, and are now I understand, anxious to do so again as a mark of their unchanged and entire confidence in their political pope'.²⁸ Comparisons were drawn with the veto crisis of 1814 and Michael Davitt while suggesting that the target should be raised to fifty thousand pounds, said, in a reference to 1814, that: 'It would be also worthy of Ireland's veto record in O'Connell's time against another attempt at an Anglo-Roman dictation in the public life of this country'.²⁹ Certainly this 'attempt at Anglo-Roman dictation' had backfired and as Larkin has stated: 'Rome had defeated her own

²⁶ Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic church and the creation of the modern Irish state, 1878-86* (Dublin, 1975), p. 193.

²⁷ *F.J.*, 17 May 1883.

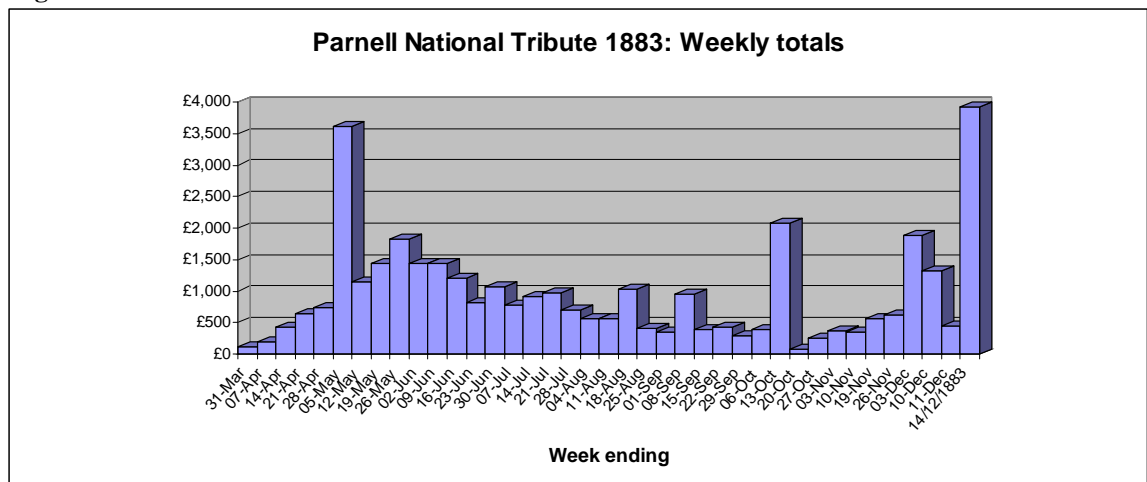
²⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 May 1883.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18 May 1883.

purpose by giving the British government a concrete example of the effective limits of Roman authority and power in Ireland'.³⁰

The controversy injected life into a political scene that had lacked excitement, it galvanised the Catholic clergy in their support for Parnell and it boosted support for the fund. From this point onward subscriptions were being made, and pointedly acknowledged in the press, in the name of 'the priests and people' of whichever town had sent it. It was as if the 'Catholic Rent' had been reintroduced and it seemed that, as had been the case in the 1820s, the very act of collecting money for a single identifiable national purpose, would have the effect of mobilising, politicising and binding all concerned to the common cause. It is notable however, that despite the fine words and the fact that the weekly subscriptions rose to a peak on 26 May, this practical expression of people's outrage seems to have been short lived, for, as can be seen from figure 5.1, the weekly totals declined again after 26 May.

Figure 5.1.



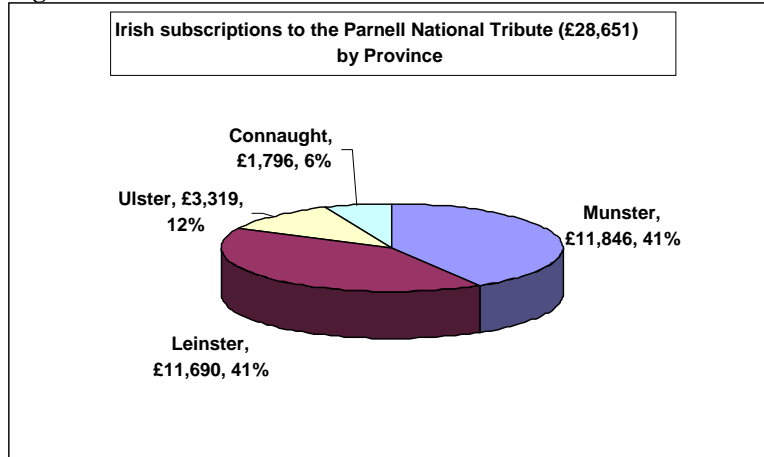
Source: *Freeman's Journal* 1883.

³⁰ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic church*, p. 194.

Nevertheless, more than enough to cover the outstanding mortgage had been collected by July and the collecting continued on to the end of the year. The final total was £39,871 7s. 8d. of which £28,651, or seventy one per cent, came from Ireland.³¹ A breakdown of these figures gives a further insight into the nature of the nationalist movement that Parnell had recast from the materials of the 1879 'New Departure'. The tribute was first and foremost a vote of confidence in the leadership of Parnell. It was a resounding affirmation of his decision to take the constitutional route and we only have to look to the areas that contributed most for confirmation of this. The semi-revolutionary phase from 1879 to 1882 had its origins in the land agitation of Mayo and the west, while it drew up to ninety per cent of its funding from America. The tribute shows this pattern turned on its head. Parnell now drew support from the more prosperous provinces, showing a pattern of support very similar to that attracted by O'Connell almost sixty years earlier (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Munster and Leinster led the way, with each province contributing more than forty percent of the Irish total. Munster provided £11,846 and Leinster £11,690. However, when allowance is made for variations in population, Leinster edges marginally ahead of Munster and Connaught overtakes the more populous Ulster, with ten and nine percent respectively (Figure 5.4).

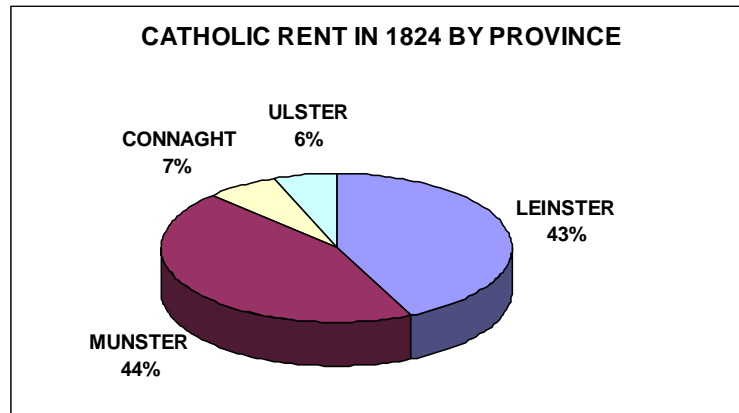
³¹ *Parnell National Tribute: analysis of subscriptions* (Dublin, 1884) p. 35.

Figure 5.2.



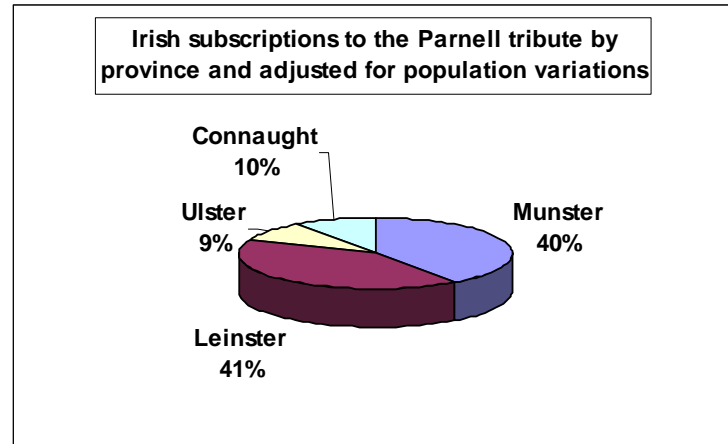
Source: *Parnell National Tribute: Analysis of subscriptions* (Dublin, 1884) p. 35.

Figure 5.3.



Source: Accounts of the Catholic Association published in the *Dublin Evening Post*, 17 Feb.1825 and 27 Apr. 1826.

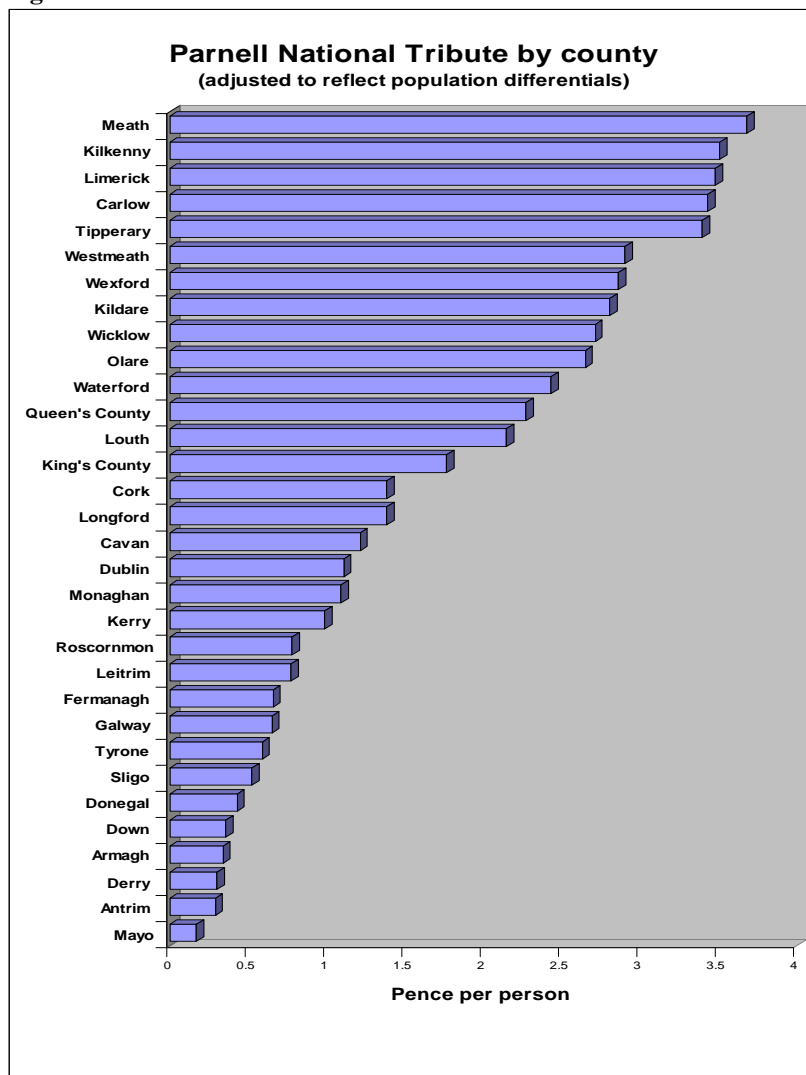
Figure 5.4.



Source: *Parnell National Tribute: Analysis of subscriptions* (Dublin, 1884) p. 35.; Census of Ireland 1881, H.C. 1881 (2931), xevi, 159.

The figures show in stark terms the degree to which Parnell had won broad support by winning over middle class Catholics. Looking at the counties in order of their contributions the point is reinforced; with the prosperous farming counties of Munster and Leinster to the fore (Figure 5.5), and there is a certain irony in the fact that Mayo, where Parnell's rise to prominence had begun four years earlier, brings up the rear and America contributed just over fourteen percent of the total as compared to its complete domination of Land League funding. Like O'Connell before him, Parnell had found that the political fulcrum for broad popular support rested with the Catholic middle classes.

Figure 5.5.



Source: *Parnell national tribute: Analysis of subscriptions* (Dublin, 1884); W.E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick, eds, *Irish historical statistics, population 1821-1971* (Dublin, 1978), pp 5-15.

In the fear, no doubt, that the fledgling Irish National League would take up where the Land League had left off, it was watched very closely by the Dublin Castle authorities. Quarterly reports were compiled based on extensive compilations of newspaper cuttings and comment from the various police divisions.³² Each quarterly report was preceded by a summary of the League's progress in the period, focusing in particular on the number of branches, their levels of activity and also detailed accounts of financial support from home and abroad. The picture painted by these reports is one of initial concern at the potential threat of the new organisation, giving way very quickly to a belief that the response to the new League was in general, apathetic.

In his report for the period 1 March 1883 to 31 May 1883, R. E. Beckerson, of the Police and Crime Department, Dublin Castle, pointed out that the receipts for the period came to £2,700 approximately, of which £2,000 was remitted by John Redmond from South Australia, £514 18s. 8d. from America and only £91 0s. 6d. came from branches in Ireland. Offering his opinion as to the reason for the poor response from the Irish branches, Beckerson goes on: 'I think that the apathy of the league during the period under report and the fewness of the meetings may be explained by the fact that its supporters have been engaged in devoting their energies to the success of the Parnell testimonial, and in whipping up subscriptions for that object'. He takes the view that the launch of the National League of America at the Philadelphia convention 'will arrest its [the National League] premature decay in this country, and will no doubt be the means of filling its treasury, as was the case with the Land League'. He may have misjudged the

³² Irish National League proceedings (N.A.I., Police reports 1848-1921, Irish National Land League and Irish National League Papers 1879-88, 10 cartons).

mood in America, for his contention that the Americans would fill the treasury of the National League was somewhat unlikely in 1883. But he concluded his report with an all too accurate indictment of the Irish branches, saying that: 'It must be conceded that were the League not supplied with funds from sources outside Ireland, the contributions "for the Cause", sent from the branches in this country, would not pay the office expenses'.³³

At the end of 1883 the indications were of continuing decline in organisational vigour. A report from Captain Butler, whose division covered the counties Kildare, King's, Westmeath, Meath, Longford, Cavan, Leitrim and Sligo, informed the Castle that the League was falling flat in all the counties comprising his division: 'The old established branches exist merely in name, the farming class do not appear to support the movement with any enthusiasm, and subscriptions are raised to a very small amount'. The south western division reported that the League was most active in County Limerick with frequent meetings of the local branches being held, but even so, it was reported that 'in most cases the object was to point out the slowness with which subscriptions were paid'. The activities of the League seem to have been an open book to the authorities. Resident magistrates such as Clifford Lloyd in County Limerick were able to provide detailed accounts of the proceedings at the League meetings in their area. Lloyd was able to inform Beckerson in his monthly report for March 1883 that in the case of the Broadford and Dromcollogher branch there had been 'no progress and at a meeting held by Hannigan (the prime mover) on 11 March, seven labourers alone attended! He explained to them how to make bottle envelopes'. And a month later he followed up: 'No progress

³³ Irish National League progress report, 1 Mar. – 31 May 1883 (N.A.I., Police reports 1848-1921, Irish National League proceedings 1883-90, Carton 6).

since the last report. Even the labourers are getting disgusted with it'.³⁴ Meanwhile, Kerry was reported as not having a single branch, the report pronouncing that: 'In Kerry the League is a dead failure'.³⁵ This last observation would appear to tally with the county totals for the Parnell Tribute which showed Kerry lagging well behind the other counties in Munster.

A year later, at the end of 1884, Beckerson referred to the branches of the League in Great Britain and said that, 'the British association was not able to support itself without aid from the central branch in Dublin' and with the general election getting ever closer he noted that 'no money was forwarded from America to the Central Branch during this period - at least none has been acknowledged'. Support from Australia had also dried up in the second six months of 1884. Beckerson referred to this as a 'temporary cessation of supplies from abroad' because, he added presciently, that while 'the lack of subscriptions is felt, . . . in the event of money being urgently required it is probable that American branches would come to the rescue'.³⁶

These reports show that the authorities had detailed information on the activities of the National League, and while they were right to conclude that the organisation was less than vibrant they made the mistake of comparing it with its predecessor, the Land League. It was not the Land League, nor anything remotely like it. As far as Parnell was concerned the apathy of the League membership was almost a virtue. It would have been better, in his eyes, to have a passive organisation that raised hardly enough to keep itself,

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Irish National League progress report, 1 Oct. – 31 Dec. 1883 (*Ibid.*).

³⁶ I.N.L. progress report, 1 July – 31 Dec. 1884 (*Ibid.*).

than a radical organisation that leaked money like a sieve. He was happy to use the structure to give him a base in each constituency that would ratify candidates of his choosing should the need arise and who would provide the basis of the electoral machine that he could press into service when the next general election came along. All this did, however, leave him with a problem. He had broad support and a biddable organisation and was winning by-elections almost at will. As well as Healy's election in Monaghan, seats were won in Mallow, Westmeath, Tipperary, Wexford County, Wexford city, Sligo County and Limerick city, making a total of eight seats won by Home Rulers from the ten vacancies arising in 1883. In 1884, Home Rule candidates won four of the six by-elections held.³⁷ The signs were there for all to see; the Irish Parliamentary party had huge electoral potential but if Parnell was to capitalise on his support in a general election setting, particularly a general election that would be fought on a wider franchise, he would need a reliable source of funding.

Despite the progress being made in building up the parliamentary party at the various by-elections, Parnell was still being frustrated in his attempts to create a separate stream of funding, dedicated to parliamentary purposes. He struggled to protect the 'Paris Fund' from demands put upon it by outstanding Land League liabilities. In 1883 and 1884 he effectively borrowed over £4,000 from the National League rather than use the funds in Paris. The League's accounts for 1883 show payments totalling £2,668 described as 'Expenses not properly chargeable against National League being TEMPORARY ADVANCES made on account of funds in Mr. Parnell's hands to secure audit of items and save loss of interest by displacing his investments'. The League appears to have been

³⁷ B. M. Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978), pp 127-9.

lending him money to save him from losing interest on his investments. The following year the ‘temporary advances’ came to £1,401 4s. 8d. but, of the £4,069 so advanced over the two years, only £1,385 was repaid by Parnell.³⁸ It is hardly surprising that Parnell was desperately trying to preserve the only money he truly controlled, for, as we have seen, efforts to protect the modest funds of the National League from the demands of evicted tenants had failed. From the demise of the Mansion House Evicted Tenants Fund in May 1883 the National League was forced to take up the slack. All incoming funds were being channelled into the National League but now, much to his frustration, Parnell could see that the single largest call on those funds was grants to evicted tenants.

In 1884, for example, evicted tenants’ grants came to £6,508 7s or more than half the League’s £11,508 9s subscription income for the year, while the figure in the same year for election expenses was only £110 16s. Alarm bells must certainly have begun to sound at the end of 1884 when it emerged that ‘the temporary cessation in supplies from abroad’ referred to by Beckerson, had resulted in a situation whereby the League’s income for the second six months of the year only came to £2,779, and this included the sum of £1,185 4s. 2d. repaid by Parnell. In the same period, £2,553 was paid out in grants to evicted tenants.³⁹ That is not to say that the League was quick to part with money to the evicted tenants. Stalwart efforts were made to detach the new organisation from monetary claims arising out of the Land League agitation, as can be seen from the many letters written by Timothy Harrington, secretary of the Irish National League, deflecting claims for assistance. For example, he wrote on 27 December 1883 to J. Clerkin,

³⁸ *Special comm. proc.*, vi, pp 326-8.

³⁹ Receipts and expenditure of the Irish National League, as published (N.A.I., Police reports 1848-1921, Irish National League proceedings 1883-90, Carton 6).

Colooney advising that: ‘The organising committee of the National League has never held itself responsible for the law costs incurred by the Land League’ and he went on, ‘the balance of the Land League fund was never placed at our disposal, we could never devote the money of the National League to defray debts incurred before the National League was formed’.⁴⁰ Harrington was being somewhat disingenuous here, for while he was right to say that the Land League funds had not come to the National League, their own accounts testify to the fact that tenants who were evicted while supporting the Land League were being maintained out of National League funds. It would appear that Harrington’s real intention was to protect the National League from any new demands from that quarter. But try as he might, Harrington could not preserve anything like the financial resources that would be needed to fight an election.

It was not so much the cost of the elections themselves that would be a problem. The by-election victories showed that seats could be won without incurring a great deal of expense. Where the lack of funds was likely to be felt most sorely was in the area of candidate selection. In the 1880 general election Parnell had put forward many candidates who resided in England on the grounds that it would be less taxing on their finances to attend parliament. Parnell did not wish to resort to such measures for the 1885 general election. He aspired to an expanded parliamentary party that did not require him to sacrifice quality for quantity. He needed reliable men from within his own organisation to stand, but if this meant men with little independent means he would have to find a way to supplement their income so they could devote themselves fully to their parliamentary duties. Clearly the National League was not generating adequate resources to meet his

⁴⁰ Harrington to J. Clerkin, 27 Dec. 1883 (N.L.I., Harrington Papers, Ms 9454).

needs, nor would he have been confident that, even if it did, it would have been possible to ring-fence that funding for purely parliamentary purposes. This was to be the *leitmotif* of his entire political career; the ongoing struggle to secure political funding that would not be consumed by agrarian agitation.

His instinct in early 1883 was to look beyond the League to the individual constituencies, suggesting that local subventions might be raised to cover the expenses of an M.P. who was pledged to the party, while he attended parliament in London. He cited Queen's County and other constituencies where something of this nature had been undertaken.⁴¹ He stressed the need for such support saying that, 'otherwise I certainly should not continue to ask members to place themselves in a false position of undertaking duties which they are not financially able to carry out, and I should be obliged to consider on my own part whether I could persevere with the thankless task of endeavouring to keep together an independent Irish party'.⁴² A number of constituencies took up the idea but the prospect of success was greatly undermined with the launch, just weeks later, of the Parnell Tribute. Queen's County only managed to raise half the £1,000 it had hoped for, but the notion of paying M.P.s had begun to take hold.⁴³ At the height of the storm surrounding the papal intervention on the subject of the tribute, it came up again. At a public meeting held in Limerick on 13 May, Rev. D Humphries said 'it was essential to strengthen Mr Parnell's hand by giving him supporters he could rely on and that until the

⁴¹ *U.I.*, 10 Feb. 1883.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 251.

country paid its representatives they could not expect good men to sacrifice their time and means in parliament'.⁴⁴

The disappointing results from the constituency based initiative pointed to the need for a more dependable system for supporting M.P.s. Perhaps the tribute provided the inspiration for the scheme that was finally put in place. The idea was to prevail on the public to contribute to a fund dedicated to parliamentary purposes that would be collected in similar fashion to the Parnell Tribute, that is, through the good offices of the Catholic clergy and the *Freeman's Journal* supported by League members but not for the benefit of, or under the control of the League. This separate parliamentary fund was launched in Ireland in March 1885.⁴⁵ It was another attempt to isolate funds from agrarian erosion. Initially the fund was operated under the auspices of the National League but in November 1885 a separate parliamentary fund account was opened and the National League transferred the £5946 9s. 10d. already raised to the credit of the fund. It was thereafter completely independent of the National League and for the first time Parnell had a source of funding, other than the Paris Fund, that was sacrosanct, and it was to be put to good effect in the general election.

Parnell's personal status, the evidence from the by-election victories and, particularly, the revised franchise of 1884 which had increased the Irish electorate from 226,000 to 738,000 all pointed to a strong showing by the Irish Parliamentary Party.⁴⁶ The parliamentary fund provided the means to fulfil this promise. It provided funds for most

⁴⁴ *F.J.*, 14 May 1883.

⁴⁵ *Special comm. proc.*, vi, p. 340.

⁴⁶ S. J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Irish history*, (2nd ed., Oxford, 2002), p. 215.

of the eighty contested seats and while the amount contributed to the cost of winning an individual seat was relatively modest, ranging from £100 in West Wicklow to £325 in Mid-Tyrone, cumulatively, the cost of the general election, according to the accounts of the parliamentary fund, came to a hefty £14,610.⁴⁷ The figure was corroborated by Timothy Harrington, who, in an interview with the central news representative of the *Freeman's Journal*, put the cost of the election to the League and the fund at 'over £15,000'.⁴⁸ It was a figure beyond the means of the League as things stood in Ireland in 1885, however, as R.E. Beckerson had predicted, the American branches had 'come to the rescue'.⁴⁹ If one takes the period from the launch of the parliamentary fund in Ireland in March 1885 to the end of 1885, the period that encompasses the general election and its run-up, we see that the total receipts for the period were £19,415 of which only £415 came from Ireland, approximately £1,000 came from Australia and the balance came from America.⁵⁰ It can be said therefore, that the 1885 election, with its unprecedented eighty six seats for the Irish Party, was funded more or less exclusively by American money.

As early as April 1884 the Irish National League of America had 'decided, in view of the prospect of an approaching general election in Ireland, to establish and make an appeal in favor [sic] of a special fund to be called "the Irish Parliamentary Fund". The special fund in America was slow to gain momentum. By the time the Irish National League of

⁴⁷ Irish parliamentary fund, Cash Book 21 Nov. 1885 – 22 Mar. 1886 (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 9229).

⁴⁸ Receipts and expenditure of the parliamentary fund (N.A.I., Police reports 1848-1921, Irish National League proceedings 1883-90, Carton 6); *F.J.*, 19 Dec. 1885.

⁴⁹ Irish National League progress report, 1 July – 31 Dec. 1884 (N.A.I., Police reports, Carton 6).

⁵⁰ Receipts and expenditure of the parliamentary fund, *Ibid.*

America held its convention in Boston in August 1884 only \$4,767⁵¹ (approx. £980)⁵² had been collected. At that convention, which was attended by Thomas Sexton and William Redmond representing the Irish League, a motion was passed expressing ‘unqualified approval of the course pursued during the past year by Charles Stewart Parnell’ and pledged ‘to support them by every moral and material aid . . . and to this end we commend the parliamentary fund recently opened by our executive for such purposes’⁵³ According to Charles O’Reilly, treasurer of the League in America and also of the separate parliamentary fund, this commitment from the Boston convention and a subsequent urgent appeal to the American branches in June 1885 saw the money begin to flow in volume again. Significantly, the June 1885 appeal, which was issued by Patrick Egan, focused on the up-coming election. It suggests that even those of advanced views were convinced of the great potential of this, the first election fought under the 1884 Irish Franchise Act, which more than trebled the Irish electorate. Egan told the American league members that:

With a moderate amount of the ‘sinews of war’ at his command Mr. Parnell can secure at the general election the return of reliable followers and with that number and the balance of power in the hands of an honest Irish National Party, the next two or three years will, we believe, bring forth results which few of us hoped to see accomplished in our time.⁵⁴

Egan’s assurance that ‘the attainment of self-government is now brought almost within our grasp’ seems to have convinced his audience of the power of parliamentary politics, and in the two years from the Boston convention in 1884, to the Chicago convention of

⁵¹ Affidavit of Charles O’Reilly, treasurer, Irish National League of America, Apr. 1892 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8932 (2)).

⁵² Based on the historical exchange rate of .206015 in 1884, Lawrence H. Officer, ‘Purchasing power of British pounds from 1264 to 2007’, MeasuringWorth, 2008. URL <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppoweruk/> (accessed 21 Jan. 2008).

⁵³ Affidavit of Charles O’Reilly, Treasurer, Irish National League of America, Apr. 1892 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8932 (2)).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

August 1886, the American League remitted \$314,257⁵⁵ (approx. £64,649 at 1886 exchange rates)⁵⁶.

But that was by no means all the support coming from America. Going back to the reason for Parnell changing his travel plans in 1883 we are reminded that the organisation in America was bitterly divided, and the Irish National League of America could not claim to represent the whole of Irish-America. By keeping his distance, Parnell had managed to avoid taking sides and was now to benefit from the fact that, while the opposing camps were at loggerheads, he had managed not to alienate either side.

On 24 November 1885, the eve of the general election in Ireland, ‘the other side’ launched a separate ‘Irish Parliamentary Association Fund’. Its twenty-five member executive committee came to be referred to as the ‘Hofmann House Committee’ after the New York building where the association held its meetings. The committee drew its support from the faction headed by the Ancient Order of Hibernians and also from the New York Democratic party based in Tammany Hall, and they concentrated their fundraising efforts in the city.

At its inaugural meeting it was suggested ‘that subscription lists be placed in places frequented by many people; that sub-committees be appointed to obtain subscriptions from people in specific trades and professions; that a subcommittee be appointed to obtain the names and addresses of every man in the city who might contribute to the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Based on the historical exchange rate of .205719 in 1886 <http://eh.net/hmit/exchangerates/> (accessed 22 Jan. 2008).

fund'.⁵⁷ The fund proved to be immediately successful with donations even coming from across ethnic and religious lines. At a meeting of the committee on 4 January 1886, Abraham Piser, who rejoiced in the title of the Irishman Hebrew of Harlem, undertook to go among his people with his collecting book and to get some of them actively interested in the movement.⁵⁸ By 16 January 1886 \$32,000 (approx. £6590) had been collected and six weeks later on 1 March 1886 the association held its last public meeting having declared that 'the fund was in need of no more money at present'.⁵⁹ In just over three months, \$66,351⁶⁰ (approx. £13,650) had been subscribed to the fund and the Committee adjourned to meet again 'when its services would again be required'.⁶¹

Events in Westminster determined that their services would be needed sooner rather than later. The prospect of another general election, triggered by the defeat of Gladstone's Home Rule bill, led to the Committee reconvening and the fund was reopened on 14 June 1886. Money came in at such a rate that, four weeks later the committee decided to adjourn *sine die* having accumulated a further \$77,783.⁶² Its chairman, Eugene Kelly deemed it advisable 'to hold back the money now on hand until it was known just how things were across the water'.⁶³ Between the two fundraising drives the Hofmann House Committee raised a total of \$144,134, and allowing for smaller amounts that came in after the official closure of the fund, the final total was probably closer to \$158,000 as on 14 September 1886, \$57,988 remained on deposit after it was claimed that \$100,000 had

⁵⁷ *N.Y.T.*, 25 Nov. 1885.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 Jan. 1886.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 Feb. 1886.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1886.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 24 Feb. 1886.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 15 Sept. 1886.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 13 July 1886.

been forwarded to Ireland.⁶⁴ This meeting on 14 September set up a committee of sixteen to establish a permanent fund for the support of the Irish Parliamentary Party and made it clear that the funds it held in trust would not be used for ‘paying the rent of evicted or impoverished tenants in Ireland’, but that it would be used for the purpose for which it had been contributed: ‘to maintain the Irish representatives in the English parliament’.⁶⁵

The parliamentary fund had made it possible for Parnell to maximise the number of seats won by the Irish party under the wider franchise, but perhaps more importantly, it gave him the latitude to select the kind of men who previously had to be passed over due to lack of independence of means but who now compensated with, very often, their corresponding lack of independent opinion. Conor Cruise O’Brien points out that ‘not one of the fifty-odd new members of the Irish party returned in the 1885-6 elections, under the National League system of managed conventions, ever rose to any sort of leadership in the party’ and goes so far as to say that Parnell’s ‘lieutenants’ and Healy and Harrington in particular, who had the greatest say in candidate selection, ‘ensured not merely the provision of a solid block of votes for any Parnellite policy, but their own continued predominance in the councils of the party’.⁶⁶

The American money saved the day, and not only did it give Parnell latitude in his candidate selection as well as covering the expense of getting them elected, but it also provided a substantial balance and continuing revenue stream that was dedicated solely to parliamentary purposes. It allowed Parnell put in place a system of payments to

⁶⁴ Ibid., 15 Sept. 1886.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 15 Sept. 1886.

⁶⁶ Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Parnell and his party: 1880-90* (London, 1968), p. 147.

compensate the party's M.P.s for the expense of attending parliament. Not since the fifteenth century had members been paid to attend parliament and this radical development in parliamentary politics further tightened Parnell's hold over his party.⁶⁷ A separate account was maintained in the books of the parliamentary fund for each of the fifty-eight individual M.P.s who were paid. From 11 January 1886 the task of keeping the accounts of the parliamentary fund had fallen to James F. X. O'Brien. Chosen because of his accounting background, O'Brien appears to have been assiduous in his duties. One particular entry in his parliamentary fund ledger attests to his scrupulous attention to detail. On page thirty there is an entry dated 2 March 1886 which refers to 'cost of this A/C book, per J. F. X. O'Brien, £1 1s'. From O'Brien's detailed records we see that the standard salary was £200 per annum, paid quarterly. There were however many variations from the norm. Some of the better-off M.P.s eschewed payment or settled for a lesser amount. John Dillon, for example, only received £25 per annum and Thomas Mayne received only £50 in 1887, £72 in 1888 and £52 in 1889. These odd amounts may have been recoupment of expenses rather than payment as such. This was also the case with Dr. J. E. Kenny who received no salary but was paid £67 0s. 6d. over a three year period in travelling expenses.

A clear example of the salary payment being used to instil discipline was the fact that poor attendance in the house was punished by a deduction from that member's salary. Thus, Michael McCartan had his salary reduced to £150 for 1888 because his 'attendance

⁶⁷ William B. Gwyn, *Democracy and the cost of politics in Britain, 1832-1959* (London, 1962) p. 8.

was not good' and in 1889 Patrick O'Hea was docked £100 for the same reason.⁶⁸ If some M.P.s got less, then others got more. For example, T. P. O'Connor was paid an extra £120 in September 1886 for 'election work' and John O'Connor was paid an extra £100 in 1887 for 'extra work in recess'. O'Brien's own accounts reveal that his stipend for 'extra work A/Cs' was £50 per annum. There was also a benevolent aspect to some of the payments recorded; Matthew Harris, for example, was paid £70 rather than £50 in one quarter on grounds of ill health and another member, John Hooper, was even advanced a loan of £500 from the fund.

O'Brien kept track of the various payments but the controlling hand of Parnell is evident when it came to deciding who did or did not get paid. In September 1887 J. G. Biggar wrote to Parnell, having been approached by William O'Brien making representations on behalf of his fellow Corkman William Lane M.P.. It appears that Lane had taken no payment in 1886 and while his attendance was poor in 1887, O'Brien was concerned that his business was unprofitable. Putting this to Parnell, Biggar asked: 'Do you want him to get anything?' We do not know what the actual reply was, but J. F. X. O'Brien's accounts tell us that following the intervention, a payment of £100 was made to Lane. Either his business had improved or pride prevented him from accepting what he might have regarded as charity because the entry is cancelled, the payment having been 'declined'.⁶⁹

The hand-picked salaried M.P.s of the Irish Parliamentary Party had one further feature that distinguished them from their more traditional Liberal or Conservative counterpart:

⁶⁸ Irish parliamentary fund ledger (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 9227).

⁶⁹ J. G. Biggar to Parnell, 2 Sept. 1887 (N.L.I., J. K. X. O'Brien papers, MS 13461 (2)); Parliamentary fund ledger (N.L.I., MS 9227).

each was required to sign a pledge of allegiance before they were allowed stand for the party. The standard wording was set out on a pre-printed form and stated:

I ----- pledge myself that in the event of my election to parliament, I will sit, act, and vote with the Irish Parliamentary Party, and if at a meeting of the party, convened upon due notice specially to consider the question, it be determined by a resolution supported by a majority of the entire Parliamentary Party that I have not fulfilled the above pledge, I hereby undertake forthwith to resign my seat.
Signed -----⁷⁰

The idea of the party pledge had its origins at least five years earlier when the parliamentary party meeting on 27 December 1880 resolved unanimously that: ‘union amongst the members of the Irish parliamentary party is indispensable. And we pledge ourselves to meet together and consult on all questions of importance and to abide by the decision of the majority’.⁷¹ In February 1883 Parnell, again, raised the question of a party pledge, suggesting that a county might pay the expenses of a man pledged to work with the party while on duty in London.⁷² The first formal pledge taken by a candidate in advance of an election was P. J. Power in advance of the Waterford County by-election in August 1884.⁷³ Power was joined by J. J. Clancy in Dublin and John O’Connor also took the pledge before being nominated to stand for Tipperary in the January 1885 by-election.⁷⁴ According to T. M. Healy, who administered the pledge in Waterford, he ‘improved the wording and it became the standard test for nationalists at all elections.’⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Irish Parliamentary Party pledge book (N.L.I., Harrington Papers, MS 8595 (2)).

⁷¹ Party minute book 1880-5 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 9233).

⁷² Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 251.

⁷³ T. M. Healy, *Letters and leaders of my day* (2 vols, London, 1928), i, 205.

⁷⁴ *The Nation*, 17 Jan. 1885.

⁷⁵ Healy, *Letters and leaders*, i, 205.

Parnell now stood at the helm of a vessel with a united and disciplined crew. If there had been doubts about Parnell's political philosophy, by 1886 it was becoming crystal clear that in terms of his objectives, he drew inspiration from Grattan's Parliament and in terms of approach, his model was inspired by the Independent Irish Party of the 1850s. He acknowledged as much in his evidence to the special commission in 1889, saying that 'He had read about the independent opposition movement of Sir Charles Gavan Duffy and the late Sir Fredrick Lucas in 1852; and whenever I thought about politics I thought that that would be an ideal movement for the benefit of Ireland'.⁷⁶ Parnell, however, did not make the mistakes that had been made by the earlier incarnation of an independent Irish party in Westminster. He seems to have appreciated that an independent party was impossible without independent funding, and that with adequate resources he could populate the party with the type of men, upon whom he could depend and keep under his control.

As early as 1877 he had given an indication of the type of candidate he sought. Referring to a vacancy that had come up in Tipperary he stressed in a letter to John Dillon, the need 'to secure the seat for some person who would stop over here permanently during the session and assist us to work' and he repeats that, 'we want a man who will attend constantly and assist us in the work we have commenced this session'.⁷⁷ Work-rate and dependability were what he sought, and in 1886 he had created a political machine in the Irish Parliamentary Party where the structure bore a greater resemblance to a private company than a democratic organisation. Parnell the managing director, with a board

⁷⁶ *Special Comm, Proc*, ii, 694.

⁷⁷ Parnell to Dillon, 20 Apr. 1877 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6745).

made up of his favoured 'lieutenants' and the company employees, the parliamentary party who were, in effect, hired to do the company's bidding. The electorate could be viewed in the role of company shareholders whose confidence in the enterprise needed to be maintained, but who had little or no direct input in the running of the company. He had learned from the mistakes of the Independent Irish Party and now, in early 1886, he had created a political machine that placed him in a very strong political position.

With his eighty-six M.P.s he held the balance of power in Westminster. Cast as he was in the role of kingmaker, and with his overwhelming electoral mandate in Ireland there was a sense that concession on the Home Rule question was almost inevitable. An editorial in the *Freeman's Journal* in February spoke of Parnell having 'Home Rule in the hollow of his hand.' It did so, however, in the context of a call for unity within the Irish Parliamentary Party with regard to the contentious candidacy of William O'Shea, husband of Parnell's mistress, in the Galway by-election.⁷⁸ During the general election in 1885, Parnell had made efforts to have O'Shea returned as a Liberal for a seat in Liverpool. O'Shea lost to the Conservative candidate and Parnell found himself under pressure to find him another seat. Parnell looked to Galway City where T. P. O'Connor had been elected but had chosen to sit for the Scotland division of Liverpool, where he had also won a seat. The idea that O'Shea, a Whig who refused to take the Home Rule pledge, would be put forward for a nationalist seat dismayed many within the party, not least O'Connor, who had his own candidate in mind for the vacancy. Most of the parliamentary party chose not to risk a division in their ranks over the issue lest it jeopardise the prospect of Home Rule, but J. G. Biggar and T. M. Healy would not accept

⁷⁸ *F.J.*, 9 Feb. 1886.

O'Shea and backed the local candidate, Lynch.⁷⁹ How close the party came to a schism as a result of the Galway crisis is clear from a letter written by Tim Healy to William O'Brien in which, referring to Parnell, he states: 'Should he come down we shall reply firmly to every attack and maintain our position come what may'. Healy goes on to say that he accepts that O'Brien will have to 'scorch us' in the paper and says that he will not hold it against him. He refers to himself as 'a traitor' and to the letter as 'a farewell letter'.⁸⁰ Parnell did manage to impose O'Shea on the Galway electorate, but the saga left a bitter taste, not least in the mouth of Healy who was forced to back down and the divisiveness of Galway served as a portent of greater divisions still to come.

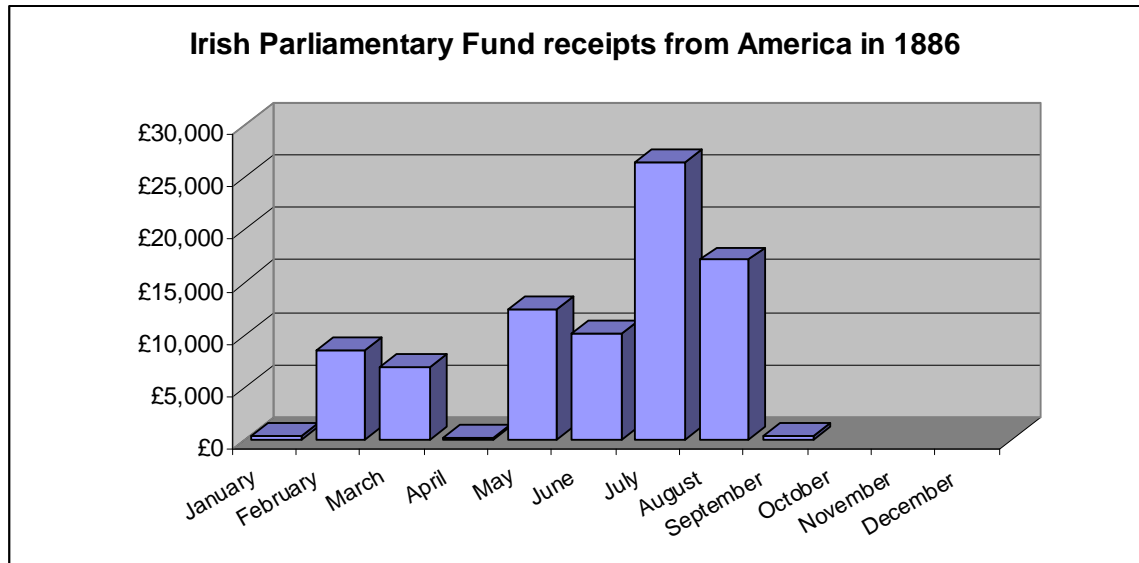
In 1886 it was not to be the Irish Party that succumbed to seismic pressures. When William Gladstone was finally persuaded to concede on Home Rule for Ireland it proved too much for many of his own party to swallow, and so when it appeared that Parnell had won his ultimate prize, it was taken from him by dissident Liberal M.P.s who crossed the floor to vote with the Conservatives and defeat the 1886 Home Rule Bill. As had occurred in 1885, the ensuing general election generated a renewed flood of funds from Irish-American supporters into the Irish parliamentary fund to bolster Parnell, his party and his quest for Home Rule. The prospect of Home Rule had united the vast majority of the Irish electorate behind Parnell, and Irish-America, despite its internal divisions and more radical leanings, had also been won over to Parnell's constitutional approach, not least because they believed success in the shape of Home Rule was in sight. If Irish-America's conversion to constitutional politics were to be measured in monetary terms,

⁷⁹ Lyons, *Parnell*, pp 319-29.

⁸⁰ T. M. Healy to William O'Brien, 7 Feb. 1886 (U.C.C., William O'Brien papers, Box AA /2).

then the conclusion would have to be that it was complete. In the four month period between May and August 1886 America provided the parliamentary fund with an incredible £66,152 (Figure 5.6). This sum was made up in the main by money sent from the I.N.L.A (£47,000) and the Irish parliamentary association fund (£8,000).

Figure 5.6.



Source: Irish parliamentary fund ledger (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 9227).

Neither at home nor in America was the defeat of the Home Rule bill seen as a crisis. The fact that the Liberal Party was now committed to the measure seemed proof enough that it would be delivered. The priority for the July election was therefore to reaffirm Parnell's mandate and to hope that the British people would signal their approval of Gladstone's proposals and return a Liberal government. Parnell had long been aware of the need to influence British public opinion, for, as he had just seen, the strength of his mandate in Ireland provided him with political leverage but in the final analysis it would be English M.P.s answering to English electorates who would decide the fate of Home Rule. As ever, Parnell's efforts to invest funds in parliamentary enterprises were

frustrated by those around him who were not blessed with his foresight. In 1883 he struggled to get the organising committee of the Irish National League to make a grant of £200 to its counterpart in Great Britain. He wrote to Alfred Webb to express his disappointment at the failure to make the grant and insisted that the matter be brought before the committee at its next meeting stating that ‘it is of the utmost importance to support the movement in England; otherwise our expenditure and exertions during the last few years in Great Britain would be entirely thrown away when the moment is approaching for reaping the harvest’. Parnell maintained that the organisation in Britain could raise no more than £500 per annum while its expenditure was in the region of £1,000 per annum. He argued the case for the organising committee making up the £500 shortfall by pointing out to Webb that the League in Britain controlled ‘the seats of ninety-seven English and Scotch Liberal members,’ and that ‘it forms a power, the importance of which cannot be over-estimated’.⁸¹ It would appear that Parnell got his way, as the accounts show that ‘Special grants to the English League’ came to £900 in 1883.⁸² Amounts were smaller in subsequent years, but the ongoing subsidy to the Irish National League of Great Britain was, in Parnell’s eyes at least, money well spent.

In the 1886 election the League in Britain threw its weight behind the Liberals, its executive going so far as issuing a circular to branches, instructing them on how best to help the Liberal candidates.⁸³ Money was, no doubt, also provided from the ample war chest being built up in the parliamentary fund. Officially, the sum of £1,471 was provided from the fund to the League in Britain for parliamentary elections between 1886 and

⁸¹ Parnell to Alfred Webb, 11 Nov. 1886 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8595 (2)).

⁸² *Special comm. proc.*, vi, p. 327.

⁸³ O’Brien, *Parnell and his party*, p. 193; *F.J.*, 17 June 1886.

1890. We must assume however, given the critical importance of the 1886 election to the prospects of Home Rule, that greater resources were made available to the Liberal cause. T. P. O'Connor, the one Irish Party M.P. who sat for an English constituency, may have been the conduit for such resources. In a diary entry on 24 June 1886, W. S. Blunt mentions that 'T. P. [O'Connor] has got a sum of £2,000 he wants to spend on English elections'. It is clear that such funds were being supplied surreptitiously; as O'Connor asked Blunt to ensure that 'the sums given to candidates should be given under cover of the British Home Rule Association'.⁸⁴ More visible support came in the shape of the sixty-five Irish Party M.P.s whose seats were uncontested and who were therefore free to travel to Britain to speak in support of Liberal candidates at meetings up and down the country.⁸⁵ Parnell went himself, and speaking at Portsmouth on 25 June, he set a reassuring and unthreatening tone. He began by proffering an apology 'for trespassing into the domain of English politics' and went on to spell out in great detail why 'the integrity of the Empire' and 'the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament' would not be endangered by Home Rule and assured his audience that 'The men who raised this bogey, this bugbear, of separation before your eyes as a reason against conceding the just demands of the Irish people know perfectly well that there is not the slightest danger or risk of separation'.⁸⁶ The men who raised 'the bogey' won out and Parnell's plea to 'the spirit of fairplay among the English masses' came to nought.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Ibid.; Wilfrid S. Blunt, *The land war in Ireland, being a personal narrative of events* (London, 1912), p. 155.

⁸⁵ R. V. Comerford, 'The Parnell era, 1883-91' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland. vol. 6: Ireland under the Union, pt. 2, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996), p. 64.

⁸⁶ *The Times*, 26 June 1886.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

With the Conservatives back in power Home Rule was off the agenda. This created untold difficulty for Parnell. It had been the promise of Home Rule that enabled him to construct and maintain an alliance that spanned the classes and virtually the entire spectrum of political opinion in Ireland. It had been the imminent prospect of Home Rule that kept Patrick Egan, Alexander O'Sullivan and their radical supporters in America bound to the constitutional initiative. This initiative had now stalled and a question-mark hung, not only over American support, but over the whole assemblage of support that made up Parnellism. Because the general election had been fought on the issue of Home Rule for Ireland, positions in Britain had hardened and political opinion had polarised to a greater degree. The Irish Party was bound inextricably to Gladstone and the Liberal party, thereby losing that independence that had been critical to Parnell's power in parliament heretofore.

How Irish-America would react to this new state of affairs would be telling and attention turned to the upcoming convention of the Irish National League of America in Chicago. An article reproduced in the *Irish Times* of 19 August 1886, from the *Globe*, referred to the Chicago convention and questioned what would happen if the organisation turned against 'the advocates of moral force'. Taking comfort, no doubt, in Parnell's predicament, the article did, nonetheless, sum up fairly accurately the nature of his dilemma. It pointed out that: 'It is American and not Irish money that furnishes the salaries and defrays the expenses in London of the Home Rule members. . . . Without

American support Mr. Parnell ceases to be in power and without the support of Parnell, Mr Gladstone is helpless'. The correspondent then went on to suggest that

The Parnellites . . . will naturally be tempted in the direction of an aggressive policy in the House of Commons in the hope of showing themselves deserving the support of the men of action in America. Between the desire of conciliating this faction on the one hand and the fear of offending and alienating English Home Rulers on the other, Mr Parnell will find himself tomorrow in a dilemma from which escape will be difficult.⁸⁸

This was exactly the problem for Parnell. He depended on America for funds but had nothing to offer that quarter now but exhortations for patience and restraint. The conciliatory rhetoric of Portsmouth was what was required in Britain while such sentiments would be an anathema to his supporters in America.

Parnell's policy in the aftermath of the election seems to have been to cement the Liberal alliance and to continue his quest to win over British public opinion. In pursuit of this policy he launched one of his more innovative political enterprises. At the end of September 1886 he set up the Irish Press Agency with the former editor of *The Nation*, J.J. Clancy at the helm.⁸⁹ Its role was unashamedly propagandist and to that end it was responsible for publishing a series of pamphlets under the general heading 'The Irish question' that were designed to make the case for Home Rule to a British audience. The agency was funded to the tune of over £3,000 per annum from the parliamentary fund, an indication of the priority placed by Parnell on courting British public opinion.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ *I.T.* 19 Aug. 1886.

⁸⁹ *F.J.*, 2 Oct. 1886.

⁹⁰ Irish parliamentary fund balance sheet, 11 Jan. 1886 to 30 Nov. 1890 (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 13461).

Meanwhile on the other side of the Atlantic, opinion was, as ever, divided and the Chicago convention was preceded by the usual unseemly jockeying for position between the two factions. Notices signed [triangle] were sent to Clan na Gael members urging a large turnout at the convention in support of Patrick Egan, while the Devoy camp issued an appeal to National League members to oppose Egan, of whom they said:

Almost from the hour of his election he has made use of his position to serve clique interests and to advance the personal fortunes of men who are charged with the squandering of immense sums of money in another Irish organisation, men who hold the League in a vice and who are now bent on forcing Mr. Parnell's hand in the direction of extreme measures.⁹¹

The results of the convention proved to be mixed from Parnell's point of view. The more conservative Devoy supporters failed to unseat Egan and his 'triangle' backers, but the strength of the opposition from the 'kickers', as the New York based Devoy camp was termed, and the 'moderate and conservative' interventions on the part of Michael Davitt, ensured that the general tone of the convention was supportive of Parnell.⁹²

However, the danger still remained that, with the triangle in control of the League in America, funding might return to the drought levels that followed the Boston convention in August 1884 when Egan was first elected president. Under Egan, no money had been sent to Ireland in the second half of 1884 and it was only towards the end of 1885, in the run up to the election, that funds began to flow in volume again. Even before the Chicago convention in August, it had become clear to the American organisations that the amount of money contributed in June and July of 1886 far exceeded what might be needed in Ireland to fight the second general election. The Hofmann House Committee suspended

⁹¹ *N.Y.T.*, 6 Aug. 1886.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 17, 19 Aug. 1886.

fundraising operations after only four weeks and decided to hold back some of the money ‘until it was known just how things were across the water’.⁹³ Even if both sides in America ceased fundraising, such had been the surge in funding during the middle months of 1886, that Parnell was in the happy position of having built up a substantial financial cushion and was able to write J. G. Biggar telling him to ‘forward all funds to Messrs. Monroe in Paris, as I have cheques amounting to over £2,000 for you and other remittances will be coming in, which will be sufficient for current expenses’.⁹⁴ Biggar did as he was bid and between 26 July and 20 August 1886 he invested £52,293, in eight payments, with Monroe & Co. It is ironic that this money, collected in America for the cause of Irish independence, came first to London, was transferred to Paris and ended up back in America, being invested in American railway bonds, never having been in Ireland.⁹⁵

It would appear, however, that this handsome lump-sum, now at Parnell’s disposal, should in fact have been significantly larger. In September 1886 it emerged that some of those charged with the stewardship of National League funds had succumbed to temptation and that between eight and nine thousand pounds had been misappropriated from League funds. The revelations came in a series of letters from Mrs Kate Molony who along with her husband had been involved in administration of various accounts on behalf of the League including the Parnell Tribute in 1883.⁹⁶ Mr. Molony was a partner in a Thomas Street merchant company by the name of Fay & Co., which, apparently, had

⁹³ *N.Y.T.*, 13 July 1886.

⁹⁴ C. S. Parnell to J. G. Biggar, 27 July 1886 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8582 (4)).

⁹⁵ Affirmation of J. F. X. O’Brien (Ibid. MS 8930).

⁹⁶ *Special comm. proc.*, vi, p. 340.

been encountering trading difficulties. It seems that Molony and his partner, P. McCabe Fay, had been using National League money to keep the business afloat but matters came to a head when Fay was arrested and charged with forgery and the business collapsed.⁹⁷ Molony fled to Barcelona and tried, through his wife in Ireland, to communicate with Parnell in an attempt to sort matters out. Having failed to get to Parnell, Mrs Molony confided in Anna Parnell and suggested that, if matters were not made public, the Fay family might make good the money and her husband could then return to Ireland without a cloud hanging over him.⁹⁸ The Molonys' hopes were dashed when Fay also fled the country and Mrs. Molony wrote: 'I fear the money I am anxious about is lost and in that case we must simply disappear out of every Irish person's knowledge for the rest of our lives'.⁹⁹ It does not appear that the loss was ever made public nor made good and the incident highlights how poor the levels of accountability were within the organisation when so large a sum could have disappeared without being missed.

The loss could have come as a greater blow if it had come to light at another time. As it was, Parnell had still acquired a £52,000 financial cushion which he had secured in an account beyond the grasp of the League, out of reach even of the parliamentary party and firmly under his own personal control. The account, the Paris No. 2 account, as distinct from the No. 1 account which held the balance of Land League monies from 1882, was in the names of Parnell, Biggar and McCarthy and could be accessed with the signatures of any two, one of whom had to be Parnell.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ *The Times*, 28 Sept. 1886.

⁹⁸ Anna Parnell to John Dillon, 28 Sept. 1886 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6745).

⁹⁹ Kate Molony to Dillon, 28 Sept. 1886 (Ibid., MS 6745).

¹⁰⁰ Affidavit of Justin McCarthy, 28 Apr. 1892 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8930).

The lodgements to the Paris No. 2 account in August 1886 marked the high water mark for Parnell. In seven short years he had moved from the whiggish Home Rule League to the company of the revolutionary Clan na Gael and into the land war. Turning the Land League into the National League he converted the revolutionary into the constitutional, seamlessly moving the cause from the land war to Home Rule. Each step of the way he worked to divert resources to the parliamentary party and into his control. He had begun by raising money from American Fenians for a semi-revolutionary agrarian agitation with a proviso that no funds could be used for electoral purposes, and he ended raising money from those self-same Americans to fund his parliamentary party with the proviso that none of the funds could be used for agrarian agitation. He had turned it all on its head; The same people were paying the piper but he now called the tune.

Chapter VI: Land agitation, expense and division, 1886-91

In Ireland the political vacuum that followed the 1886 general election and the sidelining of the Home Rule issue, came to be filled by a return to agitation on the land question. Evictions had increased following a sharp fall in agricultural prices, and, in the absence of the a Home Rule campaign, which had acted as a brake on land agitation since 1882, resistance to the evictions began to grow and the second phase of the land war began in the autumn of 1886.¹ There appears to have been a certain inevitability about this development but, while elements of the parliamentary party were happy to resume the war for the land of Ireland for the people of Ireland, it was a move in a direction that Parnell did not wish to go. For four years he had striven to turn the organisation away from campaigns that won favour in one quarter but alienated others. The measure of his achievement in this regard was the fact that he oversaw a movement that drew its funding from American Fenians while simultaneously being the official representative in Westminster of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

A return to any form of land war would inevitably upset this precarious equilibrium and on a more basic level, it would, almost certainly, consume his newfound financial reserves. With this in mind Parnell, in September 1886, issued an appeal to the League in America for money, in support of an anti-eviction fund. He spoke of ‘a combined

¹ O'Brien, *Parnell and his party*, pp 198-9.

movement of extermination against the tenant-farmers of Ireland by the English Government and the Irish landlords', but also insisted that by sending 'moral and material assistance' they would 'lessen and alleviate those feelings of despair in the minds of the evicted which have so often and so unhappily stimulated those victims to a recourse to the wild justice of revenge'. He was simultaneously trying to stir the passions in America while reassuring Liberal opinion in Britain of his determination to preserve the 'peaceable character' of the movement.² The American response was slow in coming. The National League of America sent no further remittance to Ireland until 20 December 1886 when £5,000 was dispatched,³ and the Hofmann House Committee had clearly signalled that they were dedicated to supporting the pursuit of Home Rule through purely parliamentary efforts and did not intend their fund to be spent on evicted tenants.⁴

The 'Plan of Campaign' published on 23 October, sought to place a *cordon sanitaire* around the agitation by insisting that the tenants themselves take responsibility and that they pool their rent in a fund that would be administered locally, usually by the Catholic clergy, for the benefit of the tenants in their struggle with their landlord. This allowed the League to give an impression of distance from the agitation and set up a system that, in theory, would be self-funding. In practice, of course, the National League was totally involved in the movement. And the expense, as had been the case in the time of the Land League, would in time prove to be immense. Although the plan of campaign was not the official policy of either the National League or the parliamentary party and was opposed

² *I.T.*, 28 Sept. 1886.

³ Rev. C. O'Reilly's Statement of Irish National League of America funds for period 24/08/1886 to 31/12/1889 (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 13461).

⁴ *N.Y.T.*, 15 Sept. 1886.

by Parnell, Laurence M. Geary reminds us that it was more widely adopted than has hitherto been accepted, and at local level, the National League and the plan of campaign generally shared a common leadership.⁵ John Dillon and William O'Brien, along with other members of the parliamentary party, travelled the country addressing meetings, even opening 'rent offices' into which the tenants on plan of campaign estates were to pay their rents pending a settlement with the landlord. On one such occasion, at Loughrea, Dillon and O'Brien had collected approximately £20 and £70 respectively when the police raided the premises and seizing the money and books, arrested the two who were charged with 'conspiring to induce tenants to abstain from paying the rents they were lawfully bound to pay'.⁶ This was but one of many brushes with the law, and both Dillon and O'Brien would spend much of the following few years either serving jail terms or trying to avoid them.

With the launch of the plan of campaign, the focus of the movement swung away from Parnell, from parliament and back to Ireland, to the National League and to its local branches. Not wishing to be compromised by association with agrarian unrest, Parnell stayed in London and left matters to Dillon and O'Brien. He did, however, try to exert a restraining influence on the campaign. Parnell seems to have accepted that the land question could not be ignored, but he did do all in his power to curtail the extent of the agitation and in the light of the poor response from America, its expense. He summoned O'Brien to London and asked him to restrain the language being used at Plan meetings and he expressed grave misgivings as to the financial sustainability of the Plan. Given his

⁵ Laurence M. Geary, *The plan of campaign 1886-91* (Cork, 1986), p. 3.

⁶ *The Times*, 17 Dec. 1886.

knowledge and experience of the first phase of the land war, he had good reason to doubt the willingness of the tenants to use their own rents to fund the war on landlordism and he put it to O'Brien; 'What will you do for money? You will never succeed in collecting your rents a second year'. O'Brien seems to have conceded this point but added, optimistically, that if the landlords engaged in wholesale evictions, America would come to their aid with funds. There was, as yet, no evidence to support this contention, as, at the time of their meeting, the first remittance of £5,000 in response to Parnell's appeal for aid had not yet been received from America. In the circumstances, O'Brien agreed not to extend the agitation and assured Parnell that the Plan would be confined to the estates where it was already in operation.⁷

Parnell's worries on the funding of the Plan were well founded. The £5,000 received from America in December did not herald a flood of funding for the Plan and it would be more than six months before a further remittance of £5,000 would be received from the National League of America.⁸ America did not appear to be prepared to bankroll the second phase of the land war with the same level of enthusiasm as it had shown in 1880-2 and, worse, the money now being directed towards the anti-eviction fund was money that would otherwise have gone to the parliamentary party. In the twelve months from the launch of the plan of campaign, the parliamentary fund received a mere £34 from America.⁹ Not only had the political focus turned away from the parliamentary party but so had its lifeblood, the American money.

⁷ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 377.

⁸ Rev. C. O'Reilly's statement of Irish National League of America funds for period 24/08/1886 to 31/12/1889 (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 13461).

⁹ Irish parliamentary fund ledger (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 9227).

From the outset, the financial underpinnings of the Plan seemed to be precarious. Shortly after its launch, the receipt book held by Dillon showed impressive payments on the part of tenants. In the month of December 1886 alone, £12,086 was received, but the total for the following three months only came to £10,456 and the subsequent three months yielded only £2,062.¹⁰ Meanwhile, even though they had heeded Parnell's warning not to extend the agitation, the number of estates involved had risen to 116 and maintaining the Plan became increasingly difficult for O'Brien and Dillon, who endured spells in prison while they struggled to raise funds to sustain the campaign.¹¹ As early as March 1887 O'Brien was concerned that 'the responsibilities and worries will be too much for one pair of shoulders',¹² but the real financial problems began to emerge during the second winter of the campaign. The rate of evictions had increased on Plan estates during the summer of 1887¹³ and as Parnell had rightly pointed out, the tenants who had pooled the rent they were withholding from the landlord, were not inclined to pay into this fund a second time when another gale day came around.

In December 1887 Dillon was concerned that funds were low, and his correspondence with Tim Harrington reveals a growing concern at the worsening financial situation. 'The situation has become very serious indeed', he told Harrington, and, revealing the heightening level of frustration with Parnell, he added: 'He plainly means to boycott us till the opening of parliament at all events . . . but it is an extraordinary line of policy to

¹⁰ Plan of campaign receipt book (T.C.D., Dillon Papers, MS 6665).

¹¹ *Report of the commissioners appointed to enquire into the estates of evicted tenants in Ireland*, H.C. 1893-4 [c. 6935], xxxi. 421.

¹² William O'Brien to John Dillon, 3 Mar. 1887 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6737).

¹³ Laurence M. Geary, *The plan of campaign 1886-91* (Cork, 1986), p.140.

go off without a word - and most of all without, so far as I know, making any arrangement to secure that we shall not be stranded for money It will be simply monstrous if we run short of money in a crisis like this'.¹⁴ There is a level of naivety in Dillon's railings against Parnell, for this was a full year since Parnell had summoned O'Brien to London in an attempt to limit the extent and cost of the agitation. Besides, Dillon had acted with Parnell in 1882 when the latter had brought the first phase of the land war to a halt by the simple expedient of starving the Ladies Land League of cash.¹⁵ He, more than most, should have been aware that Parnell had never been inclined to expend funds on agrarian agitation, particularly when it would have served to undermine rather than bolster him politically.

1888 was not a good year for the plan of campaign. Besides the financial woes and Parnell's opposition to the agitation, came papal condemnation in April of that year. On 20 April a papal rescript was issued condemning the plan and the practice of boycotting as illegal, and forbidding clergy to take any part in either.¹⁶ In truth, the papal circular had little more effect than the similar intervention at the time of the Parnell National Tribute. Archbishop Croke chose to interpret the papal rescript in a manner that allowed him to avoid condemning the Plan, and the Catholic members of the parliamentary party rejected the rescript, resolving that: 'Irish Catholics can recognise no right in the holy see to interfere with the Irish people in the management of their political affairs'.¹⁷ Acquiring the funding to keep the Plan in operation continued to be the real headache for its leaders.

¹⁴ Sally Warwick-Haller, *William O'Brien and the Irish land war* (Dublin, 1990), pp 102-3; John Dillon to T. Harrington, 12 Dec. 1887, 26 Jan. 1888 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6732a).

¹⁵ Parnell to Dillon, 9, 11 Aug. 1882 (Ibid., MS 6745).

¹⁶ *F.J.*, 27, 30 Apr. 1888.

¹⁷ Ibid., 18 May 1888.

Estimates of the number of families being supported by the plan ranged from 800 to 1,400, the higher figure being a (possibly exaggerated) estimate given by Dillon. However, if one includes the 470 families who were evicted before October 1886 and who were being maintained by the Irish National League rather than from Plan funds, then the higher figure might be taken.¹⁸ In any event, while the numbers fluctuated over the years, it is probably fair to say that the Plan was forced to support in excess of 800 evicted families over much of the period.¹⁹ In money terms the pressure was huge and in 1888 it was still spiralling upwards.

With costs rising rapidly and no sign of assistance from Parnell, a fundraising mission was becoming imperative. Dillon, who was imprisoned in Dundalk jail from June to September 1888, could not go, and while he was anxious that O'Brien embark on a fundraising trip to America and Australia, O'Brien seems to have been disinclined to go abroad while Dillon was incarcerated. He told Dillon that he did not believe Parnell would allow Harrington to accompany him and felt that 'it would be impossible to face the financial work alone'.²⁰ Instead O'Brien carried on the work on the ground but still worried about the rising costs. 'The expenses are swelling frightfully', he wrote to Dillon, 'Balfour has plainly declared war root and branch on every campaign estate and undoubtedly if our great list goes on swelling there will be a collapse unless you or I get off on a begging mission'.²¹ Dillon agreed that success, indeed survival, of the movement hinged on funding: 'I foresaw long ago what it would come to in the matter of expense. It

¹⁸ F. S. L. Lyons, *John Dillon* (London, 1968), pp 109-10.

¹⁹ *Report of the commissioners appointed to enquire into the estates of evicted tenants in Ireland*, H.C. 1894-4 [c. 6935], xxxi. 421.

²⁰ O'Brien to Dillon, 29 June 1888 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6737).

²¹ O'Brien to Dillon, 13 Sept. 1888 (Ibid.).

is largely a matter of the biggest purse and our expenses during the next year will I fear run up to twenty thousand at least,' and he seems to have accepted that it would be he, rather than O'Brien, who would go abroad to seek to raise this money, when he wrote: 'The only way in which we can hope to get this money is for one of us to go to Australia, and I am willing to go if you can remain at liberty'.²²

As the year progressed one gets an increasing sense of panic setting in as the two men begin to despair at the prospect of maintaining the growing movement on their own. In June 1888 grants to evicted tenants were running at £750 a month, but by October this had increased to £1,261 a month. Dillon estimated that this would mean 'an expenditure of £20,000 a year – all items included,'²³ but only a week later he had raised the estimate, noting in his diary that, 'It will take at least £25,000 to run our movement to this time next year'.²⁴ Even this turned out to be an underestimation of the actual expense. Dillon's own figures for 1889 show that £30,780 was spent, of which more than £26,000 was in support of evicted tenants with grants to the tenants averaging close to £2,000 per month.²⁵ Contrary to O'Brien's optimistic prediction, America had failed to respond to the crisis as the number of evictions rose. In the three years 1887-9 the Irish National League of America sent a total of \$103,972, or just over £20,000, in aid for the evicted tenants.²⁶ At an average of less than £7,000 per annum, and even allowing for some other smaller additional remittances from America, this was less than quarter of the amount

²² Dillon to O'Brien, 14 Sept. 1888 (Ibid.).

²³ John Dillon's journal, 28 Oct. 1888 (Ibid., MS 6559).

²⁴ Ibid., 5 Nov. 1888.

²⁵ Expenses of the land war 1889 (Ibid., MS 6820).

²⁶ Rev Charles O'Reilly's Statement of League Funds for period 24/08/1886 to 31/12/1889 (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 13461).

needed to run the plan of campaign. It was little wonder then that it was to Australia and not America that Dillon planned to travel in search of funds. However, it would be some time before aid from that quarter would reach the evicted tenants and, with the tide of expense rising around them, they turned in desperation to Parnell.

Dillon wrote to him on 14 January 1889 and in the opening sentence he came straight to the point. 'I have looked carefully into my accounts' he said 'and I find that £10,000 to be the very smallest sum with which I can hope to carry on the movement till it may reasonably be expected that money will begin to come in from Australia – as a result of my tour'. Dillon explains that in the wake of the papal rescript the landlords had become more bullish and many had broken off negotiations and this had given rise to more evictions and a steep rise in costs. Dillon then engaged in bit of brinksmanship. He went to great lengths to impress upon Parnell that a negative response would bring about a crushing collapse of the movement. 'I need not point out to you the utter ruin and collapse which would result from any hitch in making the regular paymentsThe movement is, as I am sure you understand, to a great extent a game of bluffing both sides. And if the idea got around that we were short of money, [there] would come an immediate disaster'. Dillon asked for £5,000 immediately and for a further £5,000 by 1 March, and he concluded by asking Parnell to wire Melbourne and Sydney by way of introduction for the fundraising trip and he also asked for £400 to cover travelling expenses because, he says, 'I do not like taking the expenses out of the fund at my

disposal for two reasons – First because the fund is so low and second, it is not pleasant to be signing a large cheque for one’s own personal expenses’.²⁷

Parnell’s reply on 26 January did not deliver the money Dillon had sought, but it did hold out the possibility of a financial lifeline. Parnell said that he has been waiting ‘to receive Mr. Rhodes’ remittance’ and that when it arrived ‘I hope to be able to scrape together £10,000 for you.’ He made it quite clear, however, that he was not prepared to touch his reserves, reminding Dillon ‘that I do not feel justified in selling any more bonds’.²⁸ The Rhodes remittance to which Parnell referred was the remaining £5,000 of the £10,000 promised by Cecil Rhodes to Parnell in June 1888. Rhodes was anxious that, in the context of Home Rule for Ireland, Parnell would support the retention of Irish representation at Westminster. In a series of letters published in *The Times* in July 1888, Parnell agreed in principle to his proposal and Rhodes wrote in response: ‘I am happy to offer a contribution to the extent of £10,000 to the funds of your party. I am also authorised to offer you a further sum of £1,000 from Mr. John Morrough, an Irish resident in Kimberley, South Africa’. With his letter, Rhodes enclosed a cheque for £5,000 ‘as my first instalment’.²⁹ Parnell was now awaiting the second £5,000 and perhaps the £1,000 from Morrough and was promising Dillon to make some, or all of it, available to the evicted tenants. The fate of this money remains shrouded in mystery, for while the first £5,000 was put through the books of the parliamentary fund, the second, and Morrough’s £1,000, were never recorded. Parnell subsequently claimed, at the time of the split, that he had given some of the second £5,000 to William O’Brien for the

²⁷ Dillon to Parnell, 14 Jan. 1889 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6745).

²⁸ Parnell to Dillon, 26 Jan. 1889 (Ibid.)

²⁹ Rhodes to Parnell, 28 June 1888, *The Times* 9 July 1888.

evicted tenants and retained the balance in his own possession.³⁰ From this, it would appear that Parnell did bail out the Plan at the beginning of 1889, but it seems unlikely that he managed to ‘scrape together’ the full £10,000. Parnell certainly did provide for Dillon’s expenses, as the payment of £400 to John Dillon on 26 Feb. 1889 for his ‘mission to Australia’ is recorded in the parliamentary fund ledger.³¹

Dillon delayed his trip to Australia out of concern for O’Brien who was in Clonmel Jail, but he eventually got away on 6 March 1889, having been assured by O’Brien that ‘It is all right now . . . I beg you to go at once. Want of money alone could beat us’.³² Dillon departed for Australia in March 1889 leaving O’Brien in prison and the Plan in the hands of Harrington and T. P. Gill. At about this time the landlords began to coordinate their approach and focused their resources on half a dozen ‘test estates’.³³ This new coordinated approach on the part of the landlords centred on the Ponsonby estate in Cork and was spearheaded by A. H. Smith-Barry, a landlord with extensive holdings in and around the town of Tipperary. The landlord syndicate used its financial resources to support Ponsonby who had been targeted by the plan of campaign, and turned the tables on the Plan by forcing expense back on it through a concerted campaign of evictions. By the time O’Brien had been released from prison at the end of May 1889 the landlords appear to have been gaining the upper hand. They had been bolstered by the absence of both Dillon and O’Brien and by Parnell’s apparent ambivalence towards the Plan. In July O’Brien told Dillon that: ‘The expenses were mounting terribly and there was an eviction

³⁰ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 613.

³¹ Irish parliamentary fund ledger (N.L.I., J. F. X. O’Brien papers, MS 9227, p. 229)

³² O’Brien to Dillon, 5 Feb. 1889 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6737).

³³ F. S. L. Lyons ‘John Dillon and the plan of campaign’ in *I.H.S.*, xiv (1964-5), pp 313-47.

campaign against all our estates simultaneously so as to overwhelm our funds'. and that, 'the landlords were full of the notion that we were abandoned by P. and that we had no funds – hence a last mighty effort to strike terror and break us'.³⁴ O'Brien could well have agreed with the landlord's assessment of his predicament. Dillon's trip to Australia had yet to bear fruit and Parnell was still distant and unhelpful, despite, in July, having endorsed a new initiative to counteract the landlord syndicate.

Parnell had launched the Tenants Defence League on 11 July 1889. The League, it was announced, was to be 'the official act of the whole Irish Party'.³⁵ In London, the parliamentary party resolved 'that the tenant farmers of Ireland be invited to combine themselves against their attempted extermination by the landlord conspiracy' and Parnell chaired the committee set up to draft its constitution.³⁶ Despite the rhetoric, Parnell made no effort to back the new organisation, refusing even to attend its inaugural convention in Tipperary. Frustrated and increasingly desperate for funds, now it was O'Brien's turn to put pressure on Parnell. He gave him an ultimatum that 'if he wanted the fight to go on he must openly help us' and he demanded that Parnell initiate a fund that would generate £30,000 to match the £30,000 Dillon was expected to raise in Australia.³⁷ Parnell's response, and O'Brien's resulting anger and despair, was revealed in a letter from O'Brien to Dillon on 14 August 1889. The letter recounts in some detail the robust exchange that took place between Parnell and himself. The opening line sets the scene when O'Brien writes, 'Things have reached a crisis between Parnell and myself'. He then

³⁴ O'Brien to Dillon, 14 July 1889 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6737).

³⁵ *F.J.*, 11 July 1889.

³⁶ Irish parliamentary party minute book, 11 Jan. 1886 to 4 Dec. 1890 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6500).

³⁷ O'Brien to Dillon, 14 July 1889 (Ibid., MS 6737).

explained to Dillon that Parnell, 'having started the new Tenants' Defence League with the assurance that it would be used in support of the Plan, he now flatly refuses to take any steps to put life in it'. Then, reminiscent of the frustrations experienced by Anna Parnell in closing days of the Ladies Land League, he says: 'I confess that until last night I did not believe him capable of taking advantage of our difficulties to deliberately make the situation intolerable'.

According to O'Brien, Parnell, referring to the Tenants' Defence League, said that 'he did not see his way to any new movement,' that 'the £30,000 could be raised without him' and that 'he would send Sexton to a Tipperary convention as his representative'. At this O'Brien seems to have got his hackles up. He treated Parnell's suggestion that Sexton go to Tipperary in his stead with derision, saying that he 'might as well send Blaine'. Apparently, Alexander Blaine, M.P. for South Armagh, was not highly regarded within the party. O'Brien then pressed Parnell to come down on one side or the other; either 'say our policy was doing mischief' or 'give us a helping hand now by simply declaring we had his goodwill'. Politics is rarely so simple and Parnell knew this even if O'Brien did not. Parnell did not support the Plan, the land war, or any form of agrarian agitation other than that which he was forced to endure until his star was sufficiently in the ascendant. Now the land war was an expensive nuisance but, as had been the case with its first phase, it would not reflect well on him if it were seen to collapse in ignominious defeat. O'Brien could not get him to come down on one side or the other, 'he continued to look on in an attitude of cold apathy'. In response, O'Brien threatened that he and Dillon 'would have to consider whether we could any longer remain in so

intolerable a position'. Parnell replied 'with the most brutal frankness' that 'we could not get out of it – that we had got ourselves into it adding "You forced me to say that."'

O'Brien retorted: 'I am glad that I forced you to be frank, but I think you will find you are mistaken in supposing that you have us tied to the stake and that you can leave all the responsibility in our hands, while you take all the advantages and none of the labour'.

Not alone could O'Brien and Dillon not understand why Parnell would not support the Plan, but they refused to accept such a position. O'Brien concluded his letter by unveiling a scheme to 'force him out of a most cruel and infatuated policy of veiled hostility'. He told Dillon that he planned to allow his upcoming prosecution to go undefended and he calculated that, with his being sent to jail, 'the result will be that Parnell and the rest will be coerced into activity and that the result will be a big Fund which cannot possibly be used for any purpose except the support of the Campaigners'.³⁸

O'Brien was duly imprisoned and his plan seems to have had the desired effect. In his absence the Tenants' Defence Association was launched in Thurles on 28 October 1889. Parnell, citing illness, did not attend the convention but gave his tacit approval and asked Sexton to deputise for him.³⁹ O'Brien was delighted with the outcome and wrote to Dillon, 'The policy of coming to prison and forcing responsibility on the party was completely triumphant'.⁴⁰ An impressive eighteen strong group of M.P.s led by Sexton attended the convention. The association was announced as 'a distinct and independent association, having the support of the National League. . . it had no branches, being

³⁸ O'Brien to Dillon, 14 Aug. 1889 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6737).

³⁹ Parnell to Sexton, open letter 4 Oct. 1889, *F.J.*, 7 Oct. 1889.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 21 Oct. 1889

conducted from Dublin'.⁴¹ The Tenants' Defence Association threw the weight of the national organisation behind the struggling tenants, particularly those who found themselves in opposition to Smith-Barry and his landlord syndicate. That struggle seems to have captured the imagination and, whether Parnell liked it or not, there was popular support for a stand to be taken against the landlords. The convention in Thurles laid out an organised and well planned strategy whose main focus was on raising funds to carry on the struggle. The first motion proposed:

That this convention, aware of the urgent need of a defensive combination for the protection of Irish tenants, attacked or threatened by aggressive combinations of landlords, and heartily approving of the objects and the means of the Tenants' Defence Association, hereby undertakes to contribute to its funds a subscription equal to an amount of a rate of not less than 3d. in the pound on the rateable valuation of the holdings of the tenants represented in this convention.⁴²

The motion was proposed by Canon Cahill of Tipperary and a second motion proposed by Father O'Dwyer P.P. set out the mechanics of the process. He proposed

That on Sunday 15 November, the tenants in each parish will appoint secretaries and treasurers to the Tenants' Defence Fund, and on Sunday 1 December, the treasurers in each parish will collect the subscriptions, and without unnecessary delay remit them to the national treasurers in Dublin.⁴³

Thurles was the first of many conventions around the country that took a similar form and adopted similar motions.

The combination of genuine indignation at the treatment of the tenants, combined with a much higher profile on the part of the parliamentary party, a strong input from the Catholic clergy, and a very efficient system of collecting the money, resulted in an impressive fund being accumulated. The pattern of county convention and parish

⁴¹ *I.T.*, 2 Nov. 1889.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

collection was repeated across the country, with the Catholic clergy playing a central role in promoting and organising the church-gate collection of subscriptions to the fund. Such was the degree of clerical enthusiasm, that it was commented on in reports to Dublin Castle, who were informed that ‘The movement has been taken up strongly by the Catholic clergy who have generally assumed the direction and leading parts in local collections, urging their congregations to subscribe not only as a matter of expediency but of charity’.⁴⁴ The church-gate location placed moral pressure on people to contribute and in some instances the priest read the amount and name of each subscriber from the altar.⁴⁵ The conventions and collections continued through the winter and when the fund closed on 25 May 1890 the total stood at £61,000.⁴⁶ This was twice the sum O’Brien had proposed to Parnell and should have been enough to sustain the Plan for two years. O’Brien had good reason to be pleased, he had secured the funding, he had mobilised the parliamentary party, and the country was behind the movement. Once again, however, financial solvency was to be short lived.

The spur that had generated the generous subscriptions to the tenant defence fund, the Smith-Barry syndicate and the wave of evictions it precipitated, had also prompted another response that would in turn consume the fund. Smith-Barry’s tenants in Tipperary town began to withhold rent in solidarity with the tenants on the Ponsonby estate and more evictions ensued in the town. Many of these tenants set up business outside the town in what was to become known as ‘New Tipperary’.⁴⁷ O’Brien

⁴⁴ Report of Inspector A. Bell, 5 Dec. 1889 (N.A.I., Crime Branch Special, Midland division, 1887-94).

⁴⁵ Laurence M. Geary, *The plan of campaign, 1886-91* (Cork, 1986), pp 127-8.

⁴⁶ *F.J.*, 26 May 1890.

⁴⁷ *I.T.*, 10 Apr. 1890.

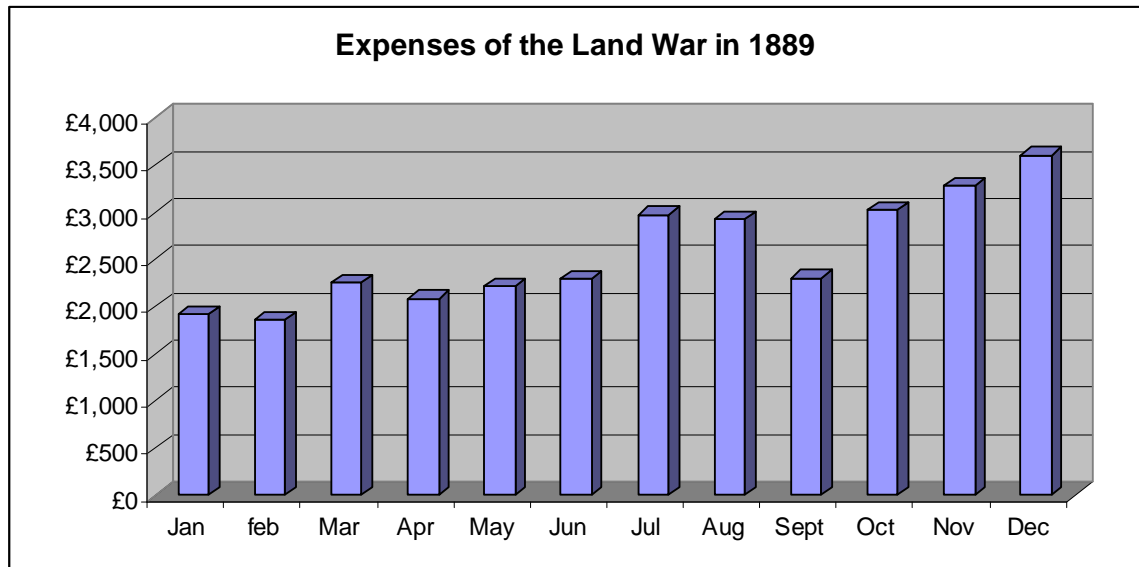
enthusiastically supported the development and ‘New Tipperary’ became the focal point for the agitation. Unfortunately, it also became something of a money-pit for the Plan.⁴⁸ On his release from prison in December 1889 O’Brien promised that: ‘We are in a position absolutely to say that no matter what the struggle costs, no matter how long it lasts, we can, if necessary, match Mr. Smith-Barry pound for pound and, if necessary, rebuild this whole Tipperary’.⁴⁹ It was a brash claim; certainly the £61,000 raised by the Tenants’ defence fund, along with the £33,000 or more raised by Dillon in Australia and New Zealand, had given the agitation a new lease of life but the ongoing costs were considerable.⁵⁰ In 1889 the plan of campaign had cost £30,780 and the monthly total had been on an upward curve (Figure 6.1):

⁴⁸ Geary, *Plan of campaign*, p. 128.

⁴⁹ *F.J.*, 28 Dec. 1889.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1890.

Figure 6.1.



Source: Expenses of the Land War 1889 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6820).

By July 1890, reports based on the Plan supporting 800 evicted tenants estimated that costs had risen to £32,000 per annum and that New Tipperary would more than double the expense by adding an estimated £40,000 a year to the cost of the Plan.⁵¹ The enormous cost of New Tipperary was confirmed by Laurence Ginnell when he advised Dillon that, on its own, Tipperary had cost £35,000 up to the end of January 1891.⁵²

At that rate of expenditure, the proceeds of the defence fund would not even last a year and as early as Good Friday 1890 T. P. Gill had realised this and was warning of yet another impending financial crisis. He wrote to William O'Brien saying:

What I am most uneasy about is money. I do not think we shall have enough of money. I don't know what P. [Parnell] may have for election purposes purely. But what I have realised is that the Tenants' Defence Association fund will barely carry us into the autumn. Tipperary is costing fearfully, and we shall have a few hundred more evicted on our hands in a few weeks. . . . What I am convinced of is that election or no an American expedition will be necessary.⁵³

⁵¹ Report by R. E. Beckerson, Support of the plan of campaign tenants, their present position and prospects, 27 Nov. 1891 (N.A.I., Crime Branch Special, No. 4208/S).

⁵² Ginnell to Dillon, 28, 29 Jan. 1891 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6731).

⁵³ T. P. Gill to William O'Brien, Good Friday 1890 (U.C.C., William O'Brien papers, Box AC, 2).

He wrote again on 28 May. This was a dramatic and desperate letter from a man who was clearly finding it difficult to cope with the pressure of trying to find and stretch resources. The source of his frustration is clear, for he began: 'I shall have to send by the end of the week another £1,000 to Tipperary ... I am actually at the end of my tether. I will send them £500 on account on Friday and send the balance in the early part of next week'. He then related how quickly funds were being dissipated and seemed to be uncertain as to the possibility of the plan surviving until money can be got from abroad. 'The £10,000 has barely lasted out the time I said - till the end of May. . . I anxiously hope we may get some windfalls from here and there within the next few months to eke us out until we can begin to get money from America,' And tellingly, he adds: 'our expense is a growing not a fixed quantity. . . Money, Money, Money is the one thing we want now'. He further underlined the point as he concludes with a dramatic account of the personal strain he was under: 'The thought haunts me . . . So that I go now to the signing of a pile of cheques, to the reading of a pile of applications, to the examination of Ginnell's memos on the interest on our overdrafts with the feelings with which one screws one self together to go through physical pain'.⁵⁴ New Tipperary was rapidly bleeding the Plan dry and an American trip was its only hope of deliverance.

The fact that the Plan was in dire financial straits was not lost on the authorities and Balfour knew that 'there was not the slightest chance of the conspiracy breaking down until the funds were run out or the misery and inconvenience inflicted by a hard winter

⁵⁴ T. P. Gill to O'Brien, 28 May 1890 (U.C.C., William O'Brien papers, Box AC (4)).

upon the dwellers of New Tipperary had become absolutely intolerable'.⁵⁵ He was determined to stop Dillon and O'Brien's American trip and to that end they were both arrested on 18 September 1890. However, the chief secretary's plans were thwarted when the two jumped bail and were spirited away, first to France and from there to America. The plans for the American trip again brought into sharp focus the chasm that had developed between Parnell and the Plan leaders. Not alone had he refused to allow the Paris funds to be used to assist the Plan, but he was at pains to point out that monies raised on the trip to America would have to be shared with the National League 'to defray the expenses of registration in Ireland and the support of tenants left to us from old Land League times'.⁵⁶

The divisions created by the plan of campaign within the ranks of the Irish Parliamentary Party suggest that despite his iconic status among the general public, Parnell's hold over his lieutenants and sub-lieutenants was not as strong as he might have wished. When the Plan was launched in the autumn of 1886 Parnell had not been fully in control of events due to illness, and, the agitation horse having bolted, he tried to rein in Dillon and O'Brien when he recovered in December. Even then he singularly failed to convey to them the perfectly logical and practical reasons for his not wanting another wave of agrarian agitation in Ireland at that time. It is clear from their correspondence throughout the second phase of the land war that Dillon and O'Brien were often frustrated and perplexed at Parnell's unwillingness to publicly support them and to provide them with the financial assistance they were invariably in need of. This line of thinking betrays an

⁵⁵ J. A. Balfour to J. Bright, 24 Sept. 1890, cited in Warwick-Haller, *William O'Brien and the Irish land war*, p.133.

⁵⁶ Parnell to O'Brien, 3 Oct. 1890 (N.L.I., T. P. Gill papers, MS 13506/2).

ignorance of the political realities as Parnell would have seen them, but it also points to the fact that Parnell for his part was not inclined to apprise them of these realities.

After the failure of the Home Rule bill and the Conservative election victory in 1886, the political priority for Parnell was to work on British public opinion in the hope of winning it over in advance of the next election. The setting up and funding of the Irish Press Agency⁵⁷ testifies to that policy, and just as he wanted members of the parliamentary party making conciliatory, non-threatening speeches on British platforms in the run-up to the election, he certainly did not want them to return to Ireland after the election and ‘set the heather ablaze’ in a renewed war against the ‘alien usurpers of the soil’. Furthermore, Parnell seems to have failed to bring home to the leaders of the Plan, the precarious nature of overall funding. For as long as the Plan struggled for funds there seems to have been a belief that, had he wished to, Parnell could have provided them with all they had needed and that the Paris funds were somehow inexhaustible.

The truth of the matter was that from 1886 to 1890 parliamentary party spending greatly outstripped income, and the election-related windfall, that allowed more than £52,000 to be lodged in Paris in 1886, was being rapidly eroded by day to day spending. Parnell’s great achievement in creating a cohesive pledged based party whose parliamentary effectiveness could be maximised by their unity of purpose was built on the principle of independence. To ensure the independence of the Irish members Parnell had to create a party structure that could immunise them from the blandishments of the old patronage-

⁵⁷ The Irish Press Agency was established in London in September 1886 under the stewardship of J. J. Clancy M.P., *F.J.*, 2 Oct. 1886.

based model of parliamentary allegiance. This highly effective political machine ran on adherence to a central, popular political platform and generous political funding. The innovative policy of paying members of the parliamentary party alone cost over £12,000 per annum and more than £3,000 per annum went to support the Irish Press Agency. In all, the cost of Parnell's model of machine politics ran to close on £30,000 per annum in the years between 1886 and 1890. In that same period the annual income of the parliamentary fund dropped to £10,763 in 1887, £9,377 in 1888 and £6,213 in 1889. In order to maintain the party Parnell was forced to draw on the Paris funds to the tune of £34,569 over the four years. Of this, £7,000 was paid over to Dillon for support of the Plan's evicted tenants.⁵⁸ Parnell told William O'Brien in October 1890 that 'the parliamentary and other expenses in England now necessitate the sale of the securities in Paris to the extent of twelve thousand pounds per annum'. but still, it would appear, the Plan leaders failed to appreciate that, even with the best will in the world, Parnell was in no position to fund the plan of campaign. The Plan had proved effective in mobilising public opinion in Ireland but it did so at a time when the focus needed to be on British public opinion and despite its limited application, the Plan was, as Parnell had rightly anticipated, hugely expensive.

The Plan also added considerably to the stresses within the parliamentary party. Parnell's ambivalence towards it gave the likes of Healy, who had been sniping since the 1886 Galway mutiny, a stick to beat Parnell with. Dillon, who had been disillusioned after the collapse of the first phase of the land war but who had renewed his support for Parnell

⁵⁸ Irish parliamentary fund ledger (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 9227); Parliamentary fund balance sheet, *Ibid.*, MS 13461).

when he came to believe that his Home Rule policy might bear fruit, was now, once again, becoming exasperated with Parnell, and O'Brien, a devoted friend, was clearly disillusioned with him.⁵⁹ To have lost the faith of such close allies augured badly for Parnell's great endeavour. The plan of campaign drove a wedge between Parnell and a significant element in the party. He had good reasons to oppose it but in failing to relay those reasonable concerns he stored up resentments that would reveal themselves when he least needed. It is probably not a coincidence that the majority of M.P.s active in the Plan took an anti-Parnell stance when the final split came. The divide among the party generally was fifty-three (62%) anti and thirty-three (38%) pro Parnell, whereas among a sample of twenty-six M.P.s active in the Plan, the ratio was seventy to thirty percent.⁶⁰ The internal tensions were fuelled by the lack of funds. Had Parnell been able to spare some money to take the pressure off Dillon and O'Brien he would have most likely retained the goodwill of more M.P.s who supported the Plan. The reason he could not afford to assist financially was due to the lack of American funds.

The fact that Dillon and O'Brien had to lead a delegation to America to collect money underlined the near collapse of organised fundraising there. In April 1890 Rev. Dr. Charles O'Reilly treasurer of the League in America wrote apologetically to Dr. J. E. Kenny, one of the treasurers in Dublin, about the difficulty of raising funds for Ireland; ' . . . the truth is we have had it hard for the past year. But I think we have turned the brow of the hill'. He suggests that it would have been easier if some key figures from the movement in Ireland had come to America. He says that, 'it was hard on us not getting

⁵⁹ O'Brien to Dillon, 14 Aug. 1889 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6737).

⁶⁰ C. C. O'Brien, Parnell and his party, p. 326; Laurence M. Geary, *The plan of campaign, 1886-91* (Cork, 1986).

men to come over,' pointing out that Dillon raised almost '\$8,000 at one meeting in San Francisco,' but he acknowledges that 'you could not spare the men or we would have had them'. however he insists that, 'it is absolutely necessary they should come'. and he suggests that 'O'Brien and Dillon could raise a fund by a tour through the country that would tide you over the next election'.⁶¹ The real reason for O'Reilly's plea for a delegation from Ireland was the sorry state of Irish-American politics at this time. The American organisation, forever riven by disputes between its 'triangle' and 'kicker' factions, had descended to the lowest levels of intrigue when in June 1889 Alexander Sullivan, former president of the Irish National League of America, was indicted for the murder of Dr. Patrick Henry Cronin. Cronin had been abducted and brutally murdered apparently because he was in possession of facts which implicated the 'triangle', the three men at the head of Clan na Gael, in a conspiracy to misuse the funds of the society.

The funds in question were not inconsiderable. Between 1879 and 1882 the Clan was reputed to have 40,000 members, each of whom paid 25 cents a week into his 'camp'. According to a friend of Dr. Cronin's, reported in the *New York Times*, twenty-five per cent of this went to headquarters and from 1882 this increased to fifty per cent. This arrangement continued until the Clan split in 1885. When the two wings came together in 1888 it was found that the exchequer of the 'triangle' was bankrupt and a committee of investigation was appointed of which Dr. Cronin was a principal member. It was claimed that the money had been spent on the dynamite campaign of 1882 to 1883; an endeavour for which one could not reasonably demand detailed accounts and receipts. Yet, it seems that even this could not reasonably account for the huge expenditure. According to his

⁶¹ Rev. Charles O'Reilly to Dr. J. E. Kenny, 30 Apr. 1890 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8582).

friends, Cronin had found that Sullivan had used Clan funds to speculate in stocks and grain and he had lost the money in this way. Cronin was accused of disloyalty to the Clan and was expelled from the organisation. He threatened to publish his findings but he disappeared before he could do so on 4 May 1889. Cronin's murdered body was found three weeks later and, in the trial that followed, three members of Camp 20 of the Clan, the camp that expelled him, were convicted of his murder.⁶²

The gruesome murder, the chicanery behind it and the high profile murder case, brought the glare of publicity on a most unseemly chapter in the history of Irish-American politics. Just months after Dr. Cronin disappeared the spotlight fell on the Clan once again. A row between the Clan's secretary, Thomas H. Ronayne and James Tierney, treasurer of the executive board, resulted in the former refusing to forward Clan funds to the latter which caused the press, once again, to raise the question of misappropriation of funds.⁶³ With such dark doings in America it is no small wonder that Parnell wrote to Dillon in advance of his departure advising him to 'appeal to the people and avoid all sections, between whom there is nothing to choose'. He also insisted that he 'let both sides understand that we will not again recognise any central authority in America, or tolerate any more conventions or recriminations, and that the branches must communicate and remit directly to Dublin'.⁶⁴ This determination to by-pass the American organisation had also involved the placing of notices in the American press headed 'Send Money Direct' stating that 'advices have been received from the Irish leaders depicting the urgent necessity for the immediate transmission of all available funds in America to the

⁶² *N.Y.T.*, 11 Mar. 1894.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18 Sept 1889.

⁶⁴ Parnell to Dillon, 10 Sept. 1890 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6745).

home organisation. 'In view of this severe crisis', it continued, 'all branches of the League, affiliated organisations and individuals . . . are hereby authorised to forward their funds direct to the office of the League in Dublin'.⁶⁵

Dillon and his fellow fundraisers, did remain aloof from the warring factions when they arrived in America, but their mission did suffer as a result. Writing to Hishon back in Dublin, Tim Harrington sounded a pessimistic note. He said:

It is fortunate that the Tenant Defence Fund in Ireland is making such progress. We shall evidently need it all, as we are not working through any organisation here, and have not a special organ to collect our fund as in the days of the Land League. The money we get from here will simply be the result of our meetings alone, and as these must necessarily be limited, there will be numbers of places that could contribute which we cannot reach. It will take very hard work and a good deal of time to realise £100,000 in this way. And while our reception is generous I do not see any possibility of our realising that amount in the time allotted to our mission here.⁶⁶

Little did he know that the situation was about to become a whole lot worse.

When the O'Shea divorce case brought Parnell's affair with Katherine into the public domain in November 1890 it plunged the Irish Parliamentary Party into crisis. Gladstone made it clear that Parnell's continued leadership would make his own position untenable, thus forcing the party to decide between Parnell and the Liberal alliance. Six days of negotiation failed to resolve the issue and the party split when the anti-Parnellites, forty-five in all, withdrew on 6 December 1890.⁶⁷ When news of the split reached the American delegation, they made every effort to work through the crisis. Harrington

⁶⁵ Rev. Charles O'Reilly to Dr. J. E. Kenny, 9 Aug. 1890 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8582).

⁶⁶ T. Harrington to Hishon, 25 Nov 1890, (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8577 (4)).

⁶⁷ Comerford, R.V., 'The Parnell era 1883-1891' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland. vol. 6: Ireland under the Union, pt. 2, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996), pp 76-7.

consulted with Dillon and maintained that ‘on the whole, the best course is that we should still instruct the committees to send the various sums in hand to the two treasurers already appointed, Dr. Kenny and Dr. Webb’. Harrington pointed out that, as luck would have it, the two men were on opposite sides of the controversy and ‘the signature of both being required to every cheque, every danger is removed of the money being applied in any way for the purposes of one side or another of this dispute in our party’.⁶⁸ Harrington was clutching at straws, for not alone were the two sides in Ireland unlikely to agree a *modus vivendi* in relation to the American money, but securing the money itself was now by no means guaranteed.

Dillon and O’Brien remained on in America, while Harrington and the others returned to Ireland and the cables and letters that Dillon and Harrington exchanged across the Atlantic, testify to a rapidly deepening crisis. Harrington had, on his return, consulted with the bank and found that ‘things are in a sad fix’ and he wrote to inform Dillon that the plan of campaign account was overdrawn by £7,000, that F. X. O’Brien was pressing him for £1,100 and that New Tipperary needed £1,000. His tale of woe did not end there; he went on to inform Dillon that, ‘so far as I can see, the National League is broken up. Healy and D. B. Sullivan, Dennehy and William Murphy are going to run, or saying they will run, a rival organisation, and of course this has stopped up all subscriptions, although our faithful friends the evicted tenants continue still to apply to us’. He spoke of ‘a frightful collapse, before this reaches you, if no further aid comes from America’⁶⁹ and to underline the sense of urgency, he cabled Dillon the following day with a plea to: ‘Press

⁶⁸ Harrington to Dillon, 12 Dec. 1890, (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 3732a).

⁶⁹ Harrington to Dillon, 31 Dec. 1890 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 3732a).

American Committees send funds Tipperary presses for thousand campaign for another thousand and Bank seven,⁷⁰ Dillon's cabled response, however, was not encouraging: 'Doing best get money forwarded great difficulties fear expenses must be cut down net total will be much below estimate Dillon',⁷¹ He expanded on this gloomy message in a follow-up letter to Harrington:

I have been hard at work for the last week trying to get money sent but have had no end of difficulty. A great number of the committees had decided to hold their money until some arrangement had been concluded at home. Today I was telegraphing all the places where money is maybe still on hands, asking it be cabled over. But I must warn you that I don't think you can count on more than from £12,000 to £14,000 in all and you should make arrangements accordingly. I think that for unavoidable necessities Parnell should be requested to give £5,000 from the reserves in Paris. If this be not done, for my part I don't see how you can avoid a complete collapse, even if the expenses are cut down.

I don't think it would be wise to calculate on receiving any large sum from America for some time to come. The mischief done by the struggle in Ireland during the last four weeks is something frightful and I fear it will take a very long time to remedy it. If a settlement is arrived at by O'Briens being appointed leader it will, I believe, be possible to raise something, but nothing like the sum we should have raised but for this catastrophe.⁷²

With the American committees holding back their funds, and subscriptions having dried up at home, Dillon's hope for an early resolution of the leadership crisis was the only chance for the survival of the Plan and for the continued maintenance of the evicted tenants. When no such resolution materialised, the pressures on men like Harrington, J. F. X. O'Brien and Dillon himself, became unbearable. Dillon who was prone to bouts of depression recorded in his diary how he was 'inexpressibly sad' as he recalled on 20 December 1890 how 'on this day eleven years ago I started from Queenstown with

⁷⁰ Harrington to Dillon, Cablegram, 1 Jan. 1891 (Ibid.).

⁷¹ Dillon to Harrington, 1 Jan. 1891 (Ibid.).

⁷² Dillon to Harrington, 2 Jan. 1891, Ibid.

Parnell. And now this is what it is all come to' and he speaks of an 'unspeakable longing to get out of politics'.⁷³

Back in Ireland, J. F. X. O'Brien struggled with the accounts. He used all of the money he received from America to clear the £7,000 overdraft with the Hibernian Bank, but that still left the account in the National Bank overdrawn by £2,017 15s. 11*d.*, and the only money available to him was a balance of £2,300 remaining in the Tenant Defence Fund.⁷⁴ On 17 January the National Bank advised him that they would no longer honour cheques until the overdraft was cleared and three days later on 20 January the Hibernian Bank sent a similar letter, the recently cleared overdraft having risen again to £1400.⁷⁵ Meanwhile he was receiving telegrams such as the one from Walter Dalton in New Tipperary that read 'No money wire credit meet weekly wages'.⁷⁶ Not alone was he hard pressed to find any funds for Dalton, but he also had to take on board the bitter suspicions that now ran through the divided organisation. On 2 January Rev. David Humphries, C.C. in Tipperary, had written advising O'Brien that: 'Dalton wants to exhaust your funds. . . . He and Henley are Parnellites of the worst type and it would be one of their tricks to exhaust your funds. . . . I think it is better that you should send the cheques payable to me'.⁷⁷ Despite Fr. Humphries' warning, O'Brien responded to Dalton's appeal with a cheque for £500 and the promise of another on the morrow,⁷⁸ which, in light of the letters from the banks, shows that he was sailing very close to the wind financially. By August

⁷³ John Dillon's journal in U.S.A. 12 Nov. 1890 - 5 Jan. 1891 (Ibid., MS 6567).

⁷⁴ J. F. X. O'Brien to William O'Brien, 12 Jan. 1891 (U.C.C., O'Brien papers, Box AD).

⁷⁵ Letter from National Bank to J. F. X. O'Brien, 17 Jan. 1891 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6735, no. 7a); Letter from Hibernian Bank to O'Brien, 20 Jan. 1891, (Ibid., no. 7b).

⁷⁶ Telegram from W. Dalton to J. F. X. O'Brien, (Ibid., no. 10).

⁷⁷ Letter from Rev. D. Humphries to J. F. X. O'Brien, 2 Jan. 1891 (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 13432).

⁷⁸ Telegram from W. Dalton to J. F. X. O'Brien, 23 Jan. 1891 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6735, no. 10).

he had had enough. He asked Dillon to relieve him of his duties in connection with the Plan. His frustration, it appears was not confined to matters financial, for he wrote: 'It has been an unpleasant business for me since 1 November and I regret to say - Mr. Ginnell has several times very much added to the unpleasantness of the business. But it is no use blaming a hysterical man for being hysterical'.⁷⁹

In February 1891, Dillon and William O'Brien were in Boulogne, avoiding arrest and trying to broker a settlement of the leadership dispute. Once again Dillon attempted to address the financial ills of the plan of campaign by turning to the party leadership for assistance and once again his lack of success in that regard would foster further resentment towards Parnell. He began by writing to both Parnell and Justin McCarthy, saying that he could no longer be responsible for distributing funds to the evicted tenants. He wanted money to pay off the Hibernian Bank overdraft and a joint committee to be set up to administer funds for the evicted tenants. According to Dillon, Parnell had told William O'Brien that he was prepared to release £3,000 of the Paris funds, the last of the old Land League money, provided that £1,000 went to the League. Dillon reckoned that this £2,000 plus £1,300 in the Tenant Defence Fund and the balance of the American money would cover the overdraft.⁸⁰ Even if Parnell had released the money, it could only have been a temporary stop-gap measure, as the demands of the evicted tenants were ongoing and having failed in his efforts to get a joint committee to take on responsibility for them, the financial burden would continue to rest on Dillon's shoulders.⁸¹

⁷⁹ J. F. X. O'Brien to Dillon, 11 Aug. 1891 (Ibid., MS 6735, no. 18).

⁸⁰ Dillon to Harrington, 11 Feb. 1891 (Ibid., MS 3732a, no. 14).

⁸¹ Valentine B. Dillon to Harrington, 26 Feb. 1891 (Ibid., no. 15).

When efforts in Boulogne failed to resolve the crisis, Dillon and O'Brien returned to Britain and were duly arrested. Dillon had asked Parnell to look after the evicted tenants while he was incarcerated but found, when he emerged from prison in August, that the money from the Paris Fund had not been released and that the grants to tenants had been allowed to go into arrears. He tried once again to persuade Parnell to come to some arrangement that would allow the funds be released. He wrote to him on 15 August 1891 and spoke of his concern that the evicted tenants 'should not be allowed to suffer, or to be starved into an unconditional surrender'. He then proposed that Parnell and McCarthy should each nominate two people and that these four could distribute money from the Paris fund to the evicted tenants.⁸² Parnell did not reply until 10 September. He made excuses for the delay in replying, he made excuses for not looking after the evicted tenants while Dillon was in jail, blaming Justin McCarthy for not supplying him with the details of the tenants involved, and he flatly refused to relinquish control of the Paris fund to anyone.⁸³

Dillon, not surprisingly, was furious and wrote back to Parnell expressing his complete exasperation with him. He stormed:

I have read your letter very carefully – more than once – and I cannot find in it any practical proposal in the direction of making the Paris Fund, or any portion of it, available for the relief of the evicted . . . Nothing then stands between the tenants and that relief from the Paris Fund which you have so frequently promised them – except your refusal to release any portion of the fund. . . . You refuse on grounds which – pardon me for saying – appear to me to be utterly without force, and when one reason is dealt with another appears.⁸⁴

⁸² Dillon to Parnell, 15 Aug. 1891 (Ibid., MS 6745, no. 27).

⁸³ Parnell to Dillon, 10 Sept. 1891 (Ibid, no. 30).

⁸⁴ Dillon to Parnell, 15 Sept. 1891 (Ibid., no. 30b).

One is struck once again by Dillon's political naivety. By now the split was well entrenched. Parnell's National League competed with McCarthy's National Federation for support, both electoral and financial. Dillon had aligned himself with the anti-Parnell side, and given that Parnell had not been inclined to lend financial support to Dillon's evicted tenants before the split, he was hardly likely to release funds to him now that they stood on opposing sides of a bitter struggle for political survival.

Parnell did come to an arrangement with McCarthy to pay bills relating to costs incurred while the party was still united, albeit, after having reduced the accounts furnished for registration work by twenty-five per cent.⁸⁵ No money was released for evicted tenants, including those who had been aided by the National League. These families, effectively abandoned by Parnell, now posed a problem for Dillon. He agonised over whether or not he should stretch his already meagre resources to provide assistance for them. In August 1891 J. F. X. O' Brien had reasoned that 'the result of refusing the appeals of those cast off by the National League would surely be bad' and he maintained that it was 'better to share with them as far as the money goes'.⁸⁶ But if the assistance were to be spread wider it would of necessity have to be applied more thinly and O'Brien suggested that rather than reducing the amount of the grants, it would be best to issue them at longer intervals, pointing out to Dillon that 'making the intervals 11/2 months would of course be equal to a reduction of one third all around'.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Parnell and Justin McCarthy to Harrington, 11 Sept. 1891 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8581).

⁸⁶ J. F. X. O'Brien to Dillon, 27 Aug. 1891 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6735, no. 22).

⁸⁷ J. F. X. O'Brien to Dillon, 29 Aug. 1891 (Ibid., no. 24).

After the split, the Paris funds could not be accessed by either side because to release funds Monroe & Co. would have required the signatures of both Parnell and Justin McCarthy, who now led the opposing camps. With the Paris funds effectively frozen, Parnell, at least, had access to some funds, while his opponents struggled in that regard. This inequity rankled and prompted Archbishop Croke to question ‘how it was that Parnell was able to go by special train through Ireland every week “to knock the bottom out of the priests.”’⁸⁸ He listed a variety of monies that had passed through the hands of the party leader but which had, according to Croke, never been properly accounted for. He referred to the ‘Parnell Tribute’, and also the Parnell Defence Fund, which was initiated by the *Freeman’s Journal* in August 1888 to cover the legal expenses arising from Parnell’s defence of the charges brought against him by *The Times*.⁸⁹ He cited the £10,000 gift from Cecil Rhodes, the £1,000 from Rhodes’ friend John Morrogh and he questioned how much lay in the Paris fund.⁹⁰

Parnell responded to the archbishop by addressing each of the items listed but none of them in any great detail. He rightly pointed out that the ‘Parnell Tribute’ was raised for his personal use and as such was for him to do with as he wished. With reference to the £42,000, raised to cover the cost of the Special Commission defence, he gave a clue as to the money that remained at his disposal. He stated that the balance of that fund, the amount of which he did not specify, remained in his possession and that he would use it ‘for public purposes whenever he judged fit’.⁹¹ Tim Healy maintained

⁸⁸ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 613.

⁸⁹ *F. J.*, 17 Aug. 1888.

⁹⁰ *National Press*, 30 May 1891.

⁹¹ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 613.

that the total cost of the Parnell defence came to £31,000, and that ‘Parnell put the balance in his pocket amounting to £10,000’.⁹² Parnell referred to Morrogh’s £1,000 but gave no indication as to what happened the money and in relation to the Rhodes money he maintained that he had given £3,000 to William O’Brien for the evicted tenants and that the balance, which would have been £2,000, he retained. He also put a figure on the famous Paris fund. His estimate of £43-£44,000 would appear to tally with other indicators.⁹³ The balance of the £30,900 from 1882 augmented in 1886 by the £52,293, less the £34,569 withdrawn between 1886 and 1890 would have left such a balance.

It would appear therefore, that while the Paris monies remained out of reach of both parties, Parnell may have had the balance of the Parnell Defence Fund and some of the Rhodes money at his disposal. His opponents on the other hand struggled for funding. The anti-Parnellites, led by Justin McCarthy, formed the Irish National Federation as distinct from the Irish National League in February 1891, and in the early stages Dillon put up £1,000 of his own money and John Barry M.P. advanced £1,550 to keep it afloat until the Irish National Federation Fund was set up on 21 February 1891.⁹⁴ Between then and October 1892 the fund raised £12,224, the majority of which, £7,129, came from branch affiliation fees.⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that while the Federation stood in direct opposition to Parnell, it had no problem in adopting the operational and organisational structures of the old organisation. The Irish National

⁹² T. M. Healy, *Letters and leaders of my day* (2 vols, London, 1928), i, 343-4.

⁹³ Lyons, *Parnell*, p. 613.

⁹⁴ William O’Brien to Dillon, 9 Aug. 1891 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 6735 no. 17).

⁹⁵ Party funds ledger, 1891-5 (Ibid., MS 6517, pp 461-2).

Federation fund mirrored the parliamentary fund and its single biggest outlay in the period to October 1892 was the £3,500 spent on paying members salaries.⁹⁶ Indeed, Dillon showed some signs of being a poacher turned gamekeeper when he jousting with J. F. X. O'Brien over what appears to have been an attempt on Dillon's part to divert money intended for evicted tenants into the Irish National Federation fund. Dillon wanted all monies to go to the central fund, while O'Brien said he did not think 'that the branches of this organisation which have sent us their contributions to the Evicted Tenants Fund would be satisfied to see the money passed to the Irish National [Federation] Fund'.⁹⁷ With his newfound responsibilities at the head of the Irish National Federation, it is just possible that Dillon was coming to appreciate Parnell's point of view, as he struggled to simultaneously fund land agitation and a political party.

The leadership struggle eclipsed the already struggling plan of campaign and although Dillon would continue to work tirelessly on behalf of the evicted tenants for years to come, the political agenda had moved on. Parnell, it might be said, would have argued that it had moved on in 1882 and that the second phase of the land war was no more than an expensive distraction from the central objective, that of winning elections, winning over British public opinion and winning Home Rule. Between November 1886 and 1892 the plan of campaign accounted for a total sum of £234,431 14s. 8d. This included £41,895 in rents, withheld from landlords, that had been paid in to estate funds as part of the plan of campaign. It was money held in trust pending negotiation

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ J. F. X. O'Brien to Dillon, 22 Oct. 1891 (Ibid., no. 45).

with the landlords, and £30,000 was subsequently returned to the tenants on settlement with their landlord. Of the remaining £192,536 raised by subscription, the vast bulk, £175,700, was spent on grants, maintenance and building houses for evicted tenants.⁹⁸ The funding of the Plan differed greatly from that of the first phase of the land war in that much less support came from America. Of the £192,536 subscribed to the Plan, we know that £61,000 was raised in Ireland by the Tenants Defence Fund up to May 1890.⁹⁹ At the end of 1890 the fund was reopened but had only raised a further £6,746 14s by 31 December 1890.¹⁰⁰ Dillon's trip to Australia and New Zealand raised £40,000¹⁰¹ while only £21,500 came from the Irish National League of America in the period November 1886 to the end of 1889.¹⁰² The 1890 fundraising trip to America, cut short by events at home, raised £23,000.¹⁰³ If one adds the £7,000 received by the Plan from the parliamentary fund the total comes to £159,000 approx.¹⁰⁴ A small portion of the remaining £33,000 or so would have come from the second phase of the Tenant Defence Fund, some from America in the period after 1889, and from smaller amounts subscribed over the entire period. The figures, while not comprehensive, show that after 1886 America retreated from support of the land war in Ireland and overall contributed little more than the amounts coming from the antipodes.

⁹⁸ *Commission to inquire into estates of evicted tenants in Ireland. Report, minutes of evidence, appendices, index* [C.6935] [C.6935-I], H.C. 1893-4, 421.

⁹⁹ *F.J.*, 26 May 1890.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 31 Dec. 1890.

¹⁰¹ *U.I.*, 2 Aug. 1890.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 30 May 1890; Rev. C. O'Reilly's Statement of Irish National League of America funds for period 24/08/1886 to 31/12/1889 (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 13461).

¹⁰³ The plan of campaign, disposition and whereabouts of 'the war-chest', May 1892 (N.A.I., Crime Branch Special, 1892, 4697/S).

¹⁰⁴ Parliamentary fund balance sheet (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 13461).

This lack of support in America was not specific to the Plan but reflected a general decline in support for the Irish cause across the board. It was related to the domination of the Irish National League of America after 1884 by Clan na Gael which was in turn dominated by Alex Sullivan and the 'triangle'. This diminution of financial support from America affected the engine of Parnell's political machine, the parliamentary fund, just as severely as the Plan. Between August 1886 and the end of 1889, a period of over three years, only £7,700 was sent by the Irish National League of America to the parliamentary fund.¹⁰⁵ This was only a third of what was sent to support the Plan and a tiny fraction of the sums being sent in the run up to the election in 1886.

The net effect was to create a competition for resources between the agrarian agitation of the Plan and Parnell's parliamentary project. Parnell could not afford to ignore the land question in 1886 but equally he could not afford to indulge those who sought to wage an all-out war on landlordism. Land agitation in Ireland was at odds with Parnell's objective of courting public opinion in Britain, but, even if he had backed the Plan as a political strategy, he could not afford to support it in financial terms. O'Brien and Dillon turned, time and again, to Parnell for financial support for the evicted tenants, assuming that he could draw on the Paris funds to assist them. The reality was that Parnell was already drawing on the Paris funds. He had exhausted the old Land League monies and was drawing on the reserve at the rate of £12,000 per annum to supplement the parliamentary fund.¹⁰⁶ At that rate the Paris fund would have just about stretched to the following general election at which time Parnell would have

¹⁰⁵ Irish parliamentary fund ledger (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 9227).

¹⁰⁶ Dillon to Harrington, 11 Feb. 1891 (T.C.D., Dillon papers, MS 3732a, no. 14); Parnell to O'Brien, 3 Oct. 1890 (N.L.I., T. P. Gill papers, MS 13506/2).

been obliged to fundraise again. There was no vast war chest sitting in Paris. The two accounts in Paris were the reservoir that stored the occasional deluge of funds from America, but like the monsoon, these bursts of funding were sudden, intense and short-lived, although, unlike the monsoon, their next arrival was neither predictable nor guaranteed. What Parnell had available to him was just the minimum required to sustain the party and he genuinely was not in a position to fund any form of land agitation.

In distancing himself from the plan of campaign Parnell distanced himself from those members of the party who supported it in the belief that they were pursuing a genuine policy objective. It may have suited Parnell to have a limited form of agitation in Ireland to balance the soothing noises he was forced to make in Britain to court Liberal support for Home Rule, but his efforts at balance on this occasion were part of his undoing. He failed to communicate to his own supporters the sound reasons for his reservations in relation to the plan of campaign. Without proper explanation, his unwillingness to become involved, his attempts to limit the agitation and most particularly his apparent tight-fistedness were bound to cause frustration. It was that terrible frustration that comes from having one's efforts rejected by the very one they were intended to impress. Parnell's treatment of Dillon and O'Brien made him enemies where he ought to have had friends, and the competing demands for funds set Parnell at loggerheads with the Plan and its supporters. Had he been more supportive, or at least more communicative, Parnell might have found himself in a much stronger position when the leadership challenge came.

Conclusion:

Parnell's death was followed by a period of political in-fighting and stagnation that encouraged the growth of a small but more radical group of disaffected nationalists. It was not unlike the period that followed the death of O'Connell in 1847. Then too, nationalist politics had entered the doldrums after experiencing a split and losing its iconic leader, quickly followed by a failed revolution and, of course, having suffered from the effects of the famine. The political initiatives of the 1850s; the tenant right movement and the Independent Irish Party floundered, and, then too, the failure of constitutional nationalism gave way to a more revolutionary alternative, in the shape of the Fenians. Constitutional nationalism in nineteenth century Ireland was therefore very much centred on the O'Connell and Parnell eras. These were the periods where Catholic nationalism developed and progressed, gaining in parliamentary representation and political leverage. This study has focused on the role played by political funding in that progress.

In part I it looked at the forces that led O'Connell to push for Catholic emancipation and how as a result Irish liberalism became predominantly Catholic and nationalist.

O'Connell developed an entirely new brand of popular politics that was fuelled by propaganda and funded by popular subscription. The O'Connell approach was radical and new but its success was limited. Political funding allowed him to advance the cause of Irish Catholics, or at least, middle class Irish Catholics, by building a coherent lobby

group within parliament. His success was facilitated by liberal reforms while the limitations to that success reflected the degree to which the landed class were able to resist those reforms and retain a stranglehold on political representation. O'Connell had partially broken the monopoly of private money on public representation and in so doing, he had laid down political foundations that would shape the direction of constitutional nationalism in the decades that followed.

Part II looks at how the fortunes of Irish constitutional nationalism were revived with the arrival of Charles Stewart Parnell on the political scene. No more than O'Connell, his first steps towards leadership were born out of frustration with the ineffectual leadership that preceded him. Parnell, like O'Connell, succeeded in uniting a diversity of Catholic interests behind a purposely vague and populist national objective; Home Rule. He knew how to harness popular grievance to generate public support and funding. He understood the critical importance of enlisting the support of the Catholic Church for his endeavours and how by managing agitation he could maximise funding, extend representation and exert leverage for reform on a Liberal government.

Comparing these two periods, one is struck by the parallels between the two and the centrality of political funding to the political model in each case, yet, they were also very different men operating in very different times. By analysing this intriguing blend of contrast and continuity, perhaps we can more fully understand how political funding became central to the advance of constitutional nationalism over the course of the nineteenth century.

The political world that O'Connell entered in Ireland during the second decade of the nineteenth century was a complex mixture of British politics, European influences and specifically Irish problems. Within the British political system the Whigs, since 1688, had given a voice in parliament to a growing middle class. O'Connell, a barrister, was part of that growing middle class, his natural political home would have been among the Whig liberals, but he was also an Irish Catholic, which complicated matters. It was for this reason he had been sent to France to be educated. While there, he experienced at close quarters the French Revolution and developed a lifelong aversion to political violence. Ireland had experienced its own French-inspired political violence in 1798 and when the Act of Union¹⁰⁷ came in response, it did so without the compensating gesture of Catholic emancipation. It was the failure to rectify the inequity, whereby Catholics were allowed to vote, but not for other Catholics, that spurred ambitious middle-class Catholics like O'Connell to action.

When petitions to parliament fell on deaf ears, O'Connell came up with a new strategy. In an attempt to gain admittance to the system of parliamentary democracy, Irish middle-class Catholics were forced outside the system. O'Connell's revamping of the Catholic Association in 1823 involved an alliance of all Catholics in a popular movement to agitate for concessions that in reality were only going to benefit the middle-class. Deliberately playing on the emotions of Catholics as a group, he sought out all forms of Catholic grievance and highlighted them. The Catholic rent propelled the agitation into a national movement. With the support of the Catholic clergy it had access to every parish

¹⁰⁷ Union with Ireland Act, 1800 (39 & 40 Geo III, c.67); Act of Union (Ireland) 1800 (40 Geo III, c. 38).

in the country and just as Catholics of every class could come together in religion they were now similarly united in the Catholic Association on payment of their modest penny a month. It was an extra-parliamentary movement that united Catholics in pursuit of constitutional reform and while it was constituted purely as a single issue lobby group, the methods employed by O'Connell saw it grow into something more politically potent. By campaigning on a range of Catholic issues O'Connell gave the association the air of a representative body and this also cultivated the impression among his supporters that Catholic emancipation would resolve all these grievances. The association came to be referred to as 'the Government' and the Catholic rent as 'a form of national treasury'. O'Connell had created the Catholic nation. The real key to the success of the association was the rent. By allowing poorer Catholics pay at a reduced rate, the association mimicked the organisation it had allied itself to, the Catholic church, and welcomed all classes of Catholics paying according to their means. All Catholics could join and given that the association set itself up to represent the interests of all Catholics and to oppose 'the orange faction', it was not surprising that Catholics came to associate the practice of their religion with membership of the association.

O'Connell's achievement in mobilising such broad popular support would not be repeated until Parnell managed to do it in the 1880s, by which time the political structures were in place to allow him convert popular support more easily into political power in terms of parliamentary representation. For O'Connell, public opinion itself was the weapon, and he did not immediately make the connection between the popularity of the

Catholic Association and the possibility of converting that support into electoral support. When Thomas Wyse took the lead in Waterford in 1826 and harnessed support for the association to challenge the local aristocratic family's grip on the parliamentary seat, he revealed simultaneously the power of the association and the obstacles that it would have to overcome if it were to repeat the success in Waterford on a broader scale. The power, which was shown again when O'Connell won the Clare election in 1828, lay in the fact that it could no longer be taken for granted that county elections would be decided by the local landlords using the block votes of their tenants to support their chosen candidate. Catholic voters were persuaded to vote for the nationalist candidate against the wishes of their landlords. It was a mould-breaking moment. The election victories in 1826 and in 1828 had shown that the economic hold of the landed class over political representation could be broken, albeit at enormous expense. In 1826 the Catholic Association spent £3,361 in support of freeholders who had been victimised by their landlords in Waterford¹⁰⁸ and in Clare in 1828 payments 'for refreshment and support of freeholders' came to a total of £6,245¹⁰⁹ These electoral successes were achieved by mobilising resources at a national level and focusing those resources, both financial and human, on a single constituency and also by placing moral pressure on voters to vote for 'God, their church and their country'.¹¹⁰ The pressure was applied by their priests and by their non-voting neighbours, for it must be remembered that there was no secret ballot and electors were required to openly declare their vote at the polling booth.

¹⁰⁸ *D.E.P.*, 29 Mar. 1827

¹⁰⁹ Clare election 'account books', 1828 (D.D.A., C.P., 390/2/x.

¹¹⁰ *The reign of terror in Carlow* (London, 1841), p. 27.

Against this moral pressure came economic pressure from their landlords to vote for their man or run the risk of being confronted with a demand for rent arrears and face possible eviction. Landlords were prepared to come down hard on any tenant who broke what they regarded as a feudal bond between landlord and tenant that demanded loyalty up to and including doing the landlord's bidding at election time. O'Connell's biggest challenge at election time was not the direct expense of the election but the challenge of overcoming deference, convincing tenants that their loyalty lay not with their landlord but with their co-religionists and that the association could, and would, provide the financial means to protect them from a vindictive landlord.

It was an uphill struggle, and O'Connell seemed to realise that popular subscription could not be a match for the economic power of the landlord class, save in a few constituencies. What he had achieved with the Catholic Association was primarily in the area of mobilising public opinion using propaganda and popular subscription to build up and fund agitation on a single issue. The forays into electoral politics were intended to bolster the agitation rather than representing a coherent attempt to challenge the political status quo. Nevertheless, the success of the Catholic emancipation agitation had catapulted O'Connell into uncharted territory. He was the political leader of Catholic Ireland, a constituency he had himself created, and while the Catholic Association did not outlive the granting of emancipation, ways and means were found to keep the money flowing from the people to their 'Liberator', the 'uncrowned King of Ireland'. Parnell was to inherit this latter title half a century later when he too united Catholic Ireland through a

campaign of extra-parliamentary agitation and went on to pursue an independent legislature for Ireland. Both Parnell and O'Connell were quintessentially liberal in their political outlook and committed to achieving their goals by purely constitutional means. They both took a supplicant Irish nationalism, made it aggressive to the point of revolution, demanding, not seeking, concessions in return for their guarantee of continued constitutional action. They were both consummate gradualists. Their objective was to win whatever measure of independence could be achieved from Westminster by constitutional means. They both benefited from the impression, if not the reality, that a British government that did not do a deal with them would face the alternative of dealing with the darker forces that only they could suppress. They both stole the clothes of the radicals, building popular support and popular funding on the strength of their fiery rhetoric. Simultaneously they reassured both the Catholic church and Whig/Liberal governments of their commitment to constitutional methods.

For Parnell the parliamentary route was easier. His tenure as tribune of the people being separated from that of O'Connell's by approximately forty years, he was to benefit from a range of reforms that made it easier for him to fashion a strong and effective Irish Parliamentary Party in Westminster. The first of these developments came with the reform act of 1832.¹¹¹ In Ireland the county electorate was increased from about 37,000 to 60,597 and the borough electorate to 29,471. It was hardly a radical reform given that, three years earlier the raising of the freehold qualification, in county constituencies, from forty shillings to ten pounds had slashed the county electorate from about 216,000 to

¹¹¹ Representation of the people (Ireland) Act, 1832 (2 & 3 Will. IV, c. 88)

about 37,000. Neither the pre-1829 nor the post-1832 electorate seemed to favour O'Connell. The forty-shilling freeholders had been disenfranchised by a British government that feared a Catholic nationalist electoral land-slide once emancipation was granted, but O'Connell may not have been all that sorry to see them go. They had delivered the electoral success in Waterford and Clare that precipitated the granting of emancipation, but their susceptibility to landlord influence had made their votes rather expensive. The reform act of 1832 proved a disappointment to O'Connell. It did result in the opening up of all but three of the twenty-six close boroughs¹¹² but a complex arrangement for assessing freehold values and household valuations in the boroughs allowed many poor voters on to the register while many well to do voters were excluded. K. T. Hoppen suggests that from such an electorate, made up, as it was, of 'fragmented groups ranging from prosperous shopkeepers to indigent labourers, from substantial farmers to cottiers at the margin of existence. . . , even O'Connell had not been able to fashion the politics of cohesion.'¹¹³

O'Connell was hampered by the slow rate of change, but he was a pragmatist and if politics is the art of the possible, he was also a very capable politician. Having broken new ground in the area of popular politics, he was not averse to reverting to more traditional methods when circumstances demanded. Having won emancipation he set repeal of the act of union as his new goal but readily switched to a reform agenda when he saw the prospect of concessions from a Whig administration. Like emancipation,

¹¹² Macintyre, *The Liberator*, p. 106.

¹¹³ Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, p. 32.

repeal could be held out as the cure for all ills, it provided a focus for agitation when O'Connell felt the need to march his troops to the top of the hill, and it provided the reason for maintaining a national organisation that could be counted on to collect the 'Rent'. However, repeal was very much the unreachable star. O'Connell wore it like a mask to frighten Tory governments while his real agenda was what he termed, 'Justice for Ireland' or the gradual erosion of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland.¹¹⁴ O'Connell the agitator became O'Connell the parliamentarian and the Catholic rent was replaced by the 'National Rent' and the 'O'Connell National Tribute'. It was the tribute that enabled O'Connell to break the rules of the political system and, yet, stay within it. The popular subscription made him the first truly independent politician; it enabled him to remain aloof from the patronage system that was the very basis of how parliament operated and the offer of a judgeship failed to win him over to the ranks of the Whig administration. It had been shown that public money, when available in volume, could enable seats to be won in an electoral system dominated by private money. O'Connell, having challenged the electoral system, was able, with the aid of the tribute, to take the fight into parliament and challenge the very operation of government. In theory, this brand of popular politics could, if extended, capture the majority of the Irish seats and form a voting block in parliament that could not be swayed by offers of patronage. In practice, O'Connell realised only too well, that despite his unquestioned power to drum up money, he would never be able to support more than a few seats by such means.

¹¹⁴ Jackson, *Ireland*, p.40.

The few seats he could control, he reserved for his sons, and even then he had to resort to various ploys to stretch the money to its limit, where possible, finding uncontested seats for the sons or pairing them with wealthy running mates. Beyond this core of seats, any further repeal candidates tended to be qualified on the strength of their bank balance rather than their political convictions and he was even accused of selling seats. By means conventional and unconventional he managed in 1832 to enter parliament at the head of a Repeal Party of thirty-nine M.P.s., although the question of party loyalty and O'Connell's power to control the majority of these 'Repealers' was limited by virtue of the fact that for the most part they paid their own way at the election.

O'Connell was derided, by Tories and Whigs alike, for the grubby and vulgar manner by which he came to be in parliament, and certainly it must have rankled to see an M.P. in their midst who proclaimed himself a representative of the people who was 'the hired servant of Ireland'.¹¹⁵ It was the age of reform, but O'Connell had gone beyond the most ambitious liberal agenda, flouting Burke's principle of representatives being independent, and was seen as a threat to the system. The disenfranchising of the forty-shilling freeholders in 1829 and the limited extension of the franchise in the 1832 Reform Act was a deliberate attempt to deny O'Connell the electorate that would have helped him to advance his Repeal party representation in parliament. A more direct attempt to scupper O'Connell's political career involved an attack on the very means of his success, that is, his funds. The Tories appreciated that, without funding, O'Connell could not sustain his political career and that the greater the demands on his funding the fewer seats he could

¹¹⁵ *The Nation*, 22 Oct. 1842.

sustain for his family retinue. In the 1835 and 1837 general elections every effort was made to stretch him financially and the Tory party raised the financial stakes by running candidates against him and all of his sons and following up with expensive petitions after the election. It took the intervention of English radicals to save him from financial ruin, when they raised over £8,000 to cover his costs in the 1835 petition following his election in Dublin city. This episode, more than most, serves to underline the critical connection between funding and political survival. But even before 1835, O'Connell had seen the limitations to his model of popular parliamentary politics. He had pushed it to the limit in the 1832 election, using the National Political Union as a fully fledged electoral organisation, standing on a national platform of repeal and creating a pledged Repeal party. Realising that no amount of electoral success would win him repeal he took the pragmatic route and maximised the political capital he did have, when he shored up a weak Whig government in 1835. He was once again breaking new ground. It was the first time that an Irish party had held the balance of power in Westminster. The next time it would happen would be in 1885 when it would be Parnell who would decide who governed, but for higher stakes.

O'Connell was a political innovator. He began by harnessing public opinion to win a major constitutional concession, then he adapted the model to create an independent Irish presence in parliament and when he had succeeded in establishing a degree of independence from the Whigs he bartered it for political concessions. The period from 1835 to 1841 was one where O'Connell and his repealers seemed to revert to Whig

liberals in the manner of 'if you cannot beat them, join them.' His support of the Whigs brought modest reforms in Ireland, but it brought O'Connell and his supporters very much into the realm of traditional politics and the 'spoils system'.

It could be argued that, in his compact with the Whigs, O'Connell was replicating in parliament, what the landlords did at constituency level. That is, delivering a block of votes in return for political favours. It was another example of the man's pragmatism. He was only too willing to mix old style politics with new and while he pressed for reforms designed to give Catholic a better deal in Ireland he was happy in the meantime to win them a share of government patronage under the existing system. His return to liberal orthodoxy in the late 1830s was reflected in the nature of the organisation he set up at the time. The very title of the General Association, established in September 1836, was reassuring and unthreatening. It was a broadly liberal organisation and almost one in four of its members were Protestants.¹¹⁶ One would have been forgiven for thinking that O'Connellism had been tamed and Irish Catholic liberals, who had been forced into becoming Catholic nationalists, were showing signs of returning to the Whig fold. Even if O'Connell could have been accommodated within the Whig party there was one very strong imperative that would have forced him to maintain an independent course. That related to funding. The closer O'Connellism came to liberalism, and the further O'Connell distanced himself from repeal, the less money was subscribed to the tribute.

¹¹⁶ Gerard Lyne, 'The General Association of Ireland, 1836-37' (M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1969) p. 126.

Throughout the 1830s P. V. Fitzpatrick oversaw the collection of the tribute, often struggling to keep the seemingly permanently impecunious O'Connell afloat.¹¹⁷ The crisis became acute in the run up to the 1841 election. O'Connell was depending on the tribute to fund four elections and that money would not be forthcoming unless he regained some of the popular support he had lost while in coalition with the Whigs. The nature of O'Connell's political operation, its dependence on public funding at election time, in itself, determined that he would have to return to the repeal agitation, if for no other reason, than to generate the funds he needed to continue in politics.

When he finally decided to throw all his energy into repeal agitation, it was very much a return to the days of the Catholic Association. With only eighteen repealers returned at the 1841 election and a Tory government, he had little choice but to revert to tactics that had proved successful in earlier times. The fervour for repeal that he was able to generate from late 1842 was incredible, outstripping the emancipation agitation in terms of money raised, and suggests that O'Connell had once again, managed to fool all of the (Catholic) people, some of the time. The peasantry were swept along in a mix of political theatre and rash promises. The Catholic clergy once again dragooned their parishioners, they and the middle-classes oversaw the collection of the rent, and O'Connell provided the rhetoric and the promises of what wonders repeal would bring. The only problem was that repeal, unlike emancipation, did not have any widespread support in parliament and

¹¹⁷ P. V. Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 16 June 1840 (*O'Connell corres.*, vi, no. 2719); For details of O'Connell's finances see M. R. O'Connell's wonderfully titled article: 'Daniel O'Connell: income, expenditure and despair' in *I.H.S.*, xvii, no. 66 (1970), pp 200-220.

Peel was able to take on O'Connell. It was a lesson that Parnell would learn. He realised, in his time, that once public opinion in Ireland had been mobilised, he still needed to win over opinion in Britain before there was a realistic chance of the concession of Home Rule.

O'Connell provided many lessons for those who came after him; some were learned, some not. In his alliance with the Catholic church he made a virtue of necessity and showed that no political endeavour in Ireland could succeed in uniting the majority of the people without its support. He showed that with its support and using its organisational base, it was possible to politicise a constituency already united by their creed. He played on a collective sense of injustice, building a sense of fellow feeling, a Catholic nationalism, that saw him as their political leader and that was prepared to pay him and fund his organisation in his efforts to advance their cause.

The Independent Irish party of the 1850s learned from the O'Connell experience. It had the support of the Catholic church and it understood the necessity of maintaining its independence from the pre-existing power blocks in Westminster if it was to be an effective voice. What the Independent Irish Party failed to understand, however, was the critical role of political funding in that regard. O'Connell had created an independent Irish Party in 1832, but it was only independent to the extent that he and his sons were not bound to the government by ties of patronage, nor were they independent unto

themselves by virtue of their own personal wealth; they were tied to the 'party', because it was the 'party', in the form of their supporters, that paid for their election and their living expenses. It was this funding that gave them the independence to be a separate party, bound only to the cause that generated the money to put them there. It might be said that without the funding there could be no party, and without the party there would be no funding. It was the failure to grasp this point that proved the undoing of the Independent Irish Party and it was by his clear understanding of it that Parnell managed to succeed.

Parnell also understood the need to enlist the support of the Catholic church and by convincing them of his purely constitutional intent he managed to reunite, in broad terms, the same constituency as O'Connell. It took a little more effort in the case of Parnell for he had been forced down a more radical path than O'Connell in his initial quest for popular support. The 'New Departure' had held out the promise of American funds to Parnell and his fellow obstructionists, but when that money was used to establish and fund the Land League it took Parnell beyond the realms of constitutional parliamentary politics and into the murky world of agrarian agitation. The war on landlordism was not a political direction that suggested the prospect of broad unity. A Fenian funded semi-revolutionary agitation could only hope to attract support from the more left leaning elements of nationalism. It certainly was not the ideal starting point if one sought to enlist the support of the Catholic church and yet, Parnell, from this very different starting point,

and by more complex means, also managed to woo the Catholic hierarchy and create a broad Catholic nationalist constituency.

The biggest difference between O'Connell and Parnell, in terms of means at their disposal, was the money provided by the Irish diaspora in America, Australia and elsewhere. O'Connell had benefited from Irish-American funding, particularly during the repeal campaign of 1843, but he managed to alienate much of the goodwill from that quarter by his trenchant opposition to slavery and, besides, there was no comparison in the size and weight of the Irish population in America in 1843 with that of forty years later. The famine had crudely and dramatically altered the demography of the Irish population. The society that emerged in its aftermath was more homogenous in socio-economic terms; the tenant farmer dominated in terms of numbers and they also found themselves in a better economic position, the land having been shorn of much of the cottier and poor labouring class. Parnell had, therefore, the advantage of dealing with a constituency that had a good deal in common, and to the great majority of whom the land question was central. The departure of the poorer elements had a further, and even more positive, outcome for Parnell. The huge population of displaced Irish in the cities of America, embittered as they were against Britain, would provide a vast reservoir of potential support for nationalist causes in Ireland. This money was to be the making of, and it might be argued, contributed to the breaking of Parnell. From the time of his fund-raising tour at the end of 1879 he did not just use the American money to fund his

endeavours, but he used it as a tool to lever differing elements of his growing constituency into place.

That trip to America had been to raise funds for the Land League, but such was the distress in Ireland arising from a sharp economic downturn, that there were fears of a famine on the scale of 'black '47'. Parnell turned those fears to political advantage, and playing on the emotions of Irish-Americans who owed their emigrant status to the famine, he raised a huge relief fund as well as raising funds for the Land League. The relief fund was used by the Land League to assist struggling tenants and played a role in spreading and popularising the organisation, while the use of the Catholic clergy to disseminate the money helped to break down their distrust of the League. Just as O'Connell had bound the priests into his organisation by getting them to collect the 'Catholic Rent', Parnell achieved the same result by getting them to distribute money, and while they both used extra-parliamentary agitation to build a popular movement and exert political pressure, it is worth noting that in their respective agitation campaigns, money tended flow in opposite directions. O'Connell used the campaign for Catholic emancipation to mobilise the Catholic 'nation' and the more he agitated on it, and later on repeal, the more money he generated to fuel the agitation. Parnell, on the other hand, built a popular national movement from the land agitation, but rather than more agitation generating more funding, it tended to consume more and more.

In all of O'Connell's organisations the words membership and subscription were synonymous and he managed to link the payment of the 'rent' to a sense of belonging, as an equal member, to the Catholic nation. Parnell on the other hand, had to depend on the agitation generating support from outside the immediate organisation, from in fact, outside the country. It was because of America's generosity that Parnell was able to conduct a land war where the front line troops, the tenant farmers, were able to emerge virtually unscathed. The League was able to indemnify the farmers against loss by adopting the 'rent at the point of a bayonet' policy, thus spreading and popularising the League. No more than O'Connell's indemnity funds at election time, this proved to be hugely expensive. So it was, that O'Connell had to indemnify tenant farmers against their landlords at election time, while Parnell had to do the same, but as part of the agitation. The Ballot Act 1872, having introduced the secret ballot, made it more difficult for landlords to force their will on their tenants at election time.¹¹⁸ For Parnell the agitation was a drain on resources, whereas for O'Connell it was electioneering that had proved to be the big expense.

Parnell's experience was the reverse of O'Connell's, in that he could see that political objectives could be pursued in a more cost effective manner by taking the route of parliamentary politics. Accordingly, he was quick to distance himself from land agitation and concentrated much of his energy on acquiring and protecting funds for exclusively parliamentary purposes. He had struggled for funds with which to fight the general election in 1880 when he had made his play for control of the Home Rule party. With

¹¹⁸ The Ballot Act, 1872 (35 & 36 Vict., c.33)

only £2,300 he still managed to win twenty-four seats, which gives some indication of how things had changed since O'Connell's time.¹¹⁹ The fact that M.P.s continued to be unpaid presented Parnell with problems similar to those faced by O'Connell; how to find candidates who could fund their own election and afford to spend six months of the year in London at their own expense. Parnell's choice of candidates who were already based in London; his so called 'carpetbaggers', were a partial solution to that problem. The aspect of parliamentary politics that had changed dramatically in the period was the electorate, in its composition and, just as importantly, in its mindset. Three years after the death of O'Connell, the Irish Franchise Act 1850 put in place a system of 'automatic' registration, that is, voters were no longer required to apply for registration certificates. Registration was based on occupancy, rather than ownership, of property rated at a poor law valuation of twelve pounds, in counties, and eight pounds in boroughs. It delivered a more uniform electorate, excluding the poorer voters. It was the kind of electorate O'Connell would have longed for, one that could provide the base upon which to build a strong parliamentary party.

The Independent Irish Party had the benefit of the reformed and expanded electorate, but was unable to manage the party it delivered to them in the 1852 election. Its parliamentary independence, lacking solid foundation, succumbed to government patronage. The electorate was also growing in prosperity, as agricultural prices rose at

¹¹⁹ *Special comm. proc.*, vii, p.27; Conor Cruise O' Brien, *Parnell and his party, 1880-90* (London, 1968), p. 26.

faster rate than rents,¹²⁰ and advances in education, newspaper readership and income over the 1850s and 60s built a self-confidence that was lacking in O'Connell's time. Stronger in number, more cohesive in class and independent in thinking, the voters were no longer bound to their landlord by any sense of obligation to vote according to his wishes. By 1880 the Land League had seen to it that the landlord was generally seen as the enemy of the tenant farmer, accordingly, in the general election of 1880 it was not a question of whether the tenant voter would follow the landlord's lead but more a question of what shade of liberal they would support. Parnellite candidates were regarded with some suspicion and hostility by that other great influence on the voters, the Catholic clergy, who, in many cases, would have supported the Whig liberal candidates. It is a testament to the increasing popularity of Parnell, growing out of the land war, and the increased independence of the nationalist electorate that, far from being subject to landlord influence, they were now also prepared to defy their priests. O'Connell had led the way in terms of breaking down deference as an impediment to popular parliamentary politics. In his case he was forced to counter it with the money he raised from his extra-parliamentary agitation. He was forced to match every pound of private wealth brought to bear on the election with a pound raised by public subscription, which set the limits to his independent presence in parliament. Freed from the enormous burden of indemnity funds, and having partially surmounted the problem whereby candidate selection tended to be a trade off between party loyalty and private means, Parnell was in a position to win a lot more seats with a lot less money than O'Connell.

¹²⁰ B. L. Solow, *The land question and the Irish economy, 1870-1903* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971), p. 69.

Parnell's success in the 1880 election gave him the support he needed to take control of the Home Rule party. He displaced the Whig element with Home Rulers and united the party behind that political objective. The land war had launched Parnell as a national figure, and it had generated the financial support in America that allowed the Land League to indemnify the tenant farmers in their struggle with their landlords. It paid for legal representation and legal costs, and it supported at least eight hundred families evicted, supposedly, because they withheld rent in solidarity with their fellow tenants, but who, more often than not, had been evicted for arrears of rent. As long as the Land League money was plentiful, it was easy to mobilise the tenantry. From the tenant's point of view, success meant that the landlord would be forced to grant a rent reduction of up to twenty per cent, and failure did not enter into it, as the League would intervene to cover costs and stave off eviction. It was in this arena that Parnell was required to indemnify tenants against landlords, and just like O'Connell before him, he was anxious to put limits on the funds committed to such protection. For O'Connell indemnity funds helped to win elections and for Parnell they helped to make the land war painless and popular and created a national movement with him as its leader. When the demands on the League's resources began to outstrip supply there was a danger that divisions within the movement would be exposed, the poorer tenants aggrieved when the League was less inclined to support tenants evicted on foot of arrears and the stronger farmers irked by the change in policy that required real sacrifice on their part as the League tried to cut costs and pressed them to face eviction.

Once the 1881 Land Act¹²¹ had been achieved, Parnell was quick to retreat from the land agitation. A classic example of the law of diminishing returns, Parnell saw the agitation as having achieved its purpose and realised that little was to be gained from throwing good money after bad. It was not a view shared by his idealistic sister Anna, and Parnell's cynical manipulation of the Ladies Land League seems proof enough of his matter-of-fact attitude to the plight of evicted tenants, and his determination to preserve funds for what were in his mind more worthy projects. His central project was then, and one assumes, had always been, to build a truly independent Irish parliamentary party and press for some form of independent legislature for Ireland. Proof of his popularity as leader of a unified, if de-radicalised, nationalist consensus came with the raising of the 'Parnell National Tribute' in 1883. The parallels with O'Connell were glaring; Parnell had just won a measure of reform on foot of an extra-parliamentary agitation that had served to unite Catholic nationalists behind a demagogue who now sought to lead them on to win a separate parliament for Ireland, and, as had happened in 1829, the people showed their appreciation in monetary terms.

But as Parnell tried to press on with his constitutional endeavours, he continued to be dogged by the continuing financial demands of the evicted tenants, the collateral damage from the land war. Compared to O'Connell, Parnell needed much less funding with which to contest and win elections, but unlike O'Connell, he lacked the annually renewed tribute to sustain his electoral endeavours. By-elections were fought and won in 1883 and 1884 by Parnellite candidates, but money had been in short supply. The Irish National

¹²¹ Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881 (44 & 45 Vict., c. 49).

League which replaced the Land League raised very little funding, and what it did, was eroded by commitments to the evicted tenants. Meanwhile, in America the successor organisation to the American Land League, the Irish National League of America, came to be dominated by forces less committed to the constitutional route, and support from that quarter also dried up.

If one were to compare the position of O'Connell in 1834, with that of Parnell fifty years later in 1884, it could be said that O'Connell had generous funding in the shape of the £12,000 he received from the tribute, but that to win any significant number of seats that he could realistically control, he would have needed multiples of that sum. Parnell on the other hand, had the potential to win a majority of the Irish seats with a relatively modest outlay, but struggled to raise any funding for electoral purposes.

In 1884, Parnell's electoral prospects were even further enhanced by the Representation of the People (Ireland) Act 1884¹²² which extended the right to vote in Ireland to all male householders in both counties and boroughs, and to lodgers in the counties, tripling the Irish electorate.¹²³ The following year the Redistribution of Seats (Ireland) Act, removed most of the closed boroughs and introduced single seat constituencies. This was the final piece in the electoral reform jigsaw that had transformed the electoral environment from

¹²² The Representation of the People (Ireland) Act, 1884 (48 & 49 Vict. c. 3).

¹²³ Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922*, xiii.

the one in which O'Connell had operated. The Ballot Act of 1872¹²⁴ had brought the secret ballot and increased the number of polling places in constituencies, provisions which accelerated the decline of landlord influence.¹²⁵ The 1867 Reform Act¹²⁶ had dramatically increased the electorate in England and Wales and by sheer weight of numbers had pushed up the cost of elections there. Government concerns that the further increases to the electorate proposed for 1884 would push up electoral costs even further, led to measures being taken to reduce the cost of elections. The Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act 1883,¹²⁷ had made treating of voters illegal and placed strict limits on election expenses. The stage was set for a nationalist landslide in Ireland but despite the removal of most of the financial hurdles that O'Connell had faced, money was still a critical issue if success was to be assured.

Nationalist candidates stood for eighty-nine of the 103 seats in 1885.¹²⁸ Just the basic election expenses alone multiplied by eighty-nine amounted to a significant sum but the biggest unresolved question in advance of the election was the question of funds to compensate members for loss of income while attending parliament. Parnell resolved the problem by turning to America for help and convinced Patrick Egan to issue an appeal to all branches of The Irish National League of America for 'moral and material support' for

¹²⁴ The Ballot Act, 1872 (35 & 36 Vict., c.33).

¹²⁵ R. K. Carty, 'From tradition to modernity, and back again: party building in Ireland', in *Modern Irish democracy: essays in honour of Basil Chubb*, R. J. Hill and M. Marsh eds. (Dublin, 1993), p. 35.

¹²⁶ Representation of the People Act, 1867 (30 & 31 Vict., c. 102).

¹²⁷ Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1883 (46 & 47 Vict. c. 51)

¹²⁸ Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922*, pp 130-5.

the Home Rule cause.¹²⁹ When the money began to flow in, Parnell moved to safeguard it from the, seemingly insatiable, demands of the evicted tenants, setting up a separate parliamentary fund over which he had direct control and which could not be accessed by the I.N.L. The parliamentary fund was the mechanism by which Parnell was released from the final impediment to progress in parliamentary politics that had persisted since O'Connell's time. The electorate had been reformed, the costs had been limited, but, while the property qualification for parliamentary election candidates had been abolished in 1858, members were still unpaid and without some form of fund from which to pay expenses and compensate members for lost income, Parnell would have been forced to choose candidates on the basis of independent means rather than loyalty to the party.¹³⁰

O'Connell's attempt to create the first independent Irish party in Westminster with his pledged Repeal party in 1832, managed to create a party with a nominal strength of thirty nine, of which seven were relatives of his. It was only these seven that could rightly be regarded as being independent as they were funded by the party in the form of the tribute paid to O'Connell and used by him to underwrite as many members of his family as he could afford to get into parliament. The remaining thirty-two M.P.s were loyal to varying degrees, but having funded their own elections and continued to pay their own way after the election, they were to all intents and purposes little different from other Whig liberal M.P.s. Even the seven seats the party managed to fund in 1832 was pared back to four in

¹²⁹ Affidavit of Charles O'Reilly, treasurer, Irish National League of America, Apr. 1892 (N.L.I., Harrington papers, MS 8932 (2)).

¹³⁰ *H.C. Deb* 22 April 1858, vol. cxlix, cc1543-4

subsequent elections, when the Tories realised that by stretching O'Connell's resources, they could limit his independent presence in parliament.

Parnell was similarly hindered in the 1880 election, but managed to compromise by selecting his London-based 'carpetbaggers'. Now in 1885 no compromise was needed. The parliamentary fund contributed £14,610 to the cost of the election,¹³¹ a sum not much greater than the amount of O'Connell's annual tribute, but the return, in terms of seats won, proved to be much greater. Eighty-five of the eighty-nine candidates were elected and these were not fair-weather Home Rulers. The parliamentary fund afforded Parnell the luxury of selecting men who were solid and dependable rather than wealthy, men who were committed to the party rather than sympathetic. The payment of a salary of £200 per annum meant that he was free to choose men of modest means, safe in the knowledge that they were inoculated against government patronage. Parnell had not four or seven members he could count on, but all eighty-five, constituting a voting block that he was quick to exploit.

The parliamentary fund highlights yet another advantage Parnell had over O'Connell. O'Connell outdid Parnell when it came to generating funds from within the ranks of his organisation but he could never call on the Irish abroad for assistance to the extent that Parnell could. Through the 'New Departure', Parnell had tapped into an incredibly

¹³¹ Irish parliamentary fund, cash book 21 Nov. 1885 – 22 Mar. 1886 (N.L.I., J. F. X. O'Brien papers, MS 9229).

valuable resource that was to sustain all his subsequent political operations. America proved to be a precocious benefactor. Its generosity, initially intended for semi-revolutionary agitation and relief of distress, proved a little elusive for Parnell who constantly sought to divert it into parliamentary politics. Of the £261,000 that passed through the accounts of the Land League an estimated ninety-six percent came from America.¹³² The £31,900 that remained, of this almost exclusively American money, when the Land League was wound up, formed the basis of Parnell's fund devoted to parliamentary politics. It was added to after 1885 when the parliamentary fund was set up in order to provide for the ongoing needs of a, soon to be expanded, parliamentary party. The accounts of the parliamentary fund show that of the £144,000 paid into it, £119,000, or almost eighty-three percent came from America. It is worth remembering that it would not have been possible for Parnell to create the strong, disciplined, political machine that was the Irish Parliamentary Party of the mid-1880s without the money to fight elections and pay salaries to M.P.s, and that in excess of eighty percent of that money came from America. This external source of funding that had not been available in O'Connell's time gave Parnell a great advantage in his pursuit of his parliamentary political agenda but the erratic nature of the supply brought its own problems.

America had subscribed generously to the Land League but that money did not become available for parliamentary purposes until after the demise of the Land League. Then as

¹³² *Special Commission Act 1888; reprint of the shorthand notes of the speeches, proceedings and evidence taken before the commissioners appointed under the above named Act* (London, 1890), vi, p.341; Davitt, *Fall of feudalism*, p. 173.

Parnell entered his constitutional phase American support seemed to dry up and did not flow again until the general elections of 1885 and 1886, when Ireland and America alike were convinced that Home Rule was within Parnell's grasp. When 1886 brought disappointment and a Tory government, American enthusiasm waned and funds slowed again to a trickle. Parnell realised that with annual commitments of almost £30,000 to maintain his parliamentary party and no guarantee of fresh funds from America, he would have to depend on his reserves in Paris to tide him over.¹³³ It was his determination to preserve these funds for parliamentary uses that brought him into conflict with his own colleagues who in 1886 had engaged in the second phase of the land war. 'the Plan of Campaign' was for Parnell something of a necessary evil. It responded to a political need in Ireland but it also ran counter to his policy of winning over British liberal public opinion to the idea of Home Rule for Ireland, however, the real problems stemmed from its cost.

After July 1886 Parnell sought to lie low and protect his reserves until the Liberals regained power. He tried to limit the extent and cost of the land agitation but it became ever more expensive, and with money in short supply tensions began to grow between Parnell and his lieutenants, particularly Dillon and William O'Brien, who expected Parnell to use the Paris funds to bail out the 'Plan'. Their idealistic determination to fight the landlords clashed with Parnell's antipathy to the agitation and his resolute determination to retain what funds he had, for the maintenance of his parliamentary party.

¹³³ Parnell to O'Brien, 3 Oct. 1890 (N.L.I., T. P. Gill papers, MS 13506/2).

O'Connell too had clashed with young idealists in his day. He too had hoped to lie low after his release from prison in May 1844 and await a new Liberal government. He too had tangled with those who sought to have resources spent on other initiatives; in his case, those who wished to see the repeal reading rooms retain some of the repeal rent in order to expand the educative role of the movement. Whether the differences arise over money, or policy, or both, all political organisations are prone to dissent, division and moves against the leader. In O'Connell's case the cracks began to appear in 1844 and represented a general sense of disillusionment with his policies and his dictatorial leadership style. With Parnell, there were rumblings from August 1886 when he foisted Capt. O'Shea on the voters of Galway. But it was his ongoing wrangling over money with Dillon and O'Brien that soured his relationship with them and the other supporters of the plan of campaign, and it may have been his unwillingness to divert money from his parliamentary priorities to agrarian agitation that tipped the balance when the parliamentary party voted on his leadership in December 1890.

There were other questions relating to diverting money that linked the two men. It was a curious fact that both men who seem to have been so adept at raising and directing funds for their political projects, were singularly inept when it came to managing their personal finances, and consequently both were at one time or another accused of misappropriating funds intended for their political enterprises. In O'Connell's case the lines of demarcation between private and political funding were so blurred and given that for many of his accusers, accepting public subscriptions was objectionable under either heading, the

chorus of disapproval tended to blend together in a general outrage at what was termed ‘a swindling enterprise’.¹³⁴ Parnell too had questions asked about funds, supposedly, unaccounted for. The accusations came in the context of the bitter split, but if there was malicious intent in raising the issue it does not mean that Parnell did not have a case to answer. Certainly, some of the famous £10,000 from Cecil Rhodes seems to have vanished without a trace.

To even consider the question of probity, in relation to political funding, on the part of the two leaders, one must first remind oneself of the different context of nineteenth century politics. In the first instance, both men, and O’Connell in particular, were breaking new political ground. The methods they used were, of necessity, novel and were regarded in established political circles as being, at best unseemly, and at worst, a gross corruption of the political system. When O’Connell entered parliament on the strength of money popularly and willingly subscribed for that purpose he challenged a system that to modern eyes was corrupt; a system of pocket boroughs and county constituencies returning members of parliament based on a feudal premise that landed proprietors had a divine right to hold the levers of power. In the context of the 1830s it was O’Connell who was corrupt, swindling the people out of their money, a charlatan who had not the means to hold a seat in parliament, and who lowered the status and independence of the office by virtue of his being a paid servant of his constituents. It was against that background that many of the vitriolic accusations were aired about O’Connell’s misuse of funds. *The Times* never relented in pouring scorn on the man, his motives and his methods, referring

¹³⁴ *D.E.M.*, 28 Sept. 1842.

to him as ‘King of the Beggars’ and regularly reminding its readers, that ‘the man’s enormous income has been literally “wrung from the hard hands of peasants”’.¹³⁵ The ‘rent’ was usually referred to as the ‘rint’ and his followers were said to have ‘skulls’ that were ‘thicker and muddier than the walls of any Irish pigsty’.¹³⁶ With this level of bile infecting the commentary, it is not surprising that malicious stories were put about and the fact that O’Connell had to account for his handling of the funds of the Precursor Society in 1839 does not necessarily mean that there ever was a case to be answered.

The fact was that O’Connell was playing by different rules; he was to some extent making up the rules for popular parliamentary politics. He struggled to maintain an Irish party in parliament. It cost money to do so, and his political opponents put him to expense and used money against him. He mixed popular funding with personal funding, the rent and the tribute, he was not inclined to differentiate, for it all came from the one source and, in his eyes, it was all put to the one purpose. It is hard in such circumstances to make clear distinctions as to what should, or should not, be given ‘unto Caesar’. If the political and the personal could be separated it would probably reveal that *The Times* was not wrong in suggesting that the Irish people were underwriting a relatively comfortable lifestyle for their leader, although it could also be said that, such was his ability to mismanage his finances, he never got rich from politics.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *The Times*, 21 May 1836.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 July 1836.

¹³⁷ See M. R. O’Connell, ‘Daniel O’Connell: income, expenditure and despair’ in *I.H.S.*, xvii, no. 66 (1970), pp 200-220.

Although he was not given to lavish living, Parnell seems to have matched O'Connell in terms of the poor state of his personal finances. Avondale came to him with mortgages that amounted to £18,500 by 1872, and Parnell's efforts to reduce the debt, involving sawmills, quarrying, and mining enterprises, proved singularly unsuccessful. There was also a scheme to buy land and transfer tenants from congested districts which also failed.¹³⁸ Parnell once confided to his brother that politics was 'the only thing that ever made him any money'.¹³⁹ The Parnell Tribute in 1883 was triggered by the prospect of Ireland's great leader being forced to sell his property to cover his debts and his relationship with Katherine O'Shea was not unsullied by the question of money. Parnell benefited indirectly from the £4,000 per annum allowance that Katherine received from her aunt, and it was the fear of losing this and being disinherited from her fortune, said to be in the region of £200,000, that kept the O'Sheas from divorcing while Aunt Ben was alive.¹⁴⁰ When she did die it was a disagreement over Captain O'Shea's share that precipitated the messy divorce case. Despite Katherine's £4,000 a year, and the £39,871 7s. 8d provided by the 'Parnell National Tribute' in 1883, Parnell seems to have been broke again by 1887. We know from his correspondence with his bank in Wicklow that in September of that year he owed them £5,000 and was seeking to extend the overdraft by a further £500.¹⁴¹ It is clear therefore that Parnell did not get rich from politics either.

¹³⁸ Foster, *Parnell and his family*, pp 127-30.

¹³⁹ J. H. Parnell C. S. *Parnell: A memoir* (London, 1916) p.228

¹⁴⁰ R.V. Comerford, 'The Parnell era, 1883-91' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland. vol. 6: Ireland under the Union, pt. 2, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996), p. 57.

¹⁴¹ *Parnell National Tribute: Analysis of subscriptions* (Dublin, 1884) p. 35; Parnell to William O'Shaughnessy, 8 sept. 1887, Letter auctioned at Whyte's auction rooms on 5 Apr. 2008.

Besides, there was a much greater consciousness of the need to keep separate accounts for monies received under various headings, than had been the case in the 1830s and 40s. It could be seen in the early days of the Land League, when concern was expressed that money contributed for relief of distress was recorded and acknowledged as such and not as Land League money.¹⁴² Later, J. F. X. O'Brien kept scrupulous account of the receipts and expenditure of the parliamentary fund, but by his own admission he was limited by the information he received and it galled him that he was unable to get a breakdown of sums as large as £24,909 and £11,666, spent on elections and registration expenses respectively between 1886 and 1890. It suggests that while much had changed since the days of treating of voters and the provision of indemnity funds, there was still call for some election spending to be recorded under fairly broad headings. O'Brien did not just confine his exasperation to election funds in general. He quite specifically singled out Parnell for mention, complaining of: 'the irregularity on the part of the late chairman . . . in handing in drafts and cheques received by him as treasurer of the Irish Parliamentary Party' and he also questioned the whereabouts of the second £5,000 donated by Cecil Rhodes, the £1,000 donated by Rhodes' friend John Morrogh, and makes reference to a missing draft for £400 which he claimed had been cashed by Parnell.¹⁴³ The fact that the letter was written after the split and Parnell's death tells its own story as it seems to purposely set out to catalogue his financial indiscretions. If it was an attempt at a damning indictment of Parnell, then it seems to fall short of the mark. Parnell claimed to have given £3,000 of the Rhodes money to the plan of campaign and apart from a

¹⁴² Irish Famine Relief Fund New York to Land League (N.L.I., Irish National Land League papers, MS 8291 (American connection, 5)).

¹⁴³ Draft letter undated, J. F. X. O'Brien to Justin McCarthy (N.L.I., O'Brien papers, MS 13461).

possible indiscretion in relation to the £400 draft, there was little else of substance to suggest that Parnell was given to serious misappropriation of funds.

Yet, it does show that things had progressed a long way since O'Connell invoked the principle in 1842 that the 'labourer was worthy of his hire'.¹⁴⁴ Just as legislation had regulated the cost of elections, the funds needed to fight those elections were themselves now organised in a more rational and accountable fashion and it should be remembered, before judging his financial probity, that it was Parnell who contributed more than most to engineering that new system. In this, as in his other political achievements, Parnell had the advantage of coming after O'Connell, who had been a political trail-blazer of European stature. Parnell was an incredibly able politician, but much of his success came from perfecting a pre-existing model of parliamentary politics. For O'Connell no such template had existed. It was his exclusion from the existing model that forced him to devise new methods and what he created was built upon by Parnell and others.

The first political grouping to be influenced by O'Connell were, not surprisingly, his Irish Conservative adversaries. Even before he embarked on his parliamentary career, the Tories had been spurred into action by O'Connell's mobilisation of the masses and by the national scope of the Catholic Association. Brunswick clubs were set up in direct response to the organisation of the Catholic Association and they countered O'Connell's popular funding with their own, slightly more genteel, fundraising. After 1832, the

¹⁴⁴ *The Nation*, 22 Oct. 1842.

Conservatives in Ireland were not slow to adapt to the new political realities. Electoral reform required that registration of voters be attended to in an organised fashion and the Conservatives learned from O'Connell in that regard. The Irish Protestant Conservative Association was founded in 1831 and addressed itself to such practical matters as setting up registration clubs, local Conservative associations and raising funds in the form of the 'Protestant Rent'.¹⁴⁵ The level of political organisation among Irish Conservatives was well in advance of the party in Britain, which testifies to the influence of O'Connell.

But even in Britain it might be argued that O'Connellite politics forced the pace of change. The necessity of dealing with popular political opposition in Ireland also forced the Conservatives to up their game, and informal as they were, initiatives such as the Carlton Club and the Spottiswode Fund were moves in the direction of organised party politics that were well ahead of developments in the Liberal party. Overall, however, the response of the British political parties to O'Connell was reactive, and the development of popular party politics in Britain would wait until it became inevitable following the franchise extension of 1867 which gave a political voice to the working classes. Further afield there were many emerging nationalist movements which were undoubtedly influenced by O'Connell's mobilisational abilities in the 1820s and 1840s, but nowhere was the model of popular subscription supporting an independent parliamentary presence emulated. French liberal Catholics, Montalembert, Lacordaire and Lamennais, regarded

¹⁴⁵ Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society*, p. 280.

him and his movements as models for political action in Europe¹⁴⁶ and the banquet campaign of 1847, which saw mass gatherings in 180 locations calling for reform, may have been inspired by O'Connell's 'monster' meetings. Overall, however, it seems that it was O'Connell's ideals rather than his methods that inspired European nationalists. In France party building was slow to develop, and it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that parties formed permanent national organisations.¹⁴⁷

In America the emergence of popular politics and party building owed much to the emergence of Andrew Jackson on the political stage. Between 1824 and 1840, contested presidential elections became the crucible of national party politics, with Jackson the central figure.¹⁴⁸ Jackson stormed to presidential victory in 1828 on a wave of popular politics. Jackson's appeal to the 'common man' and his razzmatazz election campaigns ushered in a new more intense style of politics. His Jacksonian Democrat Party was opposed by a Whig Party that was forced to develop an ever more sophisticated organisation as they conducted rousing campaigns in support of their candidate. By 1840 voter participation had roughly doubled and the basis of an enduring two party system had been established.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, while popular politics and party building had advanced much further and more quickly in America than in Ireland, Britain or Europe, it was not a model that was based on popular subscription. Jacksonian democracy wedded

¹⁴⁶ T. Desmond Williams, 'O'Connell's impact on Europe', in Kevin B. Nowlan & Maurice R. O'Connell eds, *Daniel O'Connell, portrait of a radical* (Belfast, 1984), pp 100-6.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Tombs, *France 1814-1914* (Harlow, 1996), p. 115.

¹⁴⁸ Richard L. McCormick, *The party period and public policy, American politics from the age of Jackson to the progressive era* (Oxford, 1986), p. 161.

¹⁴⁹ Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and power: The politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990), p. 6.

itself to the spoils system with support being rewarded by government gift. In the latter part of the century the system had evolved to such an extent that questions began to be raised in relation to the apparently corrupt bonds between national party politicians and big business interests and what Richard L. McCormick refers to as ‘the seemingly sordid quality of machine politics in the big cities’.¹⁵⁰

O’Connell had developed a model of popular politics that managed, using money raised by popular subscription, to gain a toe-hold in the aristocratic model of parliamentary politics. His success in creating an independent presence in parliament may have been limited by the money available to him and by the money used against him, but his very presence in parliament was mould breaking. His approach to parliamentary politics was, of necessity, a blend of the old with the new. He mixed popular funding with the application of the patronage system, when he had to. America, on the other hand, had thrown out the old aristocratic model and so popular party politics was able to flourish when it became established in the 1820s. American parties did, however, adapt the old aristocratic patronage system to provide their motive force, and thereby, it could be argued, compromised the true democracy of their party system.

If there was a common thread running through the broad political developments in the nineteenth century it was the general move away from autocratic forms of governance and towards more democratic models. It was a movement that took different shapes

¹⁵⁰ McCormick, *The party period and public policy*, p. 174.

depending on the local conditions. In Britain it took the form of a reforming liberalism, America embarked on an experiment in democracy and in France the pressure came from revolutionary nationalism. In Ireland, British liberalism blended with Catholic nationalism to create its unique approach to the advance of constitutional democracy. In all instances, however, a general progression can be discerned. Whether it occurred dramatically or slowly over time, the move from the aristocratic to the democratic involved the replacement of one form of economic resource with another. The aristocratic model had been controlled by private, usually landed, wealth, and as it retreated it came to be replaced by money raised initially to challenge it and then replace it. O'Connell began by raising money to circumvent the system, then to challenge it, but the aristocratic model outlived O'Connell. Ongoing political reform had seen the political system transformed and the aristocratic model had retreated further, but Parnell still faced the challenge of advancing popular politics in what was still a substantially aristocratic model of parliamentary democracy. Parnell was familiar with the progress made by O'Connell, with the errors of the Independent Irish Party, and in seeking to fund his own endeavours in the area of parliamentary party politics he would become all too familiar with the 'sordid politics' of the American big cities. They were the source of most of his political fighting fund as well as a source of frustration, given the capricious nature of that support.

Parnell failed to construct a political movement that generated sufficient funds from within its own ranks to sustain itself, but with the funds he had available he achieved

much. The American money he squirreled away in Paris provided the means to create the political machine that was the Irish Parliamentary Party. If O'Connell had broken new ground in 1832 when popular subscription partially funded the Repeal Party, then Parnell, too, had set an example of a popularly funded, highly organised, and disciplined political party. Both O'Connell and Parnell can rightly be regarded as trail blazers in the manner in which they pushed the boundaries of parliamentary democracy, but it has to be remembered that O'Connell's Catholic Association made no headway until the Catholic rent was introduced, that it was money that won the Clare election, and that it was the O'Connell tribute that facilitated a new form of popularly elected parliamentary representation. In Parnell's case, it was American dollars that propelled the Land League into a national movement and turned Parnell into a national leader. It was America that funded the eighty-six seats won in the 1885 election, and without the money that fuelled his parliamentary party it would not have become the powerful machine that came so close to winning Home Rule.

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