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## Peering in from the window ledge of the Union: the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the attempt to bring British Conservatism to Northern Ireland

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In this article I examine one particular way in which the Anglo-Irish Agreement redefined unionist politics in the late 1980s. While the operation of “direct rule” had drawn the unionist middle classes ever closer to Britain in economic and cultural terms, it had also left them in a precarious position politically. The nature and scale of this political subservience was brought home dramatically in 1985 when the British government signed an international agreement giving the Dublin government the right to be consulted on Northern Irish affairs. In the period of political flux summoned by the Hillsborough Accord, elements of the unionist middle classes were drawn to the previously marginal ideas of a small leftist organisation that argued for the British political parties to organise in the region. Given the material interests and social conservatism of those attracted to it, the call for “equal citizenship” would inevitably take the form primarily of a movement seeking to bring British Conservatism to Northern Ireland.

**Keywords:** Ulster Unionism; Anglo-Irish Agreement; direct rule; Conservative Party; British and Irish Communist Organisation

### Introduction

On 10 October 1989 a motion was placed before the annual conference of the Conservative Party calling for membership to be extended to people living in Northern Ireland.<sup>1</sup> While the demand that Conservative Central Office recognise constituency organisations in the region faced stern opposition from the hierarchy of the party, it clearly exerted an appeal among the rank and file. Amid euphoric scenes, the controversial motion was passed by a resounding majority of delegates gathered at Blackpool – to the astonishment of most observers and the dismay of quite a few.<sup>2</sup> Persuading the Conservative Party to organise in Northern Ireland represented a remarkable political achievement. While the campaign to convince the Labour Party to accept Northern Irish members had been established in 1977,<sup>3</sup> the demand that the Tories stand for election in the province was of rather more recent vintage. Indeed, the pressure group that agitated specifically for membership of the Conservative Party had been established only eighteen months before the eventful Blackpool conference.

The swift success of the campaign for affiliation predictably inflated the expectations of Conservatives in Northern Ireland. As the 1980s drew to a close, many Ulster Tories firmly believed themselves to be on the verge of a genuine political breakthrough. The handful of elections in which they had stood had seen the Northern Ireland Conservatives perform strongly. In advance of affiliation, Tories standing in the local government elections in May 1989 had topped the poll in North Down. In the week that followed the

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National Union's ratification of the historic conference decision to accept members from Northern Ireland, moreover, a Conservative candidate running in a district council by election in East Belfast secured 23% of first preferences.<sup>4</sup> While these predominantly affluent and overwhelmingly unionist<sup>5</sup> constituencies were unlikely to provide genuinely representative tests of their electoral potential, the Ulster Tories were quick to point to a series of surveys of political opinion appearing to indicate that there existed sufficient space for Conservative politics to flourish in Northern Ireland. One particular, respected opinion poll – the *British Social Attitudes Survey* – even seemed to suggest that the Conservatives might well become the single largest political party in Northern Ireland.<sup>6</sup>

As the 1980s drew to a close, then, the movement to bring British Conservatism to Northern Ireland appeared – to some eyes at least – to be on the verge of an historic breakthrough. In this essay – the first of a pair of articles – I will set out to explain why it was that Conservative constituency associations began to appear in the six counties in the period of profound political flux summoned by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. In a future issue of *Irish Studies Review* I will return to examine how the meteoric rise of the Northern Ireland Conservatives in the late 1980s gave way to their equally swift and ignominious demise in the early 1990s. Both articles draw upon two valuable primary sources of information. Firstly, the author conducted interviews with thirty Northern Irish members of the Conservative Party between 1992 and 1993. Excerpts from these interviews are used at various stages to illustrate or underline the issues at hand. Secondly, the essay draws on analysis of data generated by the 1989 and 1990 editions of the *British Social Attitudes Survey*. The information on 274 Conservative “identifiers” living in Northern Ireland furnished by these two instalments of the survey offered crucial insights that shape the discussion that follows.

### **The contradictions of direct rule**

The appearance of Conservative associations in the more affluent constituencies of Northern Ireland in the late 1980s marked a genuinely unanticipated turn in the political life of the region. While invariably dismissed as a mere aberration by political commentators, the emergence of the Ulster Tories might in fact be regarded as an entirely rational development. The apparent attraction to Conservative politics among elements of the unionist community owes its origins in part to the complex set of processes that unfolded in the wake of the dissolution of the devolved parliament at Stormont in the spring of 1972. If we are to understand the emergence of the Northern Ireland Conservatives, we need to appreciate the particular and profoundly contradictory manner in which the unionist middle classes experienced “direct rule”.<sup>7</sup>

In principle, the dissolution of the Stormont legislature offered the sovereign parliament the opportunity to embrace the six counties as an integral region of the UK. The perennial conviction that Northern Ireland remains irretrievably “different” from the rest of the state ensured, however, that in practice Westminster opted to govern the six counties in a manner reminiscent of a distant colonial possession.<sup>8</sup> The mechanisms and institutions through which direct rule operated were subject to few of the checks and balances that are customarily understood as the hallmark of liberal democracy.<sup>9</sup> In particular, legislation for Northern Ireland was exempt from the established procedures of parliamentary discussion and scrutiny and introduced instead through the executive fiat of “Orders in Council” devised by politicians whose parties had never even stood for election in the region.<sup>10</sup>

The distinctly autocratic form assumed by direct rule engendered widespread resentment among unionists in Northern Ireland. Members of the unionist community

were often painfully aware that they were in effect afforded rights of citizenship vastly inferior to those enjoyed by people living in other regions of the UK.<sup>11</sup> This sense of alienation was compounded further by the concern that the unaccountable powers afforded by direct rule might be used by the British political elite to chart a course injurious to the unionist cause. While figures in government often issued assurances that the Union was secure, it was all too apparent that Westminster was willing to envisage a future for Northern Ireland beyond the boundaries of the UK. The trajectory of British policy over the course of the Troubles was guided by the conviction that the metropolis has no “selfish, strategic or economic” interest in the six counties and would readily facilitate the wishes of people there should they democratically express the desire to live elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> While the insouciance of the British political establishment towards Northern Ireland remained implicit for many years, it would find rather more formal and explicit expression in the mid-1980s in the guise of a political initiative we will return to shortly.

The political form and substance of direct rule served to alienate the professional and business classes within the unionist community no less than their poorer ethnopolitical kin. The social and economic measures implemented by Westminster, in contrast, proved rather more to the liking of the unionist middle classes. Among the principal concerns of successive direct rule administrations was the creation of conditions deemed essential to weaning people away from political violence. As a consequence, the period would see state spending on a range of social and economic matters sustained at levels much higher than other regions of the UK. In the fiscal year 1985–86, for instance, public expenditure in Northern Ireland was 42% greater than in Great Britain.<sup>13</sup> While state spending was, of course, inflated by the large security budget, the region also enjoyed funding in key areas such as education and housing that was greater than any other part of the UK.<sup>14</sup> The relative generosity of the direct rule era would allow the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs in a public sector that would in effect become the regional economy.<sup>15</sup>

In principle, the high levels of spending introduced by direct rule administrations of various ideological hues were guided by an ambition to improve living conditions in those poor neighbourhoods that had produced most of the combatants in the conflict. It is ironic then that, in practice, the main beneficiaries of the annual subvention provided to the region by the British exchequer should be the more affluent among Northern Irish society. The principal outcome of social and economic policy under direct rule was to create an enlarged and relatively prosperous middle class.<sup>16</sup> In expanding the public sector, the British state created a substantial body of comparatively lucrative and secure jobs that would not otherwise have existed. Individuals working in the upper echelons of the civil service, for instance, drew the same generous salaries as their counterparts “across the water” but were able to buy homes costing only 60% of the UK average and to send their children to often excellent schools at typically minimal cost.<sup>17</sup> This rather fortunate coincidence ensured that senior public employees in Northern Ireland came to enjoy a comparatively high level of disposable income which in time would find expression in ever more conspicuous consumption. In the 1980s, it became commonplace for commentators to observe that the region saw more sales of luxury cars than any other part of the UK.<sup>18</sup>

The economic reliance of the unionist middle classes on the British state under direct rule was echoed in a growing cultural association with public life on what unionists often term the “mainland”. In the years after the dissolution of the Stormont assembly, the British state became the absolute fulcrum of the Northern Irish economy both as a provider of jobs in the public sector and as a guarantor of many jobs in the private sector. As a consequence, the organisation of work – especially in the middle and higher

echelons of a range of professions – became “integrally tied to British policies and practices”.<sup>19</sup> One significant expression of this growing association was that it became increasingly routine for members of the professional and business classes in Northern Ireland to travel to Great Britain for meetings and conferences. In the early 1980s, the major airlines acknowledged this emerging market by establishing daily “shuttle” services between Belfast and various cities in other UK regions. While these flights were relatively expensive, they quickly proved popular among those needing to go to London and elsewhere on business. In the period between 1984 and 1988 alone, the number of air passages between Northern Ireland and Britain rose almost 40% from 329,240 to 454,050.<sup>20</sup>

The growing familiarity with British society that their working lives bestowed upon middle-class unionists was augmented further by destination patterns in higher education. In the years before the outbreak of the Troubles, the number of Northern Irish students choosing to attend university “across the water” was remarkably small. Indeed, in 1968 more people from the six counties enrolled in Trinity College Dublin alone (359) than in all of the British universities put together (326). Over the next couple of decades, this pattern would be reversed and by the late 1980s each autumn would see more than 2500 Northern Irish undergraduates begin college life in another region of the UK.<sup>21</sup> The overwhelming majority of these students were unionists from relatively prosperous backgrounds and most would not return to the six counties after graduation. Over time, this particular trend in higher education would – as we shall witness later – create an important autobiographical association that would make many middle-class unionists feel rather closer to the rest of the UK.

These feelings of association that direct rule fostered among the unionist middle classes were also nurtured by one further development that is worth mentioning. In the period after Stormont was prorogued, the British media and in particular British newspapers came to exercise an even more palpable influence within the cultural life of Northern Ireland. When Richard Rose conducted his survey of political opinion on the eve of the Troubles in 1968, he discovered that only one in three Northern Irish people read a British newspaper.<sup>22</sup> Over the next two decades, that proportion would double and titles published elsewhere in the UK would become more popular than the local press.<sup>23</sup> This trend was particularly pronounced in the case of more affluent unionists among whom the British broadsheets were popular. It is hardly surprising, then, that even though Northern Ireland remained “a place apart”,<sup>24</sup> the era of direct rule nonetheless witnessed a growing interest among middle-class unionists in the issues and personalities that animated British political life.

### **The steady course**

In sum, then, it would appear that the unionist middle classes experienced direct rule in a number of different and ultimately contradictory ways.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, the period after the fall of Stormont merely confirmed among middle-class unionists that suspicion of the British political establishment they shared with the rest of the unionist community. On the other hand, the advent of direct rule had ensured that unionist professionals and business owners had come to enjoy a better standard of living and had through their travel patterns, familial relationships and reading habits come to have greater knowledge and experience of everyday British society than arguably any previous generation. In the years after Stormont was dissolved, middle-class unionists were simultaneously being kept at arm’s length by the British political establishment and being drawn into the embrace of wider

British society. It is this particular paradox that is crucial to understanding the disposition and conduct of the unionist middle classes during the period under consideration here.

The decision to close the Stormont legislature had at the time been greeted with virtually unanimous opposition within the unionist community. As the material advantages of direct rule gradually became apparent, however, much of this initial hostility began to dissipate. The more affluent within the unionist fold in particular abandoned their erstwhile commitment to the restoration of a devolved assembly with almost indecent haste. The rapid shifts in the outlook and allegiance of the unionist middle classes that took place in the 1970s soon found ideological expression in the guise of a political enterprise conventionally denoted as “integrationist” but which Bew and Patterson<sup>26</sup> have persuasively designated “minimalist”. Advocated by senior figures within the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and associated most closely with leader James Molyneaux, minimalist integrationism insisted that Northern Ireland should continue to be governed by Westminster, not least because the restoration of a devolved parliament would, under the terms likely to be on offer, scarcely be advantageous to the unionist cause. The minimalist position offered a pragmatic endorsement of direct rule but advocated that the manner in which the province was governed should be brought in line with the standards that prevailed throughout the rest of the UK. According to Molyneaux, the cause of democratic reform would be served best not by radical gestures but by the patient courting of opinion among the British political elite. In his understated and often oblique public comments, the UUP leader seemed to imply that his tireless efforts behind the scenes meant he “had the ear” of influential figures in Westminster and Whitehall. The events at Hillsborough Castle on the afternoon of Friday 15 November 1985 would mercilessly expose that particular assumption to have been an exercise in self-delusion all along.

### **The Anglo-Irish Agreement**

The decade or so that prefaced the Anglo-Irish Agreement witnessed the advance of a profound political apathy among the ranks of the unionist middle classes. As the horrific events of the early 1970s began to recede, the residents of the province’s leafy avenues became increasingly insulated from incidents of political violence.<sup>27</sup> The fiscal benevolence of Westminster, moreover, allowed the professional and business classes in the region to enjoy increasingly comfortable lifestyles. As the political and economic climate apparently shifted in their favour, a corrosive complacency descended upon the more privileged sections of the unionist community.<sup>28</sup> Rather than reflect upon the problematic nature of the political environment they had come to inhabit, the unionist middle classes opted instead to devote their energies to enjoying their newfound prosperity.<sup>29</sup> The signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement would, however, unceremoniously jolt middle-class unionists from their reverie. In the frenetic atmosphere summoned by the Hillsborough Accord, many among the unionist middle classes would begin to reflect more critically on their political environment and, most importantly, would quickly arrive at a clearer understanding of the precarious and contradictory position they had come to occupy since the demise of Stormont.

One of the most dramatic effects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement was to highlight the deeply autocratic nature of direct rule. In affording the Irish government a consultative role in the affairs of Northern Ireland, the British state had alienated the full spectrum of unionist opinion. While unionists would express invariably vehement and occasionally violent opposition to the Hillsborough Accord, they would be unable to alter the course



upon which the Thatcher government had embarked. The advent of the Anglo-Irish Agreement brought into stark relief not only that the power that Westminster had come to exercise over Northern Ireland under direct rule was essentially unaccountable but also that this authority could be used to imperil the Union itself. Central to the significance of the international treaty signed in Hillsborough Castle was that it represented perhaps the first document to encode the formal indifference of the British state to the constitutional status of the six counties. Article 1 (c) of the text, for instance, stated that should the people of Northern Ireland indicate a desire to live in another state, the Westminster government would be entirely agreeable to facilitating them.<sup>30</sup> It is hardly surprising, then, that in the days after the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, figures within the unionist community were moved to describe themselves as living on the “window ledge of the Union”.<sup>31</sup>

The advent of the Hillsborough Accord would bring middle-class unionists to at least one further critical political realisation. In so far as the unionist middle classes had engaged in politics previously it had been to cast votes occasionally for a party – the UUP – that had offered minimalist expression to their latent desire for direct rule to continue indefinitely. The UUP leader James Molyneux had, as we saw earlier, long implied that patient diplomacy had begun to win the battle for hearts and minds among the British political establishment. The agreement signed by Margaret Thatcher and Garrett FitzGerald would, of course, fatally undermine that particular claim. While the political crisis summoned by the Anglo-Irish Agreement appeared to demand new directions for unionism, the leader of the then largest Unionist party chose instead to adhere to type and cling obstinately to the “steady course” that had elevated inertia into something approaching philosophical principle.<sup>32</sup> The trauma of the events at Hillsborough had made many unionists rather more open than before to fresh ideas and initiatives. It soon became painfully apparent, however, that anyone interested in original thinking would have to look beyond the Unionist mainstream.<sup>33</sup> It was this context of intellectual crisis and curiosity that would ensure that some middle-class unionists would for a time come under the influence of a tiny Stalinist splinter of the far Left.

### **The Campaign for Equal Citizenship**

Over the course of the conflict, the British and Irish Communist Organisation (B&ICO) had devised and refined a genuinely distinctive reading of the “Northern Ireland problem”. In a seemingly endless sequence of densely written publications emerging from the B&ICO base in Athol Street in central Belfast, key intellectuals such as Brendan Clifford developed an ideological programme that would in time be termed “electoral integration” or “equal citizenship”. Although advanced with notorious vigour, the case for electoral integration initially made little real impact upon the political culture of Northern Ireland. The signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement would, however, signal a remarkable turn in the political fortunes of the B&ICO.

In the charged atmosphere summoned by the Hillsborough Accord, many within the unionist community were open to new influences in a way that would have been unthinkable before. The activists of the B&ICO wasted no time in seeking to bring the arguments they had developed over the past decade and a half to a wider and more attentive audience. At the mass rally in Belfast convened eight days after the signing of the Hillsborough Accord, activists distributed the first edition of a new occasional journal, *The Equal Citizen*. In addition, when the House of Commons sat three days later to discuss the Agreement, MPs were already in possession of a substantial, newly written publication offering the B&ICO perspective on recent developments.<sup>34</sup> This essay, entitled

“Parliamentary Sovereignty”, was the first in a sequence of influential pamphlets in which the key intellectual Brendan Clifford set out to explain the nature of the crisis and how it might be resolved.<sup>35</sup>

The interpretation that Clifford advanced sought to depict the Anglo-Irish Agreement as merely a symptom of a much deeper malaise.<sup>36</sup> The principal source of all the political difficulties that faced Northern Ireland was, he argued, the exclusion of the region from the party political culture of the UK. After partition, the six counties had been suspended in a form of political quarantine with the result that people living there had been subjected to a profoundly unaccountable form of government. According to Clifford, it is the effective competition between political parties that is the guarantor of genuinely democratic governance. Those parties that secure office cannot under normal circumstances afford to behave in a consistently autocratic fashion. Failure to accommodate the feelings and aspirations of citizens would inevitably ensure a shift in electoral preference that would consign the government to the largely ineffectual status of parliamentary opposition. The problem that Northern Ireland had faced, Clifford contested, was that this “reflex” between government and governed had never existed in the six counties. The exclusion of Northern Irish people from the mainstream British political parties had ensured that voters in the province had been unable to participate in electing the government of the state of which they were nominally citizens. Freed from even the prospect of electoral retribution, the sovereign parliament had been able to govern Northern Ireland in an entirely unaccountable manner.<sup>37</sup>

The particular reading of the crisis initiated by the Hillsborough Accord prompted Brendan Clifford to chart a distinctive political course ahead. If the problems that beset Northern Ireland were to be resolved, Clifford insisted, the region would have to be fully integrated into the party political life of the UK. The advent of “equal citizenship” would sound the death knell of unaccountable government in the region.<sup>38</sup> Rather than being governed as a “colonial condominium” or as “Britain’s Bantustan”,<sup>39</sup> Northern Ireland would be embraced as an equal and integral region of the UK. Once Northern Irish people could join and vote for British parties, they would be in a position to bring about those electoral swings that can make the difference between government and opposition. The executive of the day would no longer be able to overlook the wishes of voters in the six counties as such disregard could lead to ministers being swept out of office. Political initiatives such as the Anglo-Irish Agreement that proved deeply unpopular among the Northern Irish electorate would simply become unthinkable.

The realisation of the “equal citizenship” project would, Brendan Clifford continued, initiate a complete transformation of political life in Northern Ireland. The stunted and sectarian nature of politics in the region was the outcome, Clifford insisted, of its exclusion from the wider and more secular party political culture of the British state.<sup>40</sup> If the Conservative and Labour parties were to run for election in the six counties, there would be an opportunity for Northern Irish people to transcend their existing ethno-religious distinctions and begin to embrace political identities other than those conventionally designated by the terms “unionist” and “nationalist”.<sup>41</sup> Individuals from different confessional backgrounds would begin to realise their shared interests and to collaborate in their pursuit. In time, the ethno-religious disputes that have traditionally consumed the public realm in the six counties would recede and the principal fault line of Northern Irish political life would come to centre on the “real” issues associated with social class.<sup>42</sup>

The bold ideological programme that emerged from the ranks of the B&ICO evidently struck a chord with many of those looking for new directions and disenchanted with the intellectual poverty of the unionist mainstream. In the late 1980s the terms and concerns of



“equal citizenship” came to pervade the political culture of Northern Ireland.<sup>43</sup> The case for electoral integration was advanced primarily by the Campaign for Equal Citizenship for Northern Ireland (CEC), a front organisation formed by the B&ICO in March 1986 and headed by the charismatic but divisive figure of barrister and Unionist politician Robert McCartney.<sup>44</sup> The initial strategy adopted by the CEC entailed seeking to win the principal voice of Ulster Unionism to the cause of electoral integration. As Arthur Aughey<sup>45</sup> noted at the time, there was “always something quixotic” about this particular objective. The electoral integrationist project was, after all, an attempt to create the conditions that would see local parties preoccupied with the traditional concerns of “constitutional issues” replaced by British parties dealing with the rather more modern fare of “real” politics. In seeking to convert the UUP to the principles of “equal citizenship”, the CEC was in effect, therefore, inviting the party to collude in its own dissolution. The inevitable resistance that greeted the case for electoral integration would become all too apparent when the traditional voice of Ulster Unionism held its annual conference on 8 November 1986.<sup>46</sup> The principal controversy that weekend centred upon two motions advocating that the party adopt the principles of “equal citizenship” submitted by Robert McCartney and the North Down association of which he was a member. In a heated session from which the media had been excluded,<sup>47</sup> the leadership brought out a number of influential personalities, including the widely revered figure of Enoch Powell,<sup>48</sup> to ensure the success of two blocking motions insisting that discussion of any new political directions would have to wait until the loathed Anglo-Irish Agreement had been defeated.<sup>49</sup>

Defeat at the UUP annual conference merely seemed to strengthen Robert McCartney’s ambition and resolve. As the profile of the CEC President grew ever higher and his criticisms of mainstream Unionism became ever more caustic, senior figures within the party inevitably decided to move against him. At a disciplinary hearing held on 18 May 1987 the charge was levelled that McCartney had acted in a manner “detrimental” to the interests of the UUP both by inviting electoral competition from other parties and by his very public ridicule of the party leadership. Among the many colourful quotations cited as evidence at the meeting were McCartney’s claim that party policy was being “decided at the urinals of the House of Commons” and his allegation that the UUP, in league with all the other local parties, was content with “Lilliputian sectarian politics where they can crow over their own little dung hills.” On the day following the meeting the inevitable announcement was made to the media that the controversial barrister had been expelled.<sup>50</sup> The decision to expel McCartney had long since appeared a foregone conclusion and evidently did little to diminish his considerable political aspirations. The CEC President announced immediately that he would stand in the forthcoming Westminster elections as an independent “Real Unionist” candidate on an “equal citizenship” platform.<sup>51</sup>

While elections in the predominantly wealthy and overwhelmingly Protestant constituency of North Down have traditionally been rather subdued affairs, the contest held in June 1987 would prove to be anything but. During the campaign there was a series of bitter exchanges between the two principal rivals, Robert McCartney and sitting independent Unionist MP James Kilfedder.<sup>52</sup> As tempers began to fray, the combustible figure of the CEC President was to be heard making claims about the imminent success of his campaign.<sup>53</sup> When the polls closed, however, this confidence would quickly prove to have been ill founded. North Down had seen the third largest swing of the 1987 elections anywhere in the UK but James Kilfedder had still managed to retain his seat, albeit with a vastly reduced majority.<sup>54</sup> While the outcome of the “Real Unionist” campaign would ultimately prove a disappointment, there was much from which the CEC might have chosen to draw comfort. In particular, the contest in North Down had drawn to the standard

of “equal citizenship” a substantial body of activists who transcended political distinctions often deemed insurmountable – staunch Unionists had canvassed with erstwhile Republicans, Stalinists had rubbed shoulders with Thatcherites, Gay Rights activists had found common cause with the more genteel elements of the unionist middle classes. While the diversity that sheltered under its umbrella was often vaunted as the principal attribute of the CEC, it would also prove to be its undoing. In the year that followed the unity and energy of the North Down campaign, the differences always latent within the pressure group would begin to tear it apart.<sup>55</sup>

The principal fault line that opened up within the CEC inevitably mapped the tensions between the two principal centres of power within the organisation, namely the B&ICO on the one hand and Robert McCartney and his supporters on the other. The small Athol Street contingent – now operating as the Ingram Society<sup>56</sup> – contested that McCartney had come to exercise excessive influence and had used this to chart a regressive ideological course for the pressure group.<sup>57</sup> The experience of defeat in North Down drew key figures within the B&ICO to the view that the CEC needed to dramatically alter its course. If the pressure group were to make a genuine impact on the political culture of Northern Ireland, they argued, it would have to abandon the discourse of “Real Unionism” and recast itself solely as an inclusive campaign for “civil rights”. A rally held a few weeks after the disappointment in North Down offered an opportunity for the CEC to chart a rather different course. While the Athol Street group felt that a meeting held in the Ulster Hall on 2 July 1987 to mark the first anniversary of the pressure group should be used to make the case for the British parties organising in Northern Ireland as a civil right, Robert McCartney had other ideas. On the night, McCartney used the platform to denounce the cross-party Unionist Task Force on the grounds that its anticipated recommendation of power-sharing devolution represented a form of “capitulation”.<sup>58</sup> In the eyes of the B&ICO, McCartney had squandered a golden opportunity to move beyond the abiding concerns of local politics and had instead “immersed the CEC in the squabbles of the Unionist Family”.<sup>59</sup>

Those who found themselves on the other side of this increasingly acrimonious dispute would, of course, offer a radically different interpretation.<sup>60</sup> Robert McCartney and his supporters tended to dismiss criticisms of his leadership as the petulant response of the B&ICO to losing control over an organisation they had originally founded.<sup>61</sup> While the origins of the fissures within the pressure group were open to dispute, their impact was rather more clear cut. Meetings of the executive committee became ever more rancorous and the political work of the organisation largely ground to a halt. The divisions within the CEC first came to public attention on 4 March 1988 when the often sympathetic *News Letter* ran a story documenting the tensions simmering within the pressure group.<sup>62</sup> Eight days later, a press release announced that Robert McCartney had resigned as President and Dr Laurence Kennedy had stood down as Chairman. These resignations would prove to be simply tactical manoeuvres. Both McCartney and Kennedy intended to return to their positions once they had been able to sideline their critics. It would soon become apparent that the B&ICO harboured similar ambitions.

The struggle for control of the CEC came to a head at an extraordinary general meeting convened on 18 June 1988. Among the matters before the conference was a motion from the Athol Street grouping demanding that Robert McCartney be censured on the grounds he had “moulded the CEC around his own personality” and that his resignation had damaged the organisation in a manner that needed to be acknowledged. That the motion was easily defeated revealed the balance of forces in the room and this was confirmed when the meeting turned to consider the competitors for the position of President. In a last

ditch attempt to recapture the organisation they had founded, the B&ICO had decided to run Mark Langhammer against Robert McCartney for the leadership of the CEC. When the ballots were counted, it emerged that the former President had been returned by a margin of “almost four to one”.<sup>63</sup> The re-election of McCartney with such a ringing endorsement clearly signalled that he was the ultimate victor in the bitter disputes within the CEC. The B&ICO members present reacted angrily by attempting to “wreck”<sup>64</sup> the meeting before departing to sever all remaining ties to the pressure group and become its most vehement critic.

### **The emergence of the Northern Ireland Conservatives**

While the B&ICO had given the CEC political direction and much of its intellectual ballast, the grouping actually represented only a small proportion of an overall membership estimated at 750 people.<sup>65</sup> The decision of the infamously combative Athol Street sect to depart need not necessarily, therefore, have proved fatal for the pressure group. Indeed, the rapid decline of the CEC as a mass organisation might more accurately be attributed to the activities of another, rather more “respectable”, element within the remarkably broad church of the electoral integrationist movement. Although the demand for equal citizenship resonated with a range of people, its principal audience was evidently among middle-class unionists disaffected by recent shifts in the political climate. The material interests and social conservatism of those drawn to the ideal of electoral integration meant that they were in the main “natural” Tories. In the spring of 1988, an organisation was established under the umbrella of the CEC specifically geared to persuading the Conservatives to extend their operations to Northern Ireland. As the Campaign for Conservative Representation (CCR) gathered momentum, many electoral integrationists began to channel their energies primarily in that direction and allowed their membership of the CEC to lapse. As the decade turned, the CEC, an organisation that had once been able to hold meetings in large venues like the Ulster Hall, found that its membership was dwindling dramatically and took the decision to recast itself as a “think tank”.

The decision of many erstwhile CEC activists to devote their energies to the cause of bringing Conservative politics to Northern Ireland quickly appeared to have been rather astute. The CCR ran a slick and thoughtful campaign that emphasised the solid bourgeois credentials of its members and evidently struck a chord with ordinary Conservatives “across the water”.<sup>66</sup> Within eighteen months, the attempt to persuade the Tories to accept members from Northern Ireland had borne fruit. At the Conservative Party conference in October 1989 a motion to extend organisation to the six counties received an overwhelming endorsement from the rank and file, in a moment haughtily dismissed by one Tory grandee as a “peasant’s [*sic*] revolt”.<sup>67</sup> At its meeting the following month, the National Union overturned a decision taken the previous year and agreed, albeit with some reluctance, to allow the affiliation of Conservative associations established in Northern Ireland. In the aftermath of affiliation, many Ulster Tories seemed to genuinely believe that they were on the verge of breaking the mould of Northern Irish politics.

The emergence of the Northern Ireland Conservatives in the late 1980s appeared to catch observers of local political life off guard. While often dismissed as a mere aberration, the establishment of Conservative associations in certain parts of the province might perhaps be more fruitfully regarded as a logical and perhaps even inevitable political development. The thesis advanced in this essay is that the rise of the Ulster Tories represented an expression of – and an attempt to resolve in political terms – the particular

contradictions of direct rule experienced by elements of the unionist middle classes. The logic of this argument is borne out strongly when we turn to examine two forms of primary data that shed considerable light upon the composition and disposition of the Northern Ireland Conservatives.

From the outset, the socio-economic credentials of the Ulster Tories were quite self-evident. The spatial distribution of constituency organisations, the accents to be heard at public meetings and the occupational backgrounds of the principal party spokespersons all served to underscore that the nascent Conservative associations in the province drew principally on the talents of the professional and business classes. The characterisation of the Northern Ireland Conservatives offered by anecdotal information was confirmed and fleshed out more fully by the information offered by the 1989 and 1990 editions of the *British Social Attitudes Survey*. Between them, these polls offered insights into the backgrounds and outlook of some 274 respondents who claimed to “identify” with the Tories rather than with a local political party.

The data garnered by the *British Social Attitudes Survey* confirmed the common-sense assumption that support for the Conservative Party was to be found among the more affluent sections of Northern Irish society. The Ulster Tories emerged as being distinctly more privileged than those who aligned themselves with one of the provincial political parties. Conservative “identifiers” were, for instance, one and a half times more likely to fall into the highest bracket of income earners (31% versus 20%) and had substantially more chance of owning their home (76% versus 61%). This distinctive socio-economic profile was confirmed in another opinion poll conducted by Ulster Marketing Surveys in January 1990. The company reported that while 16% of middle-class respondents (categories A, B, C1) stated their intention to vote Conservative, this proportion declined to 6% among unskilled manual workers (D, E).<sup>68</sup> The relative affluence of the Ulster Tories might be attributed in part at least to the conduct of social and economic policy in the era of direct rule. The *British Social Attitudes Survey* revealed that almost half of Conservative identifiers were employed in the public sector (46%) and that these respondents were more likely to be employed by the state than people drawn to one of the other political parties (40%). We are faced, then, with a remarkable political irony. Even though the local Conservatives had benefited more than any other constituency from the expansion of the public sector in Northern Ireland, they were nonetheless drawn to a political party that had embarked upon the mission of “rolling back the frontiers of the state”.

The data furnished by the *British Social Attitudes Survey* indicated, therefore, that the Conservative associations that sprang up in parts of Northern Ireland in the late 1980s had drawn principally from the ranks of the professional and business classes. This was scarcely a revelation, of course. After all, the class profile of the Ulster Tories merely echoed that to be found in any other Conservative association in any other region of the UK at the time or indeed since. In the course of interviews I would invite local Conservatives to explore and explain the origins of their relative prosperity. The response was often defensive and occasionally even frosty, with interviewees frequently at pains to establish that their privilege was the result of talent and, above all, hard work. Once the conversation moved beyond the immediately personal and towards the broader macro-economic context, however, many Conservatives exhibited a rather keener sense that their lifestyles might have origins beyond simply their own abilities and industry. When we discussed constitutional preferences, for instance, interviewees were quick to emphasise the benefits that had flowed from the fiscal benevolence of direct rule. It was an article of faith among all of the Conservatives that I spoke to that high levels of public expenditure

afforded Northern Ireland a standard of living much greater than that which would obtain should the Union ever be sundered:

Author: Do you regard Northern Ireland's position as part of the UK as the most beneficial constitutional arrangement?

Interviewee: Yes it is. It is the most beneficial. Our gross expenditure, public expenditure is streets ahead of what it is across the water. The biggest problem is that people tend to read *The Guardian* and they say we spend less on hospitals than they do in the rest of Europe, but they're not talking specifically about Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has got a very beneficial situation as regards public expenditure.

Author: So your reason for supporting the Union would be primarily economic?

Interviewee: Yes. Economics is what makes the world go around. No bucks, no Buck Rogers ...<sup>69</sup>

The individuals who joined the ranks of the Conservative associations that began to appear in Northern Ireland in the late 1980s tended, therefore, to fit a very specific socio-economic profile. The Ulster Tories were typically professionals, senior civil servants and business owners who had come to enjoy a very comfortable standard of living and who had a sense that their privilege was in some sense bound up with the fiscal benevolence of the British state. When the Troubles were at their peak in the 1970s and early 1980s, these individuals had largely disengaged from politics save for casting a vote every now and again. While the Conservatives that I interviewed were invariably people with a longstanding interest in political matters, the majority of them – seventeen out of thirty – had never been actively involved in politics previously. Many of the Ulster Tories had for most of their lives resembled the “coasters” identified in Ulster poet John Hewitt's resonant and venomous denunciation of the political indifference of the unionist middle classes.<sup>70</sup> The event that shook those who would become Conservatives out of their apathy was, of course, the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

### The political trauma of the Anglo-Irish Agreement

It would be difficult to overstate the impact of the Hillsborough Accord on the entire breadth of the unionist community in Northern Ireland. In every single interview I conducted with local Conservatives, the advent of the Agreement was recounted as a moment of trauma and revelation. During a discussion with an academic who belonged to the South Belfast association, the respondent was clearly discomfited by his own reflex of emotion as he recalled the significance of events at Hillsborough:

Author: The Anglo-Irish Agreement seems to have had quite an impact on you. What was its effect exactly?

Interviewee: I know it sounds strange to say this, “devastating” is perhaps an exaggerated word, but really quite a profound impact, in all honesty. People say they can remember where they were when President Kennedy was shot, and I know this all sounds very sentimental, but I can remember the day on which it was signed ... I suppose the most serious part of the shock, and this still remains, is quite simply the sense of being let [down] ... maybe “betrayal” is too strong a word. But that's what it felt like, and that's what it feels like still.

A common thread that ran through interviews with the Northern Ireland Conservatives was that the signing of the Hillsborough Accord represented a moment of personal and political epiphany. One younger member of the North Down association invoked the metaphor of “Plato's cave” and spoke of “emerging into the light”. While unionists were already aware



that they faced political challenges, the Anglo-Irish Agreement brought home more starkly than before just how precarious their position had really become. The atmosphere of crisis in the mid-1980s evidently impressed upon many the need and indeed obligation to become more politically active. While the instinct of middle-class unionists would previously have drawn them towards the UUP, for many that no longer appeared a viable political direction. The traditional voice of unionism had, after all, been severely discredited by the appearance of the Hillsborough Accord:

Interviewee: [The Anglo-Irish Agreement] gave the lie to what Jim Molyneux had been claiming at the time, that he had the ear of Mrs Thatcher, that there was this supposed rapport between the Conservatives and the Unionists ... It made me start to think “well these guys are our political representatives and they can’t put across the case for Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom, no ifs, no buts”. They just didn’t seem to be capable of doing that and I thought it was time we had a completely different direction. It didn’t change what I believe, it just sort of shifted my focus in terms of how I should go about things. And that really the Unionist Party was not the vehicle of change I thought it might be ...

The crisis of mainstream Unionism occasioned by the Hillsborough Accord opened up the political space that, for a time, allowed the ideal of electoral integration to flourish. The appeal of the equal citizenship project derived largely from the perception that it would afford a degree of political influence that the established forces of Unionism so clearly lacked. While those who joined the ranks of the Conservative associations in the late 1980s were motivated by many concerns, the most prominent and recurrent was to secure access to what was the de facto centre of power under direct rule. The Ulster Tories genuinely appeared to believe that operating within the party of government would enable them to have “their voices heard” and ultimately shape the course of official policy:

Interviewee: How we can convince people that if you want to remain British you vote Conservative I’m not sure. I have to work out how you get that point across. There is a conception that the harder line Unionist you vote for – Unionist with a capital U – the more chance you have of remaining British. When in actual fact the only person [*sic*] who can assure you of anything is the party of government. Other people can promise you the sun, moon and stars but don’t have the ability to deliver because they’re not the government and never will be the government in British, Westminster terms.

While the claims made on behalf of electoral integration may well have been overstated to the point of being naive, it remains possible to understand why the project exercised some resonance within a unionist community still reeling from the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The advent of equal citizenship would have ensured that direct rule from Westminster would have remained in place for the foreseeable future. The ideal of electoral integration clearly accorded, therefore, with the material interests of those middle-class unionists who had prospered greatly since the fall of Stormont. Electoral integrationists were concerned, however, not only that direct rule would continue but that it would be rendered democratically accountable as well. The realisation of equal citizenship would, in principle at least, mean that middle-class unionists would continue to enjoy the generosity of the British exchequer but would also be able to exercise a degree of political influence that had evaded the integrationists within mainstream Unionism. The specific promise of electoral integration was, in other words, that it would resolve the gnawing contradiction that defined how the unionist middle classes had experienced direct rule. It is hardly difficult, then, to understand why the enterprise should – for a time at least – have proved so attractive to a certain strand of unionist opinion.



### Cultural assimilation under direct rule

The electoral integrationist project might be said to have chimed with middle-class unionists' experience of direct rule in at least one further, crucial sense. Over the course of the Troubles it became commonplace for commentators to suggest that the unionist community had little knowledge or experience of those with whom they assumed kinship when they chose to call themselves "British".<sup>71</sup> While these dismissive and often derisive readings of unionist identity were always problematic, they would become even more so after the dissolution of the Stormont assembly. One of the greatest ironies of direct rule was that although it was originally intended to maintain Northern Ireland as "a place apart", the era in fact served in some respects to bind the six counties more closely to the rest of the UK than ever before.<sup>72</sup> The social and economic policies implemented by successive direct-rule administrations unleashed centripetal forces that drew the professional and business classes in particular more fully into British public life.<sup>73</sup> It was in large measure this experience of cultural assimilation that encouraged middle-class unionists to become involved in the campaign to bring Conservative politics to Northern Ireland.

In her influential typology of unionist ideology, Jennifer Todd<sup>74</sup> identified a central strand which she designated "Ulster British". Broadly secular and liberal in nature, this version of unionism articulated a sense of connection with the wider environs of the UK and centred upon the rituals and practices of the British state. The characteristics that Todd ascribed to the Ulster British were well represented in the cultural and political disposition of the Northern Ireland Conservatives. Those middle-class unionists who joined the ranks of the Ulster Tories regarded themselves as part of a broadly secular community that transcended the narrow ground of the six counties and included the entire UK. This burgeoning sense of Britishness<sup>75</sup> arose not merely out of an abstract definition of self but also out of the lived experience of everyday life. Over the period of direct rule, those people who considered themselves Conservatives had come to identify more closely with British society because they had gained much more personal experience of it. This trend was especially marked in the realm of people's working lives. The absolute centrality of the British state in the Northern Irish economy during direct rule ensured that professionals and business owners were increasingly required to make the journey "across the water" as a matter of routine:

Author: What would you say to the criticism that Northern Irish people don't really know British society? Do you have much experience of Britain?

Interviewee: Well, I was there this week. I won't be there next week. I'll be there the week after, and the week after and the week after that. I'll miss a week and then I'm there again. So I'm there most weeks on business.

The burgeoning sense of connection with British society fostered in the world of work was augmented by trends in higher education outlined above. Many of the Conservatives I interviewed had children who were attending, or had attended, university in other regions of the UK. Most of those who went to British universities followed the established pattern and never returned to Northern Ireland.<sup>76</sup> As the trend towards studying "across the water" gathered pace in the 1980s, many middle-class unionists came to acquire strong personal bonds with other regions of the UK they might not otherwise have known much about:

Author: It is often said that unionists who call themselves British don't really understand the British way of life. How would you respond to that sort of criticism?

Interviewee: In all honesty, I think that could have been cast up to people twenty years ago. It could have been used for the vast majority of the population who in all honesty never travelled outside the confines of Northern Ireland. Their holidays were either in Portrush or in Bangor. I think now with all the changes that have happened ... In my case – when you ask do I understand the British way of life – probably now because of travel I'm over there on business and my wife's over there on business. My three children are living over in England at the minute. My son is a solicitor in York and he's been living in England since he graduated. My daughter is in London where she graduated. And I now have a second daughter at Bath University doing an MSc in computers. So with my connections, the connections through my business of being an estate agent where I go across frequently to England for meetings, because I'm the Northern Ireland representative for the association I'm a member of. And that's what has happened over the past twenty years.

The growing sense of cultural association with the “mainland” among middle-class unionists was encouraged further by the increasingly pervasive presence of the British media in Northern Ireland. It transpired that the Ulster Tories were especially likely to use “national” rather local media sources. Some 86% of Conservatives featured in the *British Social Attitudes Survey* opted for a British daily newspaper and during interviews people would frequently attest to the importance of the UK media in their cultural lives:

Interviewee: I suppose I feel more culturally comfortable within the United Kingdom ... One of the things I do when I get up every day, I buy *The Times* and I listen to *Radio Four*. I'm just somebody who can't help but be culturally British.

The ubiquity of the British media was essential in fostering among those who joined Conservative associations in Northern Ireland a sense that they really belonged to the wider political culture of the UK. In the course of interviews, the Ulster Tories would display a ready knowledge of the figures and issues dominating British politics and seemed much more drawn to that realm than the local political scene.

The unintended effect of direct rule was, therefore, to draw the unionist middle classes in particular ever more fully into the broader cultural and political life of the UK. When a senior civil servant boarded the early morning “shuttle” to London for a meeting with colleagues or a parent spent a few days in Edinburgh to see their daughter graduate or a follower of current affairs got up to date with the latest drama at Westminster in the pages of *The Times*, that sense of association with British society was affirmed a little more. Over time, the everyday experiences of middle-class unionists ensured that the UK came to represent a community that was not only “imagined” but also very real in their everyday lives. That sense of association played a crucial role in the genesis of the Northern Ireland Conservatives. The Ulster Tories wished to join a community of British Conservatives because that was, in the main, precisely what they considered themselves to be.

## Conclusion

When we examine more closely the various conditions that enabled it, the emergence of the Northern Ireland Conservatives in the late 1980s begins, therefore, to appear a rather more likely political development than commentators have tended to allow. The appearance of Conservative associations in the region might be considered to narrate rather well the complex ways in which the interests and experiences of the unionist middle classes were recast in the decade and a half after the demise of Stormont. The strategy of electoral integration not only chimed with middle-class unionists' material interests and cultural proclivities but also seemed to offer the opportunity of real influence in what was an increasingly precarious political environment. It is hardly surprising, then, that the more affluent within the unionist community should have been drawn, in particular, to the

attempt to bring British Conservatism to Northern Ireland. While the complex sequence of processes initiated under direct rule might well have been necessary to allow the emergence of the Ulster Tories as an influential political force, it would quickly prove to have not been sufficient. Opinion polls often suggested that the Northern Ireland Conservatives were on the verge of a political breakthrough, but that apparent potential would never be translated into electoral success. In the second of this pair of articles – to be published in a future issue of *Irish Studies Review* – I will turn to examine how the unanticipated rise of the Ulster Tories in the late 1980s would give way in the early 1990s to their subsequent swift and ignominious decline.

### Acknowledgements

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### Notes

1. [Cunningham](#), "Conservative Dissidents and the Irish Question," 35.
2. Edward Pearce, "Not Everyone was Cheering," *Fortnight*, no. 278, November 1989, 8.
3. The Labour Representation Committee was formed in the summer of 1977 in the wake of the abortive "Paisley" strike. In the following year, the pressure group was renamed the Campaign for Labour Representation. Both bodies were among the seemingly endless stream of front organisations established by the [British and Irish Communist Organisation \(B&ICO\)](#), a grouping that plays a prominent part in the story that follows. See *Workers' Weekly* 150, July 9, 1977, 3–4; B&ICO, *Labour in Ulster*.
4. *The Northern Star* 2, no. 46, November 18, 1989, 1.
5. It might be useful here to offer a brief note on the terminology used in the essay. Throughout the article a distinction is made between "unionism" and "Unionism". While the former designates simply a broad political commitment to the maintenance of the Union, the latter denotes a more exclusive ethnonational identity. The two orientations overlap to a large extent but are not entirely coterminous. Hence, someone from a nationalist background who happens to believe in the Union might be termed a "unionist" but would not be considered a "Unionist". The distinction between "unionism" and "Unionism" was one routinely employed by the Conservatives I interviewed. Most were at pains to distinguish themselves from the sectarianism and parochialism of local parties whom they considered to be "Unionist with a capital U".
6. [Stringer and Robinson](#), *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland*, 192.
7. Although originally conceived as a temporary expedient when introduced in March 1972, "direct rule" would remain the mode of government in Northern Ireland for most of the following thirty-five years, interrupted temporarily on various occasions by ill-starred attempts at devolution of power. The devolved arrangements instituted in 2007 appear relatively stable, however, and a return to "direct rule" in the future would seem unlikely.
8. [Ruane and Todd](#), *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 224–6.
9. [O'Leary and Arthur](#), "Northern Ireland as a Site," 41.
10. [Birrell](#), *Direct Rule and the Governance of Northern Ireland*, 40–4.
11. [Farrington and Walker](#), "Ideological Content and Institutional Frameworks."
12. [Arthur](#), "The Anglo-Irish Joint Declaration"; Dixon, *Northern Ireland*, 292–4; [Ryan](#), *War and Peace in Ireland*, 148–9.
13. [Gaffikin and Morrissey](#), *Northern Ireland*, 80.
14. [Birrell](#), *Direct Rule and the Governance of Northern Ireland*, 155.
15. [Byrne](#), *Economic Assistance and Conflict Transformation*, 63–4.
16. Suzanne Breen, "Middle Classes Find a Silver Lining," *Red Pepper* 5, October 5, 1995, 26–7.
17. [Gudgin and Roper](#), *The Northern Ireland Economy*, 20.
18. [McGarry and O'Leary](#), *Explaining Northern Ireland*, 295–6; [Cebulla and Smyth](#), "Industrial Collapse," 81–93.
19. [Todd](#), "Two Traditions in Unionist Political Culture," 15.

20. Northern Ireland Tourist Board.
21. Department of Education, Northern Ireland.
22. Rose, *Governing without Consensus*, 490.
23. Northern Ireland Readership Survey, Belfast: Belfast Telegraph, 1992.
24. Rose, "Is the UK a State?," 100–36.
25. It might be said, of course, that the processes under discussion here also impacted on middle-class *nationalists* in various ways. While significant, the scale and nature of these effects are beyond the scope of this particular essay.
26. Paul Bew and Henry Patterson, "Unionism: Jim Leads On," *Fortnight*, no. 256, November 1987, 11–12.
27. Farrington, "Unionism and the Peace Process," 285.
28. Pollak, *A Citizens' Enquiry*.
29. McKay, *Northern Protestants*, 37, 258.
30. Aughey, *Under Siege*, 55.
31. Farrington, *Ulster Unionism*, 57.
32. O'Malley, *Northern Ireland*, 37.
33. Cochrane, *Unionist Politics*; Porter, *Rethinking Unionism*, 6–11.
34. *The Equal Citizen* 8, September–October 1986, 3.
35. Clifford, *Parliamentary Sovereignty and Northern Ireland; Parliamentary Despotism; Government without Opposition*.
36. *The Equal Citizen* 5, March–April 1986, 1.
37. Ibid.
38. Davidson Clifford, *Electoral Integration*.
39. *The Equal Citizen* 9, January 1987, 4.
40. Clifford, *The Road to Nowhere*, 1–3.
41. *A Belfast Magazine*, April–May 1988, 6.
42. Clifford, *Parliamentary Sovereignty*, 13.
43. O'Dowd, "New Unionism," 73; "Constituting Division," 117.
44. *News Letter*, "Pact 'Symptom of Political Malaise,'" March 31, 1986, 8; Cochrane, *Unionist Politics*, 101; Farrington, "Ulster Unionism and the Irish Historiography Debate," 255.
45. Aughey, *Under Siege*, 162.
46. Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party*, 238–9.
47. *News Letter*, "Unionist Gag Row," November 8, 1986, 1–2.
48. Corthorn, "Enoch Powell, Ulster Unionism, and the British Nation."
49. *News Letter*, "Molyneaux Demands Unity in Party Policy Battle," November 10, 1986, 12–13.
50. *News Letter*, "Victory Pledge," May 20, 1987, 1–2.
51. *News Letter*, "McCartney Launches into Campaign Attack," May 19, 1987, 9; *Belfast Telegraph*, "No New Party: QC," May 20, 1987, 1, 3.
52. *News Letter*, "Kilfedder Hits Out over 'Nazi Smear Campaign,'" June 6, 1987, 7; *County Down Spectator*, "Allegations Abound in Election Race," June 4, 1987, 1.
53. *News Letter*, "Triangular Battle for a Square Deal," June 6, 1987, 9.
54. Aughey, *Under Siege*, 164. Kilfedder's majority in 1987 was 3953. In 1983, the only previous Westminster election in which McCartney had stood against him, the distance between the two candidates was 14,600 votes.
55. Farrington, *Ulster Unionism*, 64.
56. *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 675, March 19, 1988, 2–3.
57. *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 677, April 2, 1988, 3.
58. *News Letter*, "Secret Deal Claims Made by McCartney," July 3, 1987, 9; *Belfast Telegraph*, "Unionist Deal Claim is Denied," July 3, 1987, 4.
59. *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 675, March 19, 1988, 2.
60. Wilson, "Sect behind CEC Split," *Fortnight*, no. 261, April 1988, 4.
61. *News Letter*, "Campaign Split over McCartney 'Blacklist,'" March 4, 1987, 10.
62. Ibid.
63. *News Letter*, "Setback for Equality Group," June 20, 1987, 12.
64. This was the term used by the academic economist Dr Boyd Black – a B&ICO member from 1972 to 1988 – in an interview with the author.
65. This membership estimate appeared in the minutes of a CEC "steering committee" meeting held on October 26, 1987.

66. *The Northern Star*, 1, no. 18, 5 November, 1988.
67. O'Leary, "The Conservative Stewardship of Northern Ireland," 666.
68. Ulster Marketing Surveys, *Northern Ireland Opinion Poll* (Belfast: UMS, January 1990).
69. This peculiar materialist aphorism was one that I had never heard previously at the time. It presumably has its origins in the USA and appears, for instance, in the classic 1970s conspiracy thriller *The Conversation*.
70. Hewitt, *Collected Poems*.
71. Bell, *The Protestants of Ulster*.
72. Farrington and Walker, "Ideological Content and Institutional Frameworks."
73. Coulter, *Contemporary Northern Irish Society*, 17–19.
74. Todd, "Two Traditions in Unionist Political Culture."
75. Ruane and Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland*, 59.
76. McHardy, "Young, Gifted and on a Boat Out of Ulster," *Times Higher Education*, December 10, 1999.

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