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**'They do not become Good Scotsmen':  
A Political History of the anti-Irish campaign in Scotland  
1919-1939**

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**Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
University of Edinburgh  
2013**

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the Scottish Presbyterian Churches anti-Irish campaign in the inter-war period with particular emphasis on the governmental response. It can, and has been, argued that the Church campaign was driven more by sectarian sentiment than by any other motive, however, the Church made a determined attempt to make their case on racial grounds. Discredited as those theories now are this thesis will carefully examine intellectual basis of the Church's case. It has not thus far been considered how much the Church's arguments were influenced by academic opinion in the United States and by the American experience of immigration restriction. It has also been argued that politically the campaign was a failure as no measures to restrict Irish immigration were ever imposed. Equally, it has been held that politicians of all parties were either hostile or indifferent to the Church campaign. It will be demonstrated here that this was far from the case and that the Church had its supporters on all sides of the political divide and that at various times the issue was seriously considered by Governments whether Unionist, Labour or National and that arguments for restriction did not emanate solely from the Scottish Churches or indeed solely from Scotland.

### **Declaration of own work**

I declare that this PhD thesis entitled 'They do not become Good Scotsman': A Political History of the anti-Irish campaign in Scotland 1919-1939 is entirely my own work. Chapter five 'The Civil Magistrate' has been published in amended form in the Innes Review 63, 1, Spring 2012. Some of the material in chapter seven has appeared in Scottish Local History 83 Summer 2012 under the title 'A Very Edinburgh Riot.'

David Lloyd Ritchie

0458079

## **Dedication**

*For my mother, June Ritchie, who probably never wants to hear the word thesis again but without whose unvarying support and encouragement this would never have been written.*

## **Acknowledgements**

A great many people have assisted in the writing of this thesis. I have been exceptionally fortunate in my supervisors, Professors Tom Devine and Ewen Cameron, whose advice and support have been invaluable. Their good humour, patience and wise and original suggestions were of particular help, especially at the moments when I had, frequently, run out of those particular qualities. I must also record a special thank you to Anne Brockington of the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies who has come to my, and many others, administrative rescue on more occasions than I can remember.

I would also like to thank Dr Michael Rosie of the Sociology Department of the University of Edinburgh for his insights into John Cormack and for the many entertaining discussions on that and other subjects. Dr Mairtin O’Caithin of Queens University Belfast for first pointing me in the direction of the Irish Disturbances files in the National Archives of Scotland which sparked my original interest in this subject and Dr Colin Barr of Ave Maria University, Naples, Florida for his help on the career of Cardinal Cullen. I am also grateful to the staff of the National Records of Scotland, particularly Duncan Clark, for their assistance.

The financial assistance of the Justin Arbuthnott British Irish Fund and the James MacMillan Scholarship made this research possible. I would also like to thank the postgraduate community and all staff, past and present, of the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, and particularly my colleagues in the Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies. Individually and collectively they have made the past three years a happy and rewarding experience.

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## Introduction

In the last twenty years, partly as a result of constitutional change and partly because ‘sectarianism’ in Scotland has occasionally caught the media and political, if not necessarily the public, imagination there has been an increased interest on Scotland’s history of religious controversy. It remains an emotive issue for many and there are few aspects of recent Scottish history that attract such a rich amount of mythology. James MacMillan’s controversial lecture at the Edinburgh Festival in 1999, ‘Scotland’s Shame,’<sup>1</sup> in which he argued that Scotland was an inherently bigoted and anti-Catholic country, caused considerable comment at the time, not least amongst historians. It prompted a volume of essays edited by Tom Devine *Scotland’s Shame? Bigotry and sectarianism in modern Scotland* in 2000. This collection, while emotive and even polemical in some of the contributions, either for or against MacMillan’s argument, is an invaluable guide to the thinking behind some of the current scholarship on the period. It does also raise one other and possibly controversial point in itself but one that should not, in that fine and apposite Victorian phrase, be burked, the similarity in background and often geographical origin of many, although certainly not all, of the contributors. Tom Gallagher in his preface to *Edinburgh Divided* makes the point: ‘I grew up a Catholic in a working class area of Glasgow, which some readers may consider a double disqualification for writing such a book about Edinburgh.’<sup>2</sup> It is fair to say that there has generally been something of a West of Scotland perspective on the subject. It is perfectly understandable that scholars with a personal experience should be particularly drawn to the field but perhaps that has resulted in one particular approach becoming the dominant narrative for the period. In the case of the Presbyterian Churches’ anti-Irish campaign between the wars there has been a certain unanimity about the nature, conduct and response to that campaign. The purpose of this thesis is to examine whether there is another narrative and approach, one that will hopefully complement previous scholarship and at the same time provide a fresh perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> For the full text of the lecture see T. M. Devine(ed.), *Scotland’s Shame: bigotry and sectarianism in modern Scotland*, (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 2000), pp13-25.

<sup>2</sup> T. Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided John Cormack and No Popery in the 1930s*, (Edinburgh, Polygon, 1987), p5.

In 1985 Steve Bruce published *No Pope of Rome: Anti-Catholicism in Modern Scotland* with the intention of filling ‘an embarrassingly large gap in the literature on Scotland and Protestantism.’<sup>3</sup> Certainly Scottish historiography on the subject prior to the publication of this book, with the exception of James Handley’s *The Irish in Modern Scotland*<sup>4</sup> was somewhat thin, particularly on the inter-war period. Since then many scholars have sought to fill this particular gap and the body of work devoted to the subject is now substantial. Any scholar of the period must take as their starting point the pioneering works of Bruce, Tom Gallagher’s *Glasgow the Uneasy Peace: religious tension in modern Scotland*<sup>5</sup> and *Edinburgh Divided: John Cormack and No Popery in the 1930s*<sup>6</sup>, Callum Brown’s *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*<sup>7</sup> and Stewart J. Brown’s seminal article in the *Innes Review* “‘Outside the Covenant’: the Scottish Presbyterian Churches and Irish Immigration, 1922-1938’.<sup>8</sup> All these works are products of the 1980s and early 1990s and, in the intervening period a considerable body of scholarship has followed. As Michael Rosie has it: ‘These authors are to be commended for their pioneering work but like all pioneers they could only sketch the outlines and contours of the phenomena they were explaining. And like all pioneers they need to be followed by others filling in the gaps and redrawing the contours.’<sup>9</sup> The main gaps and contours to be filled in the following pages will be the political ones. It is not proposed to consider this period as a traditional orange versus green controversy. This thesis will concentrate largely on the anti-Irish campaign as a discussion between its proponents and those it sought to convince. Stewart J. Brown had a similar focus in his 1991 essay but the aim here is to explore the issue from the governmental rather than the Church side.<sup>10</sup>

The arguments the Churches made for the restriction of Irish immigration were largely those of an elite for an elite. Dr John White’s interests in pseudo-scientific race theory and eugenics were not, by and large, the interests of the working man or woman. Equally, prior to the Great War the middle classes in Scotland, either within or without the Church, had shown little inclination to involve themselves in sectarian controversies other than for the Unionists

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<sup>3</sup> S. Bruce, *No Pope of Rome: Anti-Catholicism in Modern Scotland*, (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1985), p1.

<sup>4</sup> J.E. Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland*, (Cork University Press, 1947).

<sup>5</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow the Uneasy Peace: Religious tension in modern Scotland*, (Manchester University Press, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> T. Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided: John Cormack and No Popery in the 1930s*, (Polygon, Edinburgh, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> C.G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*, (Methuen, London, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> S.J. Brown, “‘Outside the Covenant’: The Scottish Presbyterian Churches and Irish Immigration, 1922-1938, *Innes Review* 42;1 (1991) .

<sup>9</sup> M. Rosie, Protestant Action and the Edinburgh Irish, in M.J. Mitchell (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* (John Donald, Edinburgh 2008), p148.

<sup>10</sup> S. J. Brown, *Innes Review* 42;1,(1991), pp19-45.

to consider the Orange Order as a useful repository of working class votes or, in the case of the Liberals, to rely on those Home Rule supporting Catholic Irish who actually had the vote. In fact, as Callum Brown points out, there was something of a suburbanisation of the Churches in the nineteenth century with the growth of middle classes.<sup>11</sup> Why then should it have been the case that presence of the Irish in Scotland suddenly emerged as matter of national survival, (if the Church and others were to be believed), for the Scottish bourgeoisie?

As Scotland emerged from the Great War traumatised by its battle casualties and ill-equipped for an economic crisis, its certainties of moral, intellectual and religious superiority challenged, it turned anxiously in upon itself. There can be few examples amongst the victorious powers of that conflict where a sense of defeatism set in so rapidly amongst its middle and upper classes as they surveyed their country. Many of the fundamental convictions that had underpinned pre-war Scotland seemed to be disappearing. As a partner in the project of Empire, Scotland's voice appeared to have been marginalised if not ignored, her loyalty and sacrifice apparently given scant regard in relation to the disloyal and rebellious Irish; her industries, converted wholeheartedly to the war effort, given little help to adjust to the post war conditions; her working class, seemingly unruly, disaffected and inclined to Bolshevism; her politics changed out of recognition with the collapse of Liberalism and the rise of Labour, and, lastly, her religion threatened by a resurgent Catholicism, a product of Irish immigration, and the apparent indifference of its own people, a product of the war. As Callum Brown has shown:

By the end of the war, the social Gospel of Christian Socialism which had brought a consensual approach to social politics in the 1890s and 1900s and which had brought church and Labour close together in the pursuit of a fairer society was in tatters. Not only had the advent of rent strikes and "Red Clydeside" produced a politicisation of social improvement which alienated Church leaders, but the churches themselves took a surge to the political right...The First World War heralded a profoundly confrontational era for inter-war Scottish religion, characterised by classism and eugenics, and incorporating an hostility to the Labour movement and Irish Catholics.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> C.G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*, pp. 167-208.

<sup>12</sup> C.G. Brown, *Piety, Gender and War, Scotland in the 1910s* in C. MacDonald and E. McFarland (eds.) *Scotland and the Great War*, (Tuckwell Press, East Linton, 1999), pp. 174-5.

The 'Grand Peur' of the Scottish middle class was reflected in the Protestant panic of the Scottish churches. The Church of Scotland and the United Free Church filled with Jeremiahs pronouncing the impending doom of the land of Knox. Scotland appeared to some to be threatened on all sides, from prolific aliens within, to alien ideologies and religions from without. The idea took hold of Scotland as a dead or dying country, reinforced by writers like George Malcolm Thomson in *Caledonia or the Future of the Scots*<sup>13</sup> which provided a dystopian vision of a future Scotland in which it had become an Irish colony and the original inhabitants a minority in their own country: 'The first fact about the Scot is that he is a man eclipsed. The Scots are a dying people. They are being replaced in their own country by a people alien in race, temperament and religion.'<sup>14</sup> Scotland was neither dead nor dying but in an almost indefinable way it felt defeated. Such views were taken seriously by many in Scottish society and it will be the purpose here to show how that sense of defeat came to be directed against the Catholic Irish.

The experience of Scotland in the 1920s and 1930s has been described as a sectarian crisis and as a crisis of confidence. The historiography in religious terms has tended to concentrate on the rise of militant Protestantism, particularly in the work of scholars like Handley, Gallagher and Walker. The Church of Scotland's anti-Irish campaign of the inter-war period has been considered as part of a long standing Scottish tradition of 'No Popery' and seen in the tradition of Jacob Primmer in the nineteenth century and the later demagoguery of the Scottish Protestant League and Protestant Action led by Alexander Ratcliffe and John Cormack respectively. However, as Bruce has suggested, the idea of the prevalence of Scottish anti-Catholicism, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, can be and has on occasion been overstated: 'in some places there was some sympathy for aggressive anti-Catholicism but local preferences were invariably over-ruled by cosmopolitan elites who regarded social order as more important than local values.'<sup>15</sup> It will be argued that to regard the anti-Irish campaign as simply a manifestation of 'No Popery' is to miss several fundamental points about post-war Scotland. For example, the impact of the Irish War of Independence on Scotland has not so far been assessed. The contemporary intelligence and police reports gave credence to the idea that there was an armed Sinn Fein presence of twenty thousand men in the West of Scotland and that the IRA were only waiting their opportunity to

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<sup>13</sup> G.M. Thomson, *Caledonia or the future of the Scots*, (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, London, 1927).

<sup>14</sup> G.M. Thomson, Caledonia in R. Finlay, *Nationalism, Race, Religion and the Irish Question in Inter War Scotland* *Innes Review*, 42;1 (1991) p53.

<sup>15</sup> S Bruce, T Glendinning, Iain Patterson, Michael Rosie, *Sectarianism in Scotland* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p24.

launch this 'army' against targets in Scotland. Groundless though those fears were in reality, it will be shown that the psychological effect of the Irish War impacted far more on Scotland than it did on the rest of the United Kingdom and consequently the perception of the Irish was radically altered.

It should be noted that before the Great War the majority of Irish Catholics were firmly rooted to the bottom of the economic pile. As Tom Gallagher puts it:

In Glasgow the Irish would dominate the unskilled labour market for generations, finding work...as casual construction labourers, coal heavers and as sweated labour in textiles....They were an indispensable mobile workforce whose contribution to the 'Second City of the Empire' went unappreciated by contemporary chroniclers.<sup>16</sup>

It is probably not too much of an exaggeration to describe the Irish Catholics in Scotland before 1918 as a coolie class although, as Bernard Aspinwall has pointed out, there were more instances of upward mobility than have been appreciated and 'that far too many myths and ideological assumptions bedazzle writers on the Catholic Irish in Scotland.'<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, it is also true that the vast majority of the men were either in unskilled or semi-skilled work and the women in domestic service or factory employment. Derided and despised by the middle-class and treated with resentment and suspicion, they were still not a political or social threat. The restricted franchise before the 1918 Reform Act ensured that a sizeable proportion of their number did not have the vote and for those that did the Irish Home Rule issue could generally ensure their loyalty to the Liberal party. In any case the Labour party with certain significant exceptions was still in pursuit of the votes of the respectable working class. In 1909 the Majority and Minority reports of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 'the latter drafted by Sidney and Beatrice Webb and signed by George Lansbury were as one in their support for the forcible segregation of those inefficient parasitical elements, the so called residuum who were deemed incapable of improvement.'<sup>18</sup> In 1914 you could not be more a member of the 'residuum' than an Irish Catholic in Glasgow. In 1914 the Irish could be safely seen as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Yet

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<sup>16</sup> T. Gallagher, *The Catholic Irish In Scotland*, in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scotland in Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar*, University of Strathclyde 1989 – 1990, (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1991), p21.

<sup>17</sup> B. Aspinwall, *The Catholic Irish and Wealth in Glasgow in Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, p91.

<sup>18</sup> J. J. Smyth, *Labour in Glasgow 1896 -1936: Socialism, Suffrage, Sectarianism*, (Tuckwell, East Linton, 2000), p26.

by 1924 John Wheatley would be one of the most effective Cabinet ministers in the first Labour government, an Irish Free State had been created in twenty-six counties of Ireland and the 1918 Education Act in Scotland had ensured a place for state funded Catholic education that was in advance of any other part of the United Kingdom. The Catholic Irish had lived in Scotland in considerable numbers since the 1840s but they *arrived* in the 1920s. Ironically this arrival coincided with the very moment at which they were ceasing to be 'Irish'.

It was this new awareness of the Irish that prompted and fuelled the Church's anti-Irish campaign. 'No Popery' was an element, and in the 1930s an increasingly important one, but the reasons for the attack were more complex than simple religious bigotry. The Churches were not engaging in a proletarian crusade, but a bid for moral leadership backed up by legislative sanction. The arguments employed, while discredited and distasteful by present standards, were at the forefront of intellectual discourse at the time. Race theory and Social Darwinism, while familiar concepts in the Nineteenth century, were reaching their popularity in debates over eugenics and 'Race Suicide' in the 1920s. The Church of Scotland would attempt to conduct its case as a racial rather than a religious issue. The work that has been done on the Church of Scotland campaign, most notably by Stewart Brown, has demonstrated that the aim of the Church was to place itself at the head of a nativist movement that would return the Kirk to its position of pre-eminence in Scottish society.<sup>19</sup> At its root was the Presbyterian concept of 'Twa kingdoms', the idea that the nation consisted of two kingdoms, Christ's and the King's, and that the state or 'civil magistrate' had a duty to be guided by the Church.

It will also be argued here that the Church campaign lasted longer than has been previously considered and ended more suddenly and dramatically. It will be demonstrated that between the General Assemblies of 1935 and 1936 a major change of heart took place and the reasons and personalities behind this change will be examined. Stewart Brown has argued that the reasons for the end of the campaign were a steady waning of interest in the Church and the rising concerns at developments across the Rhine.<sup>20</sup> This was undoubtedly a major factor, but at the General Assembly of 1935, when the Church Interests Committee was arguably at its most influential, the incoming Moderator was Dr Marshall Lang, brother to Cosmo Lang Archbishop of Canterbury, who would argue for a more ecumenical approach. The realities within the Church of Scotland by this time were as complex as anywhere else.

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<sup>19</sup> S.J. Brown, 'Outside the Covenant': Scottish Presbyterian Churches and Irish Immigration 1922-38. *Innes Review* vol 22;1,(1991), p20.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid* p39

The Government response, as will be shown here, differed in Scotland from that of the United Kingdom. What has generally been accepted is that the Church case fell on the 'Imperial' issue of the position of citizens of the Irish Free State as British subjects. What has not been considered to the same extent is how successful the Kirk was in winning influential adherents to its cause within the political elites of all parties and how close they came in Scotland to successfully persuading successive Governments of their case. Tom Devine, along with every almost every other scholar of the period has stated that 'Neither the Conservative nor Labour party was prepared to introduce the legislation for which the General Assemblies...pressed so enthusiastically year after year.'<sup>21</sup> While this is substantially correct it does not wholly reflect the actual position in Government at the time. The discussions that took place within the Scottish Office and with United Kingdom departments, as shown in the files, were considerably more complex than the idea of a flat refusal would suggest. To some Scots the Irish War of Independence and the creation of the Free State effectively made the Irish foreigners. To the British, Ireland was still firmly within the Empire and citizens of the Free State were British subjects. The latter interpretation prevailed but it will be demonstrated that this was not without considerable resistance from the Scottish Office.

Lastly there is the response of the forgotten people of the controversy, the Catholic Irish themselves. This is still an under-researched area very probably because the archives of the Catholic Church in Scotland contain certain surprising lacunae for the 1920s. For example, in the minutes of the meetings of the Catholic hierarchy throughout the 1920s there is no reference to the Presbyterian campaign, nor in the archives Archdiocese in Glasgow, does there appear to be any correspondence on the issue. This appears at first sight to be rather baffling but it will be seen that the Church did respond to the attacks on the Irish but that the concerns of the Scottish hierarchy were not necessarily those of the Irish Catholic community and that the chief spokesman for that community, Charles Diamond, was in many ways a hindrance to Irish integration in Scotland. It will be considered whether the Scottish Catholic hierarchy's problematic relationship with Irish clergy may not have inclined them to rise to the defence of the Scoto-Irish with any great enthusiasm. Colin Barr's work on Irish 'ecclesiastical imperialism' in the empire sheds some interesting observations on this issue.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1707-2007*, (Penguin, London, 2006), p384.

<sup>22</sup> C. Barr, *Imperium in Imperio: Irish Episcopal Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* in *English Historical Review* 123; 502, (2008).

The inter-war period in Scottish history is one of considerable complexity. Bernard Aspinwall in *Scotland's Shame* repeatedly made the point that 'Reality is complex.' This may be something of a truism but nonetheless valid for that. It also has to be pointed out that here one is dealing with more than one reality. There was the 'reality' of the police and intelligence services view of the IRA threat and the reality of that threat. There was the Church 'reality' of an Irish invasion and the reality of that invasion. It raises an interesting question as to the correct methodological approach to all these realities. As this period is receding, but not entirely gone, from living memory there is limited value in using oral history which on this subject tends to be clouded with mythologies on all sides. It would also be perfectly possible to take a Marxist perspective and consider this as an economic issue. One could equally apply any number of economic, sociological or historical theories to the problem. In the 1990s there emerged a theory, which enjoyed a considerable vogue amongst American scholars, that the Irish, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century occupied an indeterminate space in which they were not quite 'white'. David Roediger first argued the thesis in the *Wages of Whiteness*<sup>23</sup> followed up by Noel Ignatiev's, *How the Irish became White*<sup>24</sup>. Essentially, the Irish, and particularly the emigrant Irish competed for the lowest rungs of employment and were considered by the ruling elites to be racially inferior to the highest or 'Anglo-Saxon type'. As much of what follows in this thesis will deal with race theory as it was understood in the 1920s and with self-perceptions of racial identity, both that of the Church and of some, at least, of the emigrant Irish community a brief mention of this particular theory is necessary. It has to be said at the outset that the 'Whiteness' argument does have its attractions particularly when considering the Church case. As it will be discussed further on this was a racial campaign and, as is argued elsewhere in this thesis, the Irish prior to the outbreak of the Great War were considered something of a 'coolie class' largely, but not entirely, occupying the lowest economic rung. Considering that the Kirk would spend a great deal of time on pseudo-scientific, eugenicist race theory, largely, as will be shown, derived from the United States it has a double plausibility.

There are, however, problems with this analysis in a Scottish and indeed wider context. As Eris Arnesen argued in 2002, in the case of American historians of immigration 'their reluctance to engage with the arguments of the whiteness historians has permitted an unfortunate "jargon creep" in scholarly discussions about race...It is not uncommon to

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<sup>23</sup> D.R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, (Verso, New York, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> N. Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White*, (Routledge, London 1995).

stumble upon the phrase “how the Irish became white” and the assertions of Irish non whiteness in writings by scholars of a “progressive” orientation who are not specialists in immigration history.<sup>25</sup> In the past decade the criticism of immigration historians is perhaps less valid than it was, although the point about ‘jargon creep’ and the whiteness, or otherwise of the Irish immigrant is still frequently revived. What is of more concern here is Arnesen’s later point in the same article:

After a decade of growing popularity, however, whiteness studies – or “critical whiteness studies” as Roediger prefers – remains a vague and intellectually incoherent enterprise. Its core concept of whiteness defies singular definition. On one level, whiteness is about “identity”: how those in power identify a subordinate group, and how that subordinate group identifies itself. Elites rarely if ever employed the terminology of whiteness, so whiteness scholars presume to deduce from their statements their true intents.<sup>26</sup>

On balance the approach here will be an empirical one. The evidence in some cases speaks for itself and in others it requires interpretation given what is known about the personalities and circumstances at the time. There are times when the straightforward traditional method is the best for the subject and to intrude too much theory is an unnecessary distraction. The aim is not to be ‘bedazzled with myths and ideological assumptions’ but to give a clear and concise account and interpretation of a particular controversy that still has echoes in Scotland.

First it is necessary to examine the course of the Irish War of Independence as it was played out in Scotland. The events of the years 1919 to 1921 were to have a fundamental effect on the Scottish perception of its Irish population. The armed struggle between the republicans and the British Government, though it saw little in the way of actual violence in Scotland, profoundly altered the image of the Irish. It will be a central contention here that much of what followed in the 1920s in terms of anti-Irish sentiment had its roots in that conflict.

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<sup>25</sup> E. Arnesen, A Paler Shade of White, *New Republic* June 24<sup>th</sup> 2002 p34 of pp33-38.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid* p34

## Chapter One

### Sinn Fein and the Scottish Office 1919-1923

*'It is probably well to consider the position of Sinn Feiners here. They, equally with their Irish associates are levying war against this country and against the Executive Government of Ireland. They are instigating the disorders in Ireland, supporting the IRA with money, arms and ammunition, and I apprehend, even supplying them with men.'*

Procurator Fiscal of Glasgow in a report to the Secretary for Scotland 30<sup>th</sup> November 1920<sup>27</sup>

#### *I Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the impact of Sinn Fein on Scotland during the period of armed struggle for Irish independence and to consider its possible implications in the later anti-Irish immigration campaign. In the academic work that has been done on this period comparatively little has been produced from a specifically Scottish perspective. It is perhaps natural that the 'Anglo-Irish war' has been seen as just that, a conflict between Ireland and England or even between Ireland and the British Empire. The Scottish experience has been something of an adjunct but there has been a general assumption in the light of James Handley's seminal *The Irish in Modern Scotland*<sup>28</sup> that the Irish Diaspora in Scotland made a significant contribution to Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Army in terms of arms and financial support: 'It was not until guerrilla fighting broke out in Ireland that sympathisers in Scotland had an opportunity of rendering effective service. That service in money and materials was given so generously that the contribution of Scotland to the Sinn Fein campaign far exceeded that of any other country, including Ireland, and was in the opinion of Mr de Valera the chief factor in its success.'<sup>29</sup> Even though de Valera always understood the necessity for, and was a master of, politic flattery of the Irish Diaspora, his assessment that 'The financial contribution to the Irish struggle from among the Scottish

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<sup>27</sup> National Records of Scotland, Irish Disturbances Correspondence file, HH55/69.

<sup>28</sup> J. Handley, *The Irish in Modern Scotland*, (Cork University Press, 1947).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p297

communities was in excess of funds from any other country, including Ireland,<sup>30</sup> may not have been too much of an exaggeration. However, later scholarship has questioned this assumption. Most notably, Iain Patterson has argued that Sinn Fein activity was essentially minimal in Scotland and of little real relevance to the Anglo-Irish war.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, more recent work by Peter Hart<sup>32</sup> and by Mairtin O’Caithin,<sup>33</sup> have inclined more towards Handley’s position. In order to establish as far as possible the reality that the lies between the two, (or, more interestingly, if there is a position that reconciles the two), the object will be to re-examine the evidence from the viewpoint of Sinn Fein’s adversaries.

There is a natural tendency in the historiography of the period to concentrate on the more ‘glamorous’ aspects of the Irish Republican Army and the political activities of Sinn Fein. What might be termed the ‘Ballad History’ of gun running, gun battles and jail breaks, or rather attempted jail breaks, such as the ‘Smashing of the Van’ incident in Glasgow in 1921, and the arguments have tended to emphasise the effectiveness, or otherwise, of actual military operations. The concentration here, however, will be on the attitudes and perceptions of the actors primarily concerned with combating the ‘Sinn Fein threat’ as they believed it to exist at the time. This will be achieved by a fairly detailed analysis of some of the official correspondence concerning Scottish Office policy. One factor to be borne in mind throughout this exercise is that it is the psychological effect of an armed Irish rebellion on ‘official’ Scotland that is the main significance of the period. It is for this reason that much of what follows will be concentrated on ‘The Irish Disturbances’ files in the National Records of Scotland (NRS) (HH55/62-74) which provide an interesting light, not only to the activities of Sinn Fein, but into the official mind-set of the period.

What happened in this relatively brief passage of Scottish history had a profound effect on Scotland that far outweighed the actual military and material support given to the Irish cause. Tom Gallagher has argued that ‘No evidence has emerged that Michael Collins in Dublin sought to foment industrial unrest in Glasgow, so as to over extend the British. The Republican leadership had allotted a different and more crucial role to the Irish in Scotland: ... to provide money and military supplies to keep the war effort going back home and safe

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<sup>30</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow the Uneasy Peace*, (Manchester University Press, 1987), p94.

<sup>31</sup> I. D. Patterson, The Activities of Irish Republican Physical Force Organisations in Scotland 1919-21, *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol 72;193 April 1995.

<sup>32</sup> P. Hart ‘Operations Abroad’: The IRA in Britain 1919-23,’ *The English Historical Review*, Volume 115; 460 (Feb, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> M. O’Caithin, A Winnowing Spirit: Sinn Fein in Scotland 1905-38 in M. Mitchell (ed.), *New perspectives on the Irish in Scotland*, (John Donald, Edinburgh, 2008) and Michael Collins and Scotland in F. Ferguson and J. McConnell (eds.), *Ireland and Scotland in the Nineteenth Century*, (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2009).

houses for IRA men on the run.<sup>34</sup> This in purely military terms may well be true but that did not mean that the Scottish authorities did not believe that this was his aim and, it will be shown here, that there is evidence that suggests that Sinn Fein deliberately encouraged them in that opinion. What the evidence does reveal is the remarkable effect that the Irish war had on official and wider Scotland. It was certainly far in advance of any actual campaign. There was infinitely more damage caused by the IRA in London and Liverpool than there ever was in Glasgow<sup>35</sup> and yet in Scotland there was a readiness to believe in an enemy within who were not only well armed and organised but might join up with the disaffected Bolshevik element of the working classes. It should be remembered that on 31 January 1919 during the 'Forty Hours Strike' of 1919 the Government dispatched 12,000 troops, 100 Lorries and six tanks onto the streets of Glasgow. The Red Flag in George Square had raised the spectre of Revolution and, to a severely frightened middle class, there was not much to distinguish Sinn Fein from Bolshevism. There was also a sense of the perceived fragility of Scotland's post war society and its particular economic vulnerability. Bombings and arson may cause some economic dislocation in England but it could not bring the country to a standstill whereas the geographical concentration of industrial Scotland implied that attacks on particular strategic locations could effectively paralyse an already faltering economy and in Scotland the majority of Irish immigration was concentrated in those very areas. Most large companies in West Central Scotland employed the men as labourers and many middle class families employed the women as servants. The Anglo-Irish war appeared to some Scots more like an incipient Helots' revolt right in the heart of its pre-war prosperity and its post war anxiety.

What will be advanced here is not necessarily in conflict with either the Handley or Patterson view, rather it is an attempt to gauge the actual military and political aims of Sinn Fein in Scotland and to argue that the threat of sabotage or insurrection was a far more useful one to the republicans than actually engaging in activities for which they had neither the manpower or resources. Equally, and in some ways more importantly, the Republican cause was aided in this respect by a specifically Scottish set of circumstances at the heart of the administration that made the threat of action in Scotland as, if not more, effective than the actual action in England.

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<sup>34</sup> T. Gallagher, *The Uneasy Peace*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>35</sup> P. Hart, *Operations Abroad*, p 92. Between October 1920 and July 1921 there were 58 cases of arson in London, 54 in Liverpool and 15 in Glasgow and 38, 41, and 5 cases of Telegraph sabotage respectively. On the other hand there were 16 cases of arms and explosives thefts in Glasgow in the same period compared to two in London and none in Liverpool.

It is therefore necessary to look at the specific Scottish sources. Firstly, there are the official reactions to what was considered to be an undoubted threat. There is an obvious difference between the actual military and security threat of Sinn Fein and the authorities' perception of it. For example the quotation at the head of this chapter is from a report by the Procurator Fiscal of Glasgow in which he demanded the introduction of internment in Scotland. Some of the reactions of Chief Constables were on similar lines and while the truce intervened before matters got to this stage some of the policy options that were under serious consideration at the time make for intriguing reading, particularly the difference in attitudes of those in Scotland and those of the civil servants in London. What will be of particular significance here is the intelligence on which much of the security discussions were based and its likely source.

It should be pointed out that at this time the Government minister with responsibility for Scotland, Robert Munro, was Secretary for, and not of, Scotland and as such outside the Cabinet. Equally, the Scottish Office was largely based in London therefore the civil servants charged with dealing with Sinn Fein did so at arm's length. Both being outside the Cabinet loop and some geographical distance for the action proved to have been a considerable influence on the actions of the officials. G.F. Millar, referring to Munro's actions during wartime and later labour unrest, states that 'It is easy to see the mixture of timidity and unimaginative overreaction in Munro's role as Secretary for Scotland,'<sup>36</sup> and quotes Harvie's unsparing assessment of him as the 'dim representative of a failing political party.'<sup>37</sup> However, 'timidity and unimaginative overreaction' as will be seen from the files were traits far from confined to Munro himself.

Outside of Government circles the war in Ireland was avidly followed in the Scottish press. This fell into two categories, the 'mainstream' press, particularly the *Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*, and the 'Catholic' press. This may seem to be something of an oversimplification considering that much of the radical press such as *Forward* were sympathetic to the Irish cause while much of the English press, for example the *Times* and especially the *Manchester Guardian*, were often critical of Lloyd-George and the coalition's policies in Ireland. However this analysis is, as was stated at the outset specifically concerned with Scotland, and official Scotland in particular, and for this reason the stance taken by the *Scotsman* is especially interesting. Naturally both the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Scotsman* were

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<sup>36</sup> G.F. Millar, 'Munro, Robert, Baron Alness, (1868-1955) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, Oxford.

<sup>37</sup> C. Harvie, *No gods and precious few heroes: Scotland 1914-1980*, (Arnold, London, 1981), p28.

politically hostile to Sinn Fein but the *Scotsman* took so vehemently a pro-Government line that it appears in some instances to be ahead of the Government itself, at least that part of it which had responsibility for Scotland. For example, between 1<sup>st</sup> September 1920 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 1920 there were 330 Sinn Fein related articles and letters in the *Scotsman* alone<sup>38</sup>. For this reason reading these papers in conjunction with the official files it is possible to see how much information actually reached the public and to gauge the accuracy of the reporting and the likely effect it was having on the thinking inside Whitehall. The second category is the Catholic press especially the *Glasgow Observer* run by the mercurial polemicist Charles Diamond. Originally a staunch supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party who vehemently condemned the Easter Rising he was, by the end of the Irish war, jailed for incitement to violence for an editorial in his own paper. He was nevertheless a hugely influential figure in Irish Catholic circles. The natural battle lines were drawn in the press as elsewhere but if the forces were marshalled by late 1919 it is well at this point to examine how they got there in the first place.

## *II The Helot's Revolt*

*'Irishmen and Irishwomen: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old traditions of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.'*<sup>39</sup>

On a sunny Monday afternoon on 24<sup>th</sup> April, Easter Week 1916 Patrick Pearse announced to a largely bemused audience from the steps of the G.P.O. in Dublin that they had a new Government. One week later much of the centre of Dublin would be a smoking ruin and, while exact casualties are hard to ascertain, about 64 rebels, 134 soldiers and police and 220 civilians had been killed.<sup>40</sup> The Easter Week in Dublin was the catalyst for the greatest crisis in Ireland since the rising of 1798. This was far from apparent at the time. The reaction in Dublin and in the wider Irish community was one of almost universal condemnation. Charles Diamond writing in the *Glasgow Observer* was forthright in his damning criticism:

The Irish People... will not manifest the slightest sympathy or approval of the madly criminal actions of the pro German plotters who resorted to insurrection...The actions

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<sup>38</sup>The *Scotsman*, Online Archive –scotman.com

<sup>39</sup>R. Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure*, (Gollancz, London, 1977), p280. Declaration of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic to the People of Ireland.

<sup>40</sup>P. Cottrell, *The Anglo-Irish War The Troubles of 1913-1922*, (Osprey, Oxford,2006), p35.

of the Dublin revolters ...was needless, foolish, wicked and unjustifiable. Irish nationalists will condemn it as unpatriotic folly; rash, blind, headlong, stupid and wrong.<sup>41</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the rising such opinions were widely held. In Scotland the condemnation was no less severe. The *Scotsman* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> May would almost seem to be echoing Diamond's sentiments with a little added local grievance:

Treasonable in its conception, mad in its methods, deplorable in its effects... Politically and nationally her aspirations have been gratified and nationalist Ireland seemed to want for nothing more... for years she has been the spoilt child of the British treasury. Her wishes have been satisfied when Scotland has been turned away with a curt refusal...Under these circumstances the rising of the past week was not merely wanton and criminal it was the basest ingratitude.<sup>42</sup>

The thunderous denunciations of the Rising on all sides seemed to indicate that the incident would be consigned to another violent footnote in Irish history and yet within two years 'the Sinn Fein banner became the rallying point for nearly every nationalist group, whether moderate or extremist, peaceful or violent.'<sup>43</sup> Within four years there would be full scale guerrilla warfare on 'British' soil.

Peter Cottrell cites Richard Bennett's description of the Anglo-Irish War as one that 'the English have struggled to forget and the Irish cannot help but remember.'<sup>44</sup> The creation of the myths of 1916 began almost as soon as the fighting stopped and another type of shooting began. Certainly General Maxwell's policy of executing the leaders of the Rising engendered revulsion in Ireland. The executions, fifteen in all, which were carried out between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> of May caused a reaction to set in. 'Mad, rash, blind, stupid folly' perhaps but the British turned it into nobly brave, 'rash, blind, stupid folly'. In Scotland, as in Ireland, Irish opinion changed from condemnation, to sneaking admiration, to outright support. On May 13<sup>th</sup> there were calls for the shooting to stop in the *Glasgow Observer*. By June that particular Irish genius for organising relief had swung into action and help was being provided for Irish

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<sup>41</sup> The *Glasgow Observer*, April 29<sup>th</sup> 1916.

<sup>42</sup> The *Scotsman*, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1916.

<sup>43</sup> C. Townshend, *The British Campaign in Ireland 1919-1921: The Development of Political and Military Policies*, (Oxford University Press, 1975), p1.

<sup>44</sup>P. Cottrell *The Anglo Irish War*, p7.

prisoners from the Rising held at Barlinnie and Perth prisons and advertisements for the relief committee were appearing in the Catholic press that had only a few weeks before been so hostile.<sup>45</sup> In fact by June 15<sup>th</sup> the police prohibited a meeting in Glasgow to raise funds for prisoners prompting stern criticism of ‘this needless prohibition.’<sup>46</sup> Throughout the following years as the old Home Rule party collapsed the Irish community in Scotland had become a sympathetic onlooker to events in Ireland. By 1919 however the community was in more of a position to take an active part in the proceedings.

It is not the purpose here to describe the rise of Sinn Fein and the demise of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Ireland between 1916 and the end of the First World War in 1918. However, in order to appreciate the effect of the Irish war in Scotland it is necessary to understand something of the political, economic and social status of the vast majority of the Irish in Scotland at the outbreak of the First World War. One or two salient facts serve to highlight a changing Scottish attitude to the large immigrant community that had grown up in its midst. After the 1840s famine Scotland was host to a large permanent Irish Catholic population particularly in west central Scotland. By 1851 the Irish made up 7.2% of the Scottish population and 18.2% of the population of Glasgow.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the later nineteenth century Scotland there was large scale immigration, particularly from Ulster, as the mass industrialisation of the country grew apace. Not all this immigration was by Irish Catholics. Graham Walker gives in his own estimation a crude figure of Irish Protestant immigration being 25% of the total Irish immigration into Scotland.<sup>48</sup> The influx of the Ulster Irish brought with it the tensions and history of the province into Scottish society. This is not to say that sectarianism was entirely an Irish import but without the introduction of militant ‘Orangeism’ it is possible to make a case that the tensions would not have been so acute. Even although there were tribal tensions between the two groups it is debateable that Scotland at the period regarded the Irish as anything like a threat.

What is not in doubt is that the majority of Irish Catholics were firmly rooted to the bottom of the economic pile. It is from this apparently unpromising material that the Irish Volunteers or Irish Republican Army (IRA) was drawn. The history of the Irish Volunteers in Scotland is one of the more controversial episodes of the Anglo-Irish war. Almost all commentators have drawn attention to the movement’s fractious and disputatious nature.

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<sup>45</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Observer*, June 10th 1916.

<sup>46</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Observer*, June 17<sup>th</sup> 1916.

<sup>47</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow The Uneasy Peace*, (Manchester University Press, 1987), p11.

<sup>48</sup> G. Walker, The Protestant Irish in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century*, (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1991), p49.

Scotland undoubtedly caused problems on a political and personal level for Michael Collins. As O’Cathain has it ‘it was precisely because of Collins’ nonchalant detachment from Scotland and the workings of his elaborate network there that many of his political and personal connections unravelled. Scotland and Glasgow in particular, became the primary weapon in the hands of his enemies.’<sup>49</sup> There is perhaps a case that much of what was achieved by the Volunteers in Scotland disappeared in the wrangling between Cathal Brugha and Collins over the ‘Scottish Accounts’, a rather pointless squabble over arms purchasing funds that had more to do with personality clashes in Dublin than cash in Glasgow.

An examination of the organisation of the IRA in Scotland does reveal that there was a distinct division between the smuggling operations and that of the ‘conventional’ volunteers. In 1919 Collins sent Joe Vize to sort out what was a fairly chaotic situation in Scotland and organise the channels for arms and ammunition. O’Cathain disputes Patterson’s suggestion that he was sent over as a senior officer or Hart’s view that his job was to sort out the warring factions in Glasgow.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless by 1920 he was given command of the Scottish Brigade, although, as O’Cathain points out he was in Scotland primarily in an IRB<sup>51</sup> capacity ‘and it was the IRB who took for themselves the control of the supply chain of arms and ammunition.’<sup>52</sup> This control of the smuggling and arms procurement in Scotland by the IRB was a crucial element in understanding the operations of the IRA in Scotland. The whole organisation in Scotland throughout 1919-20 was the responsibility of Vize and his colleague Joe Furlong: ‘Within a year he (Vize) had gone from three to twenty one companies... opened up several gun-running and ammunition streams ...and organised a successful raid for arms from Hamilton barracks. Vize also counselled against deployment of the Scottish Brigade in Ireland citing the ever-authoritative ‘instructions from Collins to remain in place and concentrate on supplies.’<sup>53</sup> This control of the Volunteers and the IRB by Vize, with orders to consider the lines of arms and ammunition as paramount explains much of the actions of Sinn Fein in Scotland and the way in which the whole movement was used in an intelligence war to protect the supply lines to Ireland. In fact the IRB often used ‘civilian’ contractors rather than Sinn Fein men to organise and purchase its arms. It may well have been the case that the IRB men used the Volunteers as a smokescreen for their gun running

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<sup>49</sup> M. O’Cathain, *Michael Collins and Scotland* p160.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid* p165

<sup>51</sup> IRB Irish Republican Brotherhood: A secret society that grew out of the Fenians. At this period presided over by Collins. Members swore allegiance to the IRB as the de facto government of Ireland. The IRB it was often in conflict with other Republican organisations including the Volunteers on occasion.

<sup>52</sup> M. O’Cathain, *Michael Collins and Scotland* pp165-166.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid* p166

activities. The actual strength of the IRA in Scotland, as will be seen, was nowhere near what the authorities believed it to be but as a ‘paper tiger’ it could cause significant problems. In effect the IRA in Scotland, outside of those directly involved in the supply train, were marched up to the tops of hills and along midnight streets to distract a police force that had convinced itself that a major attack was imminent.

### *III The ‘Glasgow Desperadoes’<sup>54</sup>*

*There is but little evidence, our Glasgow correspondent reports to indicate that the organisation in Scotland is in possession of rifles and ammunition, and a report that open and unconcealed drilling and manoeuvring has taken place on a large scale recently outside the city is unfounded. The authorities are fully alive to the situation and may be relied on to take prompt action should anything unlawful occur.*

*Scotsman* 13<sup>th</sup> September 1920<sup>55</sup>

At one o’clock in the morning on what was a fairly dank October night in Barrhead Sergeant McKenzie encountered a sizeable group of young men apparently engaged in some kind of military ‘route march’. The report of this chance encounter subsequently rose through the various levels of Government and within four days made its way to the Cabinet. On its journey it acquired ever more sinister overtones having gone through the hands of the Chief Constable of Glasgow, the Special Branch, the Director of Intelligence, the Lord Advocate and the Secretary for Scotland. A close examination of the information the reports contain builds a picture of an intelligence source that was obviously believed by the Chief Constable and in turn was readily believed by others in the chain. The actual source for the Chief Constable’s alarming assessment will be discussed further on but the remarkable aspect at this stage is the credence to which experienced police, intelligence officers, civil servants and politicians were willing to give to the claims of the IRA’s capabilities:

About 1a.m. on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> Oct, 1920 while patrolling Main St Barrhead, ...I observed a large crowd of men, numbering about 200 coming from Glen St into Main St where a halt was made for a minute or two, they then moved along Main St in the

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<sup>54</sup> This term was originally given to the Glasgow contingent who participated in the Easter Rising see O’Cathain, *Michael Collins and Scotland*.

<sup>55</sup> *The Scotsman*, September 13<sup>th</sup> 1920 p6 ‘Sinn Feiners in Glasgow’ First press reference to an Army in Scotland.

direction of Neilston. I followed after them and when near the junction of South Arthurlie Road I met a squad of them coming back again, and saw another number standing near the junction of Cross Arthurlie St. I went over to the second squad, and turning my light on, I asked if they were looking for any particular place, but I received no reply, and those on whom my light was shining turned away their heads. I saw that they were all young and respectably dressed men, and without any word being uttered they moved along Main St after the first squad. I followed after and kept behind until they made a halt opposite St Johns R.C. Chapel, Darnley Road. After remaining halted for about five minutes, I could hear them in the front moving off in the direction of Glasgow, and the squad in rear about 80 in number turned about and proceeded along Darnley Road...in the direction of Paisley.

There was little or no talking among them, nor did I hear any word of command being given, but they seemed to march and halt at some command, which I think was passed quietly from the front to the rear. They did not keep any regular formation of fours, but they had what looked like connecting files between groups, and they marched at a quick pace behind one another and it was quite evident they were on a route march.

I did not see any sign of arms. Some of them carried coats over their arm or shoulder. I did not recognise any of them ...and I am of the opinion that they were all strangers. ...The morning was very dark and a slight rain was falling which made everything very indistinct....<sup>56</sup>

At this stage Sgt McKenzie had reported nothing more than 200 young men apparently on a 'route march' in Barrhead at one in the morning. Granted two hundred young men walking around Barrhead at one o'clock on a wet night would be suspicious even now. On the other hand there was nothing to suggest that this was in any way a 'combat' formation. However, as far as the authorities were concerned, this was another example of 'illegal drilling,' an issue that began to exercise their minds particularly in late 1920. There would appear to be no evidence of this being an armed group or, on the basis of the police reports, that it had a specific objective. So the question remains is why were Sinn Fein indulging in a tour of Nitshill and Barrhead on the early hours of a Thursday morning? Equally, why had they got

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<sup>56</sup> NRS, HH55/62, Police Reports on Sinn Fein activity and precautionary measures, Report of Sgt McKenzie, October 14<sup>th</sup> 1920.

two hundred young men to participate in such an exercise on a week night? Even in 1920 it is a fair assumption that many of the participants of this midnight march had work to go to in the morning. It was something of a feature of Sinn Fein activity, at least as far as illegal drilling was concerned, that it tended to take place at the weekend. The Chief Constable of Glasgow obviously reached his own conclusions:

Sir

I beg to inform you that about 2.40 a.m. on 14<sup>th</sup> instant a telephone message was received from the police at Barrhead that a body of about 200 men believed to be Sinn Feiners had passed through Barrhead about 1.30 a.m.; that 100 had broken off and had gone towards Paisley, and that the other 100 were marching towards Glasgow. The information was telephoned to the divisions on the south side, and the constables on duty in the outlying districts on the South Side were instructed to keep watch, and to communicate with their divisional office on seeing the approach of these men. At 3 a.m. they appeared at Shawlands cross, marching in parties of 3 and 4 at intervals – 103 in all. Plain Clothes Constables, who had been previously warned, followed some of the parties to their destinations as they dispersed, but so far they have not been able to ascertain the names of the men. The parties moved quietly and there was no disorder.

It is reported that many of the men ‘appeared to be carrying something bulky’ and that in one case what appeared to be a revolver was seen protruding from a man’s inside pocket.

This midnight marching has a sinister aspect. It looks as if the Sinn Feiners were preparing for action.<sup>57</sup>

Between Sgt McKenzie’s first report and the Chief Constable’s the ‘route march’ has taken on a considerably more ‘sinister aspect.’ Originally the nearest the marchers had to anything resembling weaponry is that ‘some of them carried coats over their arm or shoulder’. This in the space of a few hours has been promoted to ‘appeared to be carrying something bulky.’ Not only this but ‘in one case what appeared to be a revolver was seen protruding from a man’s inside pocket.’ The key phrase of the Chief Constable’s is, ‘This midnight marching has a sinister aspect. It looks as if the Sinn Feiners were preparing for action.’ The reason for

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<sup>57</sup> NRS, HH55/62, October 15th 1920, Chief Constable of Glasgow’s report to the Scottish Office on men assumed to be Sinn Feiners on the early hours of October 14<sup>th</sup> 1920.

the Chief Constable's conviction that military action by Sinn Fein was imminent became apparent in his letter to the Under Secretary of Scotland two days later:

Sir

Reference to my previous letters regarding the activities of the Sinn Fein Society in Glasgow, I have now to report that private information believed to be reliable has been received that a secret meeting of the leaders of the Society was held in the League of the Cross Hall, Partick St, Greenock, on the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> inst when 37 Sinn Fein Clubs were represented. It was reported that the strength of the Sinn Fein Volunteers in Glasgow and the West of Scotland was 30,000, and that 20,000 had revolvers, and 2,000 had rifles all of the modern pattern, with unlimited ammunition; that they had plans of Maryhill Barracks and of all the Territorial Drill Halls in Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, and Dunbartonshire.

The delegates were instructed to inform their several battalions that an order might be received at any time to mobilise, and to be ready to act either in Ireland or Scotland as might be required.

The Director of Intelligence, Scotland House, and the G O C the troops in the Glasgow area have been supplied with this information<sup>58</sup>

By now the military capability of Sinn Fein had been inflated to a potentially armed force of 20,000 of whom 2,000 had rifles. 2,000 riflemen would have been approximately the size of a British brigade of the period and would have alarmed any responsible Chief Constable, and yet, as Hart points out, the reality was somewhat different: 'Glasgow began with fewer than a hundred volunteers in 1919, but reorganisation there and elsewhere in Scotland produced a potential force of 600 men by August 1920. ...all told there were perhaps a thousand men enrolled in British IRA units in the crucial twelve months between July 1920 and July 1921. How many of these were actually available for duty or active at any given time was a different matter. Only very rarely were whole units mobilised for an operation, whereupon many so ordered failed to turn up.'<sup>59</sup> It should be mentioned here that Hart's methodology has recently come into question, particularly by John Regan,<sup>60</sup> but his assessment of the actual strength of the IRA on Scotland appears on balance to be correct.

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<sup>58</sup> NRS, HH55/62, Chief Constable Glasgow C.I.D. to Under Secretary of Scotland, October 17<sup>th</sup> 1920.

<sup>59</sup> P. Hart, 'Operations Abroad': The IRA in Britain, 1919-23, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 115; 460 (Feb,2000) p73-74

<sup>60</sup> J. Regan, The 'Bandon Valley Massacre' as a Historical Problem, *History*, (April, 2012)

O’Cathain has pointed out that there is considerable disagreement amongst scholars as to the actual strength of the IRA in Scotland, ‘prior to Hart, Aspinwall suggested 20,000, which was mainly based on Finlay and Handley, the latter of whom in turn based his figures on a *Daily Record* report, which also claimed 4,000 members in Glasgow. This 4,000 figure was used by O’Farrell, who gives a figure of 7,000 IRA members for Scotland as a whole.’<sup>61</sup> Given the difficulties of weapons and ammunition supply experienced by IRA units in Ireland it is highly unlikely that Collins would have tied up 20,000 revolvers, 2,000 rifles and ‘unlimited ammunition’ in Glasgow when it was urgently required, and could be profitably used, elsewhere. The discrepancy between what the IRA were even theoretically able to put into the field and what the Chief Constable believed to be the case is so marked that the question has to be asked: what was the source of this ‘private information’ and why was such suspect intelligence believed, not only by a perhaps understandably worried Chief Constable, but by Special Branch and prompted no less a figure than Basil Thompson the Director of Intelligence to reinforce the message by reporting it independently to the Scottish Office the next day?

In answering these questions it is useful to return in more detail to the press report quoted at the beginning of this section covering a Sinn Fein rally at St Andrew’s Hall Glasgow on the 12 September 1920:

Practically all the Sinn Fein clubs on the Clydeside were represented and most of the demonstrators arrived at the hall in charabancs, from which flew the Republican Tricolour. .... Fully 8,000 Sinn Feiners took part in the proceedings ...the audiences were composed chiefly of women and young men and conspicuous among the platform party was a number of priests wearing Sinn Fein rosettes...The hall and passages were lined with young men described as Irish Volunteers The speeches were all in the same strain-violent denunciation of the Government and British democracy....One speaker contended that Irishmen were justified in employing every weapon to secure their ends, *and confirmed reports in the press that Sinn Fein had an army in Scotland and, he said it would be well to remember that that army was for use.*<sup>62</sup> (my italics)

This was obviously the hyperbole of a political meeting but it was nonetheless a sizeable demonstration of numbers if not necessarily force. What is interesting is that Sinn Fein was

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<sup>61</sup>M. O’Cathain, *Michael Collins and Scotland* p125

<sup>62</sup>The *Scotsman*, September 13<sup>th</sup> 1920 p6

proclaiming from a public platform that they had ‘an army’ in Scotland. In fact they had no such thing and they, or at least their leadership, knew it. This in itself would not be indicative of a deliberate policy on the part of Sinn Fein as inflated claims to martial prowess are part and parcel of the rhetorical currency of any political group with an armed wing. As such it would not warrant attention if it were not for one of the more remarkable documents from an ‘informer’ which is in the papers of Sir John Gilmour, later the Secretary of State for Scotland. Then in the ‘Whips’ office, Gilmour wrote to Munro one month after the mysterious route march described above. It is a rather anxious enquiry as to the safety of Bonar Law, leader of the Unionists in the Cabinet and a long-time opponent of Irish Home Rule, should he visit Edinburgh. It should also be noted that Gilmour himself was an Orangeman who took a particular interest in the activities of Sinn Fein.

My dear Munro

I write with reference to the activities of the Sinn Fein Clubs in this country – certain information which I have received in addition to what I have sent you and Morrison (the Lord Advocate) from time to time leads me to believe that a policy of kidnapping similar to that which is being used in Ireland will be tried in this country. As you are aware Mr Bonar Law is going to Edinburgh on December 9<sup>th</sup> and I thought it right to draw your attention to this matter in order that any necessary precautions can be taken.

I should also be much obliged if you can give me any assurance that in your opinion the local police force in Scotland and more particularly in Glasgow and surrounding district are in a position to obtain reliable information of the activities<sup>63</sup>

There is no record of Munro’s reply in Gilmour’s papers but there is, however, the following report sent by the Secretary for Scotland. The format is a carbon of two type-written sheets with no indication as to the identity of the author. The information it contains and, importantly the style in which it was written make it worthwhile quoting in its entirety:

On Sunday evening 27<sup>th</sup> inst, three of the Southside companies of the Irish Republican Army met for drill in St Frances Young Men’s Society Hall, Errol St, under

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<sup>63</sup> NRS, GD 383/14/6, Letter from John Gilmour MP to the Secretary for Scotland, November 18<sup>th</sup> 1920  
*Gilmour Correspondence.*

the command of Thomas J Murray, John Ryan and P J Duffy, with their respective military drill instructors.

On this same evening groups of the Irish Citizen Army in the Anderston district appeared to be unusually active. About a dozen of them visited the Workers International Union Hall, 550 Argyle Street and had an interview within the hall with Thomas L Smith, the Communist leader of the International Workers of the World. They subsequently left and went round to Laughran's Public House at Elderslie St. The employees of this spirit shop are all Sinn Feiners and the charge hand is an official of the 'Thomas Ashe' Sinn Fein Club, Anderston and the 'Patrick McDonough' Club, Partick. Nelson who is on the run probably now in Dublin and McCann who is in HMP Glasgow are members of the before mentioned clubs.

On Sunday evening at 6.30 Mr Jack Leckie was the lecturer at a meeting held under the auspices of the Communist Labour Party (Anderston section) in the Socialist Hall, 569 Argyle St. The hall was crowded. Mr Robert Fleck, Partick, occupied the chair. Leckie's subject was: - 'Irish Martyrdom' and he delivered an extremely violent speech in which he advocated physical force as the only effective means to adopt to obtain their rights. They had nothing to loose (sic) but their chains, etc. etc.

At 10 o'clock on Saturday morning a Solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated in St Joseph's R C Church, 40 North Woodside Road, for the repose of souls of the Rev Father Griffin and Rorin (sic probably Kevin) Barry murdered by the order of the British Government in order to drive terror into the hearts of the Irish people and kill the soul and spirit of the Irish nation. The Rev Joseph Reilly was celebrant and the Rev James McConnell, delivered the panegyric. The mass was arranged by the 'Anne Devlin' branch of Cumann-Na-Ban, whose members wore dark armllets. Two companies of the Irish Volunteers were present wearing Sinn Fein favours and Volunteer badges

There were present about fifteen hundred persons – a record attendance in this parish for a downright wet morning.

The writer desires to point out that the callous and deliberate murders, the burning of creameries and houses, is exasperating the Irish people of Glasgow to the utmost limit of human endeavour and is straining the bonds of discipline to breaking point. The Irish

Volunteers are one of the best disciplined and one of the biggest forces in Scotland and may break out of hand at any moment.<sup>64</sup>

It is in the language and nature of this report that gives an inkling of the ‘private information’ referred to by the Chief Constable. Intelligence is an inexact science and is dependent on the reliability of its sources. It would appear that the Glasgow Police, and indeed the Scottish Office, believed that they had a reliable source of information within Sinn Fein. For this source to trouble the upper echelons of Government the informant would have to have at least some standing within Sinn Fein and be above the level of the usual police spy. The description of the Greenock meeting implies that it was held at Commandant level which in turn suggests that the Government believed that it had an informer in Glasgow who was at least a company commander. Now all this implication is not in itself evidence and without explicit confirmation of an identity in the files at a distance of ninety years it must be a matter of conjecture. However, it is possible, using the evidence available, to posit a logical hypothesis and test it against what is known about Sinn Fein at the time.

It is reasonable to assume that the anonymous source quoted above was regarded sufficiently seriously for this report to be forwarded by Munro to Sir John Gilmour. Gilmour’s original request for information, while semi-official, is not that of a back bencher but of a rising politician in the government with a position in the ‘Whips’ Office regarding the safety of the second most important member of the Cabinet. The evidence that Munro took this request exceptionally seriously is in the fact that he instituted enquiries, as will be shown below, with all the Chief Constables in Scotland likely to have a Sinn Fein presence as to the conditions in their areas. In these circumstances it lends credibility to the theory that the above report was considered as genuine intelligence.

The content of the report quite firmly places its location in Glasgow but it is the information it reveals or perhaps the lack of it that is interesting. The first paragraph gives the names of the company commanders of the Southside of Glasgow, and yet in the trial records of Sinn Fein in Scotland, the names of Duffy, Ryan and Murray do not appear. That in itself is not that unusual but it does seem that the informant was giving or confirming information already known to the police. The slightly contemptuous references to the Irish Citizen Army and left wing speakers are also instructive. There was tension in Scotland concerning arms shipments to the Irish Citizen Army which was largely dormant during the Anglo-Irish war.

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<sup>64</sup> NRS, GD383/14/7, Report on Sinn Fein Activity sent by Secretary for Scotland to John Gilmour MP November 28<sup>th</sup> 1920 *Gilmour Correspondence*.

Patterson cites a member of the Citizen's Army describing his organisation as failing 'to play a worthwhile role in the fight against the British forces during the period 1919-21.'<sup>65</sup> As O'Cathain states 'There was also an outmanoeuvring of the Volunteers though this may also have been related to the penchant among some of that number to collect and send arms to the remnants of the Irish Citizen Army. Neither Vize nor Collins had serious leftist sympathies and their joint fear of communist or socialist influence (a difficulty in itself in a country where socialist ideas had growing support) may have affected their actions.'<sup>66</sup> It would appear that the informant shared in that opinion; in which case given the antagonistic relations between some Republican factions, especially in Glasgow, the inclusion of this information may have been a deliberate attempt to interest the authorities in the activities of groups considered as hindering Republican operations rather than providing assistance to the British Government.

The files concerning Sinn Fein in this period have more than their fair share of curiosities including a crude forgery claiming to be the oath of the Knights of Columba, an almost illegible scrawl addressed to Lloyd George and the idiosyncratic correspondence of Captain Despard, the Chief Constable of Lanarkshire. None are quite so curious as the last three paragraphs of this report. The style is obviously literate but it appears like a cross between a parish magazine and a speech from a Dublin soapbox. (It does raise the intriguing possibility that Munro's correspondent was a priest). It is less than complimentary to its intended audience and there cannot be many instances where an informer actually threatens his employer with the very people upon whom he was presumably asked to spy. Nevertheless, this report must have been taken seriously. The reason for this lies in the final sentence, 'The Irish Volunteers are one of the best disciplined and one of the biggest forces in Scotland and may break out of hand at any moment.' There is a recurrent theme here of the concept of Sinn Fein having a heavily armed, disciplined, military force. It would appear both from Sinn Fein's public pronouncements and in the information that it seemed to be providing the Government through 'other channels' that the message was constantly being reinforced. In the preceding eight weeks the Scottish Authorities had received information, publicly and privately that Sinn Fein had a substantial force of armed men in the west of Scotland who were ready to strike. The information was coming from inside Sinn Fein so the question remains, why were they so willing to give this credence? The almost inescapable

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<sup>65</sup> I.D. Patterson, *The Activities of Irish Republican Physical Force Organisations in Scotland 1919-21*, p47 citing E. Robbins, *Under the Starry Plough*, (Dublin,1977), p206

<sup>66</sup> M. O'Cathain, *Michael Collins and Scotland*, p168

conclusion is that influential figures in the political, legal and law enforcement establishment believed in these reports because they had already convinced themselves of their veracity. In that case any report of an IRA army in Scotland was eagerly seized upon as further proof of an already existing position. This is apparent in some of the responses the Scottish Office received in their request for situation reports in response to Gilmour's letter. For example the Procurator Fiscal of Glasgow was in no doubt of Sinn Fein's intentions, the nature of the threat or the remedy required:

...I have the feeling that in Glasgow we are on the point of having some serious outbreak of Sinn Fein activity and the week-end happenings in Liverpool strengthen me in that view. It is known that this hostile organisation is in some strength in this district and it is reasonable to suppose that active steps involving disorder will early ensue. All our information points in this direction.

... In the present case, while we have authentic information, we are in the position of having no sufficient legal evidence, and it has occurred to me that other means of dealing with this organisation must be found.

From the public press I gather that it is now accepted that a state of war exists at least in some parts of Ireland and these parts are practically under military control. The Government of Ireland are now apprehending the leaders of this hostile movement and interning them and this course seems fully justified.

... It is beyond all question that Republican Troops are in this city with the avowed object of taking part in hostile operations both in Ireland and here. That seems to me to be an intolerable position of matters. It is neither fair to the law abiding citizens here who are or might be victims of these men's violence at any moment, nor is it fair on those in Ireland who are responsible for the maintenance of law and order.

I have already pointed out that I can see no means of dealing with these Sinn Feiners in our Civil Criminal Courts and it occurs to me that the Government of Ireland should instruct the Glasgow Police to apprehend for them and hand over the most active Sinn Feiners in this City who would then be interned. The justification for this would be that the persons apprehended are engaged in levying war on the Irish Executive. Such apprehensions would be quite in accordance with the declared policy of the Irish

Executive and the facts, so far as Glasgow is concerned appear to fully justify such a course...<sup>67</sup>

Again we have the Fiscal's assertion of 'authentic information.' On the basis of this information the Procurator Fiscal was calling for the effective suspension of Habeas Corpus (Wrongous Imprisonment in Scotland) and an official recognition that a state of war existed in Ireland. The policy implications for the British Government of such an action were unacceptable. Any move that hinted of belligerent status for the IRA would legitimise the Sinn Fein case of being the Government of Ireland particularly in America, and equally important, in the Empire. As Lloyd George had already pointed out to Lord French in May 1920 'you do not declare war against rebels.'<sup>68 69</sup> Such niceties of policy were causing difficulties for those closer to the 'front line' who tended to view things in more black and white terms. In fairness to the Fiscal he was writing in the aftermath of 'Bloody Sunday,' and only two days before the IRA had burned seventeen warehouses in Liverpool. Coupled with this, 'Several key figures in the Collins network were picked up before the November burnings...In fact had a raid not driven Mulcahy (IRA Chief of Staff in Dublin) to escape across rooftops ...leaving his papers behind...very large scale operations would have taken place in Liverpool and Manchester during April 1921. These would have included the destruction of all British shipping in Liverpool and of Manchester's electricity supply.'<sup>70</sup> In view of what had happened elsewhere, and given what the Glasgow police believed about the IRA, it was a not unnatural assumption that what was planned for Liverpool and Manchester could well be planned for Glasgow. The report from the Chief Constables of Glasgow appeared to confirm Gilmour's anxieties about the existence of a kidnap plot:

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<sup>67</sup> NRS, HH55/69, Procurator Fiscal of Glasgow in a report to the Secretary of Scotland, November 30<sup>th</sup> 1920.

<sup>68</sup> S. Lawlor, *Britain and Ireland 1914-23*, (Macmillan, Dublin, 1983), p56

<sup>69</sup> It is probably for this reason that there is a note appended to the Procurator Fiscal's report in which the Civil Servants in the Scottish Office display an anxiety about the calls for independent action to be taken in Scotland. Note for the Secretary for Scotland (unsigned)

PF's report ... raises a question of policy. The active Sinn Feiners in Glasgow are known to the police. There seems to be some ground for apprehension that the Sinn Feiners may resort to violence (as at Liverpool) & PF suggests that the leading Sinn Feiners might be arrested and handed over to the Irish Govt. for internment. The same question arises in England. I think the arrests could only proceed in virtue of the DORA regulations. I am averse to the exercise of these powers but I suggest that the cabinet should deal with the question as a matter of general policy, NRS, HH55/69.

<sup>70</sup> T. P. Coogan, *Michael Collins*, (Arrow, London, 1991), p153

We have information that the question of kidnapping was discussed and that it was decided to kidnap the Prime Minister, Mr Bonar Law and other important members of the government and Home Office officials. This information was at once communicated according to arrangement to the Director of Intelligence, London. We have also information that a party of six was appointed to carry out reprisals in Scotland and supplied with £250 for the purpose.

If any important member of the Government should come to Glasgow special precautions will be taken to ensure his safety but it might be well if none came for the present.<sup>71</sup>

The response of Captain Herbert J. Despard, the Chief Constable of Lanarkshire, was no more comforting: 'There is always a danger of trouble in this County as the Sinn Fein and Orange parties are fairly well balanced, with the natural consequence that if Sinn Feiners are in the majority in one place they molest the Orangemen and vice versa, ...there is always a danger of conflict between the two parties, large numbers of young men habitually carry pistols and at any time there may be trouble'<sup>72</sup>

By late November 1920 the Government as a whole was in a state of some panic. Bloody Sunday and the captured Sinn Fein documents revealed an organisation that was far more formidable than the Government in Westminster had been willing to admit. The privately expressed views of the Chief Constable of Glasgow that he could not guarantee the safety of the leader of the Conservative party on British soil and his recommendation that major politicians stay away from Glasgow says much about police's belief in the strength of Sinn Fein. Sir Hamar Greenwood<sup>73</sup> in fact mentions in the House of Commons on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1920 that 'the organisation has spread to this country and £3,500 had recently been sent to Scotland, particularly in Glasgow to buy firearms for assassins.'<sup>74</sup> Strangely this particular piece of information does not feature in the Scottish Office files. Presumably they thought to let Munro know. In any case the idea of Sinn Fein attacks on the British mainland had now taken hold in Scotland is shown in an examination of two cases, one of a private company and another of a major military installation.

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<sup>71</sup> NRS, HH55/69, Chief Constable of Glasgow to the Scottish Office

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>73</sup> Sir Hamar Greenwood (1870-1948) Chief Secretary of Ireland, C. Hazlehurst, S. Whitehead and C. Woodland (eds.) *A Guide to the Papers of British Cabinet Ministers 1900-1964*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996)

<sup>74</sup> *The Scotsman*, November 25<sup>th</sup> 1920, p7

#### *IV Barbarians at the Gates*

The press publication of the captured plans for the destruction of the Manchester Power Station obviously had an effect on the board of the Clyde Valley Electrical Power Company. In December 1920 the board wrote to the Secretary for Scotland requesting a military guard for their three power stations pointing out their importance to the economy: 'These stations, ...serve an area of 730 square miles, embracing most of the important shipbuilding and engineering works of the Clyde and the Lanarkshire coalfields. Upwards of two hundred industrial works and forty collieries derive their power from our power stations, in addition to Tramways and other public services... Having regard to the disastrous consequences which would result from damage to our stations, we submit that a Military Guard should be provided forthwith, at each power station'.<sup>75</sup> What is striking is the picture of vulnerability that it presents of the industrial heart of Scotland. The Scottish Office was aware that there was little chance of maintaining a regular military guard for industrial sites in Scotland. The suggested solutions raised the possibility of what would have, in effect, been an armed militia being formed to guard strategic sites. The police were, in the opinions of the Chief Constables, far too overstretched to provide the type of protection requested and yet both Despard and Charles Harding (Chief Constable of Renfrewshire) were agreed that the installations were vulnerable. The officials were caught between their apprehension of a Sinn Fein attack, something they have been warned about for the last two months, as has been shown by the previous files, and the desire to avoid any extra expense. At the same time the solution of arming the workers was almost as alarming to the authorities as Sinn Fein itself.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> December 1920 the Scottish Office wrote to the Chief Constables concerned asking for their observations on this request. In their replies both Harding and Despard forcefully made the point that they were in no position to protect the power stations adequately. Despard pointed out that although 'Arrangements have been made by which it is hoped that the nearest Police Stations will get warning, even if telephonic communication is interrupted, if an attack is made on the works. If such a warning is received, an armed body of Police will be sent, ...The Secretary for Scotland will notice that all the Police can hope to do is to arrive on the scene as soon as possible after an attack has been made, as, however constant the visits may be, it is unlikely that an attack will be made when the Constables are actually visiting.' Harding was even more pessimistic in his assessment:

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*

I can only give them extra police protection which they do not consider sufficient, and, as a matter of fact, if this place or police stations were invaded by armed Sinn Feiners the occupants would nearly be powerless against them.

I ought to mention that during the whole of the war we kept rifles and ammunition at the more important police stations, but since then these were recalled by the Military Authorities without the instructions, so far as I am aware of the Scottish Office.

I may also add that a large number of employees at these works are either Irish or of Irish extraction.<sup>76</sup>

These senior policemen were in no doubt about the power stations' vulnerability and their own lack of resources and were taking the opportunity of going on record to stress the point. Harding's observation that he had been disarmed by the military without the sanction of the Scottish Office implied that any attack on the facility at Yoker would be partly the fault of the army. The last, rather ominous sentence, on the ethnic origins of the employees at the power station was that of a Chief Police Officer displaying his deep concern in the face of an armed attack. It may well indicate that the Renfrewshire Constabulary may have been more wary in tackling the IRA. It is remarkable that Lanarkshire seems to have had a mobile armed force on call but Renfrewshire did not. Even so, Despard held out little hope of being able to prevent any attack on the power stations in his area.<sup>77</sup> Following these gloomy assessments from the Chief Constables, efforts were made by the Scottish Office to find a solution.

In December 1920 a Scottish Office official, John Rose, later Sir John Gilmour's Private Secretary, reported that there had been a Home Office conference to consider the protection of stores for the Ministry of Munitions. The dilemma was identical to that faced by the Scottish Office in providing military guards for strategic sites. The War Office refused military protection. However, it is the suggested alternatives, that provide the most interesting example of government thinking at the time:

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<sup>76</sup> NRS, HH55/69, Chief Constable Harding of Renfrew to Scottish Office, December 9<sup>th</sup> 1920

<sup>77</sup> NRS HH55/62: Interestingly on the same date Despard wrote to the Scottish Office suggesting that the policy of internment be adopted in Scotland. This was dismissed by the Advocate Depute and the Lord Advocate's Office. Letter from the Chief Constable of Lanarkshire Constabulary to the Scottish Office

Captain H Despard, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1920:

The A D is under the impression that the L A does not meanwhile approve of any action being taken on the lines suggested by Captain Despard. No such action is, the A D, understands being taken in England. The matter being one of policy is submitted for direction. Advocate Depute.

The proceedings at this conference make pretty clear what could be the attitude of the W.O. (War Office) towards this request for a military guard. They also throw doubt on the expediency of a suggestion that has sometimes been made that the factory workers should be enrolled as Special Constables 'provided with arms'.

There is a suggestion by the Secretary of State that if the C.Cs think the arrangements for protecting the Ministry's depots are not satisfactory they should, after consulting the managers, appoint themselves appropriate watchmen and swear them in as Special Constables. The Secretary of State could defray the cost. It may be assumed that the Secretary's objection to arming ordinary factory workers could not apply to the arming of these picked men.<sup>78</sup>

This particular correspondence highlights the problems facing the Scottish Office. They had a threat which they believed to be substantial but there was little likelihood of obtaining any extra help from the British Government. As the report on the Home Office conference reported above shows, even the Ministry of Munitions could not ensure a military guard for its installations. The suggestion that the factory workers be provided with arms received short shrift. It is an intriguing thought, although the idea of providing weapons to workers on Clydeside must have seemed to the Scottish Office akin to the US Cavalry running guns to the Apaches. Nevertheless, it was the War Office in the shape of the Royal Navy that came back to the Scottish Office with an almost identical problem the following year. This correspondence again highlights the problem of protection for vulnerable installations and the perennial inter-departmental problem of financial responsibility. Rose was this time consulted by the Admiralty concerning protection of the oil pipeline which ran along the Forth and Clyde canal:

I said that we could of course ask the police of the counties where the pumping stations are, to give special attention to the stations, but that they could not provide continuous watching. There were objections to increasing the police forces for temporary purposes and the appointment of police would be expensive. I suggested that the Chief Constables might be asked by the Admiralty to select men as watchmen and have them sworn in as Special Constables.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> NRS, HH55/62

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*

The Admiralty made a formal request for assistance but the Scottish Office was in no real position to help and they were determined that they would not incur the cost of recruiting extra police. However, in their reply to the Admiralty in January 1921, Munro made a suggestion, which, had it been taken up may have had far reaching consequences:

It would probably be possible to engage a force of Special Constables for the duty under the general control of the Chief Constables. Such a force would cost less than an equal number of ordinary Constables. It is understood however, that it is intended that the men would be armed, and the Secretary for Scotland would have great difficulty in assenting to the arming of Special Constables in such circumstances.

In all the circumstances, the Secretary for Scotland would suggest that their Lordships should consider whether their object could not be attained by the recruiting of a special body of watchmen – possibly army and navy pensioners – who would form a uniformed and disciplined force and would be armed.

Sir John Lamb<sup>80</sup>

What in effect Munro proposed was the formation of a uniformed and armed militia to guard a military installation. The rather vague notion that they would be found from navy and army pensioners would very probably not have reflected the reality. Considering that the Orange Order made frequent representations to be allowed to do this sort of work it is not hard to envisage the take up of posts in this force. At any rate it is highly unlikely that anyone from an Irish Catholic background would have been recruited. The idea of Special Constables or picked watchmen had connotations of the B Specials in Ulster. Had Scotland gone down this route it is difficult to see how any force recruited to guard against Sinn Fein could have been anything other than wholly Protestant, if not entirely Orange.

As it turned out the Admiralty apparently did not reply to the Scottish Office's letter, very probably because the Truce and Treaty negotiations rendered them redundant. In which case it is possible that Scotland escaped what could have been a very divisive development especially in view of what was to come with the emergence of growing sectarian tensions in the 1920s and 1930s. Nonetheless, there were those in senior positions in Scotland that believed they were in a war situation and that the enemy was capable of deploying a

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<sup>80</sup> NRS, HH55/62, Sir John Lamb Permanent Under Secretary Scottish Office 1921-1923

considerable force in the middle of Scotland. They had had in fact an almighty fright that arguably ranked alongside the threat of Bolshevik revolution from Clydeside workers.

#### V Aftermath: 'The Irish Menace'

*They cannot be assimilated or absorbed in to the Scottish race. They remain a people by themselves, segregated by reason of their race, their customs, their traditions, and above all by their loyalty to their Church and gradually and inevitably dividing Scotland racially, socially and ecclesiastically.*<sup>81</sup>

The Sinn Fein campaign remains a contentious one in Scotland. As was pointed out in the introduction to this chapter there are differing opinions on the effectiveness of the campaign in military terms. Hart makes the point that 'If success is measured in terms of public and governmental attention and alarm, the guerrillas achieved what they set out to do. The IRA threat was the subject of numerous Cabinet reports and discussions. It was raised regularly in the House of Commons. It provoked an unprecedented and highly visible internal security regime. Most importantly it provoked headlines.'<sup>82</sup> Certainly this conclusion is borne out by the documents considered here. Nonetheless there was a peculiarly Scottish dimension to the period. Hart perceptively states that 'It is its identity as much as its violence which makes the IRA in Britain historically significant... All these organisations had also internalized a very British sense of localism, *with the movement as a whole split at the Scottish border*'<sup>83</sup> (my italics). It is certainly the case that the activities of the IRA in Scotland differed from those in England. It has been argued here that the threat of action was as useful to the IRA as a cover for their gun-running activities and that there is evidence that the IRA, or more likely the IRB, were deliberately fostering the idea amongst the authorities in Scotland that there was a large potential armed force in Scotland which, had it existed, would have been beyond the capability of the civil police forces to control. It may well have been the case that much of the activities in terms of illegal drilling took place in order to promote this perception. O'Cathain has shown that Collins used trusted IRB men like Vize and Furlong to control his munitions stream in Scotland. The fact that there were undoubted tensions inside the IRA in Scotland

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<sup>81</sup>The Scotsman, May 15<sup>th</sup> 1923 p10, Report by the Church of Scotland Church and Nation Committee The Menace of the Irish Race to our Scottish Nationality

<sup>82</sup> P. Hart, *Operations Abroad*, pp101-102

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*

may well have been caused by the need to keep the Volunteers out of the gun-running operations and yet give the appearance to the authorities that there was a substantial armed threat. It is a not unreasonable proposition that as long as the police were chasing a phantom 'army' around the Ochil Hills or, has been seen, the streets of Barrhead they would not be concentrating on the more important arms routes. O'Cathain states that 'The agreed premise is tight IRB control of arms procurement and supply, deliberate obfuscation of the IRA, and a similar ostracisation of the Volunteers from full access to funds.'<sup>84</sup> If, as has been suggested here, the IRA in Scotland were deliberately not engaged but being used as a distraction it may go some way to explaining the bitterness of the 'Scottish Accounts' wrangle and why disgruntled IRA men in Glasgow who felt left out of the action may have appealed to Brugha as minister of Defence. O'Cathain points out that the only Volunteers' action, the 'Smashing of the Van' in 1921, was contrary to the wishes of Dublin. '...a rescue attempt for an 'on-the-run' Sligo IRA leader, Frank Carty who had fled to Glasgow after escaping from jail in Northern Ireland. The resulting 'Smashing of the Van' ended in two policemen being shot, one of whom was killed in a city centre shoot-out forever embedded in Glasgow mythology, a massive crackdown and round-up of republicans in Glasgow, no release for Carty and an incandescent Minister for Finance back in Dublin.'<sup>85</sup> Thus the only really notable action throughout the whole war in Scotland could have effectively scuppered a highly successful piece of intelligence deception and endangered the vital supply lines.

Nevertheless the 'Deception Plan,' deliberate or fortuitous, had a definite effect on the Scottish establishment. The traumatic experience of the Great War changed Scottish society for ever and its attitude to the Irish. Scotland had lost proportionately more men in battle per head of population than any other nation involved in the conflict and this was a shattering blow that left no community and scarcely any family in the land untouched. The profound effects on the national psyche were incalculable. The political results of the war also had an effect on the confidence of the establishment and its institutions. As has been pointed out the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia engendered a 'grand peur' in the upper and middle classes unseen since the French revolution. The crisis in confidence ended forever the Liberal hegemony in Scotland as the middle classes rushed to the safety of the Conservatives and the working class to the hope of the Labour Party. The Irish issue itself disappeared off the political radar for England but it came haunt Scotland in a different guise throughout the inter-war years.

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<sup>84</sup> M. O'Cathain, *Michael Collins and Scotland*, p168

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid* p11

The Irish War of Independence between 1919 and 1921 must have been profoundly unsettling viewed from the perspective of Presbyterian Scotland. It is perhaps difficult from the perspective of the secular twenty-first century to conceive how much of Scotland's identity was a Presbyterian identity, certainly for the middle classes. If one considers the family background of Munro for example, he was the son of a Free Church minister and his maternal grandfather was also a Church of Scotland minister. His first wife was similarly a daughter of the manse.<sup>86</sup> The Civil Service and the legal establishment were men of a similar stamp, in many cases Church elders as well as professionals and these were the men who would have had access, directly in some cases, and through connections in others, to at least some of the information contained in the documents examined above<sup>87</sup>. They were also men who had in a comparatively short space of time seen all the assumptions of superiority with which they had grown up profoundly challenged. Three hundred years of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland collapsed as a British Empire, which had emerged victorious at phenomenal cost from the greatest conflict in history, had been apparently fought to a standstill by the despised Irish. Not only that, but their co-religionists, who had loudly proclaimed their loyalty to that Empire, had been reduced to ruling a laager of six counties still with a dangerously disloyal element, while a Catholic state had been set up not only a short journey away but within what had been a unitary state. This war had also been fought on their own territory. At any time there might have been an 'outrage' on the streets and certainly the authorities believed that at one stage there was an Irish Army in the west of Scotland. These dangerous and disloyal radicals were now making common cause with the socialists.

By May 1922 the brief post war boom was ending and Scotland was entering what would be an almost twenty year economic slump. The immediate hopes of the post war period were waning and the country entered a crisis of confidence and identity as the pre-war arrogance gave way to uncertainty and mass unemployment. At the same time the Church of Scotland's General Assembly took its first steps in a concerted anti-Irish campaign. That this was to be a racial as well as a religious campaign can be seen from the speech of the Rev Duncan Cameron who asserted that 'Roman Catholics of Irish origin were not only alien to Scots in religion; they were alien in race. They had come to Scotland to take jobs from

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<sup>86</sup> G. F. Millar, 'Munro, Robert, Baron Alness (1868-1955) *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, Oxford

<sup>87</sup> The term men is used advisedly here. This is not to say that middle class Scottish women did not share these views, they most certainly did. It is simply because the political, legal and church establishment at the time was almost exclusively male.

Scottish workers to exploit Scotland's welfare system and to stir labour unrest. Their presence had a still more sinister aspect...There was a conspiracy on the part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to bring Scotland under Roman domination.'<sup>88</sup> The General Assembly appointed a committee of leading churchman to examine the problem of Irish Catholics in Scotland. The result in 1923 was the report to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on the Irish Problem entitled *The Menace of the Irish race to our Scottish nationality*. The irony about this document is that the Irish, even during the 'war' were never much of a menace and certainly were not during the twenties and thirties but the language used in the General Assembly of 1923 was of a 'menace' to be combated. The *Scotsman* report of the speech of the Rev. William Main who introduced the report illustrates the political as well as the religious anxieties

The problem was both a political and religious one. The political influence in this (Irish) immigration was already seen in the West. It was very largely due to that fact that they had in the House of Commons... men who represented or were supposed to represent constituencies in Glasgow and the West but who did not represent them really. (Applause). They had been elected...just by the fact that they had this enormous Irish Roman Catholic population in this area. And hence the type of men they had there were bringing disgrace and scandal on the House of Commons.... When it came to pass in certain localities that the Irish population were in the majority both in religious influence and in respect of the control of the polls those men and women held the balance of power. That was the danger that was the problem that was before the country at the present time.<sup>89</sup>

It was not a long step from an armed Irish 'army' of 30,000 in the West and the fears of the Chief Constable of Glasgow, to the idea of an Irish political 'army' in the West electing the dangerous Bolsheviks of the ILP. The fact that, of the men bringing 'disgrace and scandal on the House of Commons,' ten were members of the Church, one of whom had been a missionary and the other, a minister, as was vehemently pointed out by the ILP two days

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<sup>88</sup> S. J. Brown, "Outside the Covenant": the Scottish Presbyterian Church and Irish Immigration, 1922-1938 *Innes Review* 42;1 (1991), pp19-20

<sup>89</sup> *The Scotsman*, May 30<sup>th</sup> 1923 p8

later, mattered not.<sup>90</sup> Truth in politics tends to be what is believed by the majority at any given moment.

The *Scotsman* leader of the following day concurred with the report's analysis. Entitled 'The Irish in Scotland: A Serious Problem' the fears of an Irish take over had gone from a military to a social and political threat:

The danger lies in the influence the immigrants by their increasing numbers are able to exert in the life of the community in educational, municipal and parliamentary affairs....the Irish form the most solid bloc among the newcomers. They are bound together by religious ties, which are preserved in their attitudes to social and political questions. They vote practically as one man, and their numbers are such that they virtually hold the balance in municipal and parliamentary polls in certain districts. It was largely due to the Irish vote that so many Socialists were elected to the present parliament by the West of Scotland.<sup>91</sup>

By 1923 it was obvious that large and influential segments of Scottish society had come to fear the Irish in their midst. Ironically the fears of Irish immigration in the twenties and thirties were groundless as the economic conditions slowed it to a trickle and yet a specifically anti-Irish campaign carried on. The basis of this chapter has been to suggest that some of the roots of that campaign lie in the events of the Irish War of Independence and its specific effect on the leaders of a significant section of Scottish opinion. The analysis of the official documentation of the time demonstrates how Sinn Fein, often divided and fractious in Scotland, was yet portrayed as serious military threat.

The Irish Disturbances files do not portray the Scottish Office as a dynamic department of state. It was often nervous, constantly looking over its shoulder to the Cabinet for policy advice and ready to believe exaggerated intelligence reports of the threat it faced and yet too often too timid, and too penny pinching, to take action. It displayed a lack of self-belief that in many ways became endemic in Scotland in the inter-war years. On the other hand its inertia may have been its saving grace. The idea floated that a uniformed force of armed ex-service men be recruited to protect the Navy's pipeline thankfully never came to pass. Perhaps this was too uncomfortably redolent of the 'Black and Tans,' or at least the B Specials, to be contemplated in Scotland. Equally the wilder demands from Procurator Fiscals

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*

and Chief Constables were quietly shelved. The overwhelming impression is that the Scottish Office feared that if they had not lost control of the country it could have happened at any time. It is precisely that same fear of losing control that permeated the anti-Irish campaigns of the twenties and thirties. An educated elite, many of whom would have considered themselves liberal (with a small l), all of whom would have considered themselves Christian, lent support and crucial respectability to a campaign of effective demonization of the Catholic Irish in Scotland. To middle class Scotland the creation of a Catholic Irish Free State was a defeat for the Empire, it was a defeat for previously unassailable Protestantism and it was a defeat on their own doorstep.

## Chapter Two

### An Inferior Race

*With the census report of 1871 the Committee hold that this invasion of the Irish is likely to produce far more serious effects upon Scotland than even the invasion of warlike hordes of Saxons, Danes and Northmen.'*

Report of the Joint Committee of the Scottish Presbyterian Churches on Immigration

19<sup>th</sup> July 1928<sup>92</sup>

#### *I Introduction*

The 1920s should have been a triumphant period for the Church of Scotland. It achieved union with the United Free Church ending in large part the schism of the 1843 'Disruption.' It successfully piloted two bills through Parliament establishing a new system of church finance and squaring the circle between establishment and disestablishment giving the 'Established Church' in Scotland far greater powers than its counterpart in England for it was "recognised" by the state to be independent in doctrine and government.<sup>93</sup> It had, as its most eminent churchmen, Dr John White, a skilled political operator as well as a considerable scholar with undoubted powers of leadership, and Lord Sands,<sup>94</sup> one of the foremost Scottish judges and lay churchmen of his day. It was hoped by many contemporary ministers that the post war period would see the return of the Church of Scotland to the centrality of Scottish life, not only spiritually, but also in cultural and political terms. The Kirk would regain its place as the leader and arbiter of Scotland. In effect there would be a new 'covenant' where all sections of society would coalesce around a Scottish identity that was paternal, Protestant and led by the 'Auld Kirk'.

On the other hand, as Callum Brown points out, the war had changed society profoundly:

Churchmen were shaken by what appeared to be public indifference to the churches as institutions, but they were also racked with doubt concerning the theological implications of the war...the war had severe consequences for the social vision of the

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<sup>92</sup> John White Papers, *Irish Immigration* Box 103, New College Library, University of Edinburgh.

<sup>93</sup> J G Kellas, *Modern Scotland: The Nation since 1870* (Pall Mall, London, 1968), p63.

<sup>94</sup> Sir Christopher Nicholson Johnston, Lord Sands, (1857-1934), Unionist MP for Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities 1916 to 1917, Senator of the College of Justice.

Presbyterian churches. Initially filling them with self-confidence regarding their place in a society that required moral and spiritual direction in the midst of crisis by 1916 and 1917 the experience of war had led to a failure of hope for a religious revival in Scotland.<sup>95</sup>

Much of what has been written about Scotland in the inter-war period refers to a crisis of confidence amongst the Scottish middle classes. In the case of the Presbyterian Churches this crisis may also be considered as something of a Protestant panic. Brown cites John Wolff on the effects of the Great War on religious organisations:

British society during the war, and religious organisations in particular evoke the image of a fitness and health food fanatic who, after a long period of life afflicted by nothing worse than colds and migraines, has to face up to the awareness that he has a disabling cancer.<sup>96</sup>

Scottish Presbyterianism, despite its tendency to split over matters of a doctrinal and administrative nature, had not had cause to doubt its pre-eminent position for almost two centuries. The war, however, had forced it to consider the idea that it may have lost its hold on the nation. The effects of trench warfare and the prospect of imminent death may have turned the soldiers thoughts towards God but not in the manner hoped for by the Church. A report published in 1919 entitled *The Army and Religion*, the Rev David Cairns, Professor of Dogmatics and Apologetics at the Free Church College in Aberdeen, noted ‘that the men who had been in the trenches had experienced an awakening of the primitive religious convictions - God, Prayer, Immortality, but they did not associate these with Jesus Christ, that their thought of God was not Christianised.’<sup>97</sup> Or as another observer noted, ‘The soldier has got religion, I am not so sure that he has got Christianity.’<sup>98</sup> In any case the post war world was not one in which Protestantism, never mind the Church of Scotland, could take its position for granted. This realisation prompted the Churches for the first time to take serious note of their Catholic neighbours. Faced with dwindling attendances and what appeared to be an increasingly secularised, and indeed paganised, pleasure-seeking society the apparent loyalty

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<sup>95</sup> C.G. Brown, Piety, Gender and War in Scotland in the 1910s, in C. M. MacDonald and E. W. McFarland (eds.), *Scotland and the Great War*, (Tuckwell, East Linton, 1999), p174

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid* p 174

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid* pp178-9

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid* p179

of the Catholic Irish to their Church stood as something of a rebuke and a threat. If the Protestant Churches could not hold on to Scotland then there appeared the possibility, even if it was no more than a possibility, that they could be supplanted by Catholicism.

As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the events of the Irish War of Independence had a marked effect on the upper echelons of Scottish society but why was that effect so profound on the Presbyterian churches? After all, as far as the political classes were concerned, the Irish problem was now off the agenda with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the setting up of the Free State. Prior to the First World War the Church itself had had little to do with extreme anti-Catholicism. The Disruption of 1843 may have altered the centrality of the Established Church in Scottish life but did not alter the perception that Scottish Presbyterianism was a matter of national and international import and whatever its form, was the settled religion of the country. The Catholic Church in Scotland was not considered a threat to that order. Thomas Chalmers, who was to become leader of the Free Church, had been the main speaker at a rally in 1829 in favour of Catholic emancipation. Even the massive numbers of Irish immigrants that flooded into Scotland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the wake of the famine and to provide the manual labour for industrial Scotland, while undoubtedly provoking clashes with native Scots, and particularly with Protestant Irish immigrants, did not promote Catholicism to the level of a challenge to Protestant Scotland. As Steve Bruce has pointed out: 'In class terms, the strongest opposition came from the skilled manual working class in those areas where it competed with Irish Catholics. But what is most significant, and what underlies the whole subsequent development of anti-Catholicism in Scotland, is the absence of any active anti-Catholicism from a large part of the leadership of the Churches.'<sup>99</sup> Essentially the Irish Catholics in Scotland were not worth the notice of a Presbyterian Church embroiled in its own controversies and the religion of navvies and parlour maids were of no concern to a Scottish middle class growing rich on the proceeds of Empire. If Irish Catholic labourers and Irish Protestant labourers wished to belabour each other in the working class districts of the West of Scotland, that was deplorable, but nonetheless an issue for magistrates not ministers.

The central questions of the 'sectarian issue' of the inter-war years are why the Irish, why then and why did the Church persist in a campaign for so long in the face of apparent public indifference? It has been suggested by Gallagher and Walker that this was a continuation of a Scottish tradition of 'No Popery'. 'Strongly worded attacks on the Catholic Irish presence in

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<sup>99</sup> S Bruce, *No Pope of Rome*, (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1985), p31

Scotland became a feature of the annual General Assembly of both the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church during the 1920s as senior clergymen, like the Very Reverend Dr John White, perhaps the most eminent Scottish churchman of the first half of the century, quietly endorsed the bitter critique of inveterate No Popery campaigners.<sup>100</sup> Undoubtedly there were elements of this in the campaign but the Church, particularly in the person of White, vehemently, and none too ‘quietly’ asserted that the anti-Irish campaign was a racial and not a religious issue. Professor S.J. Brown has pointed out that ‘leading churchmen sought to place the national Church of Scotland at the head of a nativist anti-Catholic movement and to make the Church the defender, not only of the Reformed Faith but of the Scottish ‘race’ as well’.<sup>101</sup> Scholars of the period have generally made reference to the racial nature of the campaign and the particular demonization of the Irish. The Irish had been a threat to the peace, they appeared to be a threat to the political and social order, and in the Church’s case for the first time in over three hundred years Catholicism was a credible rival, not simply because the Irish had suddenly become more assertive but because Presbyterianism in comparison appeared to be in decline. How then was Presbyterianism to respond? An attack on the Catholic Irish purely on grounds of religion would have begged many questions about the validity of an Established Church and of the place it claimed in Scottish society. Besides such an attack would lay them open to charges of religious bigotry and reduce the effectiveness of any appeal it made to government and the wider public. An argument had to be found that would be based on wider considerations than the purely religious and that could be presented as a defence of the national interest.

It is for this reason that this chapter will focus on the intellectual justifications behind the Church’s campaign. The notes in the John White papers held in New College Library on the subject of Irish immigration and on the concepts of race and class in general provide an insight into the mental processes of the Church and its leading figures. Much scholarly time has been spent in Scotland on the question of ‘identity.’ Here, however, we have a national institution that not only considered itself, but proclaimed itself, the guardian of Scottish identity while seeking to re-establish an identity for itself at the same time. This may sound like the paradigm for a peculiarly Scottish form of schizophrenia but to understand the Church’s quest for an intellectual base for its position in the 1920s is to understand the larger question of Scotland’s view of itself and its position in the wider world in the inter war

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<sup>100</sup> G. Walker and T. Gallagher, *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Culture in Modern Scotland*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p97

<sup>101</sup> S.J. Brown, ‘Outside the Covenant’: Scottish Presbyterian Churches and Irish Immigration 1922-38. *Innes Review* Volume 42;1, (Spring 1991), p20

period. It is also important to make a distinction between the arguments of the 1920s and the 1930s. It should be remembered that at this stage this was an argument of an elite, for an elite. White would never have considered himself a demagogue in the later Ratcliffe and Cormack mould. He genuinely believed he was making a philosophical, scientific, political and moral argument and that this argument was one with which he believed that the political and social elite of Scotland would have, or should have, been in sympathy.

The more spectacular, if brief, events of the 1930s can tend to overshadow what was for the best part of a decade a discussion between a particular intellectual, social and political stratum in Scotland, and between men who were largely intimately acquainted with each other. More fundamentally it was an argument about what Scotland was and what it would become conducted, not just by a church, but by a class which had lost the certainties of the past and was fearful of its position in the future. What did it mean to be Scottish for the middle and upper classes when the economic conditions had undermined the country's position as partner in Empire and where the loyalty and massive sacrifices of the Great War seemed to count for little? (White's own son had been killed while serving in the Royal Flying Corps). The Catholic and inferior Irish seemed to be taken more seriously by the British Government than the loyal, Protestant and self-evidently superior Scots. It would have to be proved, and proved scientifically, that the Irish were of an inferior 'type' to the Scots and that toleration of Irish immigration was risking the social, moral and economic stability of the country.

## *II A Christian Commonwealth*

It would appear from White's pronouncements on the issue of Irish immigration that there was an almost authoritarian and indeed monolithic concept behind the Church's thinking. As S.J. Brown has pointed out 'their idea of the Christian Commonwealth was based on an exclusive idea of a national church, one that called for a racial and cultural homogeneity. The national Church of Scotland was to represent a Scottish national character, and include among its teachings a 'scientific' racism in which the separation of the races was part of the divinely-ordained natural order.'<sup>102</sup> There was, however, another strand to Church thinking and it is well to pause at this stage and consider what was meant by a Christian Commonwealth and whether White's concept was a universal one shared by all members of the Presbyterian Church. The idea of *Christ's Kingdom on Earth* as a theological and,

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<sup>102</sup> S.J. Brown, The Campaign for the Christian Commonwealth in W.M. Jacob and Nigel Yates (eds.), *Crown and Mitre: Religion and Society in Northern Europe since the Reformation*, (Boydell, Woodbridge, 1993), p219

importantly, social concept was one that had a variety of interpretations within Presbyterianism. In the years prior to the Great War the concept of Christ's kingdom came under new theological and social scrutiny. This section will attempt to put this idea into its context in the early twentieth century and demonstrate that not only was it complex but a continually shifting one.

The nineteenth century had seen a something of a reassessment of the traditional evangelical approach to social problems. While it is not unreasonable to point out that the orthodoxy, both political and ecclesiastical, that poverty and other social ills were a result of individual moral failing generally held sway it was certainly the case that this analysis was becoming increasingly questioned within the Church. Without digressing too far into nineteenth century church history it is useful to give some examples to demonstrate that there was a tradition in Presbyterianism that ran counter to White's conservatism with both a large and small c. For example Robert Flint (1834-1910) Professor of Moral Philosophy and Political Economy at St. Andrews and later Chair of Divinity at Edinburgh sought to look farther than simple evangelicalism as a means of engaging with the social problems created in the wake of industrialisation. As Johnston McKay has put it:

Somehow the Church had to escape from the trap of regarding the evangelical effectiveness of the parish church and minister as essential to the reduction of poverty and the improvement of social conditions. Robert Flint's book *Christ's Kingdom upon Earth* which contained his sermons on the parables of the Kingdom, gave the Church a new model to describe its relationship with society. He argued for cooperation with secular agencies and insisted that this would not undermine the influence of the Church. Put simply, cooperation was necessary practically but, more important, required theologically.<sup>103</sup>

The Kingdom of God was not then exclusively the Church. The secular had a part to play and the Church had to engage with the secular agencies or as Flint put it himself:

The Church is not the Kingdom of God, and these elements of social life in separating themselves from the church, have not separated themselves from the Kingdom of God; nay, by the very act of rejecting the control of the Church they set aside the mediation

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<sup>103</sup> J. McKay, *The Kirk and the Kingdom: A Century of Tension in Scottish Social Theology, 1830-1929*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p28.

of the Church between them and the Kingdom of God, and secured for themselves, as a portion of their independence, the right of standing in immediate contact with the Word and the kingdom of God.<sup>104</sup>

This, as Johnston McKay points out, is crucial in the development of later nineteenth century social theology. While there was some dispute as to how far the Church should be involved socially and politically in advancing the Kingdom, it did mean that there was more to the Kingdom than the Church alone.<sup>105</sup> This would be of considerable importance in the later development in the Church's arguments and in the fundamentally contradictory stance it would adopt in the 1920s. In the immediate it had an effect on the development of later nineteenth century social thought in the Church particularly by the 1890s.

The appalling squalor of nineteenth century urban industrialised Glasgow prompted the Church to become more engaged with the social conditions around them. For example 'Of all the children who died in Glasgow before the age of five, 32 per cent died in one roomed houses compared with 2 per cent in five roomed houses.'<sup>106</sup> In 1888 the Church of Scotland's Glasgow Presbytery set up a housing commission to investigate conditions of slum housing in the city led by three ministers John Marshall Lang (1834-1909), Frederick Lockhart Robertson (1827-1892) and Donald Macleod (1831-1916). While it is true that their approach was not identical it was certainly the case that they all had been influenced by Flintian ideas of Christ's kingdom. In fact both Lang and MacLeod were friends and neighbours and had been contemporaries of Flint at Glasgow University. Lang's approach to social issues was concerned with the 'extent of poverty and the "threat" of socialism and some reactions to them both secular and Christian.'<sup>107</sup> His criticism of socialism rested largely on its lack of a religious element but he recognised that the humanitarian efforts of individuals were not distinctively Christian but were nevertheless influenced by Christian thought. MacLeod differed from Lang in what he believed social reform could achieve. For Lang the emphasis was an evangelical one to encourage individuals to return to the Church. For MacLeod there was a greater purpose. In a speech to the General Assembly of 1889 he stated that:

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<sup>104</sup> R. Flint, Christ's Kingdom upon Earth in J. McKay, *The Kirk and the Kingdom*, p32

<sup>105</sup> J. McKay, *The Kirk and the Kingdom*, p32

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid* p43

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid* p45

If we are entering on this battle against the evils of society for the object of getting our Churches filled and our Church statistics run up; if in going to the people we give them the slightest suspicion that the chief end we have in view is to get them to go 'to our Church', we will fail and deservedly fail.<sup>108</sup>

Despite their differences of approach both Lang and MacLeod recognised that the Church's social theology had to engage with the wider world rather than remain as a purely in house affair. The significance of this point in the affairs of the Church of the 1920s will become apparent later on but to give some idea of how it was carried out in practice it is necessary to take a brief look at the Presbytery of Glasgow's Housing Commission.

The Reverend Frederick Lockhart Robertson was minister for St Andrews parish Glasgow an area with some of the worst housing conditions in the City. In 1888 the Presbytery of Glasgow met to discuss the social conditions of the poor and the 'evils of intemperance.' Robertson was successful not only in convincing the Presbytery to set up a Housing Commission to look into housing conditions in the city but, equally significantly, to include outside expertise in that commission. It should be noted that although this was a hugely significant step in the Church's social engagement it did not mean that the idea of individual responsibility for the conditions of the poor had been discarded. As Johnston McKay has argued:

Because the Presbytery appointed a Commission and recognised that there were economic and structural causes of poverty, there has been a tendency to assume wrongly that blaming poor social conditions on personal irresponsibility had been abandoned. It also has to be recognised that while the Presbytery had rightly been praised for its initiative in setting up the Commission, very few of its members expressed the same sort of interest in social conditions as did Robertson, Marshall Lang and MacLeod.<sup>109</sup>

It could also be argued that the Commission was overly influenced by the landlord interest and did not totally abandon the innate conservatism of the Church. Nevertheless, the efforts of Marshall Lang, MacLeod and Robertson in raising the social conscience of the Church mark an important point in the development of social theology and social engagement by the

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<sup>108</sup> Donald MacLeod in J. McKay, *Kirk and the Kingdom*, p50

<sup>109</sup> J. McKay, *Kirk and the Kingdom*, p54

Church. Although he did not live to see it Robertson's efforts were instrumental in the setting up of the Glasgow Workmen's Dwelling Company which raised £40,000 and which bought and renovated twenty-six slum properties and erected six new tenements. This was the Flintian concept of Christ's Kingdom in action.

There was, however, another interpretation of Christ's Kingdom that to all intents and purposes was the direct negative of Flint and which specifically repudiated the idea of Church involvement in social and political issues. One of the leading advocates of this position was William Maccallum Clow (1853-1930) Principal of the United Free Church's Trinity College in Glasgow and author of *Christ and the Social Order* published in 1913. The following quotation is a reasonable summary of his views:

The Church's duty is not to make laws, not to lobby public questions, not to pronounce on the matter of hours and wages, not to play policeman in the streets, but to make men of faith.<sup>110</sup>

Essentially it was not the Church's place to become involved in, or pronounce on the political and social issues of the day. It was an inherently conservative position in both a political and theological sense. The existing social order, and economic orthodoxies were not to be challenged by ministers. It was a position that would have some resonance with predominately middle class congregations. While it has been argued, and the point is made in the introduction of this chapter, that the war and its immediate aftermath had a profound effect in turning the Churches to the right, it should also be pointed out that in the period running up to the beginning of the Great War there were many social issues that would have greatly perturbed the middle classes. Lloyd George's social reforms, the increased industrial strife and the Home Rule crisis in Ireland would have been seen by some as indicative of wide social unrest. Christian Socialism or even social activism on the part of the Church, would not have been viewed favourably by those who considered the Church, and their membership of it, as an arm of the establishment and defender of the social and economic status quo. In essence the Church should stay out of politics and economics as it was not qualified to pronounce on either. It should instead concentrate on evangelicalism and improving the morals of the individual. Nonetheless it is certainly true that in the period leading up to the Great War that there was an increased activism in the Church and the

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<sup>110</sup> W. Clow, in J. McKay *Kirk and the Kingdom* p65

impetus for union between the established Church and the United Free Church saw both engaging in social issues like poverty and housing in a more concrete way than simple apolitical evangelicalism. It also has to be pointed out that pious non-involvement in politics and economics was not as apolitical as all that. In the words of the hymn *All things bright and beautiful*:

‘The rich man in his castle  
The poor man at his gate  
God made them high and lowly  
And ordered their estate.’

Although this was an Anglican hymn there were those in the Kirk who considered the existing social order to be divinely ordained or at least something that it was not the Churches place to criticise. This was as much a political position as Christian socialism. It was a position that the Churches would adopt in the 1920s with the major exception of the anti-Irish campaign which in itself was a ‘conservative’ cause.

The Great War was initially perceived ‘as a religious crusade, which would unite and transform the nation under God’s will’.<sup>111</sup> There were hopes that it would bring about a religious revival and a turning away from frivolous pre-war pleasures. A revivalist campaign amongst the troops in Scotland claimed 12,000 converts.<sup>112</sup> ‘Supporters were confident that the revival beginning among the troops would spread to the nation at large: the Presbyterian Churches needed only to hold out their hands to catch the ripened fruit.’<sup>113</sup> The war was just, the cause was moral and Christ was on their side. As S.J. Brown has pointed out not every minister was quite so enthusiastic. James Barr, minister of the United Free Church in St Mary’s Govan and later a Labour MP was threatened with dismissal for his ‘outspoken advocacy of peace negotiations.’<sup>114</sup> As the war wore on and the full horror of the trenches became apparent hopes of religious revival faded. At home the effects of the Glasgow rent strike and other industrial unrest began to be felt as socialist politicians denounced what they saw as a capitalist war. The troops, who the Churches had thought would lead the revival, appeared indifferent to organised religion and showed little respect to its moral teachings.

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<sup>111</sup> S.J. Brown, ‘A Solemn Purification by Fire; Responses to the Great War in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches 1914-1919, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42;4, (October 1991).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid* p89

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid* p89

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid* p90

The Church was seen as a self-interested body which had little relevance in righting the social ills of the day.<sup>115</sup>

By 1916 both Churches set up Commissions on the war comprised of clerical and lay membership and presented their reports in May 1917. Their conclusions were radical. They condemned what they saw as the selfish materialism of pre-war society. 'The war...had arisen out of the predominant materialism of Western culture, the decline of Christian belief and the abandonment of Christian morality.'<sup>116</sup> While Germany was the main culprit all the combatant nations were guilty of this failing. This was quite a fundamental criticism to make in the middle of a war with the outcome still far from decided. Equally radical was the conclusion that as the war called for national as well as individual repentance there was a place for the Church in National reconstruction which would lead to a more socially just society. The Commissions engaged with the work of the Government's Committee on Reconstruction, set up in March 1917, to tackle social problems after the war. The Church of Scotland commission invited experts to contribute papers on major social issues published in 1918 under the title *Social evils and Problems*.<sup>117</sup> Both Churches also revived the plans for union which had been suspended since the start of the war. This activity, as S.J. Brown has shown, was not entirely to the liking of the more conservative elements in the Church. The 'ideas of national sin and corporate repentance had become alien to Scottish Presbyterians ... and Scottish Presbyterianism had become individualistic in its piety and largely voluntary in its organisation.'<sup>118</sup> The more 'socialistic' elements of the programme alarmed some, especially with rising social and industrial unrest. There was a fear that the Church would be seen to be taking sides in the political arena, and not the side with which their largely middle class congregations would be comfortable.

By the end of the war Scotland was a nation in mourning. The horrendous battle casualties had a profound effect on society and initially there were hopes that Church and state could work in conjunction for the reconstruction of post war society and the creation of the truly Christian commonwealth. Hopes that had been raised during the war on social issues were, however, soon to be dashed although this was not immediately apparent at the time. At the first post war General Assembly:

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid* p95

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid* p97

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid* p98

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid* p99

The Church of Scotland transformed its Commission on the War into a permanent Church and Nation Committee, instructed to guide the work of building the Christian commonwealth in all its aspects, including the social and industrial. At the close of the Assembly, the Moderator, Professor W.P. Paterson of Edinburgh University, called on the Scottish nation to ‘covenant together’ in the work of reconstruction.<sup>119</sup>

Unfortunately these words were superseded by outside events. As mentioned in Chapter One the Bolshevik revolution had engendered a ‘Grand Peur’ in the Scottish middle classes heightened by the industrial unrest and the events in George Square in Glasgow in 1919. The General election of 1918 had returned a Conservative dominated coalition. The Liberal Party, once dominant in Scotland entered a sharp decline as the middle classes fled to the perceived protection of the Unionists from the rise of Labour. It was equally true that the Coalition were determined to roll back wartime controls and return society to an economic status quo ante bellum.

For the Churches to cling to their wartime pledges to work for radical social and industrial reconstruction based on cooperation would be to set themselves against the stated policies of the Conservative dominated coalition and align themselves with the Labour opposition. This would not be acceptable to middle class Presbyterians, who provided most of the financial and organisational support for the churches and who had little sympathy for Labour politics. In the event, church leaders decided to follow the Government’s lead and withdraw from the call for social and industrial reconstruction.<sup>120</sup>

While this meant the effective end of meaningful calls for social reform and the apparent triumph of the traditional ‘Clow’ position it did not mean the end of the Christian commonwealth or the ‘political’ Church. The Church, especially under the leadership of John White, would concentrate on improving its efficiency and refuse to criticise the economic and social order ‘which meant that they gave tacit support to the revival of competitive industrial capitalism with its accompanying social inequalities.’<sup>121</sup> This attempt to define the Christian

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<sup>119</sup> S.J. Brown, The Campaign for the Christian Commonwealth in Scotland 1919-1939 in W.M. Jacob and N. Yates (eds.), *Crown and Mitre: Religion and Society in Northern Europe since the Reformation*, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1993), pp205-206.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid* p206

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid* p207

commonwealth as one largely parish based and 'non-political' or at least non-confrontational to the established order was one that would be put to the test during the General Strike. The strenuous efforts the Church made to hold on to its position of political detachment during that crisis stand in marked contradiction to its anti-Irish campaign which, as will be argued here was intensely political, and in some ways, highly sophisticated one. Before examining this, however, it is well to consider how the Churches tried to reconcile its apparently irreconcilable by considering the Church response to the events of 1926. The attitudes displayed and the positions adopted in this crisis highlight the very different approach taken towards the issue of Irish immigration in the 1920s.

The General Strike in 1926 occurred in White's first Moderatorial year. It confronted both the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, who by this time had succeeded in overcoming the parliamentary hurdles to union, with a challenge to their position of non-involvement in political and social issues. The strike had been brought about by the proposed reduction in miners' wages in April 1926. Having already suffered from a previous reduction in 1921 the unions refused to accept and in May the TUC ordered a co-ordinated response and on midnight 3<sup>rd</sup> May the General Strike began. The Churches were now in an invidious position. The claims of moral and national leadership, which had been such a feature of the Union campaign, meant that the Churches could not remain silent. In fact 'the pressure on Scottish church leaders to do something was increased by the highly visible role played by the leaders of the Church of England, and especially by Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury.'<sup>122</sup> Davidson made attempts to mediate the strike and made a public appeal to all parties to resume negotiations. For the United Free Church and the established Church some sort of response was required. In many cases there was thunderous denunciation of the strike from the pulpit although it has to be said that there were equally many cases where individual ministers refused to join in the general condemnation. For the enemies of the strike, however, there was no equivocation. 'James Harvey, moderator of the United Free Church, denounced in his sermon not only the strike but trade unionism in general as an unchristian curb on the industry and ambition of individual workers.'<sup>123</sup> This was rather at odds with idea of the Church being unqualified to pronounce on economic and political matters. The joint statement put out by the moderators of both Churches, while somewhat less strident in tone, focused on the evils of the strike. It was a selective impartiality. The Church still claimed it

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<sup>122</sup> S.J. Brown, 'A Victory for God': The Scottish Presbyterian Churches and the General Strike of 1926, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 42:4 (October, 1991) p603

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid* p604

was not competent to make pronouncements on questions of economics that lay behind the strike.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand it could still effectively condemn the strike and the strikers. It was a stance that gained the approbation of the *Scotsman* but it was a logical inconsistency that was on a par, as will be seen, with its position on Irish immigration.

The General Strike was called off by the TUC after nine days and the miners were left to carry on alone. For James Harvey of the United Free Church this was nothing less than a 'Victory for God.' White was less strident, calling for national reconciliation while at the same time holding on to the position of non-interference in politics. The General Assemblies of both churches had been adjourned for two weeks after the Moderatorial addresses due to the disruption caused by the strike and in the interim the Assemblies received a request to receive a deputation from the miners' union to put their case. White had, after all, made an offer of mediation in his Moderatorial address. This immediately raised the issue of the Church's competence to pronounce on the issue and reception of the delegation was vehemently opposed by the more conservative elements who were of the opinion that receiving the delegation would be a definite sign of meddling with economic law. There was also some disquiet that the miners might actually influence opinion. In the event they need not have worried. Both Assemblies agreed to hear the miners' deputation after also issuing an invitation to the coal owners to put their side of the dispute, an invitation which was declined. The miners' deputation was given a polite hearing but little in the way of encouragement although White did point out that the miners did a difficult and dangerous job and many had served in the war. The prevailing opinion in both Assemblies became more apparent when a few days later Stanley Baldwin, in conjunction with the Secretary of State for Scotland, Sir John Gilmour, made an unprecedented appearance at both gatherings and was given a rousing reception for his stand on the General Strike. The Assemblies repeatedly stated that they could not pronounce on political issues but apparently that did not mean that could not give some expression as to where their sympathies lay. White made one further attempt to offer mediation which was rebuffed by the coal owners who again pointed out that the Church itself had resolutely disclaimed any competence in economic matters. The Churches, despite an ill-fated attempt by the United Free Church to organise an evangelical campaign against the socialist 'enemy' in West Fife,<sup>125</sup> remained largely onlookers for the rest of the dispute.

This slight digression into the events of the General Strike may not at first seem directly related to the anti-Irish campaign but it raises several important points about the nature of the

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid* p604

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid* p611-614

Churches social and political engagement which will become apparent with a closer examination of the campaign itself. Firstly with the defeat of social progressivism in the early the 1920s the Church proclaimed it lacked the competence to pronounce on social and economic conditions and tacitly, if not overtly, supported the economic status quo and yet a large part of the argument for introduction of immigration restriction would rest on these factors. Secondly, if the Christian commonwealth was henceforward to be defined in a racial and national way it would require the active cooperation of the secular agencies most notably the Government, which in turn would require the Churches to engage directly with those agencies. It would in effect have to lobby for a policy to decide who was deserving of citizenship and who was not, to be a judge and divider of men, the very same thing it repeatedly claimed it was not. Finally it would have to find an intellectual justification for all these apparent contradictions and it for this reason it is well to turn to a closer examination of the Church's dominant personality Dr John White.

### *III The White View*

At this point it is necessary to briefly discuss the main primary sources for this section of the chapter, the John White papers, and their context. The Very Reverend Dr John White (1867-1951) is described by S. J. Brown in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography as 'outspoken with a forceful personality ...a dedicated pastor who embraced the social gospel ethos of the 1890s and was committed to restoring the social influence of the National Church of Scotland.'<sup>126</sup> In his correspondence he appears to have been a personally kindly man but no sufferer of fools and with an almost ruthless ambition for his Church. There is a telling passage in his papers where he quotes from an unnamed American source:

The preacher should enter politics for politics is the business of every American. The politicians fear the influence of the pulpit on politics. A Texan 'statesman' has recently said 'we must drive the preacher back into his pulpit.' But he won't stay there; he is going to help purify politics.

The law of conscience should be applied to parties as well as individuals. Government after all is only a committee of citizens. We must be sure that they are on the right side, that is the side of right....I believe that it is possible to get conscience

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<sup>126</sup> S. J. Brown, John White, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxforddnb.com

into politics and that things are gradually to shape themselves to that end. The polls should be made the most sacred place on earth.<sup>127</sup>

Despite the obviously American context of the quote this is a reasonable summation of White's personal position. His was a 'political' church and there is a 'Melvillian' attitude to what its relationship to the state should be. J H S Burleigh, Principal of New College and author of a *Church History of Scotland*, described White's reunited Church of Scotland in which 'the "civil magistrate" for the first time since the Reformation acknowledged in the fullest sense the freedom of a Church in matters affecting its own spiritual life and work.'<sup>128</sup> He also added tellingly, 'The only freedom that Andrew Melville could have asked for in addition would be the freedom to require the civil magistrate to compel all of his subjects to obey the judgements of the church courts!'<sup>129</sup> This was not altogether unreasonable in a Presbyterian minister but it will become apparent what the church would require from the 'civil magistrate.'

The actual course of the campaign will be examined in a later chapter but it is important to understand the nature of those conducting it and most particularly White himself. Without the support and active leadership of the most eminent churchman of the period it is doubtful whether lesser lights like the Rev. Duncan Cameron of Kilsyth could have carried it as far as the Scottish Office. Indeed, the original overture on Irish Immigration to the General Assembly of 1922 was only passed by the deciding vote of the Moderator. It is unlikely that, without White, the other Scottish Presbyterian Churches could have been persuaded to participate in a joint campaign against Irish immigration. It was largely down to the determination of White that the reunification of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church was made possible as this was in the teeth of some fierce internal, and indeed Parliamentary, opposition.<sup>130</sup> It was White who had the extensive political connections, particularly in the Conservative party, that persuaded him and others that the Government could be made to follow the Church's lead on vital matters of social policy. Essentially, what the Church was seeking to define was what constituted the desirable and undesirable citizen

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<sup>127</sup> John White Papers, *Irish Immigration* Box 103.

<sup>128</sup> J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland*, (Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 402-403

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>130</sup> See John White Papers Boxes 6-10. There was opposition to the two Bills required to clear the legal obstacles to reunification. The Second Bill required a wholesale restructuring of Church finance from the system of heritors, generally local landlords in rural communities and rate payers in urban areas that financed, for example, minister's stipends. This opposition was largely led by the Labour members which may account for some, though not all, of White's antipathy to that party.

even to the extent of allowing them residence and exercise of the franchise. In other words who was and was not a Scot. The government would then be required to give that definition legislative force, a Melvillian 'freedom' indeed. For the Church to arrogate such a significant role to itself in national life suggests either arrogance or fear that its influence was in terminal decline. The reality was a combination of the two but it needed as forceful personality as White's to even consider that the Church could take on such a role. It was an ambitious attempt for the leadership of Scottish society which would need a modern intellectual basis that could be argued on more than theological grounds.

It should be pointed out here that there is a curious gap in the White papers concerning the anti-immigration campaign in the 1920s. These papers were deposited in the Library of New College at Edinburgh University by White's official biographer, Augustus Muir, in the 1950s. Muir's biography of White appeared in 1958 and, significantly, it nowhere makes mention of the anti-Irish campaign. Yet there is a large amount of material on the subject in the form of notes for speeches and pamphlets, most unfortunately undated, in the papers. Neither for that matter does Burleigh's Church History make any mention of the immigration campaign. The collection contained in box 103 of the papers also seems to follow no chronological pattern and it is therefore largely through inference that it is possible to make an estimate of the actual time when they were written. However, White's correspondence which is catalogued chronologically contains practically no reference to Irish immigration. For as prolific a correspondent as White this is unusual. Most of the correspondence takes the form of letters to White and yet it would appear that no one wrote to him on the subject. A chance mention in the press that Stanley Baldwin smoked White's personal tobacco mixture<sup>131</sup> elicited many requests for the address of his tobacconist but on the other burning question of the day there is no correspondence either official or unofficial. It would appear that White's biographer had carefully edited out any such correspondence in the 1950s. Why should he do this and yet retain White's notes for speeches and articles, many of which make for uncomfortable reading? It may be that in the 1950s many of the principal actors of the 1920s and 1930s were still alive and holding senior positions in the Church and government. Figures like Professor J. H. S. Burleigh, Principal of New College and Walter Elliot, twice High Commissioner and former Secretary of State for Scotland may have been uncomfortable if their pre-war opinions were given a public airing. This does suggest that the Church of Scotland contracted a case of selective amnesia in the 1950s. Perhaps because it became

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<sup>131</sup>John White papers, Box 7

uncomfortable with this episode in its past and with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation on the horizon, at which Burleigh would preside as Moderator, it was less than keen to have its own brush with racism discussed. It would not be until 2002 the Church would make an official acknowledgement and apology for its part in the campaign.

Whatever the position had become by the 1950s, in the 1920s the Church was unequivocal in what it saw was a threat. White, in a note entitled 'Is restriction right,' sets out the position of the state and 'inassimilable' minorities, in this case the Irish:

The state...exists not only for immediate administrative purposes, but also for the obtaining of its citizens the highest attainable political, economic and social well-being and thus has an undoubted right to exclude through any such legislative and executive action as it from time to time judge expedient.

... We discover here a sound political principle which rightly controls all state action upon the immediate question before us. The state may exclude dangerous, ignorant, criminal and vicious persons from its borders- *it may go further- it may justly exclude entire classes whose presence would be fatal to its homogeneity as a nation, which would introduce elements impossible of amalgamation with its people and thereby possibly subversive of its political institutions, whether such fears be well grounded or not.* (my italics).<sup>132</sup>

Apart from the implication that he considered the Irish 'dangerous, ignorant, criminal and vicious,' the concept that a state may exclude entire classes that it considered 'fatal to its homogeneity, impossible of amalgamation' and 'possibly subversive of its political institutions' was a particularly authoritarian statement but one not altogether out of step with rising ideologies in Europe. It should be emphasised that here White was saying something fundamental about his view on the relationship between the state and its citizens. In effect any minority could be legitimately 'excluded' if in the opinion of the state it constituted a threat at any given moment. Who would decide the nature of the threat were, in this case, the self-appointed guardians of national identity, the Church of Scotland. The implication was that the Church was seeking something more formal in its relationship with government - a form of blood and soil patriotism which was peculiarly Scottish would be allied to Scottish executive action. This is not to say that White was necessarily advocating a kind of

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<sup>132</sup>John White papers , Box 103

Caledonian proto-fascism. However, as Owen Dudley Edwards has commented of the *Irish Menace* report, 'If a comparable document from such a body had appeared in Bavaria discussing the Jews in the same year, no historian would hesitate for a moment in seeing it as an origin of the Third Reich....That Scotland avoided pogrom and bloodshed does not mean that such good fortune was inevitable.'<sup>133</sup> Had the Church successfully convinced the government of the kind of restrictive measures on Irish immigration it was promoting in 1926 a new relationship would have been formed. The Church would have established a right to be consulted on Scottish legislation. It is yet another irony, in an era that abounds in irony, that the Church of Scotland was seeking to form the type of relationship with the Scottish Office that arguably the Catholic Church later enjoyed with the de Valera Government in Ireland while at the same time proclaiming it was not competent to pronounce on economic and political affairs.

If there appears something incongruous in a churchman arguing for such an authoritarian position it should be remembered that in Scotland democracy as presently understood was still a novel concept. Until the outbreak of war the franchise was not even universal for adult males far less females. For example, in Glasgow in 1911, three out of the seven parliamentary divisions there was an enfranchisement rate of less than 50% and for the city as a whole the proportion of adult males enfranchised was only 53.9. Neither White nor many of his contemporaries apparently saw any conflict in their assertions with that of their position of churchmen. They were the Church of Scotland and it was their Christian and moral duty to protect the people of Scotland. In a note headed somewhat disingenuously, 'No race hatred no religious bigotry,' White stated:

There is no desire to shut out any immigrant solely because he will be a competitor in the labour market, if there is work to be given, because he is of a different religion to the bulk of the community.

Our case against undesirable immigration is based on high moral grounds. We are not willing to run the chance of seeing a people educated, intelligent and moral corrupted by a horde of immigrants whose habits of life, whose standards of morality and whose standards of comfort are far below that of the existing population.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Owen Dudley Edwards, *The Catholic Press in Scotland since the Restoration*, in David McRoberts (ed.) *Modern Scottish Catholicism 1878-1978*, (Burns, Glasgow, 1979), p167

<sup>134</sup> John White Papers Box 103

The question remains why should the Irish be seen as such a uniquely morally corrupting force from which the Scots required the Church's protection? As far as White was concerned it was the Irish inability to assimilate:

The Irish do not readily assimilate our habits and become good Scotsmen. As they come so they for long remain, amongst us, yet not of us.

The Irishman, notwithstanding many virtues, seem to bring a sort of social contagion with him, which has the effect of seriously deteriorating the life of those of our own people who are compelled to be his neighbour. It is a painful thing to write but truth compels the statement that whenever the Irish immigrant comes in any number the neighbourhood in which he settles speedily drops in tone, in character and in morals.

It may be difficult to explain the fact but fact it is. The statement of it may give offence in some quarters. That is to be regretted. But the existence of the fact is an offence, and a grave offence, in our city life and in our national morals.<sup>135</sup>

In effect the Irish, in the eyes of the Church, were akin to a disease infecting the morals and habits of virtuous Scotsmen. The logical inconsistency of how this infection was supposed to take place if the Irish had no social contact with the native Scot and was 'amongst us and yet not of us' does not seem to have troubled White. It was 'difficult to explain' but still a 'fact.' This argument does not say much for the idea of the moral superiority of the Scottish neighbour as surely contact with this example would have lifted the depraved Irishman to a higher moral plane.

The racial theories to which White subscribed were not in themselves new but why did a Scot subscribe to them in the case of the Irish? The idea of a 'Teutonic' lowland Scotland superior to the Celtic races was one that had enjoyed much popularity in the nineteenth century. Colin Kidd has shown that race was also viewed as a determinant of religion: 'nineteenth century anti-Catholicism became tinged with racialism which rendered it even more potent, for race lent a pseudo-scientific justification to Protestant bigotry, deepening and hardening traditional confessional prejudices. Why, nineteenth century commentators asked, were Teutonic peoples more susceptible to Protestantism and Latin and Celtic peoples so reluctant to abandon the old superstitions of Catholicism?'<sup>136</sup> White was a product of the

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>136</sup> C. Kidd, *The Forging of Races, Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World 1600-200*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p192.

nineteenth century. Between 1883 and 1891 he had studied Political Economy under Edward Caird, later Master of Balliol, at Glasgow University and taken an MA Honours in Mental Philosophy as well as training for the ministry.<sup>137</sup> He and his contemporaries did not view the Irish as fellow Celts. Lowland Scotland defined itself in the nineteenth century as ‘Teutonic’ and the ‘Celtic’ label was one that many 19<sup>th</sup> century Scots would have strongly rejected.’<sup>138</sup>

Apart from the particularly Scottish concepts of racial identity the White papers also demonstrate the extent to which he was influenced by American sociologists who were at the forefront of racial theory at the turn of the century. It is particularly interesting that a man from a nation with a centuries-old tradition of emigration should turn to the scholarship of a nation made up almost entirely of immigrants. Three figures feature at length, Richmond Mayo-Smith (1854-1901), Franklin Henry Giddings (1855-1931) and Edward Alsworth Ross (1866-1951). Mayo-Smith was a pioneer of the use of statistics in sociology and published *Emigration and Immigration* in 1890, in which he demonstrated his belief ‘that the enormous number of immigrants with disparate sociocultural habits then entering America threatened to overwhelm the political institutions of the United States and would generate economic disturbances.’<sup>139</sup> It was the methodology of Mayo-Smith that would materially influence the Church’s written submissions to the Scottish Office and yet it was on the basis of the Church’s statistics where their case collapsed. F. H. Giddings, considered to be one of the ‘four founders’ of American sociology, propounded a theory of four stages of human evolution:

‘zoogenic, anthropogenic, ethnogenic and demogenic. He asserted that the lower stages were more susceptible to emotional forces. Modern society (demogenic) is not totally free of these forces but uses reason and critical reflection in determining its own destiny. Societies could not exist without certain inequalities. Inequality was a result of constitutional or genetic differences forming the basis for class divisions ... that these divisions were natural and led to permanent conflicts.’<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> S.J. Brown, John White, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxforddnb.com

<sup>138</sup> C. Kidd, Race Empire and the Limits of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Scottish Nationhood, *Historical Journal*, 46:4,(December, 2003), p 874.

<sup>139</sup> Richmond Mayo-Smith, UXL *Encyclopaedia of World Biography*, BNET online

<sup>140</sup> F. H. Giddings, *American Sociological Society*, www2.asanet.org

The last of this triumvirate, E. A. Ross, had a particular influence on White in his article ‘*The Cause of Racial Superiority*’ (1901), in which he coined the phrase ‘race suicide,’ and in his book *Foundations of Sociology* (1905).<sup>141</sup>

In fact Ross is particularly interesting in this context as, like White himself, he was something of a contradictory character. A social liberal who became an enthusiastic New Dealer and ended his career as head of the American Civil Liberties Union he was also, until the end of the 1920s at least, a vehement nativist who flirted with eugenicist ideas. Julius Weinberg has made the point that ‘The Social thought of Edward Alsworth Ross provides a fruitful ground for an analysis of the relationship between the reformist thrust of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the nativism expressed by many of these reformers of the same period.’<sup>142</sup> Ross’s nativist writings brought him into contact with other American nativist organisations such as the Immigration Restriction League founded by three Harvard graduates, Robert DeCoursey Ward, Charles Warren and Prescott Farnsworth Hall in 1888. Although, originally something of an east coast or ‘Boston Brahmin’ intellectual group, its influence spread throughout the USA. It campaigned successfully for the introduction of a literacy test and had a considerable influence on the eventual introduction of national origin immigration quotas in the United States.<sup>143</sup> Arguments about race and immigration restriction as developed in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth Century would be re-employed time and again. Opinions like those of Prescott F. Hall, one of the founders of the *American Immigration Restriction League* found a receptive audience in White:

Immigration restriction is a species of segregation on a large scale, by which the inferior stocks can be prevented from both diluting and supplanting the good stocks. Just as we isolate bacterial invasions and starve out the bacteria by limiting the area and amount of their food supply, so we can compel an inferior race to remain in its native habitat.<sup>144</sup>

Ironically enough, as will be seen later, the success of the Immigration Restriction League in the matter of quotas fuelled the Kirk’s (and others) fear that a reduction in the Irish quota in

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<sup>141</sup> E. A. Ross *American Sociological Society*, [www2.asanet.org](http://www2.asanet.org)

<sup>142</sup> J. Weinberg, E. A. Ross: The Progressive as Nativist, *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, (Spring, 1967) p242.

<sup>143</sup> See Immigration Restriction League, *Aspiration, Acculturation and Impact: Immigration to the United States 1789-1930*, Harvard University Open Collections Program.

<sup>144</sup> P. F Hall *Immigration Restriction and World Eugenics*, Harvard University – Collection development Department, Weidener Library, (Boston, Mass: Immigration Restriction League, 1919).

the USA would lead to an increase in Irish immigration into Scotland. The League had proved that it was possible to persuade politicians, on the basis of a primarily race lead argument, to impose immigration restrictions on groups from a specific national origin. It is, however, the personal background that informed Ross's views that may have had a major influence on White. To again quote Weinberg 'Upon closer analysis the seeming paradox between Ross's views as a reformer and those he espoused as a nativist can be explained, although the logical contradiction between them cannot be dissolved. Ross was a Middle Westerner by birth and his views were fashioned by the piety of his Scotch-Irish, Presbyterian parents and the mores Ross identified with Scotch-Irish as the epitome of the American spirit.'<sup>145</sup>

The outstanding trait of the Scotch-Irish was *will* (sic). No other element was so masterful and contentious....The stubbornness of their character is probably responsible for the unexampled losses in the battles of our Civil War. They fought the Indian they fought the British with great unanimity in two wars and were in the front rank of the conquest of the West. More than any stock has this tough gritty breed, so lacking in poetry and sensibility moulded our National character. If today a losing college crew rows so hard they have to be lifted from their shell at the end of the boat race, it is because of the never-say-die Scotch-Irish fighters and pioneers have been the picturesque and glowing figures in the imagination of American youth.<sup>146</sup>

It is readily understandable why the sentiments and ideas of Ross would have struck such a particular chord with White. It is also notable how this Presbyterian mythology travelled across the Atlantic and then back again and was utilised in the service of the same cause. The White papers contain an extensive quotation from Ross's *Foundations* concerning immigration in the United States which obviously resonated with the Scottish position as he saw it:

The newcomer counts as one at the polls, and hence it is in our politics that the sag is most evident. The higher types of men are prompted to act together, because they believe in the same principle or love the same ideal. The inferior pull together from

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<sup>145</sup> J. Weinberg, E.A. Ross: The Progressive as Nativist, p242

<sup>146</sup> E. A. Ross, *The Old World in the New: the significance of past and present immigration to the American People*, (Century, New York, 1914), p13

clannishness or allegiance to a leader. The growing disposition to rally about persons and the rising value of the saloon keeper, the ex-pugilist and the boss in controlling city voters would indicate that the electorate has been debased by the too free admission of political incapables.<sup>147</sup>

The terms saloon keeper, ex pugilist and boss were synonyms for the Irish in Scotland and America. The influence of the American arguments on the way in which White presented his own case is apparent from the following, again from White's notes for speeches and articles:

Many of our immigrants are out of sympathy with our institutions. They form a large percent of our voting population in our large towns. As a rule their votes are under the control of a few leaders...there can be no question as to the moral right to restrict immigration. It is our duty to develop our institutions and our national life in such a way that they will make the largest contribution to the good of humanity then it is manifestly our duty to exclude from membership elements which might prevent our institutions from reaching the highest and best development. All restrictions to immigration it must be admitted must be based, not upon national selfishness, but upon the principle of the good of humanity; and there can be no doubt that the good of humanity demands that every nation protect its people and its institutions from elements which may seriously threaten their stability and survival.<sup>148</sup>

It was, therefore, not only for the good of Scotland that the Irish be excluded but for the good of humanity. White essentially maintained that the economic, social and political problems of Scotland could be defined as a racial problem. Having made that diagnosis it followed that the solution to these problems was a racial one: in the first instance the restriction of Irish immigration.

Lower down the ecclesiastical ladder there was more probably the desire to 'throw prudence to the winds and put in some strong ginger re the R Cs.'<sup>149</sup> Yet, what is notable is that in their public utterances most ministers followed the White line. The issue was to be primarily racial and not religious. For example, in the meeting held with Sir John Lamb, the Under Secretary of State at the Scottish Office, on September 24<sup>th</sup> 1926 and not attended by

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<sup>147</sup> John White Papers, Box 103.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>149</sup> John White Papers Box 6, letter to White from the Rev J. N. Ogilvie, May 19th 1921

White, the Rev John Maclagan put the case in the following way: 'It was as custodians of the fine traditions of Scotland that the committee approached the Secretary of State and not at all in the narrow religious sense. They approached the problem as loyal Scotsmen who loved their country and wanted to do what they could to ensure that the heritage handed down to them would be handed down to the next generation.'<sup>150</sup> The White line was the Church line and it was a position held not only by the Church of Scotland but by the United Free Church as well. It is something of a tribute to the esteem in which White was held that throughout the 1920s that it was the race issue as defined by White that was official Church policy.

Of course, it was a subtle distinction that was probably lost on the wider public. Abusing the Irish for their racial origins was tantamount to abusing them for their religion. Irish meant Catholic and Catholic meant Irish, however hard White tried to make the distinction but then this was not intended, as was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, to be an argument for the man in the street. He was to be protected and led by the Church. Indeed, the Church considered itself the genuine voice of the Scottish working class as the remarks made by the Rev Duncan Cameron at the same meeting with Scottish Office show:

During the General Strike in the industrial areas nearly all the leaders were Irish. In course of time instead of a Scottish proletariat there would be a body of people who had no regard for the United Kingdom and who were prone to revolutionary ideas. From the point of view of the interest of the United Kingdom and the existence of the Empire it was important that the Government should tackle the question. No political party should be afraid of tackling the question. The *Glasgow Herald* and the *Scotsman* did not give a true reflection of the working classes in Scotland. There was great bitterness among them against the growing numbers of Irish immigrants.<sup>151</sup>

This was plainer language than White's scholarly and scientific sociology. The Irish were potentially dangerous revolutionaries, they were replacing the Scottish proletariat and, for the existence of the country and the Empire, the Government had better do something about it.

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<sup>150</sup> John White Papers box 103, Minutes of the meeting between the Joint Church of Scotland and United Free Church Committee and Sir John Lamb at the Scottish office, September 24th 1926 .

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*

#### *IV Conclusion*

It can be seen from the foregoing that the leadership of the Church of Scotland, as epitomised by White, went to considerable lengths to make an intellectually coherent case for the restriction of Irish immigration into Scotland on the grounds of Irish racial inferiority. It also made strenuous efforts to distance itself from any suspicion that it was motivated by any religious consideration, although this was, even then, scarcely credible. The fact that the effort was made is important. It suggests that the Church at the highest levels was uncomfortable with simple 'No Popery'. Certainly it had a tradition of distancing itself from the more rabid proponents of that cause. The career of the 19th century controversialist Jacob Primmer is a case in point. Primmer was a tub thumping anti-papist who 'loved the thrill of the outdoor meeting' and conducted a fourteen-year series of meetings around Scotland in which he luridly described the imagined exploits of nuns and priests and the pagan symbols of Romanism.<sup>152</sup> At the same time he was consistently in conflict with his own presbytery in Dunfermline and with the General Assembly which frequently voted to withhold a proportion of his stipend.<sup>153</sup> The Church of Scotland had a distaste for vulgar anti-Catholicism and 'No Popery' street preachers were vulgar. As Bruce has pointed out, they were a form of popular entertainment<sup>154</sup> and Ratcliffe and Cormack would carry on in that tradition in the 1930s. Dr White was not a public entertainer.

Aside from naturally wishing to have its arguments considered on a higher plane the Church was engaging with the intellectual debate of its day. Eugenics and race theory were concerns of individuals like H G Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Marie Stopes and Dean Inge of St. Paul's. The carnage of the First World War had made questions about the survival of the 'race' topical as never before. As that carnage had been so marked in Scotland it is not all that surprising that the Church engaged in that debate using the terms current at the time. There had been a long nineteenth-century tradition in Scotland of commingling racial and religious ideas. These were fearful times and the Church of Scotland was a frightened institution in which case it was not unnatural, if inexcusable, that it turned to authoritarian solutions to its perceived problems or, given recent events, that the Irish were that perceived problem.

However, was this Scotland's 'fascist moment?' As Owen Dudley Edwards pointed out it is not difficult to see elements of fascism in much of the Church's public and private

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<sup>152</sup> S Bruce, *Sectarianism in Scotland*, p19

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid* pp18-19

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid* p19

pronouncements on the Irish<sup>155</sup>. Yet, as Stephen Cullen has shown recently, the British Union of Fascists never really made much progress in Scotland in the 1930s partly because of its inability to understand the religious and identity dimensions in Scotland.<sup>156</sup> It is probably more accurate to describe it as an attempt to re-imagine Scotland, a Scotland secure in its racial homogeneity and Presbyterian identity led by a reunited Established Church. In effect it was an attempt to turn the clock back to a safer and less threatening pre-war world. In some ways the Irish were almost incidental to the whole campaign. They were a convenient, visible, tangible expression of an insecurity that had more to do with a sense of national loss, loss in terms of men on the battlefield, loss through the mass emigration of the twenties, loss of direction and loss of self-esteem. The movement for re-unification of the Presbyterian churches was part of that process, as Burleigh put it: 'Into the re-united Church in 1929 were gathered the great majority of Presbyterians...The Chief rival was the Roman Catholic Church consisting largely of Irish immigrants settled in the industrial areas and increasing in numbers and consequently political influence. In numbers alone the Church of Scotland in 1929 might justifiably regard itself as the Church of the Scottish people....More important, however, is the fact of its acknowledged responsibility for the spiritual life of Scotland.'<sup>157</sup> It also highlights a fundamental contradiction in the Church's position. It would go to considerable lengths to declare that it was not competent to pronounce on economic or political issues if this could in any way be seen as a criticism of the prevailing social orthodoxy. At the same time White was making a case for the Church's involvement in the very nature and composition of Scottish society. In order to do this it would have to be in very earthly politics. In answering the question of how White was able to square this particular intellectual circle it is necessary to explore the Church's relationship with the 'Civil Magistrate' in this case the Scottish Office.

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<sup>155</sup> O. D. Edwards, *The Catholic Press* p167

<sup>156</sup> S. M. Cullen, *The Fasces and the Saltire: The failure of the British Union of Fascists in Scotland 1932-1940*, *Scottish Historical Review* 87; 2 No.224,(October 2008), pp306-333

<sup>157</sup>J.H.S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland*, p405

## Chapter Three

### The Catholic Response

*If no Popery orators and writers do for us individually, what heresies do for the Church at large; that is make us look to our defences we may almost thank God for... the service of slander*<sup>158</sup>

Clydesdale Catholic Herald “7<sup>th</sup> November 1926

#### *I Introduction*

The *Clydesdale Catholic Herald* on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 1926 relates a story of two Scots, one a Catholic the other a Protestant, discussing the Catholic Church in Scotland. The Protestant asks his friend what Catholicism in Scotland would be without the Irish? The answer given was ‘Aye we would be sma’ but we would be an eeminently (sic) respectable body.’<sup>159</sup> The humour of this anecdote probably does not translate so well now but in its way it answers one of the conundrums of the period for scholars. Why does there appear to be so little official Catholic reaction to the Church of Scotland’s anti-Irish campaign in the 1920s. The archives of the Archdiocese of Glasgow and the Catholic Archives in Columba House are bafflingly bereft of official comment and in the minutes of the hierarchy in Scotland there is not a single mention of the major, to the Church of Scotland at any rate, issue of the day.<sup>160</sup> Equally the absence of correspondence on the matter was described to the author by the archivist of the Archdiocese of Glasgow, an area containing the largest Irish population in Scotland, as ‘tantalsing’.<sup>161</sup> It was not as though the issues were not hotly debated in the correspondence columns of the press, on the floor of the General Assembly, in the pages of the Catholic press or even, as will be demonstrated, within Government itself. Yet were one to rely exclusively on the information contained in the official archives it would seem that the whole controversy was studiously ignored by the leaders of the Catholic Church in Scotland. However, this was not entirely the case and it will be the intention here to provide some explanation of how the Church responded to what was to all intents and purposes an attack on itself, even if the motivations were officially racial and not religious. This has been something of an under-researched area in the historiography of the period which has concentrated on the louder

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<sup>158</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, Current Comment February 27th 1926, p10

<sup>159</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald* March 13th 1926, p6

<sup>160</sup> Minutes of the Catholic Hierarchy 1920-1929, Scottish Catholic Archives, Columba House, Edinburgh

<sup>161</sup> Dr Mary McHugh, Archivist of the Archdiocese of Glasgow in conversation with the author May 5<sup>th</sup> 2009.

noises made by the Protestant extremists. It is not within the scope of this chapter to comprehensively cover the whole controversy from the point of view of the Catholic Church and its defenders whether conducted in the press or elsewhere. What is proposed here is to analyse how the Catholic Church in Scotland viewed itself in the 1920s, its mission in Scotland and how it regarded its Presbyterian detractors. Equally important, is to consider how that those views differed from those of the most vocal of the defenders of the Catholic Irish, Charles Diamond.

## *II The Catholic Church in Scotland*

The position of the Catholic Church in Scotland in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century does not always fit the image of an embattled minority than it has sometimes been portrayed. Certainly the need to provide for a massive injection of adherents strained, almost to breaking point, the slender resources of the native Church. However, from the restoration of the Scottish hierarchy in 1878 it is not unreasonable to consider Catholicism in Scotland to be a religion on the move. The proliferation of Catholic societies and sodalities in the later nineteenth century show a confident and growing institution. Despite its well documented difficulties in the provision Catholic education before the 1918 Education Act and the undoubted poverty of many of its members many of the Church's problems could be attributed to its success. The Irish influx may have been a mixed blessing but, considering the logistical and financial problems that it had largely successfully overcome by the end of the Great War, it was not the Catholic Church that was facing a crisis of confidence. The war itself could be seen in some ways to have been 'good' for the Catholic Church: 'For the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow, John Maguire, the war brought a new lease of life. This virtual recluse, who had languished in a sick bed since 1910, became an enthusiastic recruiting sergeant in both sermons and pastorals.'<sup>162</sup> Large numbers of Irish Catholics served in Scottish regiments and bore comparable losses. After the war those of Irish Catholic descent began to play an increasing part in public life and, while this undoubtedly was one of the reasons for Presbyterian complaint, it was nonetheless a source of pride for other Catholics. In fact the 1920s were, in retrospect, something of a golden era for Catholicism in Scotland and the attack when it came, but for the events of the Irish War of Independence, may have been as from a clear blue sky.

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<sup>162</sup> M. Lynch, *Scotland A New History*, (Pimlico, London, 2001), p422

The initial Catholic response to anti-Irish agitation was one of pained surprise. A letter to the *Glasgow Herald* reprinted in the *Clydesdale Catholic Herald* on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1923 from a Scottish priest, illustrated the feeling:

Before the Great War we had been getting along comparatively smoothly together. In due course our brave men went forth and fought and bled and fell, inspired by the conviction that their sufferings were to lead to the abolition of all wars. Hardly did they think that other wars of camouflaged cruelty and religious hate might eventuate. But it has evidently done so, as shown by the agitation going on in certain clerical circles.

...The general waning of belief in Protestant forms of Christianity rendered people all the more ready to give some heed to those admirable sentiments which if not counteracted by adverse or retrograde influences, would cause a vast improvement in our social fellowship, a noble sympathy with, and respect for, the religious convictions of all, however they might differ from our own. But such a state of matters was most alarming and detestable to some of our Presbyterian clergy. I say some because the higher type of clergyman never descends to such levels. The steady, though slow, increase of the Catholic Church in Glasgow is gall and bitterness to those partisans; and with a cunning worthy of a better cause, taking advantage of the fact that this increase is mainly due to the Irish element in our midst, they are making determined efforts to inflame the basest passions of their hearers against the Catholic Irish...What a spectacle of petty bigotry! What a horrible pose for professional teachers of Christ who came in love to save us all! Thank God a more Christian laity has already expressed indignation at their barbarous conduct.

John Charleson, Holy Cross, Croy, March 31 1923<sup>163</sup>

It is apparent from a reading of Father Charleson's letter that he at least was taken aback by what at that stage was an attack on the Irish by the Presbytery of Glasgow prior to the General Assembly of 1923. He was to be disappointed in his assessment that the higher type of clergymen 'never descends to such levels' as the Church and Nation Committee were to produce their report on '*The Menace of the Irish Race*' within two months of his letter. However, his tone of more sorrow than anger, does suggest that the Catholic Church was

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<sup>163</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, April 7<sup>th</sup> 1923, p3.

somewhat surprised by the vehemence of the Protestant Churches sentiments. What is also interesting is his observation on ‘the general waning of belief in Protestant forms of Christianity.’ It was something of an article of faith for the Catholic Church in the 1920s that Protestantism was in terminal decline and that it was only a matter of time before it was replaced by Catholicism or, in strictly more Catholic terms, before Scotland returned to its true adherence from the heretical error into which it had fallen at the Reformation. This was more than a theological point. The Church of Scotland feared the very same thing, if not couched in those terms, and loudly and repeatedly proclaimed the danger. If the Established Church feared it was in decline while at the same time in the process of ending the schism of 1843, and was constantly warning of the possibility of a Catholic takeover spearheaded by the Irish it is hardly to be wondered that the Catholic Church was inclined to take them at their word. Scotland did not lack for Jeremiahs, ecclesiastical and secular, in the 1920s. However, it was this perception of Protestant decline that was to have a significant bearing on the upper levels of Catholic response to the anti-Irish campaign.

The Catholic press under the combative Charles Diamond was inclined to take a less considered view. On the same date as it reproduced Father Charleson’s letter it printed an article entitled ‘The Glasgow Presbytery’s Jihad (sic): “Holy War” against the Irish.’<sup>164</sup> In a vehement refutation of the arguments of what are described as an ‘aggregation of Protestant Church of Scotland ministers who in their collective capacity are styled “The Glasgow Presbytery”’<sup>165</sup> Diamond was not reticent to the possible consequences of the Church having its way on the immigration question:

If, however, it should occur in the remote future that the British Parliament should be so ill advised as to meet the wishes of the Glasgow Presbytery some other things would happen. The Free State would certainly reply by reprisal decree which would exclude Scotsmen from Ireland...The Glasgow Presbytery should also consult the heads of some of the big Glasgow trading firms ...who have and have always had an immense volume of business in Ireland. Irish America would hardly remain quiescent on the matter and Irish influence is one of the strongest influences in American life. Scotsmen themselves now and then emigrate. You get a great many Englishmen and Americans to tell you that whenever there is a good job worth collaring the Scotsman has got it. The public works of England and of America are flooded with Scotch foremen who are

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<sup>164</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, April 7<sup>th</sup> 1923, p10

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*

never “blate” about welcoming compatriots...The Glasgow Presbytery...may succeed also in raising a worldwide question and may fashion a weapon that in the long run may prove to be a very boomerang.<sup>166</sup>

Having delivered this warning he rather obscurely ended with a diatribe on the ills of birth control, or ‘Race Suicide’ as it was termed. which was apparently a direct result of Protestantism. (It is interesting that he used the example of the ‘Scotch foreman’ when the Irish foreman was be such a bogey figure in Presbyterian propaganda in the rest of the decade). Diamond returned to the attack in a speech to his shareholders on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1923. By this time the Church and Nation Committee had delivered its report on the ‘Irish Menace’

The Chairman said it could not be considered inappropriate if he made some reference to the recent attacks on the Irish people in Scotland...It was true that the words Irish and Catholic in Scotland were not entirely synonymous. But the Catholic population was so largely Irish the two could not be well separated. There was no doubt that the recent attack was inspired more by religious intolerance and bigotry than by national rancour though the grounds of the attack were notionally national...

The Irish Catholics in Scotland had a great deal more in common with the history of Scotland for a thousand years than those who represented an apostasy from the faith from their ancestors, who had a supreme contempt for their national history and who replaced a noble national spirit by a profession of subservience to another country and attachment to the crude religious beliefs of a mushroom growth that was everywhere disappearing.<sup>167</sup>

Diamond further averred that while they were not looking for a fight with their neighbours attacks on the Irish population would not be ‘taken lying down’ and to this end he proposed to reduce the price of the *Glasgow Observer* and increase the efficiency of its distribution.<sup>168</sup> The difference in Diamond’s response to that of some of the senior Catholic clergy is what makes the Catholic reaction so interesting.

As Gallagher has pointed out, there was something of a vacuum in the leadership of the Catholic Church during the First World War:

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<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>167</sup> *The Scotsman*, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1923, p 5.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*

Glasgow and St Andrews and Edinburgh...were administered by two ageing prelates who did not have the strength to perform many of their customary duties never mind issue political instructions to their flock. When Archbishop Maguire of Glasgow died in 1920, Rome did not appoint a successor until 1922....In Edinburgh, Bishop Henry Grey Graham was placed in effective charge of the Archdiocese after 1917, but, as a convert, he may not have enjoyed the familiarity with his flock that would have enabled him to make *ex-cathedra* statements on politics and be listened to.<sup>169</sup>

At the same time the Church was preoccupied with the implications of the 1918 Education Act. Again as Gallagher states ‘In no other predominantly Protestant country did Catholics enjoy such latitude in the educational sphere’<sup>170</sup> and yet the Church was initially hesitant to accept its terms. It took the intervention of the Vatican in the shape of the apostolic visitor to Scotland to convince a reluctant Church to accept the legislation and in Glasgow it would not be until the end of the decade before the terms were fully implemented.<sup>171</sup> The Catholic Church at the beginning of the 1920s had its own ecclesiastical concerns and in Archbishop Mackintosh of Glasgow (1876-1943) it had a prelate who had been rector of the Scots College in Rome and more at home in that city than in the rough and tumble of Glasgow politics. He was equally a managerialist whose primary concern was the financial well-being and stability of his Church. Intemperate outbursts in the General Assembly or even Church and Nation Committee reports did not necessarily have first call on his time.

It was largely left to lay Catholics and to individual priests like Father Charleson, quoted above, to respond. One of the most effective was Father McGettigan of Musselburgh. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1923 the *Scotsman* printed his detailed rebuttal of the Church and Nation Committee report. In a lengthy letter Father McGettigan attacked the ‘facts’ produced in the report refuting the Committee’s contentions that priests in Ireland encouraged their flock to emigrate to Scotland and that all emigrants from Scotland were Scots fleeing the Irish influx. He also took the Assembly to task on the assertion that Scots and Irish did not mix:

The “notable fact” is not at all complimentary to the grit of the Scottish people, and is besides a gratuitous assertion as anyone who knows who lives in the midst of Scottish

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<sup>169</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow the Uneasy Peace* (Manchester University Press, 1987), p104.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid* p102

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*

and Irish workmen. They work as harmoniously when together as they do when separate and if there is friction it is usually due to some cause which is neither racial nor religious. If racial or religious it is imported into Scotland by Orangemen who...have never fused with their fellow countrymen. But away from these, the Irishman in Scotland, as elsewhere, takes on the colour of his surroundings and in two or three generations becomes more Scottish than the Scot.’<sup>172</sup>

He also pointed out the logical inconsistency in the Irish having both the ‘restless ambition to rule’ while at the same time being intemperate and improvident and he ‘trembled’ for the man who made the charge that ‘the Irishman never hesitates to seek relief from charity organisations’ in the presence of the average Irishman.<sup>173</sup> He similarly took issue with the concept of the Irish as ‘aliens’: ‘The statement is one which bristles with controversy of an ethnological and historical character, it ought not, to say the least, to have been made part of a document which it was to be expected would present only bedrock facts...even granted its accuracy to speak of a highly gifted people...as aliens. Would we parade the offensive term before the eyes of the Canadian or Australian? And what if the Irish at home took us at our word and when the next Great War broke out (quod Deus avertat), and we were in difficulties, gently reminded us that they were aliens.’<sup>174</sup> (Given Irish neutrality in the Second World War McGettigan was remarkably prescient). His response to the charge that “the Roman Catholic Church has definitely committed herself to the task of converting the Scottish nation”<sup>175</sup> was indicative of how the Catholic Church in Scotland viewed its role - ‘But that surely is not an improper proceeding in the case of a missionary Church. The Church of Scotland claims the same right when she sends her missionaries to Ireland and foreign parts. If a Church has a right to live, she has a right to propagate her spiritual species, and the fact that one Church is more successful than another does not abrogate that right.’<sup>176</sup>

Father McGettigan was an interesting character in the Catholic Church of the 1920s. Born in Fauldhouse in 1868 he attended Blairs’ College in 1883 and the Scots College at Valladolid in 1886 and he was ordained priest in 1893 when he became curate of the Church of Our Lady of Loretto and St Michael in Musselburgh. He was also a member of the Midlothian Education Authority and promoted to the position of Canon and Administrator of

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<sup>172</sup> *The Scotsman*, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1923, p11.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*

Edinburgh Cathedral in November 1923. This promotion certainly implies official approval, indeed sanction, of the opinions he published in the press as it would have been unthinkable that the hierarchy would have elevated to such a prestigious post a parish priest publicly proclaiming a position of which they disapproved. He was in fact described in the Catholic press as ‘one of the warmest champions of Catholicity in the country.’<sup>177</sup>

The hierarchy themselves did not remain as silent as it appears from the official records though they couched their language in more coded terms. As can be seen from the following 1924 Pastoral letter from Archbishop Mackintosh:

It is a peremptory duty ...to pray frequently that our blessed Lord may gather these men and women of good will -and they are not a few- who in this country of Scotland have been robbed of their Christian birth right – the Catholic faith. I am quite well aware that those men and women may not, and probably do not, recognise the existence of this duty on the part of Catholics, or further that they may vehemently resent the fact that we Catholics find a place for the existence of a duty to pray for non-Catholics. There can be nothing to surprise one in such a situation. The attitude in question is not unlike the attitude of Nathaniel to Our Lord. It is based on irrelevant assumptions and often honest prejudice, “Can anything good come from Nazareth” (St John 1.46). Besides St Paul when he was yet Saul was consenting to the death of Stephen the first martyr...It was probably with deep resentment that Saul heard the dying prayer of St Stephen ‘Lord lay not this sin to their charge.’(Acts 7.59) What if it does – as it surely does – need a miracle of Grace to bring a non-Catholic into the Faith? Who can say that in God’s Providence it was not the prayer of St Stephen that obtained for Saul the miracle on the road to Damascus (Acts 9.3)? Who can say that our prayers and our good works are not awaited by God in order that he may turn many a Saul into a chastened and humble St Paul?

It is certain that we are bound out of charity to pray for the spiritual welfare of our non-Catholic fellow citizens. It is also certain that this duty is incumbent upon us on account of the circumstances of the country in which we live. And besides praying there are other means we must use towards the same ends. We must support the Catholic Truth Society, support the Catholic press and spread its publications.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, December 8<sup>th</sup> 1923, p5

<sup>178</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, March 15<sup>th</sup> 1924, p3

It was possibly not the most tactful way of outlining the Catholic position. As the Archbishop himself recognised praying for non-Catholics would provoke resentment amongst non-Catholics. In fact it probably provoked sterner reactions than that amongst some members of the Presbyterian Churches. The importance here is the tone of the pastoral and of Father McGettigan's letter. It was a theme of the Catholic Church in Scotland that the aim was to return Scotland to the Catholic fold. Prior to the reintroduction of the hierarchy the status of the Church in Scotland had been that of a mission. In fact that had been its position since the Reformation. The reintroduction of the hierarchy had been recognition of the numbers of Catholics in Scotland due to Irish immigration. The aims of the Scottish Catholic Church did not change. Its primary purpose was still the conversion of the Scots not the adherence of the Irish. It had a duty in the educational sphere to provide Catholic education and so prevent apostasy but, on the principle that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, then conversion was a Scottish priority if not an Irish one. It also has to be examined from the perspective of Rome, a perspective Mackintosh would have shared, that in global terms the Church of Scotland was a small northern heretical sect, (however slighting that may have been to the pretensions of the land of Knox) but its conversion would be a prize worth winning. On the other hand, Scottish Catholics knew their fellow countrymen and had no illusions as to the long term nature of the task. This theme was developed by Father McGettigan in a sermon at Fauldhouse:

Another account stands against the Protestants of Scotland. Not only did they forsake the faith: they made it their business to misrepresent it and to bequeath this misrepresentation to their children. Their children have been faithful to their trust, and so their religious teaching has consisted not in presenting their own beliefs and practices but defaming ours to that campaign their leaders dedicated their gifts...Abuse of us no matter how wanton and gross formed the stock in trade of their religion and an intense conviction on their part of the truthfulness of it all, whilst it guarded them against contamination was a sign of predestination.

...These then my brethren are a sample of the forces which have stood in the way of Catholic expansion, and if when we look back we are not gladdened by the sight of large additions to the Church from without, let us bear in mind that the obstacles we had to face were well-nigh insurmountable.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, June 30<sup>th</sup> 1924, p3

The essentially Scottish nature of the response was reinforced by Bishop Henry Grey Graham (1874-1959) in an address to the Caledonian Catholic Association in June 1925. He began by lamenting the numbers of Scots applying for the priesthood: 'Until they had a priesthood produced by this country the work would not be satisfactory - priests who knew the condition of the people and felt at home...None could do the work so well as those who were native to the soil. They must have priests, else they might close up their churches. The priesthood should be recruited from our own boys... in that way it would be another step towards the greatest of their objects - the restoration of Scotland to the Catholic faith.'<sup>180</sup> In a tacit recognition that the Catholic Church in Scotland had some diplomatic work to do in order to preach the Faith to non-Catholics he noted that 'It was a delicate matter. In other countries men were specially trained to expound Catholic doctrine in a non-controversial manner and with great results. Until something was done in that way they would not make any great progress.'<sup>181</sup> Graham was at pains to point out that there was no contradiction between being Scottish and being Catholic and that the Church had always been the true upholders of the national spirit rather than 'the real traitors...who were under financial obligations to their masters in England.' This was an unsubtle dig at the reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century but he went on to urge the Scottish Catholic laity, living as they did 'amongst a largely non-Catholic population and mixing intimately with their non-Catholic friends', to remove anti-Catholic prejudice. As was pointed out in the opening lines of this chapter they would be 'an eminently respectable body.'

There is, however, one other consideration to be taken into account in the apparent reluctance of the Scottish Catholic hierarchy, particularly in view of Bishop Graham's sentiments, to engage with the anti-Irish campaign and that is the unhappy relationship between Irish and Scottish Catholic clergy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This may have had a significant influence on Scottish Catholic attitudes towards the Irish as a brief examination of the career of Cardinal Paul Cullen and his involvement with the Scottish Catholic Church will demonstrate. Colin Barr has written informatively on the career of Cardinal Cullen (1803-1878) and what has been described as 'Irish Episcopal Imperialism'.<sup>182</sup> It is certainly the case that there was something of an Irish 'takeover', in the English speaking world, of the Catholic

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<sup>180</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald* 27<sup>th</sup> June 1925 p3

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>182</sup> C. Barr 'Imperium in Imperio: Irish Episcopal Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, *English Historical Review*, Vol CXXIII, No. 502, (June, 2008), pp 611-650. The author is indebted to Dr Barr for his kind assistance with this material.

dioceses both inside and outside the British Empire, and that this was largely orchestrated by Cullen. As Barr puts it, 'It is possible to discern a pattern of what might be described as Irish Episcopal Imperialism that began to take shape first in the United States from 1830 and then spread to British North America, the Cape of Good Hope, Australia, New Zealand and Scotland....By 1900 the hierarchy in each of these countries, save Scotland, was largely Irish, and, in large part a particular sort of Irish, moulded by a particular Hiberno-Roman fusion of devotion and administrative practice. The Catholic communities, and to a certain extent the wider culture of each of the affected countries is still marked, by this particular form of Irish "colonisation".'<sup>183</sup>

Cullen's career began as a student in Rome at the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, otherwise known as the Propaganda, which supervised the Church in the United States, the British Isles and the British Empire. Cullen remained with the Propaganda from 1820 until 1831 when he was appointed Rector of the Irish College and he was particularly influential within this organisation until the end of his life. A popular figure and fluent Italian speaker, he became the Propaganda's trusted translator:

In almost any controversy, even if the parties involved could speak Italian, or even usable Latin, it was inevitable that many of the relevant documents would be in the vernacular. Since the Propaganda lacked English speakers these had to pass to a trusted translator. He was expected to master the question himself, explain it to the Propaganda and in many cases recommend action to busy Cardinals. Conveniently they had such a man at hand in Paul Cullen. When Cullen left Rome they utilised Tobias Kirby, his friend and successor as Rector of the Irish College. Either way Cullen secured a near monopoly on the explication of English language conflicts, either directly or at one remove.<sup>184</sup>

Cullen used this unique influence, at its most basic, to populate the English-speaking world with Irish bishops. Essentially the method employed was to use a controversy in any given diocese as an excuse to appoint a bishop coadjutor, almost invariably an Irishman, as an 'assistant' to the incumbent who then found himself, none too gently, marginalised in the running of the diocese. Even in areas where there was no controversy one could generally be manufactured, with charges of financial incompetence, mental instability, or even, rather

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid* p612

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid* p615

improbably, sexual impropriety in the case of the elderly Bishop Pompallier of Auckland. The tactics may not have been edifying but they were effective and resulted in what could be described as the ‘greening’ of the English-speaking Catholic world. In 1866 it would be Scotland’s turn to experience Cullen’s colonisation.

It is not intended here to go into great depth on this particular issue but the basic outline is necessary to understand Scoto-Irish Catholic relations. Prior to the restoration of the Scottish hierarchy in 1878 the Catholic Church in Scotland was governed by three Vicars Apostolic each of Episcopal rank. In 1866 the Propaganda ordered the appointment of a coadjutor for the Western District due to the ill health of Bishop Gray. Gray and Kyle of the Northern District drew up a list of three names, all Scots, while Bishop Strain (himself part Irish) of the Northern District wanted to include an Irish name but appeared to bow to the wishes of the majority. The approved list was duly sent to Rome but unbeknownst to Gray and Kyle, Strain had written privately to the Propaganda denouncing the choice and stating that no Scottish priest was suitable for the job. The Propaganda were now faced with a dilemma, an apparently divided leadership in the Scottish Church had proposed ‘candidates whom the third identified as being involved in the disturbances that had roiled Glasgow for some years. This is a crucial point: the district was already divided on *Scots v. Irish* lines, and Irish priests and laity, associated with a radical newspaper the *Glasgow Free Press* had done much to make the Church there effectively ungovernable.’<sup>185</sup> This sort of controversy was tailor made for Cullen who duly proposed Dr James Lynch, an Irishman, for the post of coadjutor. In this case though, the sequence of events did not follow the usual pattern. For one thing Lynch was something of an abrasive character who was unsuited to the role, for another the Scots clergy took his appointment as an insult and a negative reflection on themselves. What was most important in this case is that the Scots had their own fluent Italian speaker with connections to the Propaganda, Coll Macdonald, who was dispatched to Rome post haste by Gray. ‘His case was simple: appointing Lynch was an insult to all Scottish Catholics; it rewarded the rebellion of Irish priests, laity and the *Free Press*; it would only make matters in Glasgow worse.’<sup>186</sup> Macdonald in a telling phrase, summed up the attitude of the Scottish clergy, ‘it is easier to keep the Irish out of possession, than to get them out of it, if they are once fairly in it’.<sup>187</sup> It was a sentiment that many Catholics around the world would have recognised.

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<sup>185</sup> *Ibid* p 638

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid* p 639

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid* p 639

Having appointed Lynch, the Propaganda could not at this point back down but the appointment proved to be a disaster. The relationship between Grey and Lynch soon broke down in acrimony, with Lynch informing the Propaganda that Grey was hopelessly incompetent and sought the help of his mentor Cullen to make the case. This case Cullen agreed to support on the grounds that the Irish vastly outnumbered the Scots in the Western district.<sup>188</sup> Cullen's intervention was not without its effect and Grey found himself summoned to Rome to prove his fitness for his position. The Scots for their part had no doubt who was responsible for the state of affairs 'It is clear that Cardinal Cullen and the Vincentians of Lanarck (sic) are the soul of the present movement.'<sup>189</sup> Relations between the native Scottish Church and the Irish having irretrievably broken down the affair rumbled on acrimoniously for some time until the Propaganda appointed an Englishman, Archbishop Manning of Westminster, to inquire into the affair. Manning did find shortcomings in Grey's administration but was equally critical of Lynch's Irish allies. Manning's eventual solution was to appoint an Englishman, Charles Eyre, to replace Grey and Lynch returned to Ireland and Cullen.

The main significance of this controversy is that the Scots managed to fend off a Cullenite takeover of their Church which would probably have had the effect of turning it into a province of Dublin. They were able to do so as they had the willingness and ability to take their case directly to the Propaganda and for once Cullen did not have the sole power of explication. Maintaining Scottish ecclesiastical independence from Irish incursion became a feature of Scottish Catholicism up to and after the restoration of the hierarchy. Having had this experience it is perhaps understandable that the Scottish hierarchy, even in 1923, were not inclined to rush to the defence of the Irish, so long as the attack was ostensibly on their race and not their religion. The success of Cullen's 'Imperial mission' would have been still very apparent in the English speaking section of the Catholic world. After all if any Church had a legitimate fear of being swamped by the Irish it was the Scottish Catholic Church and not the Church of Scotland. Given their experiences since the 1840s, Scottish Catholic clergymen, and laity, would not have been human if they did not occasionally consider the Irish something of an interloping nuisance. Undoubtedly they would have defended their flock as Catholics; perhaps there was less zeal, to put it no stronger than that, to defend them as Irish. It would go some way to explaining the curious archival silence on the issue.

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid* p 640

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid* p 641

### *III The Catholic Press*

The ‘official’ response to the anti-Irish campaign in many ways reflected traditional Scottish Catholic concerns but, as has been stated above, the attack nevertheless was on the Irish. In Ireland the Free State Government had troubles enough of its own to concern itself with the Church of Scotland. The Irish press, however, naturally enough took umbrage. At the first appearance of the *Menace* report the *Irish Independent* produced an editorial condemning its authors:

The Scotsman is frequently accused of having no sense of humour but no critic has hitherto ventured to charge him with lacking a sense of fair play. There are, however, even Scotsmen capable of creating a bogey for the purpose of arousing racial prejudice and inflicting unmerited penalties on the victims of their bigotry. Amongst such, we fear, must be counted Lord Sands and Professor William Main who...lent their names to an attack on the Irish in Scotland as unjust as it is unfounded. They seek to incite the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland into approval of - if not, indeed participation in - an onslaught those of Irish birth or Irish parentage now resident in Scotland....These Scottish scaremongers pretend that Scotland is menaced on all sides by the Irish.<sup>190</sup>

After the Assembly passed a resolution calling on the British Government to inquire into Irish Immigration the *Irish Independent* returned to the attack:

The grievance which Lord Sands, The Rev. R. M. Main (sic), and their friends have striven to magnify into a sort of Raw-Head and Bloody Bones with which to terrify timid Scotsmen, is that the Irish immigrants are Catholics and “a menace to the Protestant religion in the country.” At first it was suggested that our people who crossed to Scotland in search of employment were criminals, but that dog would not hunt. Now they are merely Catholics, which, in the eyes of the bigots may be the unpardonable crime. The whole affair bears a strong resemblance to the recent pogrom against Catholics in Ulster....The wonder is the members of the Church of Scotland should lend themselves to such a campaign. If the Scots claim the right to deport immigrants solely on the grounds of their religious belief they are setting an example

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<sup>190</sup> *Irish Independent*, May 18th 1923, p4

which may have unpleasant consequences for themselves. It is but a step further to Russia's policy of executing those who dare to remain Catholics.<sup>191</sup>

The position of the *Irish Independent* was fairly representative of the Irish press at the time and the *Freeman's Journal* published a lengthy attack on the Church of Scotland's position by Ruaridh Erskine of Marr on the 25<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>192</sup> It also reported the following year on a denunciation of the anti-Irish campaign by the London branch of the Scots' National League.<sup>193</sup> As time went on ritual denunciations of the campaign in the Irish press became as much of a hardy annual as ritual denunciations of the Irish became at the General Assembly although these tended to become more mockery than outrage as time passed. For example the *Irish Independent* by 1927 was observing, with heavy sarcasm:

The Scottish Churches Council appears to spend much of its time in counting heads. We never read of it except in connection with the agitation against the Irish in Scotland. Seemingly it is more interested in statistics than theology...If there is a real problem to be solved an embargo against ships carrying Irish immigrants is no solution. This would still leave about 650,000 Irish Catholics in Scotland. Unless all these people were deported or killed – two proposals which even the Scottish Churches Council would admit are unchristian and impracticable – the number of Catholics must continue to increase and of other denominations to decline.<sup>194</sup>

It is to the champion of the Irish immigrant, Charles Diamond that we have to turn for a more visceral response. There is in his newspapers a remarkably revealing article that more than any other sums up Diamond's attitude, not just to the controversies of the day but how he, and no doubt many other Irish Catholics in Scotland, viewed their position. It is worth quoting extensively from it, especially if it is read in relation to the foregoing comments from the Church. In March 1926 Diamond responded to a letter to the *Glasgow Observer* which complained of the Catholic press's pro-Irish bias and suggesting that the 'Scotch Catholic press should be primarily Scottish - strongly Scottish in tone and matter first and only

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<sup>191</sup> *Irish Independent*, May 30<sup>th</sup> 1923, p4.

<sup>192</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, June 25<sup>th</sup> 1923, p6

<sup>193</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, February 18<sup>th</sup> 1924, p6

<sup>194</sup> *Irish Independent*, December 30<sup>th</sup> 1927, p4

secondarily warm towards the Irish and things Irish.’<sup>195</sup> This criticism seems to have touched Diamond on the raw.

But it is impossible for us to carry on Catholic papers ...without leaning chiefly on the Irish people who by birth or descent form an overwhelming majority of Catholics of Scotland.

...We do not quite know what our correspondent means by saying our papers in Scotland should be primarily Scottish and strongly Scottish.

The Catholics of Scotland are a minority and purely Scottish Catholics are a greater minority still. To be strongly and vigorously Scottish seems to us to involve the support of views and policies which are not only non-Catholic but anti Catholic.

At this point Diamond appears to be advocating a position for which he had castigated others: to be truly Catholic was to be Irish and compounding it with the notion that to be Scottish was to be anti-Catholic. Certainly given the climate of the times it is not difficult to have some sympathy with his view but it demonstrates an air of persecution and retreat into the ghetto. Owen Dudley Edwards has contended that part of the responsibility for the attacks made on the Irish Catholics were brought upon themselves and while ‘this does not discharge the conscience of the General Assembly...some part of the responsibility for their proceedings is owing to the evident contempt of Irish Catholic journalists for their duties to the country that had given them a home.’<sup>196</sup> Diamond illustrated that contempt succinctly in the following passage:

Our critic would have some difficulty in explaining how we are to be strongly Catholic and at the same time strongly Scottish.

...We have taken up the position...that the Irish Catholics of Britain have as much right to their national sympathies, to their political and their convictions as any other section of the catholic community. Why should they cease to be Irish?

We have never admitted the right of any of the anti-Irish elements in the land...we dared to stand up for the rights of the Irish people at home and in Britain because in fine (sic) we are too Irish!

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<sup>195</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, March 13th 1926, p6

<sup>196</sup> O.D. Edwards, *The Catholic Press in Scotland*, p167

...It would be very difficult to conduct Catholic newspapers and make them strongly English, Scottish or Welsh because England Scotland and Wales are primarily and above all things non-Catholic and even anti-Catholic countries.

In their politics, their social life and their outlook the people of these Islands are either indifferent or hostile to the Catholic cause and to Catholic principles.

Where not frankly pagan they are anti-Catholic. How then are we to make our papers strongly and entirely English, Scottish or Welsh?

...it is in the general attitude of the people as a whole that hostility is to be found to the Catholic cause.

Leaving aside the fact that his correspondent never said that Catholic papers should be exclusively Scottish, Diamond's response was instinctively defensive and returned to the justifications of the persecuted. His conflation of Catholicism and Irishness seemed to deny the title of true Catholic to anyone in Britain who was not Irish. The very existence of his papers was being predicated on the continuance of there being a sort of Irish Ghetto of the mind. The Irish in Britain, no matter how long they were settled or how far back their ancestry, were to remain Irish and outsiders amidst a racially, religiously and politically hostile people, a clan of the perpetually oppressed. It was a curious position for a serial Labour candidate and who exhorted his co-religionists to become involved in politics. However, this was a man who threatened to sue for libel anyone who called him a socialist when he stood for Labour in the 1922 elections. In the conduct of his papers throughout the 1920s his defence of the Catholic Church against the assaults of the Presbyterians made much, and rightly much, of their bigotry and yet it contrasted oddly with the frequent anti-Semitic articles which appeared alongside them. Nevertheless, Diamond is important in the Catholic reaction to the anti-Irish campaign but as has been shown here he was not necessarily the best advocate the Irish could have had.

#### *IV Conclusion*

The researching of Catholic archives for the 1920s can, as has been pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, be tantalising and frustrating. Rather in the way that the White papers show some surprising omissions the Catholic Church seems to have been, at the very least, inconsistent with its record keeping for the period. For example, there are no records extant for the Catholic Caledonian Society before 1950 and yet, as shown above, Graham was

addressing them in June 1925. Equally there are no records in the Catholic Archives for the Catholic Truth Society before 1930 and yet, as also shown above, Mackintosh was urging Catholics to support its activities in his pastoral letter of 1924.<sup>197</sup> The Archdioceses of the Catholic Church were required to submit five-yearly reports to the Vatican commenting, amongst other things, on their relations with other churches but the sole ‘Quinquennial Report’ for the period was produced in 1932 for the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. While it expresses concern about the morals of their flock, it makes no overt mention of the Presbyterian campaign.<sup>198</sup> It should be pointed out here that these reports, prior to 1947, were produced in Latin and to a specific format. It may well be, therefore, that there is more research to be done in this area, possibly in the Vatican.<sup>199</sup> Even the minutes of the hierarchy, as pointed out in the introduction of this chapter, contain no references to the campaign.

The full history of the Catholic Church and its relations with Protestantism in the 1920s has yet to be written. What can be said with a fair degree of certainty is that while the Catholic Church had some staunch and redoubtable defenders, as an organisation it did not appear to see the need to launch a counter attack to the Church of Scotland or even an official rebuttal. McGettigan’s letter to the *Scotsman* was the closest attempt. This raises several intriguing questions, the most obvious being why not? This chapter has posited some possible solutions although a final answer is still elusive. It may simply be that the Catholic leadership at the time were not personally equipped or inclined to become involved in this sort of controversy. Certainly neither Mackintosh or Graham was a political animal in the same way as White or Sands. It may be that they judged that the Church of Scotland had no chance whatsoever of succeeding, especially in view of the fact that by 1926 most of the few remaining laws restricting Catholic practice were in the process of being repealed. It could also be, that as Mackintosh and Graham were Scots that they did not take attacks on the Irish quite so personally as they might otherwise have done. Yet Father Charleson’s letter suggests that some Scottish priests were quite as ready to take umbrage at the Church of Scotland’s language as any other Catholic. It is also just as likely that the hierarchy considered it had quite enough on its plate with the implementation of the 1918 Education Act without becoming embroiled in controversies of this nature which were perhaps no more than they had come to expect from the Presbyterian Churches. To take on the Church of Scotland on

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<sup>197</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, March 15<sup>th</sup> 1924, p3

<sup>198</sup> Scottish Catholic Archives DE52/1 Quinquennial Report 1932 Caput XI Paragraph 84

<sup>199</sup> I am indebted to Miss Kate Wane, postgraduate student of the Classics department of the University of Edinburgh for her assistance with the translation.

this issue would be to inflate the whole affair into a direct confrontation between the Church of Rome and the Church of Scotland with incalculable consequences for civil peace. They, like the Scottish Office civil servant Milroy, may not have wanted 'to throw fuel on the flame of racial strife.' They may indeed have taken the Christian option and decided to turn the other cheek and pray that God would show the Presbyterians the error of their ways. It may have been all, a combination of some, or none of the above. It is one of the reasons that the period remains so fascinating. On balance it would appear that the Catholic Church in Scotland had a long tradition of keeping its head down politically unless it was directly attacked. The anti-Irish campaign of the 1920s was not ostensibly aimed at the Catholic Church or it at least had a certain amount of plausible deniability. The Church would become considerably more vocal when its members and property were physically threatened in the 1930s.

## Chapter Four

### The Civil Magistrate

*The only freedom that Andrew Melville could have asked for in addition would be the freedom to require the civil magistrate to compel all of his subjects to obey the judgements of the church courts!*

J.H.S Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* 1960, pp 401-2

#### *I Introduction*

What is sometimes lost in the history of Scotland of the 1920s is how intensely conservative a period it was. Naturally enough with the effects of the Great War, the rise of the Labour party, the General Strike, mass unemployment and the development of a class based political system it is perfectly reasonable to see it as a time of political ferment. Yet the indisputable fact is that between 1919 and 1929, with only a brief hiatus, the Conservative party, whether in coalition or on its own, was the dominant political force in Britain. It was a Conservative party, moreover, benefiting from the flight from the Liberals of a frightened middle class, that clung to many of its more reactionary principles. The defence of the Empire, a bulwark against Bolshevism and the maintenance of the pre-war social system were the certainties that its MPs could understand and promote. It was not that they did not recognise that things had changed. It was because things had changed that there was a need for the Conservative party to stick to its traditional strengths, if only to ensure that things did not change any further. This required vigilance against perceived threats to the political and social order. God, King and Empire were to be defended at all costs from enemies foreign and domestic, especially domestic.

Why then was the Unionist party so apparently reluctant to support the Church of Scotland over an issue that was almost guaranteed to unite them, namely the ‘threat’ of the Catholic Irish in Scotland, surely an enemy within if ever there was one? As has been pointed out in Chapter One the Scottish establishment in particular had had an almighty fright because of the events of the Irish War of Independence. Now these newly enfranchised ‘subversives’ were apparently making common cause with the socialists. At the very least no more of these undesirables must be allowed to flood into Scotland to take the bread from the mouths of honest Scotsmen who were suffering from high unemployment and forced to leave the land of their birth for America where they were lost to their homeland and the Empire.

All this should have been good tub-thumping stuff for the constituencies especially when it was to be backed up by the very latest scholarship, modern social theory and the imprimatur of the respectability of the Church of Scotland.

Yet the campaign appeared to have run out of steam by the end of the 1920s in the face of a refusal by a Conservative Government to contemplate the imposition of restrictions on Irish immigration. There is even evidence to suggest that that self-same Government may have been instrumental in assisting in the public demolition of the Church's case by the *Glasgow Herald* in 1929. The purpose of this chapter will be to discuss the reaction of the Government, and particularly the Scottish Office, to the Church's demand for the restriction of Irish immigration to Scotland. It should be pointed out that the Church did have its supporters in Government, notably Major Walter Elliot, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland for most of the period. The Secretary of State, Sir John Gilmour, also fought more of a battle for restriction inside the Government than has been recognised. Bruce, Glendinning, Paterson and Rosie have pointed out that when the Scottish Churches met Gilmour and the Home Secretary, Joynson-Hicks, in 1928: 'The delegates were to receive a rude shock...they were handed government data that flatly contradicted their case. With what must have required a considerable amount of self-control for a Unionist MP and member of the Orange Order's Grand Lodge, Gilmour told the petitioners that even if it had been the problem they asserted, migration from the Irish Free State could not be prevented because it was not a foreign country: it was part of the British Empire!'<sup>200</sup> Nevertheless, it will be argued here that as late as February 1929 Gilmour was still attempting to persuade the Cabinet of the merits of some form of restriction and Joynson-Hicks himself was also suggesting employment restrictions on Irish-born labour that would be policed informally by employers rather than by legislative action by the Government. Equally, Elliot was arguing at the same time that in party political terms it would be to the Conservative advantage to use the Irish issue to split the new nationalist movement and head off demands for Scottish Home Rule presented by Labour and the Liberals.

## *II Enter Elliot*

In order to understand the development of the debate it is necessary to return to the earlier years of the decade. Even before The Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland produced its report on *The Menace of the Irish Race to Our Scots Nationality* in

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<sup>200</sup> S. Bruce, T. Glendinning, I. Paterson, M. Rosie *Sectarianism in Scotland*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p43

1923, J S Phillimore, Chair of Humanities (Latin) at Glasgow University, in a perceptive article for the *Dublin Review* in 1922 analysed the tensions within the Protestant churches in Scotland:

The Holy Coalition had evidently a predisposition to work upon, and here we see it displayed. The perilous equation, “Irish and therefore Catholic”= “Catholic and therefore Irish” had been indiscreetly obtruded...One or two ill-calculated attempts by Sinn Feiners at criminal violence in Glasgow produced great indignation. They were promptly denounced and reprobated. But the legacy of “war nerves” and the present “tax nerves” form a very irritable diathesis for such alarms and outrages to work upon. But behind the Irish complication which is our Nemesis, there is the deep growing uneasiness at the failure of Protestantism to keep up in the race. The movement for Presbyterian re-union (which looks likely to succeed) is not principally a revulsion against the fissiparous instinct so deeply ingrained in Scottish Protestantism...but a policy of shortening the front against “the growing menace of Romanism and Socialism.” We must think not only of the – quite natural-resentment of a threatened caste...but of a peculiarity in Calvinism - its fitness for a small homogenous bourgeoisie.<sup>201</sup>

His was a not unreasonable survey of the underlying attitudes that would be borne out in the Church and Nation Report, even if its drafters would likely have indignantly rejected it. It should be pointed out that Phillimore was not an uncontroversial individual himself. A catholic convert, he had outraged some Protestant opinion in a speech to St Aloysius Academy in 1921 in which he suggested that the universities were open to capture and a means of converting Scotland to Catholicism.<sup>202</sup>

By 1924, however, the Labour party was in power and ‘Romanism and Socialism’ were no longer a menace but an apparent reality. Although it was a somewhat abbreviated administration, the Church was unlikely to obtain a sympathetic hearing to combat these twin evils during Labour’s period in office. However, circumstances were to change drastically during the General Election of 1924. As David Cesarani has shown:

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<sup>201</sup> J.S. Phillimore, The Prospects of the Catholic Church in Scotland, *Dublin Review* Vol 171; 343, (1922), pp191-192

<sup>202</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy Peace*, p135

What has been less generally noted by historians is the current of anti-alienism that underlay the Conservatives campaign and the anti-alien, anti-Jewish furore that accompanied the formation of the new Government. The leader of the Conservative Party, Stanley Baldwin, gave the green light to the extremists in his own ranks - men like Joynson-Hicks - in the course of his election broadcast on 16 October 1924 and in other speeches. Adverting to domestic unrest and the activity of 'alien' subversives, he announced that "we cannot afford the luxury of academic socialists or revolutionary agitation"... He told the nation on radio that should he become Prime Minister, "I want to examine the laws and regulations as to the entry of aliens into this country, for in these days no alien should be substituted for one of our own people when we have not enough work at home to go around." The Association of British Chambers of Commerce passed a resolution a few days after the installation of the new Government urging it to take measures against "undesirable aliens". The anti-alien theme was pushed hard by The Times, which began a series of articles on "Alien London"...The reports concentrated almost exclusively on the Jews in the East End..."They stand aloof -not always without a touch of oriental arrogance- from their fellow citizens. They look upon us with suspicion and a certain contempt. Mixed marriages between orthodox Jews and Gentiles are forbidden. These people remain an alien element in our land."<sup>203</sup>

In this febrile atmosphere it is not difficult to imagine the reaction of those in the Church of Scotland who held similar views about the alien inassimilable Irish. If the Jews were a problem in the East End of London how much more so were the Irish in the East End of Glasgow? The Jews had at least not been in direct rebellion against the Crown a mere three years previously and were furthermore unlikely to swamp the indigenous population. It has also to be pointed out that some Irish Catholics did their cause little favour. As Owen Dudley Edwards has stated, "The difference lies in that the Jews had given far less evidence of considering themselves a separate people...than had the chosen spokesmen of the Scottish Catholics of Irish Origin. Scotsmen who read the Catholic press might indeed wonder whether the Irish had any loyalty to Scotland."<sup>204</sup> Politically, therefore, it may well have

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<sup>203</sup> D. Cesarani, Joynson-Hicks and the Radical Right in England after the First World War in T. Kushner and K. Lunn (eds.), *Traditions of Intolerance Historical perspectives on fascism and race discourse in Britain*, (Manchester University Press, 1989), p128

<sup>204</sup> O.D. Edwards, *The Catholic Press in Scotland*, p167

appeared that the tide was running with the Church and encouraged them in the belief that any approach to Government would be met sympathetically.

This opinion was not without foundation. On the 17th July 1925 Major Elliot circulated a note on the issue of Irish immigration in the Scottish Office. The statistics that he quotes were, even then, suspect but it instigated research by the Scottish Office into the true state of affairs and would be frequently cited in departmental discussions:

I have had this matter under consideration for some time and referred guardedly to it while introducing the Board of Health Estimates, 1925. The Board of Health have since been collecting figures and estimate at present that a surplus of 4,000 Irish per annum remains as balance of immigration over emigration. We are at present supporting in Scotland some 10,000 paupers of Irish birth

In view of the very greatly overcrowded state of the Scottish labour market and the numbers who annually emigrate from Scotland only to be replaced here by Irish I suggest that the position cannot be allowed to remain.

I see no objection to framing a general statute limiting immigration from Dominions in the same way as they limit immigration from us. This in practice comes down to a reasonable prospect of employment with or without possession of a capital sum.

If England is not willing to do this Scotland should consider proceeding independently.

Note that the present situation will be greatly aggravated when the new American quota system comes into effect which restricts further Irish immigration and will have the effect of damming it back on Great Britain.<sup>205</sup>

Elliot it should be noted had considerably more influence than his position as a junior minister would suggest. He was regarded as something of a right wing intellectual and party strategist. As Hutchison has illustrated, 'A ...Scot who had an audience throughout Great Britain was Walter Elliot. He was an inveterate writer of newspaper articles for both the London and Scottish press. In 1927 he wrote a book on Conservatism, (*Toryism in the Twentieth Century*) as part of a series of books designed to state the right wing viewpoint on contemporary politics. That Elliot should be invited to define the central theme of the whole

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<sup>205</sup> NRS, Irish Immigration Files, HH1/541

series indicates the weight he carried.<sup>206</sup> Certainly his memorandum would haunt Scottish Office thinking on the Irish issue for the rest of the decade.

In terms of the statistics, he was being selective with the material with which he was provided. A Scottish Board of Health document dated 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1925<sup>207</sup> stated that the total number of Irish born persons, including dependents, receiving poor relief on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1924 was 9,342. This figure did not differentiate between Free State and Northern Irish citizens. The Board of Health's survey of the Inspectors of Poor in the parishes of Coatbridge, Govan, Greenock, Bothwell, Glasgow, Motherwell and Port Glasgow concluded that 'so far as the Parish Councils are concerned, the question of immigration from Ireland during the past three years has not been a serious matter.'<sup>208</sup> His assertion that there was a surplus of 4,000 Irish per annum was based on information provided confidentially by the Steamship Companies which estimated the excess of numbers arriving in Scotland in 1924, over the numbers leaving, to be 3,966.<sup>209</sup> These figures did not take into account that the majority of the ferry traffic was between Ulster and Scotland and not the Free State and Scotland. There was no possibility using these figures to establish that the final destination of these travellers was the West of Scotland. What is of particular interest in the Elliot note is his assertion that if England was not willing to restrict Irish immigration then Scotland should proceed on its own independently. At first glance it appears remarkable that a minister of the Crown, and a Unionist one at that, was advocating a quasi-nationalist idea of Scotland 'proceeding independently' on the issue. However, Elliot's thinking on the subject was influenced, as will be shown, by particularly Scottish political considerations.

By December 1925 the Church of Scotland Committee increased the pressure on the Government for action and produced an open letter to Sir John Gilmour which it published in pamphlet form. This opened in rather sonorous tone: 'In accordance with a remit from the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church, and the Free Church, and after consultation with other Churches, we desire to approach His Majesty's Government upon a question of vital importance to our Scottish people – viz., the serious situation that has arisen in Scotland owing to the influx during the last number of years of many thousands of Irish immigrants, and to the emigration of many thousands of the native population.'<sup>210</sup> The pamphlet itself was an updated version of the *Irish Menace* report of 1923 and contained the

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<sup>206</sup> I. G. C. Hutchison, *Scottish Unionism Between The Two World Wars*, in C. M. MacDonald (ed.), *Unionist Scotland 1800-1997*, (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1998), p74

<sup>207</sup> NRS, HHI/541

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>210</sup> NRS, HHI/541, Print of the Church and Nation Committee pamphlet, 'Open Letter to Sir John Gilmour'

usual references to the supplanting of the indigenous population by the inferior Irish. 'It has been stated in the House of Commons that 9,000 persons immigrated into Scotland in 1924 and yet there were as many as 70,000 unemployed persons in Glasgow alone.'<sup>211</sup> As has been pointed out above this figure of 9,000 was not rooted in reality.<sup>212</sup> The Church had no doubt of the cause of this unemployment and it also introduced what was to become something of a bogey figure for the twenties, the infamous 'Irish foreman':

We know of a recent case where an Irish foreman was dismissing *Scotsman* and engaging Irishmen, and was even bringing men over from Ireland and putting them on the job.

We have known cases where public schemes undertaken to provide work for our own unemployed have been partially recruited from immigrants of a few weeks and months standing.<sup>213</sup>

It is possible to discern how the Government was now being hoist with the petard of its own pre-election language of only a year before. The letter itself, signed by the Rev. John White, concluded with a request that the Government institute an inquiry into the issue and then take whatever action was necessary. The Church followed this up at the end of the year with a formal request for a delegation to meet Sir John Gilmour in person to discuss the issue. It was a request that created some consternation within the Scottish Office.

### *III Knocking on the Scottish Office Door*

In early January 1926 the rather invidious position of the Scottish Office was recognised by officials. Rose, Gilmour's Private Secretary, minuted the department regarding the Church's request and immediately pointed out that the Dominion status of the Irish Free State made any solution problematical but 'The reception of a deputation might be of advantage in that seeking to get a policy of restriction adopted Secretary for Scotland could point to feeling of responsible persons in Scotland as evinced by the deputation.'<sup>214</sup> It should be noted here that the Church was in some haste to arrange the deputation before the annual General Assembly

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<sup>211</sup> *Ibid* p2

<sup>212</sup> The pamphlet unfortunately makes no reference and gives no date for the author of this figure. Possibly given the Elliot note quoted above it might be a misreading of the numbers of Irish paupers in receipt of poor relief, or perhaps more likely a random figure.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid* p2

<sup>214</sup> NRS HH1/541, Minute Sheet

in May. This was probably because White was ending his first period in office as Moderator and to secure government assurances on action on the Irish issue would have been a considerable boost, not only to him personally, but to the re-unification process between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, the anti-Irish campaign having been very much a joint venture. Not all of the Scottish Office officials were keen to oblige the Kirk, however, as can be seen by the replies to Rose's minute:

The question of Irish immigration to Scotland is a difficult and delicate one. For facts in support of the menace within it would be necessary to consult a number of departments – Ministry of Labour, Registrar General, Scottish Board of Health perhaps the Prisons Commissioners ...

Before reaching a final decision as to receiving a deputation it would be desirable to confer with the Dominions Office as it is not impossible that the ventilation of the subject by the rather conspicuous method of a deputation from an influential body, who moreover are not particularly reticent in their presentation of the case would be regarded as embarrassing.

In view of the notice which the subject has already received (See in particular Captain Elliot memo) Secretary for Scotland should probably see before any action is taken

Patrick Laird 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1926<sup>215</sup>

The importance of the problem is undoubted. Any remedy is necessarily difficult. Presumably it could only take the form of legislation restricting immigration from the Irish Free State or from the Dominions generally. If such a measure were undertaken it would require careful steering. Judging by the print enclosed I am apprehensive that the spokesman at the suggested interview might increase the difficulties by precipitating opposition from the FS (sic) and perhaps other Dominions. Quiet consideration by the Government might be better than an advertised deputation and public inquiry as suggested.

John Lamb 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1926<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*

The use of language by these senior civil servants is interesting. Laird's description of the Church as 'an influential body who are not particularly reticent in their presentation of the case' was a piece of masterly understatement. He was obviously fully alive to the possibilities of 'embarrassment'. At the same time, the Elliot memo had made the issue one which the Scottish Office could not entirely ignore although Sir John Lamb's suggestion that it was a problem that required 'quiet consideration by the Government' implies that he hoped it might be. To accede to the Church's request would not only appear as though it was making policy but also had the potential to drag the Scottish Office into potential conflict with other departments. As far back as 1923 there had been a suggestion made to the Dominions Office that there be a reciprocal arrangement for the repatriation of those charged to the Poor Law between Scotland and Ireland. This had already received a dusty answer: 'it would be possible for HMG (His Majesty's Government) to suggest to the Government of the Free State that the previous power to remove paupers from Great Britain to their area should be re-enacted on the understanding that legislation should be introduced providing that paupers could similarly be removed to from the Free State to Great Britain but His Grace (the Duke of Devonshire) doubts whether the Government of the Irish Free State would be prepared to concur in such a proposal; and as present advised, therefore, he does not see his way to make it.'<sup>217</sup> If the Dominions Office did not see its way to making such suggestions in 1923 it was extremely unlikely that they would consider any more radical solutions at the behest of the Church of Scotland in 1926. Especially in view of the fact that the Boundary Commission of 1925 had just confirmed the borders of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland to the disappointment of many in the South. Creating unnecessary difficulties for the Cosgrave Government just as De Valera was re-entering Irish politics was not to be countenanced.

There was a recognition that the Scottish Office had to be able to examine the actual position rather than the somewhat unsubstantiated figures being employed by the Church. Sir John Gilmour, recognising that procrastination was the better part of valour, suggested putting the Church off on the grounds 'that as this is a UK question I think it undesirable to meet them at the present time.'<sup>218</sup>

Between the months of January and March 1926 the Scottish Office consulted the Scottish Board of Health, the Registrar General and the Prisons Commissioners of Scotland. The Registrar General on January 27<sup>th</sup> in his report to the Scottish Office raised the first doubts

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<sup>217</sup> NRS, HH1/540, Letter to the Scottish Board of Health from the Colonial Office (Irish Branch), November 6<sup>th</sup> 1923

<sup>218</sup> NRS HH1/541, Sir John Gilmour minute January 5<sup>th</sup> 1926

about the Church's case. He found from the census return of 1921 that the number of Irish-born persons in Scotland was lower than in 1911. He went further: 'The fact that the number found in Scotland in 1921 is the lowest since 1851 certainly does not support a view of there being within recent years any increase in the amount of immigration from Ireland.'<sup>219</sup> He also examined the numbers of Irish marriages, another statistic often cited to 'prove' the increase in Irish immigration. His conclusions were no more helpful to the Church and Nation Committee:

...these percentages tend to show some, though not great increase in the frequency of Roman Catholic (i.e. Irish) marriages but this percentage cannot be credited with demonstrating increased immigration of Irish for there are good grounds for presuming that the children of Irish immigrants adhere to the Roman Catholic faith and when they grow up and marry tend to increase the number of Irish marriages. Thus the figures obtained from an examination of the Marriage Registers, like those obtained from an examination of the census returns at least fail to show any evidence of any increase in the number of Irish immigrants.

...I in no way desire to state that the information supplied by the Committee of the Church of Scotland is erroneous, but I feel it right to point out that the information at my disposal from the census reports and from the marriage statistics fails to provide corroboration.<sup>220</sup>

There was some succour given to the Church by the statistics provided by the Prisons Commissioners but the figures did not give numbers for those of Irish birth as opposed to those of Irish extraction. As Milroy, the civil servant tasked with compiling the reports pointed out in his summary, the assumption was that those prisoners classified as Roman Catholic were either Irish or of Irish extraction in which case there appeared to be a disproportionate number of 'Irish' prisoners.<sup>221</sup> It should be remembered that this was not what would be considered a scientific breakdown of the figures and that the Chairman of the Prison Commissioners was one Lord Polwarth, who was also a prominent member of the Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland. The Board of Health reported that: 'The number of Irish born persons in receipt of ordinary poor relief has not grown recently; it

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<sup>219</sup> NRS, HH1/541

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*

is less than it was in 1910 and the same is true as regards the percentage of the total number chargeable including destitute able bodied unemployed.<sup>222</sup> The statistics thus obtained by early 1926 were far from supportive of the Church's case and went a long way in refuting it, although the Scottish Office were cautious in their conclusions. Milroy put the position thus:

There has been no serious (sic) increase recently in the Irish population but there may have been some displacement of Scottish Labour by Irish.

...In the circumstances I should be disposed to defer consulting the Dominions Office – one does not want to throw fuel on the flame of racial strife until we have consulted the Ministry of Labour and see what they have to say. If there really be a problem of recent growth it would seem to lie in the displacement of Scottish labour by Irish.<sup>223</sup>

Milroy assiduously pursued the Ministry of Labour for statistics that might prove or disprove the assertion that the Irish were in fact displacing Scottish labour. His reply, finally received in June, was that the Ministry did not have any information that was relevant to that in the Church's pamphlet. By this time Milroy at least had concluded that: 'the Irish "danger" is not appreciably increasing and does not justify any action by the British Government. Apart from the desirability of action, restriction of Irish immigration would raise thorny questions with the Dominions.'<sup>224</sup>

After what must have been much wearisome toil and, judging by the amount of material produced by the various departments, considerable departmental time, there was by the middle of 1926 no single statistical confirmation of the Church's case. The Church, however, unaware that the Scottish Office had been scrutinising the figures, renewed the mandate of the Church and Nation Committee and evidently undeterred by the earlier polite refusal, renewed their request for the reception of a delegation by the Secretary of State to discuss the issue. Gilmour was in somewhat of a difficult political position. Any further refusal to meet a delegation of the Church of Scotland may have been construed as a snub, especially as the position of Secretary of State for Scotland had been elevated to Cabinet rank that summer. The first Secretary of State for Scotland in the Cabinet since the eighteenth century, refusing, almost as his first official act, to meet a delegation from the Church of Scotland to discuss an issue that was being portrayed as a matter of national survival would hardly be considered an

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<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*

auspicious beginning, especially in the Scottish Unionist Party. On the other hand as Milroy pointed out in a memo that while he agreed that the Irish immigration question was ‘highly controversial and delicate, ... In these cases I think that, if the request for interview on these subjects were acceded to, no useful purpose would be served. On the contrary harm might ensue inasmuch as S of S’s agreement to receive a deputation might be construed by the ordinary layman - bonus paterfamilias - as an indication of concurrence with the Church’s views and of putting his weight in their favour.’<sup>225</sup>

In the event a meeting was arranged with the Church’s delegation which took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1926 but without Sir John Gilmour who was called away at the last moment on urgent business elsewhere. In view of the advice he had been receiving from his officials this may have been a diplomatic absence. It is also notable that the Rev John White was another absentee. The Church’s case was presented by the Reverends MacLagan and Cameron while the Government was represented by Sir John Lamb and Mr Jeffrey<sup>226</sup> from the Board of Health. It was not an altogether satisfactory occasion for the Church side. The usual iniquities of the Irish were rehearsed in which they were accused of taking the jobs from unemployed Scotsmen while apparently at the same time idling on the dole, the Unemployment Insurance Act being, in the words of one delegate, the Reverend Patterson, ‘a terrible curse on the country.’<sup>227</sup> When not engaged in these activities they were, according to the Rev Duncan Cameron of Kilsyth, plotting the downfall of the Empire.<sup>228</sup> The delegation called for a public inquiry which was deflected, rather than refused, by Sir John Lamb on the grounds ‘that it would be difficult to get a body which would be recognised as impartial to enquire into the matter.’<sup>229</sup> Mr Jeffrey also refuted the claim that temporary workers from Ireland working on the harvest then stayed in Scotland to collect the dole. The Board of Health had monitored the position and found that nearly all such workers returned to Ireland and in any case while, ‘It might be regrettable when there was so much unemployment in Scotland that such a field of labour should not be kept filled by Scottish workers. It was nevertheless a fact that Scottish workers did not feel attracted to that class of work.’<sup>230</sup>

The reverend gentlemen might have been a little more encouraged had they been able to read some of the general conclusions contained in the briefing note for the meeting prepared

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<sup>225</sup> NRS, HH1/541, Note from Milroy to Laird

<sup>226</sup> Later Sir John Jeffrey (1871-1947) Under Secretary of State for Scotland 1933-1937

<sup>227</sup> John White Papers Box 103, Minutes of the Meeting between the Scottish Office and the Church and Nation Committee, September 24th 1926.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid*

for Sir John Gilmour. The note itself quotes the figures given in the earlier reports and was not entirely unsympathetic to the Church although the suggestions for remedying the situation fell far short of what the Church was seeking and the tone was far from the apocalyptic.

It would appear that although the figures cited above supplied by the Scottish Departments do not reveal a very serious state of affairs, there is certainly an Irish problem in the South West of Scotland, and that there has been for some time. There is no doubt that the Irish impose an undue burden on the poor law authorities and that too great a proportion of the prison population is of Irish birth or extraction: and further it seems that Irish, whether by accepting lower wages and worse conditions or through the action of compatriot foremen, obtain employment in the face of serious unemployment among Scotsmen.<sup>231</sup>

As a matter of fact the Scottish Office had absolutely no figures or evidence to justify the existence of ‘compatriot foremen’ and, as has been pointed out above, the prison statistics had a certain dubiety about them. Crime levels in the West of Scotland tended to be higher than elsewhere and one could have equally have made the argument that Glaswegians made up ‘too great a proportion of the prison population.’ Nevertheless, the government were sufficiently concerned by the Church’s allegations to set up an interdepartmental conference on the issue.<sup>232</sup>

#### *IV Behind the Scenes*

The inter-departmental conference on Irish immigration took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1927 chaired by Major Elliot. Present were representatives of the Dominions Office, the Home Office, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, the Scottish Board of Health and the Scottish Office. Elliot was still anxious to reach some sort of agreement to restrict Irish immigration. The issue was beginning to bedevil more than the correspondence pages of the *Glasgow Herald*. Even the ‘Lady Unionists,’ as the women’s section of the Unionist party was called at the time, at their conference in October 1926 had debated and overwhelmingly passed a motion demanding the restriction of immigration of Irish manual workers into Scotland and ‘that any such immigrants requiring poor relief within five years of their arrival be

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<sup>231</sup> NRS, HH1/541, Note for The Secretary of State for the meeting of the Church and Nation Committee, Appendix ,3 p3

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*

deported.’<sup>233</sup> These were sentiments with which Elliot found himself in sympathy. It is apparent from the minutes of the conference that Elliot was hoping to influence it towards a policy of restriction of immigration even if this had to be applied in general terms to all of the Dominions.

Elliot opened the conference with a restatement of the points made in the briefing note prepared for the meeting with the Church delegation the previous year (see above). He immediately ran into difficulties with the representatives of the English departments who had not ‘received complaints on the subject of Irish immigration comparable to the complaints in Scotland’ and whose inquiries ‘did not appear to show any justification for proceeding on the line proposed.’<sup>234</sup> The Dominions Office representative, Mr Whiskard, was particularly discouraging, drawing attention to what he described as a fundamental principle that ‘persons described as of Irish Free State nationality were British subjects by birth in one of His Majesty’s dominions and as such could neither be excluded or deported from this country. Apart from legislation no power existed to restrict immigration of British subjects from the Irish Free State into Great Britain’.<sup>235</sup> The Home Office representative agreed stating that: ‘the Department would object to any proposal having for its purpose the subdivision of British nationality, and it would be a complete reversal of immemorial policy for the Government to take power to keep or send out any British subject from this country.’<sup>236</sup>

Elliot was unabashed and carried on his argument that the situation could not be allowed to continue and that there was ample precedent in that Canada and Australia imposed restrictions on the immigration of Britons and in any case the policy would have no effect on them. As proof of his case Elliot cited figures from the Inspectors of Poor in Glasgow which averred that in 43 parishes ‘mainly in the West of Scotland, the number of persons born in the Irish Free State who entered Scotland in the years ended 31, March, 1926 and 1927 and became chargeable on the rates were 418 and 431 respectively.’<sup>237</sup> This figure was immediately countered by Irons of the Ministry of Labour who pointed out that: ‘according to a census taken at the exchanges in and near Glasgow only for four weeks ended 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1925, showed that of all applicants for unemployment benefit during that period only ten had at one time or another been resident in the Irish Free State. The Ministry were not aware of

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<sup>233</sup> *The Scotsman*, October 26<sup>th</sup> 1926, p9

<sup>234</sup> NRS, HH1/541, Note of Proceedings at an Inter-departmental Conference held at the Scottish Office, Whitehall, S.W.1, Tuesday June 28<sup>th</sup> 1927 at 5.30 p.m. on the subject of Irish Immigration.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*

any powers that could be invoked to regulate the entry of Irishmen into Great Britain, even if such regulation were considered to be necessary.’<sup>238</sup> It was apparent that Elliot’s, and by extension the Church’s, case was not standing up to the scrutiny of more dispassionate observers and Elliot was forced into the uncomfortable position of admitting ‘that the statistical information which had been collected from several sources had not assisted materially in providing a satisfactory basis for the examination of the problem’ nonetheless ‘although no precise figures were available to indicate of the influx of Irish into Scotland there was evidence that an influx was taking place.’<sup>239</sup>

It is probable that it was at this conference that any realistic possibility of restricting Irish immigration ran into the sand. At the end of the conference the Dominions Office made the position clear: ‘As at present advised Mr Whiskard could hold out no hope that the Dominions Office would undertake to support any proposal having for its object the exclusion of Irishmen from this country. Such a proposal impinged upon the important question of the status adhering to British nationality and was one which could not be proceeded upon without a decision by the Cabinet.’ It was not, however, the end of the affair. Sir John Lamb wrote on behalf of Sir John Gilmour to the Departments concerned on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September restating the case that the Irish were undesirable immigrants. The reply from the Home Office was a firm non possumus:

... As at present advised, Sir William Joynson-Hicks would be opposed to any suggestion that an attempt should be made to regulate immigration of natives of the Irish Free State into the UK...he would point out that natives of the IFS are in the contemplation of British law British subjects and could not under any circumstances be excluded from the UK.

Save on the grounds of urgent necessity he would deprecate the introduction of legislation with a view to making such exclusion possible.<sup>240</sup>

The Church of Scotland was in the meantime unaware of the internal discussions of the Government and carried on its campaign. On the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1928 there was a meeting in London with the joint church committee on Irish immigration and the Home Secretary

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<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>240</sup> NRS, HH1/547, Reply from John Pedder, Home Office, November 19<sup>th</sup> 1927

Joynson-Hicks and Sir John Gilmour. As has been pointed out at the beginning of this chapter the Church delegation was shocked to find that their proposals had been dismissed and were taken aback by the figures that contradicted their case. By this time, by virtue of constant re-iteration, the Church and Nation Committee were convinced that their collection of figures and anecdotal evidence made an irrefutable case. The meeting sparked considerable correspondence between the Scottish Office and the Reverends MacLagan and Cameron demanding further evidence.<sup>241</sup> The impeccably Unionist *Scotsman* chimed in with an Editorial the day after the meeting. Even though it considered that the ‘Irishman is a born agitator...on the Clyde and elsewhere there is a spirit of agitation and revolt which may owe something to Irish inspiration,’ yet the article concluded that ‘we have never had a barrier upon the immigration of British subjects...such a policy could not be applied to Scotland alone or to Irish immigration alone.’<sup>242</sup> It would appear that by the middle of 1928 the issue had become effectively dead in political terms. This, however, was not the case.

#### V *The Elliot Memorandum*

In the early months of 1929, which was to be a General Election year, the Irish issue once again intruded into Scottish and British politics. There was also a new dimension in the emergence for the first time of an avowedly nationalist party in Scotland which had secured the support of luminaries like the Duke of Montrose, R B Cunninghame Graham, Compton Mackenzie and R E Muirhead. The political circumstances were not favourable to the Conservatives. The Church of Scotland, about to be triumphantly reunited with the United Free Church later in the year, and was once again to have John White as Moderator. The indefatigable Elliot, by this time considered an influential party strategist, surveyed the political scene and found that it was not good. He was not alone in this opinion. On the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1928 he wrote to his mistress Baffy Dugdale:<sup>243</sup> ‘Had a letter from Robert Horne<sup>244</sup> getting panicky about Home Rule. I can see this Unionist Government introducing that as a last throw.’<sup>245</sup> He elaborated on his own fears a some days later in a letter to Dugdale from the Scottish Office on Christmas Eve 1928:

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<sup>241</sup> NRS, HH1/547

<sup>242</sup> *The Scotsman*, July 20th 1928, p8

<sup>243</sup> Lady Blanche (Baffy) Dugdale (1880-1948), niece of A.J. Balfour, prominent in the Zionist movement of Chaim Weizmann.

<sup>244</sup> Robert Horne (1871-1940), MP for Glasgow Hillhead, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1921-1922

<sup>245</sup> NLS Acc. 12267/11, Elliot /Dugdale Correspondence, December 11<sup>th</sup> 1928

Have been written to by Horne about Scottish Home Rule and intend to compose a memo on the subject myself. What frightens me is the prospect of the Scottish Grand Committee in the next parliament. Nobody has even envisaged this but myself. I had to face it you see in 1923.

I think that the Anti-Irish Bill and the promise of a Royal Commission the absolute minimum that we can get away with. I think more than that, but you will see it in the memo.<sup>246</sup>

In response to this Elliot produced in February 1929 a lengthy strategy document for the Scottish Unionist Party. This is one of the first references to the consequences of a serious 'Home Rule' challenge to the Unionists. The timing of the document is crucial for in March 1929 there was a scheduled Cabinet discussion on Irish immigration in Scotland which would be based on a paper produced by the Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks. Elliot suggested that for the first time the Unionists might be facing the possibility of a Bill for a Scottish legislature being proposed within the next eighteen months and produced what can be best described as a Unionist Nationalist solution.<sup>247</sup>

A re-examination of Scottish government and its relation to the United Kingdom Parliament is imminent....It is not within the range of practical politics to suppose that this situation will be altered to the Conservative advantage in the forthcoming election. ... Do we recognise, however, that this means that the establishment of a Scottish legislature is thus brought forward as a possibility not of the next ten years, but as a possibility of the next eighteen months? Both Liberal and Labour parties are deeply pledged to the proposal of such a measure, and resolutions in its favour have been repeatedly carried in Parliament, with their official support, over many years. I do not know that the Conservative party has recently made any clear statement of policy on the matter.<sup>248</sup>

In Elliot's view the existence of the Scottish Grand Committee meant that even were the Conservatives to retain power at the election they would be outnumbered in the Committee

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<sup>246</sup> *Ibid* December 24<sup>th</sup> 1928

<sup>247</sup> For discussion of the Unionist-Nationalist concept and its emergence in the previous century, see Graeme Morton, *Unionist Nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, 1830–1860*, (Tuckwell, Edinburgh, 1999).

<sup>248</sup> NRS, HH1/556 *Scottish Government Factors which must be considered before the General Election* Major Elliot, February 1929

which would make managing the Government's Scottish business almost impossible. He cited his own experience during the Bonar Law Government: 'The difficulties in the first year were dealt with by 'tacking' carried to almost absurd lengths. (The prolongation of payments of relief to Scottish able-bodied unemployed for instance, was tacked to a bill regulating London inter-borough finance.) I do not think that affairs could thus have continued for a whole Parliament, and in fact the then Secretary for Scotland had had to consider the only logical step. That is, the abolition of the Scottish Grand Committee.'<sup>249</sup> Elliot recognised that such a step would be hugely unpopular. 'Scottish Members will readily realise the extreme difficulty of taking any such step in the 1929 Parliament, as practically the first proposal of the new administration towards the Scottish people.'<sup>250</sup> There were in his view only two possible steps that Government could take to avoid chaos in the House of Commons and disastrous unpopularity in Scotland. It could set up a Royal Commission on Scottish Home Rule which would in his opinion recommend the setting up of a legislature in Scotland. This would in effect commit the Conservatives to bringing in a Home Rule Bill of their own. Elliot was of course well aware how the words Home Rule would send a shudder down the collective spine of his party. The alternative would be to suspend Irish immigration into Scotland. In Elliot's analysis of the nationalist movement:

It seems to me possible that the anti-Government swing of the pendulum may lead to a certain number of the disgruntled finding in the 'Nationalist' label a handy compromise, of the same kind as that which leads to the return of independent Members when discontent is about ...

The Nationalist movement however contains two elements naturally opposed whose temporary union has given them strength. These elements are the 'Gaelic-Irish' and the 'Edinburgh Protestant'. The 'Gaelic Irish are the literary men and some of them, such as Compton Mackenzie, preach the re-constitution of Scotland on a Roman Catholic basis. Needless to say this is an anathema to the East-country men and the Kirks. It would be easy to split these two. The steps hereafter detailed would do so. But it is probable that Unionist action along the lines previously considered might consolidate them.

... These facts seem to me the justifiable basis for suspending overseas immigration altogether at present, (that is to say Irish immigration). As all Scots Members know this

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<sup>249</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*

goes much deeper than any surface or temporary questions and indeed accounts for a large proportion of the autonomist movement.<sup>251</sup>

Having presented his party with the Scylla of Home Rule and the Charybdis of restricting immigration from the Empire he proceeded to suggest how the objections to the latter policy may have been circumvented. Using the unemployment insurance system he proposed that new books should only be issued to home born workers. This he believed would sidestep the need for an 'Ellis Island' type control system, while at the same time leaving immigration open to all countries within an unemployment insurance scheme which would 'obviate difficulties with England and Northern Ireland.'<sup>252</sup>

As a purely party political solution went it was neat and attractive for the Unionists. Elliot had managed to put restriction back onto the agenda and it was an issue, whatever its merits, he had consistently supported since 1925. It was a 'Scottish' solution to the problem and there is little doubt that Elliot believed he was shooting the nationalist fox. In this he may well have been influenced by two letters that appeared in the *Scotsman* on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1929 from the Duke of Montrose and R E Muirhead respectively. Both argued the Nationalist case but Montrose's point that a legislature was needed to control immigration while Muirhead dismissed a suggestion that Home Rule in Scotland would be 'Irish Home Rule in Scotland' by pointing out that the whole Irish immigration issue had been greatly exaggerated in the first place.<sup>253</sup> Whatever the case it was obvious that Elliot was prepared to persevere in championing restriction despite his experiences of the last five years. Incidentally this is somewhat at odds with Hutchinson's evaluation of him as a 'progressive Unionist.'<sup>254</sup> Be that as it may it would appear that Elliot was making something of a last ditch appeal to his party in terms of political self-interest to reconsider the merits of restriction in advance of the Cabinet meeting of March 1929.

This appeal was not without its effect. In advance of the discussion of a Cabinet paper on Irish immigration produced by the Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks. Gilmour discussed the situation with Elliot on two occasions. On the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1929 they agreed the memo disagreeing with the Home Office<sup>255</sup>. On 4<sup>th</sup> March they met again and, at Elliot's insistence, Gilmour agreed take to the Cabinet a copy of the *Glasgow Herald* article

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>253</sup> *The Scotsman*, January 10<sup>th</sup> 1929, p7.

<sup>254</sup> I G C Hutchison, *Scottish Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (Palgrave, Houndmills, 2001), p49.

<sup>255</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Memo Fairgrieve to Milroy February 16<sup>th</sup> 1929.

(discussed below) on the effect of the US quota system and two letters from the Scottish Unionist's Political Secretary Col. P.J. Blair<sup>256</sup>. These were addressed to Cmdr. the Hon. A.D. Cochrane D.S.O. MP and to F.C. Thomson MP, the Scottish Whip, outlining Blair's own investigation into Irish employment on the Lochmaben Water Scheme. In this it was alleged that a Ministry of Labour official informed Blair, on the basis of confidentiality, that Irish employment on the scheme was higher than they had been led to believe: 'You will see that the letter (to Thomson) covers the point about the supposed inability to know when books are issued. Apparently the Ministry of Labour in Scotland has no difficulty about this...It also says that a very much larger number of Irishmen found work on the scheme than apparently you were told in London.'<sup>257</sup> Gilmour's formal objection, agreed with Elliot, to the Home Office paper made the following points:

As regards Scotland the main facts, as shown from the enquiries which have been made, would appear as follows:-

In each of the years 1925-6 and 1926-7 over 800 poor persons born in the Irish Free State became chargeable in 43 Scottish parishes, mainly in the West of Scotland.

In each of the years 1925, 1926 and 1927 the Irish born (covering Northern Ireland as well as the Irish Free State) convicted prisoners, borstal inmates and Criminal lunatics amounted to between 22% and 25% of the total for Scotland.

In each of the years 1925 and 1926 the number of convictions of persons of Irish extraction (including both the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland) at Glasgow Sheriff Court was about half the number of persons of Scottish birth and extraction similarly convicted.

In view of these facts I should not be prepared, without further discussion, to agree with the conclusions drawn in the first paragraph of the Home Secretary's Memorandum, and I should reserve the right to state my own views as to policy at the meeting at which the matter is considered.<sup>258</sup>

The Cabinet discussion took place on Wednesday 6 March 1929. The significance of this date will be examined later. Joynson-Hicks himself was an old party 'die-hard' and of all the Cabinet the one who was most likely to be in favour of the case for restriction. However, the

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<sup>256</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Milroy minute, March 4th 1929.

<sup>257</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Blair to Cochrane February 27<sup>th</sup> 1929.

<sup>258</sup> NRS, HH1/556, Secret Cabinet Paper 46 Irish Immigration Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland, February 21<sup>st</sup> 1929.

first paragraph of his report, the one to which Gilmour objected, concluded that the results of his inquiries ‘...strongly suggest that the mischief of which the representatives of the Scottish Churches who came to see me in July last complained, has already been done and that the immigration of natives of the Irish Free State to Scotland is not now such as to affect materially the position created by the presence in Scotland of a large body of persons of Irish extraction.’ In effect the horse had long bolted and in his opinion: ‘It is in fact the Irish and their descendants already in Scotland who present the real problem and, failing wholesale repatriation, which I take to be out of the question the only measure of alleviation which commends itself as being both just and practicable is the repatriation of those who within a fixed period of their arrival in Scotland become a charge on the rates...’<sup>259</sup> It was not that Joynson-Hicks did not think that the Irish could not exert an ‘undesirable’ influence in their own localities or that no action should be taken. It is in the light of developments in the 1930s that the final paragraph of his paper takes on an added significance:

I think also that the help of Scottish employers should be enlisted. Unless there were a demand for Irish labour there would be little encouragement for either Irishmen to enter Scotland or for those who have arrived to remain. Moreover if Scottish employers showed a decided preference for Scottish Labour the Irish elements now in employment would eventually be forced onto poor relief and might, subject to whatever arrangements are made, become eligible to repatriation. The suggestion that the Secretary of State for Scotland should address a circular based of course on the gravity of the unemployment situation to the employer’s organisations in Scotland is perhaps worth considering<sup>260</sup>

In this case, we have evidence that a senior Cabinet Minister suggested that employers be encouraged to operate a specifically anti-Irish employment policy. Joynson-Hicks was doubtless referring to a policy that would affect only the Irish-born labour but in a Scotland where the distinctions between Irish and Catholic were blurred it is not difficult to see how this injunction could have been interpreted.

Nevertheless, a Cabinet decision having been agreed that no action on restriction would be taken, all members of the Government, including Elliot, were bound by the principles of

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<sup>259</sup> NRS, HH1/556, Secret Cabinet Paper C.P. 45(29), Cabinet Irish Immigration Memorandum by the Home Secretary February 20<sup>th</sup> 1929.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid*

collective responsibility. This still left the Scottish Unionists with the political problems outlined in the Elliot paper. The preferred solution was finally off the agenda and so how were the Unionists to deal with the issue in the upcoming election? If one is unable to use a political issue to one's advantage then it is obviously to one's advantage if the issue disappears. It was not in the Government's interest to release the huge volume of information it had gathered over the last five years itself, especially as for most of the time they had been claiming that they did not have it. If the Irish issue could be discredited it would possibly remove an incentive for their own disgruntled supporters to flirt with the new National party and at the same time remove an embarrassing bone of contention with Church. It would have had the added bonus of removing possible sources of friction, not only with the Free State but with the other Dominions as well, not to mention Irish opinion in the United States. It is at this point that the *Glasgow Herald* came conveniently to the Unionists' rescue.

#### *VI The Glasgow Herald*

Discerning Government inspired journalism, if it is done well, can be a difficult process. In these more cynical times when the public is more familiar with the dark arts of politics there tends to be more suspicion about the motives of journalists. The 1920s were a more deferential society and journalists, of the 'respectable' newspapers at any rate, could still, without irony be referred to as the 'gentlemen of the press.' This did not mean that they were without bias and the *Glasgow Herald* of the period, like the *Scotsman*, was soundly Unionist. It was in the correspondence pages of the *Herald* that many of the arguments concerning Irish immigration had been aired, naturally enough as this was always an issue of more concern in the West than in the East of Scotland. What is interesting is the tone of an editorial in the *Glasgow Herald* of the 22nd February 1929 in advance of the Cabinet meeting and at approximately the same time as the Elliot document was circulated. The United States was introducing a new quota system that would drastically cut the numbers of Free State Irish it would admit:

...What then, is likely to happen when the 50% reduction takes place four months hence? Is it not more than possible that a goodly proportion of the surplus, will think of trying their fortunes on this side of St Georges Channel, especially in Scotland, like so many of their fellow countrymen in the past?

...we are perfectly certain that if it were attempted on any scale it would give rise on the part of the Scottish people to feelings of profound resentment. As it is, the great

increase which has already occurred in the population of Irish descent has produced an acute uneasiness which has only failed to lead to a resolute call for restrictive measures because it is believed that the influx has fallen to small proportions in the past few years. Any sign of a recrudescence of the flow ... would provide great bitterness and lead to an irresistible demand for legislative action. It is not in the interests of anyone either here or in Ireland that such a situation should arise. Yet arise it probably will, unless the possibilities of the position are appreciated and timely provision made.<sup>261</sup>

The alarm at the possibilities of an influx of Irish prompted the *Glasgow Herald*, in a more restrained manner than that of others, once again to raise the possibility of immigration restriction without actually advocating it outright. As has been pointed out above, on March 6<sup>th</sup> the Cabinet met to discuss the issue of Irish immigration and decided that no legislative action would be taken. On March 8<sup>th</sup> the *Glasgow Herald* initiated an investigation that resulted in a series of five articles published between 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March. This was a considerable feat of research within the timescale seeing that it took whole Government departments months to collate similar material and they had been involved in the exercise for nearly five years. It is perfectly within the bounds of possibility that the *Herald* man, and it appears from the articles that only one journalist was involved in the investigation, could have amassed the information he did within the time but it is remarkable that he acquired much of it in the same format as the Government. As has been stated by Gallagher these articles, 'may have had a salutary effect on middle ground opinion, made uneasy by recent demographic changes but prepared to take its lead from the premier reading outlet of the middle class in Scotland. So the *Glasgow Herald* may have done a singular service for community relations at the end of the 1920s.'<sup>262</sup> It may be the case that the *Glasgow Herald* was at least assisted in that contribution.

In reading these articles it is difficult not to be struck by the similarity in tone and the use of statistics to that of the debate conducted inside the Government. The chronology itself is instructive. On the first page of the Scottish Board of Health Memorandum produced in response to the Church's open letter points out that the number of English born in Scotland exceeded the Irish in 1921 and that the English born had been rising steadily as a percentage of the population while the Irish had been declining.<sup>263</sup> The same statistics appear in the first

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<sup>261</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, February 25th 1929.

<sup>262</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow the Uneasy Peace*, p167.

<sup>263</sup> NRS, HH1/541, Scottish Board of Health Memorandum,.

of the *Glasgow Herald* articles.<sup>264</sup> It is a figure that seems to have made an impression. To extract the same set of figures in exactly the same manner raises the question that the research may have been directed. In the first article the *Herald* correspondent states: ‘After an extensive, painstaking and impartial examination...I am satisfied that the current Irish immigration is not large, that compared with the stream of the past it is the veriest trickle and that it is barely negligible in bearing on the development of the Irish community in Scotland. That development proceeds almost entirely from the multiplication of the Scoto-Irish – natives of this country but of Irish extraction.’<sup>265</sup> This is something of a paraphrase of the first paragraph of the Joynson-Hicks paper (see above). It is of course unlikely that the *Herald* would have seen a secret cabinet document but the sentiments expressed would have been common enough in Whitehall and Scottish Office circles and, as has been demonstrated, current as long ago as 1926.

The second Article on 21<sup>st</sup> March on ‘*Insurance and the Dole*’ points out that on March 8<sup>th</sup> there was ‘not a single native of Ireland on the Glasgow roll of outdoor relief.’<sup>266</sup> Again, these are exactly the sort of figures and sources used by the Government. For example the Ministry of Labour provided the following statistic for the Home Secretary’s report: ‘Number of persons whose last place of employment was in Ireland attending at the local office for the first time in October and November 1928 National Insurance book 50 Irish Free State Book 12 in Glasgow Greenock and Lanarkshire’. This was the same point made by the Ministry of Labour at the Inter-Departmental conference two years before.

What is interesting is where the Scottish Office had figures that were not included in the article, for example on the steamship returns; the *Herald* displays a guarded scepticism: ‘About two years ago it looked as if the Government had the intention of collecting the relevant data. It was then unofficially reported that a Government Department had applied for returns ... Similarly significant was it at a meeting of his constituents in...January 1927 Major Elliot made the statement after pointing out “that accurate statistics were practically non-existent”<sup>267</sup> that he was attempting to collect district figures on the subject’. In fact the Government had steamship returns as far back as 1925 but on a basis of confidentiality (see above). Those figures did not show any great numbers of Irish immigrating to Scotland and it only took a quiet word with the companies to confirm it.

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<sup>264</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, March 20th 1929, p15.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>266</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, March 21<sup>st</sup> 1929, p11.

<sup>267</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, March 20<sup>th</sup> 1929 p15.

In essence the argument was fully formed by 1929. The *Glasgow Herald* articles are intriguing in that, whether it is Roman Catholic marriages or birth rate it follows the path already trodden by the Government. This is not unreasonable since the arguments had been given an extensive airing over the past decade. The *Glasgow Herald*, in the space of a twelve day investigation appears to have been remarkably well informed and relaxed for a paper that only two weeks before was ringing the alarm bells about a possible fresh influx of Irish immigrants.

### *VII Conclusion*

The history of the Government's handling of the issue of Irish immigration throws up some interesting anomalies. Why, for example, should it have taken the best part of a decade to refute the Church's case when it probably could have done so as early as 1926 by releasing the information it already had? Indeed, why did it take an investigation by the *Glasgow Herald* to do so? It is obvious from a reading of the files that there was little prospect of convincing the Dominions Office about the necessity of introducing restrictions on Irish immigration or indeed that the Irish were aliens in the first place. Equally, despite Elliot's proposed solution, was there any realistic likelihood of there being any independent Scottish initiative that could be taken? Both Gilmour and Elliot were highly experienced politicians who would go on to hold high office in the 1930s and yet they both allowed this issue to run longer than necessary creating political problems for the Unionists. There was a natural disinclination to be seen to be publicly disagreeing with the Church of Scotland, but it would appear that as far as the leading Scottish politicians were concerned the evidence suggests that they were more in sympathy with the case made by the Church than has previously been acknowledged. The advice both Elliot and Gilmour received was sceptical as to the seriousness of the problem and yet Elliot, who had initiated the inquiry, was attempting to persuade an inter-departmental conference of 1927 to impose restrictions on Irish immigration. Notwithstanding his failure there he made a direct appeal to his party to make Irish immigration an election issue in 1929. It has been suggested, by Bruce and others,<sup>268</sup> that the Church campaign failed on the Imperial issue of the status of Free State citizens as British subjects and on the statistical inadequacies of its case. It was a fact that large scale Irish immigration was a thing of the past by the 1920s. Elliot and Gilmour were well aware of these facts as they had been supplied with the information in considerable detail by their own

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<sup>268</sup> S Bruce et al, *Sectarianism in Scotland*, p43.

and other Government officials. However, the evidence presented here suggests that both men were prepared to go to some lengths behind the scenes to convince the wider British Government of the need to impose restrictions on Irish immigration even at the risk of alienating opinion in the Dominions, the Irish Free State and very probably Irish American opinion as well. Not only that, they were determined to pursue the case despite the misgivings of senior civil servants in the Scottish Office who were understandably anxious about the possibility of throwing 'fuel on the flame of racial strife.'<sup>269</sup>

It would appear then the Church, despite obvious flaws in its argument, did persuade influential opinion in the Unionist party of its case. It was the failure of their allies in Government to persuade their colleagues that the issue was one which should take precedence over wider Imperial concerns that proved to be the stumbling block. However, it was only after the Cabinet endorsed the Joynson-Hicks paper in 1929 that the issue was finally off the agenda for Scottish Unionists. It was also only after that endorsement that a Unionist paper, the *Glasgow Herald*, produced a detailed refutation of the Church case using much of the material built up over the years by the Scottish Office. If the matter had been for the Scottish Unionist party alone to decide, there very probably would have been restrictions on Irish immigration into Scotland. In practical terms this would have made little difference as there was precious little immigration in the 1920s but the symbolic effect on the Irish diaspora in Scotland may well have been significant. It would at the very least have strengthened a sense of exclusion from Scottish society and probably raised sectarian tensions to a level they did not achieve in the 1920s. Perhaps Sir John Gilmour was more of an Orangeman than he has been portrayed and Walter Elliot less of a progressive. In any case it would now be the turn of the Labour Party to wrestle with this issue.

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<sup>269</sup> NRS, HH1/541.

## Chapter Five

### Aliens or Subjects

*Mr Boothby: (Unionist Aberdeen E) Asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the inquiries he had been making into the question of Irish immigration were concluded and whether he proposed to take any action on the Matter*

*The Secretary of State for Scotland: This question remains under consideration, and I am not in a position to make any further statement. Further information will be furnished when the report on the recent census will be published.*

*Mr Boothby: Is it not a fact that this question has been under the consideration of the Right Honourable Gentleman for nearly two years; and is there any chance of improved conditions in the west of Scotland until the volume of Irish immigration is controlled?*

*Mr Barr (Socialist Motherwell): (amid cries of answer directed at the Secretary of State). Is it not the case that it was under the consideration of the late Government for five years?*

*Secretary of State: I am glad that my Hon Friend has put that supplementary question. It gives me the opportunity of replying that the present Government have not had this question under consideration for half the time of the previous Government. (Laughter)*

*The Scotsman May 20<sup>th</sup> 1931 p14*

#### *I Introduction*

It was something of a standing joke in the House of Commons that William Adamson's<sup>270</sup>, (Secretary of State for Scotland in both Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Governments), stock answer to any question was that he would give the matter 'due consideration'.<sup>271</sup> Given the history of the issue, discussed in the previous chapter, and the political overtones concerning the supposed Irish immigrant support for Labour, it might be wondered that a Labour Government would have given any consideration at all to the question of Irish immigration in Scotland. The *Glasgow Herald* articles and the General Election result of 1929 would, on the surface, seemed to have buried any chance the Church of Scotland might have had of

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<sup>270</sup> William Adamson (1863-1936), Miner and Trade Unionist, MP for West Fife 1910-1935.

<sup>271</sup> Thomas Johnston (1881-1965), Editor of *Forward*, Secretary of State for Scotland 1941-1945, *Memories* (Collins, London, 1952) p101.

receiving a sympathetic hearing, much less persuading the Government to legislative action. It will, however, be argued here that during the 1930s the Kirk, (largely unbeknown to itself), came closer to achieving its aims than at any time in the 1920s. This was not solely due to the power of the Church's advocacy but to a combination of outside circumstances, some surprising Governmental allies, and, ironically enough, the election of Eamonn de Valera. It is a complicated story involving economics, imperial policy, protectionism, and even differing concepts of 'British' identity. While many historians have covered the often fraught state of Anglo-Irish relations in the 1930s, little emphasis has been paid to the substantial role of the Scottish Office, and Scottish politics in general.<sup>272</sup> This is understandable as both Irish and English historians have tended to consider Anglo-Irish relations as precisely that, *Anglo-Irish* relations. It will be maintained here that this is to miss an important dimension to the debate and that the issue of Irish immigration in Scotland, at the very point when the Church's campaign appeared to be waning, had considerable influence not only on internal Scottish politics but on the wider issue of the status of self-governing Dominions and the development of the Commonwealth. Would, for example, the issue of Irish immigration have featured quite so prominently, as will be seen, in Cabinet deliberations without the persistence of the Church? How did the differing ideas of 'alien' and 'British subject' develop in view of the changing constitutional relationships within the Commonwealth? Most importantly, how and why did this issue persist much longer, and arguably to more effect, than scholars have previously believed? Much of the archival material examined in this chapter has not been considered in the secondary sources that cover the period, and that which has been considered has not made the Scottish connection. The aim of this chapter will be to show that not only is there a previously untold narrative, but that narrative challenges our understanding of some of the events of the early 1930s.

Certainly the issue of Irish immigration had featured in the 1929 General Election, as discussed in the previous chapter, but not to the extent that the Unionists had feared (see the Elliot memorandum) or perhaps as much as the Church had hoped. Sir John Gilmour, in an answer to a question on the hustings at Pollockshaws, stated that the British Government was in negotiation with the Irish Free State for the right to repatriate Irish migrants who became a charge on the poor rates. This was only half true as the Irish Free State Government, as will become apparent, was in the business of studiously ignoring the British on the issue. He

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<sup>272</sup> For a full discussion of the historiographical controversies of the Irish post treaty relationship with Britain see Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies on Irish History and Culture*, (Oxford University Press, 2005).

further stated that if ‘the matter was not settled amicably the British Parliament would produce an act that would enable them to do that.’<sup>273</sup> This was wholly untrue as Gilmour well knew, having attended the Cabinet discussion on the issue in March 1929. It was perhaps as well for him that the Unionists lost the election or he may have found himself in a somewhat difficult position. Nonetheless, it was not a central issue on which the Unionist fortunes in Scotland depended. In fact as far as Irish immigration was concerned not only were they off the hook, they were now free to use it as means with which to bait their successors. The exchange quoted at the beginning of this chapter was far from the first or last that Boothby had with Adamson. Boothby was demanding to know the results of negotiations with the Irish Free State as early as July 23rd 1929 at the first Scottish questions after polling day.<sup>274</sup> (Boothby was, of course, mischief making although for one who was ostensibly no great lover of organised religion in any form he was remarkably persistent on the subject).<sup>275</sup> The Church of Scotland had no intention of letting the matter rest even if the natural allies of the Church and Nation Committee had lost office. Even during the election, Dr John White’s Moderatorial address to the General Assembly on the 27<sup>th</sup> May (ten days after Gilmour’s ill-advised commitment) had stressed the dangers of Irish immigration and urged the Government to take action on the restriction of immigration.<sup>276</sup> Nevertheless, with the Church preoccupied with its reunification celebrations in 1929, the incoming Government could look forward to a brief respite, from this issue at least, in its many forthcoming travails.

At this point in the introduction to this chapter it is worthwhile to briefly examine some the key personalities in the 1929 Labour Government who were involved in the prolonged discussions on Irish immigration. It was a question that would also bedevil the later National Government but many of the individuals concerned then had the experience of the 1920s behind them. In 1929, whilst the Scottish Office had long, and weary, experience of the Church’s persistence the politicians were relatively new, in administrative and political terms, to the issue. Firstly, the incoming Secretary of State for Scotland was William Adamson (1863-1936), a Fife miner and Baptist. Although affectionately regarded by all who worked with him, he was not one for seeking unnecessary controversy. According to Pottinger he ‘intended to enjoy being Secretary of State. He told his Private Secretary that, compared with the Conservatives, the Labour Party were still in the boys’ class when it came to exercising Ministerial power. But, he went on, that did not mean that the educative process which they

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<sup>273</sup> *The Scotsman*, May 18<sup>th</sup> 1929, p14.

<sup>274</sup> *The Scotsman*, July 24<sup>th</sup> 1929, p10.

<sup>275</sup> R. Rhodes James, *Bob Boothby A Portrait*, (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1991), p 62.

<sup>276</sup> *The Scotsman*, May 28<sup>th</sup> 1929, p13.

were now starting should be disagreeable.’<sup>277</sup> Tom Johnston recalled the story of Adamson’s appointment by Ramsay MacDonald in which it was proposed that Adamson go to the Lords while Johnston handled Scottish Office business in the Commons: ‘he could be titular Secretary of State for Scotland, and sit in the Cabinet, and “do the ceremonial stuff” but that I, if I would take the under-secretaryship, could take charge of Scottish business in the House of Commons.’<sup>278</sup> Both Adamson and Johnston were quite amenable to this arrangement which was only prevented at the last minute when MacDonald discovered during the conversation that Adamson had a son who would inherit the title. Nevertheless Adamson was enjoined by MacDonald to give Johnston ‘plenty of rope’ provided he didn’t ‘hang himself with it.’<sup>279</sup>

The above anecdote, while amusing in its own right, is revealing about the personalities of the three individuals who had most to do with the handling of the Irish immigration issue during the period of the second Labour Government. If Adamson was the somewhat avuncular figure who dealt diplomatically with deputations and signed the papers, the intellectual power behind the Scottish Office throne was Johnston. Ramsay MacDonald took, as will be shown, a particular interest in Irish immigration throughout his period as Prime Minister and frequently had the matter brought before Cabinet. Every Secretary of State for Scotland who served MacDonald was aware of the Prime Minister’s ‘special interest in the matter.’ Why this should have been so is unclear but as David Marquand has it:

MacDonald had an odd and, to a modern eye, a slightly unattractive streak of social hardness in his makeup...afraid that well-meant but ill-considered acts of philanthropy might demoralize those they were supposed to help. Emotionally, if not intellectually, the notion that men should be paid to be idle went against the grain...he was apt to pay more attention than he should have done to the wild stories that circulated in respectable circles about work shy idlers drawing ‘doles’ to which they were not entitled.<sup>280</sup>

As a large part of the Church case made exactly that sort of accusation about the immigrant Irish he may well have been naturally predisposed to agree with it. Curiously enough, in Marquand’s compendious biography of MacDonald, the issue of Irish immigration does not

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<sup>277</sup> G. Pottinger, *The Secretaries of State for Scotland*, (Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1979), p38.

<sup>278</sup> T. Johnston, *Memories*, pp100-101.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>280</sup> D. Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, (Richard Cohen, London, 1997), pp. 586-587.

feature, which is remarkable given the apparent importance that MacDonald attached to the issue.

## *II Between the Kirk and a Free State*

For the first few months, despite the now routine denunciations of the iniquity of Irish immigration from the re-united Church of Scotland, Jeremiads on the eclipse of Scotland by Andrew Dewar Gibb and a series of parliamentary questions on the issue put down, generally in the names of Boothby and the Duchess of Atholl, the Irish question did not loom over large. Understandably, as the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the onset of the economic catastrophe that was the Great Depression were of much greater moment. Yet the economic situation would in itself give a fresh impetus to the whole question of immigration on a Dominion wide scale.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> May 1930 Adamson met a deputation from the Church of Scotland and the Free Church on the subject of Irish immigration. Prior to that Adamson was given a briefing note on Irish Immigration. This recounted the whole saga of Church deputations to the Scottish Office of 24<sup>th</sup> Sept 1926 to Sir John Lamb, on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1926 to Sir John Gilmour, and on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1928 to Sir William Joynson-Hicks and Sir John Gilmour as well as the occasions the issue had been before Cabinet. The final points of the memo make for interesting reading. It was pointed out that the matter had been before the Cabinet several times:

the last occasion being on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 1929, (underlined in pencil), when the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs was asked to look into the position of possible deportation of citizens of the Irish Free State who have become a charge upon public funds. The present position is that the Government are awaiting the outcome of the Sub-Committee appointed by the Irish Free State about October 1928 to consider the question of reciprocal compulsory repatriation of persons who become chargeable to the poor rates.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> NRS, HH1/561, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1930. The Memo also contained statistics on Irish Pauperism between 1911 and 1927, Pauper Removal between 1898 and 1927, Migration from and into Scotland relating to countries outside Europe between 1911 and 1927, Irish-born criminals between 1921 and June 1930, Passenger movements between IFS ports and Scottish ports between 1925 and June 1930 and the figures on private and pauper lunatics giving the percentages of Irish-born and Roman Catholic lunatics.

As the Dominion Office had displayed a marked lack of enthusiasm to get involved in the issue throughout the 1920s (see Chapter Four) it can be reasonably surmised that even had the Unionists been returned the position would have been unchanged, especially as this was a Home Office responsibility. As will be seen this was exactly the stance that was taken in later discussions. What is significant is the mention of a sub committee appointed by the Irish Free State in October 1928 to consider the question of reciprocal compulsory repatriation of paupers. If such a committee was ever appointed, and considering the time it took for the Irish Free State to reply to the Dominions Office it seems unlikely, it too did not consider it a priority. What is interesting is the Dominions Office's reluctance for this to become public knowledge: 'In reply to a Parliamentary question by Mr Boothby M.P., on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1929, the Secretary of State for Scotland stated that negotiations with the Irish Free State were continuing, but no mention was made of the Irish Free State Sub-Committee as the Dominions Office did not consider this desirable.'<sup>282</sup> (Type underlined in memo). While the Government was willing to admit that negotiations were in progress, although negotiations were an elastic definition of the term, it was unwilling to publicly describe their nature, or that the Free State Government was actively considering the matter.

This reticence is understandable given the Dominions Office's well-founded scepticism about receiving a favourable reply from the Cosgrave Government. Enda Delaney has argued that 'The attitude of the Cumann na nGaedheal administration to continued emigration appears indifferent. Rather than attempting to counter directly the criticisms of the party's record on emigration the subject was not mentioned in the party's election literature for the 1927 or 1932 General Elections. Clearly the acknowledgement of the 'problem' of emigration was not perceived as a practical vote winner, yet outlining policies that would 'stem the flow', as it were, was a ploy used fairly effectively by the Fianna Fail party to increase its support.'<sup>283</sup> It was, therefore, certainly not in the political interest of the Free State Government to have it publicly acknowledged that it was considering allowing the forced repatriation of Irish emigrants from Britain when it was doing its level best to keep emigration off the agenda. It would also have substantially weakened their arguments as to the benefits of the Commonwealth connection in the face of a Republican challenge by Fianna Fail. This was more especially so as the Cosgrave administration was promoting its diplomatic success at the Imperial conferences of 1926 and 1930 in achieving equal status for

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<sup>282</sup> NRS, HH1/561.

<sup>283</sup> E Delaney, State, Politics and Demography: The case of Irish Emigration 1921-1971, *Irish Political Studies*, 13;1, (1998), p 28.

the Dominions.<sup>284</sup> Given this state of affairs the only wonder is that there were individuals within the British Government who seriously thought that the Irish could be persuaded to, in effect, re-enact a provision of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Poor Laws at the behest of the Church of Scotland.

There is a gap in the archival evidence here, as Delaney points out, ‘no (Irish) government file relating to emigration is extant for the period from 1921 to 1939, although it must be said that it is quite likely that Cumann na nGaedheal ministers did not leave any potentially embarrassing documentation for their political opponents to peruse when Fianna Fail entered office in 1932.’<sup>285</sup> This begs one of the most fascinating questions of the period. What was the Irish Free State Government’s, both Cumann na nGaedheal and Fianna Fail, attitude to the whole anti-Irish campaign? As has been pointed out in an earlier chapter the Irish press responded to the Church of Scotland with a mixture of outrage and mockery but there seems little evidence that the anti-Irish campaign impinged much on Irish politicians. It is one of the anomalies of Irish history that a nation that made much of its Diaspora, or at least that part that was far away, did not respond to a direct and racial attack on one of the largest segments of that Diaspora on its own doorstep. The explanation probably lies in the nature of the early Irish State and its equivocal relationship to the issue of emigration in general. Emigration was held to be an evil as a result of the British connection. In nationalist orthodoxy there should be no reason for anyone to leave a self-governing Ireland or as de Valera put it, ‘we believe that there can be maintained on the soil of this country, in comfort, and with a proper policy, a population two or three times the present population.’<sup>286</sup> Emigration was the uncomfortable fact of Ireland for arguably at least the first fifty years of its existence. Given this premise the apparent silence from Dublin becomes more understandable. For the Cosgrave Government there was absolutely no benefit in engaging with the Church’s debate, for one thing it would have drawn even more attention to the emigration issue, secondly it could have been seen to be taking part in a ‘sectarian’ debate in another country which would have done little to help the cause of their fellow countrymen in Scotland and may well have exacerbated tensions in the North of Ireland. Finally, why dignify the Kirk’s case with a response which would have lent it legitimacy? It may well be the case that while the Irish Government was undoubtedly aware of the campaign they were simply not interested, or did not take it seriously enough, to

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<sup>284</sup> D. Harkness, Patrick McGilligan: Man of Commonwealth, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 8;1 (1979) , pp. 126-9.

<sup>285</sup> E. Delaney, *Demography, State and Society: Irish Migration to Britain 1921 – 1971*, (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2000), p58.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid* p59

pay it any marked attention. It is certainly true that there is but little mention of Scotland in the Documents on Irish Foreign Policy.<sup>287</sup>

Such concerns were, however, not those of the Church of Scotland. It had its own solutions to the problem as it outlined in the meeting with Adamson. The Church delegation, introduced by the Reverend Mr Cockburn, began by referring to the 'previous negotiations between the Churches and the Government's predecessors in regard to the possibility of regulating the immigration of Irish into Scotland. No tangible results have so far been forthcoming from these negotiations and the deputation's object was to impress on the present Government that the position was becoming more serious and to urge them to take action.'<sup>288</sup> The Kirk's use of the term 'negotiation' is instructive here. The previous deputations, while urging Government action on the issue, had largely been a litany of complaints about the iniquities of the Irish immigrant population in Scotland. While this deputation was to continue in much the same vein, Cockburn's use of 'negotiation' implied that they were there to seek some definite concession on the matter. It is also notable that the language of the deputation was rather more forceful than previously on perceived Government inaction and fell just short of accusations of outright incompetence on the collection of statistical information. The deputation, in the person of the Reverend Reid Christie, also made pointed reference to the effects of Irish immigration on one of the Government's most sensitive areas, unemployment. The implication being that the Irish created much of the unemployment in Scotland, despite the Government's best efforts to 'relieve unemployment in Scotland by emigrating surplus labour to the colonies.'<sup>289</sup> (Mr Reid Christie was obviously unconscious of the irony of this statement). This was followed up by a reference to the inassimilable nature of the Irish population and a dark hint that 'as matters are now proceeding an Ulster question is being created in Scottish industrial areas'.<sup>290</sup> The deputation concluded with its regular demands that measures be taken to restrict Irish immigration, that those who became a public charge be repatriated and that the franchise be restricted to those with a minimum residency qualification. They did, however, make one further request that was to have a significant bearing on the later debate. They suggested that a question on the religious denomination of respondents be added to the upcoming Census. This suggestion was made, somewhat disingenuously, 'not in sectional interests but in the

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<sup>287</sup> Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, [www.difp.ie](http://www.difp.ie)

<sup>288</sup> NRS, HH1/561 Consideration by churches.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*

interests of all Churches and of the State.’<sup>291</sup> While this question was not eventually asked, a variant was included in an attempt to gain some clarity as to the nature of the Irish population. In the event Adamson, like his predecessor, was unable to give the deputation any assurance on Government action but promised to report the matter to the Cabinet, very possibly in the terms of the advice he once proffered to Johnston on dealing with difficult deputations; ‘If ye canna gie a man whit he wants, ye can aye gie him a kind word. It costs damn a’!’<sup>292</sup> Unfortunately for Adamson this normally sage advice would prove insufficient on this occasion. He did send the minute of the meeting and a covering letter to MacDonald on the 5<sup>th</sup> June which initiated yet another Cabinet discussion and certainly the Kirk was not going to be satisfied with a kind word.

### *III ‘...and statistics’*

In early July 1930 there was a flurry of activity, not solely confined to the Scottish Office, to update the statistics on Irish immigration. It would appear that the Church’s criticism had stung the Government into action. The issue had come before the Cabinet, answers to Parliamentary questions were reviewed and urgent requests were sent out by Francis Stewart, Adamson’s private secretary, to the various Scottish Office departments, the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Labour for updated figures that might shed some light on the situation. The following letter and reply give some idea of the urgency with which the matter was now perceived:

Dear Jeffrey

As you are aware the question of Irish Immigration into Scotland has been before the Cabinet recently, and the Secretary of State now desires to have all the relevant statistics brought up to date as soon as possible with a view to their early submission to the Cabinet.

I enclose copies of the sheets which require revision by the Department of Health. As regards the entry “The Irish Free State was constituted in 1920 (corrected in margin in red 1922) the Secretary of State would like to have a note inserted explaining the precise consequence of this.

The Secretary of State also desires to have any information bearing on immigration into Scotland from the Irish Free State and from Northern Ireland whether direct or

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<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>292</sup> T. Johnston, *Memories*, p103.

indirect. We are in communication with the Ministry of Labour and the Board of Trade on this, but if the Department have any information bearing on the subject no doubt you will send it on with the revised figures.<sup>293</sup>

Reply to Stewart from Department of Health for Scotland 10<sup>th</sup> July 1930

...Looking particularly to the terms of the last paragraph of your letter, a discussion with the Registrar General was arranged as to the possibility of obtaining through the 1931 Census, some more specific figures regarding Irish immigration. As a result of that interview Dr Dunlop agrees that it would be possible to have a column to bring out for those born outside Scotland, who are resident, and not visitors, the length of their residence in Scotland. The Census Office could take out, in the case of natives of Ireland, the year they came to Scotland, and from that could be seen the general trend of immigration from Ireland to Scotland.<sup>294</sup>

Stewart, and other Scottish Officials were in fact sending several urgent letters between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of July to almost any Department that could provide relevant statistics, from ferry passenger numbers, to the number of unemployment books issued to Irishmen in Clydebank (ten to twelve in the preceding three months), to 'Irish school attendance, pauperism, lunacy and crime.'<sup>295</sup> The particular importance of the exchange above lies in the discussion with the Registrar General. Less than two months after the Church deputation has requested a denominational question to be included in the Census, the Registrar General had agreed to include a specific question regarding those born outside Scotland with a view to establishing specifically the volume of Irish immigration to Scotland. Although this was not precisely what it had requested, in its way it was a significant achievement for the Kirk, although one in which they were largely to remain in ignorance for the time being. They had in fact persuaded the Government to collect an entirely new set of statistics through the medium of the Scottish Census with the sole purpose of measuring Irish immigration. This was more concrete action than they had achieved in nearly a decade's worth of campaigning and, incidentally, goes some way to at least to questioning the point made by Tom Gallagher that

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<sup>293</sup> NRS, HH1/560, Letter to John Jeffrey Board of Health Scotland from Francis Stewart, July 4th 1930, marked urgent.

<sup>294</sup> NRS, HH1/560, Letter to Stewart from John Jeffrey, July 10<sup>th</sup> 1930.

<sup>295</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Letter to the Private Secretary of Ministry of Labour, W. Lowe-Watson, July 5th 1930, marked urgent from David Milne Scottish Office.

the *Glasgow Herald* series had had a conclusive influence on the issue.<sup>296</sup> In the meantime, while an entirely new battery of statistics was being prepared for a Cabinet memorandum to be submitted by Adamson, the Church, unaware that it had apparently caused such activity in Government, followed up its presentation, in the aftermath of the 1930 General Assembly, with a letter on July 11<sup>th</sup>. The underlining and capitals are reproduced as in the original:

Dear Sir

Church and Nation Committee

I am now in a position to send you the following deliverance of last General Assembly on IRISH IMMIGRATION:-

“The General Assembly authorise the Committee to approach the Government to secure complete statistics of immigration into and emigration from Scotland, including in particular the figures relating to the Irish Free State, and to invite a declaration of policy for regulating immigration.”

I trust that this serious matter will have the early attention of the Government.

I have the honour to be,

Right Hon Sir

Your obedient servant

J Hutchinson Cockburn

Convenor

P.S.

To this letter I attach the Report of my Committee for your information, and I beg to call your attention to it especially to passages on p373 marked by blue lines.<sup>297</sup>

The section of the report underlined in blue sets out a list of seven parliamentary questions, asked in the previous session, on the question of Irish immigration that had obviously not been answered to the Committee's satisfaction. (Given the Committee's remit to obtain statistics it is apparent that these questions were asked to order by the Committee's friends in the Commons, all of whom were Unionists). The questions ranged from the number of Irish Free State citizens in receipt of unemployment benefit or poor relief, the numbers of children of Irish parents in receipt of free school meals to the numbers of Irish citizens who were

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<sup>296</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow the Uneasy Peace*, p167.

<sup>297</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Letter From J. Hutchinson Cockburn to William Adamson, July 11<sup>th</sup> 1930.

inmates of prisons, Borstals or criminal lunatic asylums.<sup>298</sup> The Committee was scathing in what it viewed as the Government's negligence in not having answers, or at least answers acceptable to themselves, to these questions.

...the strong conviction of the Committee is that the Government ought to devise means of making this information available. It is surely a serious state of matters when confession has to be made that the Government has no means of knowing, far less checking, an undue influx from the Irish Free State of persons likely to become a burden on Scottish measures of relief.<sup>299</sup>

As far as the Committee was concerned the Government had no means of knowing the answers to their questions and as a matter of urgency ought to find one. In one case the Committee was able to answer a question, by themselves, to their own satisfaction. In the matter of Irish criminals in Scotland their analysis of the annual prison report came to the following conclusion:

the Secretary of State for Scotland is careful to say that the figures giving the number of convictions of Irish persons include those from *all* Ireland, north as well as south. In another column of the Report, however, we have an analysis of the *religions* of those convicted and the figures are as follows:-

Presbyterians .....	8,407
Roman Catholics.....	5,524
Episcopalians.....	701
Other Denominations.....	105

This is to say, no less than 37.5% of the prison population of Scotland consists of Roman Catholics. Now the *total* Roman Catholic population of Scotland is only 13.26 of the whole ... The Roman Catholics have therefore nearly three times their due proportion of criminals in Scotland, and it is acknowledged that the majority of these are of Irish extraction, if not actually natives of the Free State, it will be seen that there is good cause for alarm concerning the *type* of people who are coming to us from the Roman Catholic parts of Ireland.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> NRS, HH1/56, Report of the Church and Nation Committee.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid*

It is notable that at this point the Kirk was making a case for Roman Catholic criminality. This analysis as far as the Committee report was concerned was conclusive proof that, in view of the fact the United States had introduced a quota system on immigration, ‘Scotland is being used as a dumping ground for the kind of Irish emigrant who would not be accepted by the United States.’<sup>301</sup> Who precisely was doing the dumping in the Kirk’s view is unclear but the implication was undoubtedly that Scotland was a magnet for the Irish criminal classes who would otherwise be furthering their careers in the United States but for that country’s wise restrictions on their entry. The Government was abetting this situation by their inability to monitor the situation and gather adequate statistics. However, once again civil service investigation proved that statistically the case for large scale Irish immigration into Scotland simply did not exist. Adamson produced a memo on Irish immigration on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1930 which was discussed by the Cabinet. The Scottish Office memo, produced by Norman Duke,<sup>302</sup> on that discussion concluded, as so many before it had done:

- (1) That at the present time there exists no pronounced movement of actual migration from the Irish Free State (nor indeed even from Northern Ireland).
- (2) That any tendency on the part of the Irish population in Scotland towards crime, towards pauperism or towards lunacy is not at present very evident. It is now less marked than previously.
- (3) That there is an annual incoming and outgoing of Irish agricultural workers, but somewhat slender grounds for the view that this is harmful to Scottish interests.
- (4) That the Roman Catholic schools in Scotland are increasing the numbers of their pupils, whereas the pupils at Protestant schools are decreasing.

On the evidence it would appear that, if there is at present an “Irish problem” in Scotland, that problem arises not out of any existing substantial volume of immigration but from the rapid multiplication of an old established Irish colony.<sup>303</sup>

Where the Duke memo differs from the previous cabinet discussions is that in the final paragraph there is the caveat, ‘at the same time the risk of (future) immigration from Ireland

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>302</sup> Later Sir Norman Duke the first Secretary of the Scottish Home Department 1939.

<sup>303</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Memorandum on Cabinet Conclusions by N Duke Scottish Office August 5th 1930.

(on account of unemployment benefit, etc., in Scotland) occurring at any time seems to make it desirable that a careful watch should be kept for this.’<sup>304</sup>

In any event, all discussion on the issue at Cabinet level was postponed until after the Imperial Conference of 1930. That conference was notable for setting out the free and equal status of the Dominions later embodied in the Statute of Westminster in 1931. While this was to have considerable importance in the later discussions on the question of Irish immigration the actual decisions taken did not materially affect the issue in the short term. As far as British immigration policy was concerned the most notable outcome of all this activity was the setting up, immediately prior to the conference, of a subcommittee of the Economic Advisory Council to consider the whole question of Empire migration. During the months of September and October 1930 the Scottish Office was engaged in producing a detailed submission on the question of Irish immigration for the Empire Migration Committee. The matter was one that exercised both Johnston and Adamson and was the subject of several conversations between them. It is apparent from the files that Johnston in particular was much disturbed by Irish labour in Scotland in general and by Irish seasonal agricultural labour in particular. The following letter to Adamson, which was probably not intended for inclusion in the official Scottish Office files, gives an insight into the thinking of the time. Johnston’s language is more unguarded than that generally reported in Government minutes and for this reason deserves an extensive quotation. The underlining and emphasis are reproduced as in the original:

You wanted me to go over your memo on Irish immigration. I have done so. I think there are two or three places it could be strengthened.

Page 2 Para. 2 I am not sure you should not refer to the Irish classes as those of Irish descent and not only to those whose immediate parents were born in Ireland.

Thus the Irish colonies are as much Irish and distinctively Irish when they are grandchildren as when they are children of Irish born people. I do not think the Free State Figures are complete. All NW Donegal immigration goes through North of Ireland ports. I have been over there and I am sure the Belfast and Portrush figures will include the immigrants who come from the North West via Letterkenny. I think that you should put in a par saying that the North of I figures likely include a large Free State population.

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<sup>304</sup> *Ibid*

This also affects the table on page 4

But I do most strongly urge you to consider strengthening the part of your memo dealing with employment of seasonal potato workers. The thing is a scandal that cries to heaven, while our people are unemployed.

I enclose you – please return when finished with – a letter from the N.F.U. showing that one dealer alone employs from 300 – 400 Irish for 9 to 10 months in the year.

They are only employed because of the low wage rates and the rotten housing conditions, and I would see these agricultural and middlemen soothsayers in flames before I would let the thing go on, if a restriction on the issue of unemployment cards would stop it.

Imagine you and I worrying ourselves to death about relief works, and one worthy importing 400 Irish.

And the departmental memo apologising for the outrage by saying our own folk have not the physical strength or the experience!

So long as we have our own folk unemployed, there should be no importations unless made licence (sic)

Yours Aye

T Johnston.<sup>305</sup>

The immediate point that comes from the letter, despite the somewhat convoluted double negative, is that Johnston considered the grandchildren of Irish immigrants as much Irish as the Irish-born. An Irish colony remained an Irish colony to the second and third generation which in effect endorsed the Church's view that the Irish did not assimilate, if not necessarily in the same terms. The Irish 'classes' were still those of descent as well as origin and for Government purposes should be designated as such. It is also noteworthy that Johnston considered the numbers of Irish immigrants, particularly Free State immigrants to be underestimated as they were not included in the Northern Irish figures, and finally that the employment of seasonal agricultural labourers was a 'scandal that cries to heaven while our people are unemployed.' The cause for Johnston's ire in this case was a remarkably complacent letter he received from the National Farmers Union on the issue in July 1930.<sup>306</sup> While the letter itself was concerned mainly with housing conditions of Irish seasonal labourers, (the conclusions of which were to be proved be tragically wrong by the

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<sup>305</sup> NRS, HH1/563, Private letter from Tom Johnston to William Adamson September 19<sup>th</sup> 1930.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*

Kirkintilloch fire of 1937), Johnston was particularly annoyed at what appeared to be a clear case of the importation of outside cheap labour during a period of massive unemployment. What is interesting is that his concept of restricting unemployment cards and ‘no importations unless made licence’ bear a remarkable similarity to the ideas put forward by Elliot in March 1929. (There is no evidence that Johnston ever discussed this issue with Elliot but they were close friends and had been so since University so it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that they may have). In any case the memo submitted by Adamson, while noting the difficulties in enforcing immigration control and that any such measures would be a departure from ‘immemorial policy’ did suggest that:

... control might be exercised through legislation prohibiting for a term of years the employment of any person arriving in Great Britain after a specified date who had not obtained a permit from the Ministry of Labour. The permit would specify a particular occupation and a particular employer, and no such permit would be issued if workmen capable of performing the work were available locally, or could be made available from other Employment Exchanges. The proposal, of course, involves the taking of power to remove an immigrant found to be in contravention of the scheme.<sup>307</sup>

This suggestion was not that far away in spirit from the original Elliot plan which proposed using unemployment books as a way of restricting the employment of Irish Free State labour.

The amended memorandum that was finally submitted to the Empire Migration Committee concluded generally that the problem of Irish immigration was not particularly pronounced but Adamson still made the point that, ‘Nevertheless, I consider that the reciprocal arrangements for repatriation of paupers ... should be restored.’<sup>308</sup> It is also interesting to note the change in wording of the succeeding paragraph to this statement from the original memo to the final draft. In the original version ‘The existence in Scotland of considerable State benefits, such as Health and Unemployment Insurance, State-aided housing schemes, unemployment relief schemes, etc., appears to render it not unreasonable that provisions should be made whereby the right to draw insurance benefits should not emerge until a considerable period of employment has elapsed’, whereas the words after etc. in the final version were amended to ‘is a matter which will require careful consideration in connection

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<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*

with the forgoing questions'.<sup>309</sup> While this did represent a slight toning down of the terminology, it is clear that there were underlying concerns that state benefits could be a motivating factor for immigration, despite the fact there was demonstrably no sizeable immigration taking place. Essentially the attraction of the benefits system to indigent Irish had been one of the main planks of the Church's case and on this evidence it was an argument to which even Labour ministers were not immune. It was not so much a fear of actual Irish immigration but the potential of Irish immigration. If the Irish were not currently arriving in numbers in order to benefit from British welfare provision they might do so in the future. To a Government struggling with an economic and unemployment crisis this was undoubtedly a frightening scenario. The question then arises, had the Church not spent the past ten years raising the Irish bogey would this have even been a consideration of the Cabinet? If not it would appear that the Kirk had in fact been successful in persuading some in the Labour Government of at least the basic premise of their argument that the Irish were a potential economic threat. In an era of economic protectionism it was not difficult to see threats even where they did not exist and the Church's arguments did have a spurious logic to them. If Marquand's assessment of MacDonald's personality is correct then the idea of undeserving Irish benefiting from welfare provision would certainly have caused deep concern, however unfounded. It also suggests that anti-Irish antipathy was not the sole preserve of the Unionists.

As the economic and political crisis worsened for the Government in 1930–31 with unemployment rising from 1,731,000 in March to 2,275,000 by the end of 1930, the Committee on Empire Migration carried on with its investigations and the Kirk returned to the attack. On the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1931 the Reverend MacLagan was once again writing to Adamson demanding yet more statistics and inviting 'a declaration of policy for regulating immigration.'<sup>310</sup> While another batch of statistics was duly dispatched there was considerable unease about providing the Church with any further information. As Adamson's private secretary pointed out: 'I understand from the Cabinet Office that the Sub Committee on Empire migration is likely to report fairly soon, and that the report will not be suitable, and it is not intended for, publication. No public reference has been made to the Sub Committee, and the Cabinet Office desire that no reference be made to it in any reply to the Rev MacLagan.'<sup>311</sup> The reluctance of the Government to admit to the existence of the

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<sup>309</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>310</sup> NRS, HH1/561.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid*

Empire Migration Committee, especially to the Church of Scotland, is understandable but the very fact of its existence was in no small part due to the Kirk's persistence on the issue. Certainly there were wider issues than Irish migration to Scotland considered by the Committee. The deportation, or repatriation, of British born citizens from Canada who became a public charge, or were convicted of a criminal offence, was undoubtedly one that rankled but given MacDonald's interest in, and reaction to, the Committee's report it is fair to say that the Irish issue was a major contributory factor in the setting up of the Committee.

#### *IV Empire Migration*

At this point it is well to briefly examine British and Dominion policy on Empire migration between the wars. While there had been various schemes for Empire migration in the nineteenth century it had largely been a rather disjointed process. As Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine have observed, 'The notion that emigration from the UK constituted a damaging loss of labour and skills fast faded early in the nineteenth century as population numbers increased and Malthusian concerns were expressed. Consequently, in fits and starts, the imperial government helped colonial governments secure some of the immigrants they wanted from the UK's apparently over-stocked population while in general maintaining an official policy of non-intervention.'<sup>312</sup> The Great War made the concept of Empire settlement one of more immediate import. 'Social imperialist policies found a new lease of life during the war and by 1917 had all but captured the discourses of state policy-making in key areas. The threat from industrial militancy and a disaffected working class, the perception of wartime disruption as an opportunity for radical change and the central place of imperial solidarity in the ideology of the British war effort all situated social imperial radicalism as an especially apposite response to the problems which beset the British state in the crisis mid-war years.'<sup>313</sup> While a first attempt at an Emigration Bill in 1918 which would have set up an authority which would have controlled emigration and provided financial assistance to approved candidates where appropriate failed, largely because it was seen to be too bureaucratic and intrusive, the immediate post war era once again brought the necessity for some form of formalised Empire settlement scheme.

Originally the post war government had been 'convinced that the nation would shortly experience an intense period of prosperity and a tremendous shortage of labour. To promote

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<sup>312</sup> M. Harper and S. Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, (Oxford University Press, 2010), p7.

<sup>313</sup> K. Williams, 'A Way Out of Our Troubles': The Politics of Empire Settlement 1900 - 1922, in S. Constantine (ed.), *Emigrants and Empire British Settlement in the Dominions between the Wars*, (Manchester University Press, 1990), p 31.

emigration would therefore exacerbate the shortage, delay prosperity and hamper reconstruction.’<sup>314</sup> The brief post war economic boom seemed to confirm that analysis but by 1920 the figures began to head ominously in the other direction. Between April 1920 and November 1920 the national unemployment level rose by 6 per cent. The prospect of a large number of disaffected unemployed ex-servicemen in the country alarmed the Government sufficiently to consider soldier resettlement and Empire migration as a palliative measure to relieve the situation. ‘The new British commitment to Empire migration rested on the perception that a state aided programme could relieve unemployment in the United Kingdom, forestall class conflict and save state expenditure.’<sup>315</sup> On the other hand the Dominion Governments were understandably less keen to be seen as the recipients of the United Kingdom’s ‘paupers’. In 1921 Dominion representatives met the Colonial Office to draw up a scheme that would later become the Empire Settlement Act of 1922. Essentially The British Government would provide money for land settlement and rural development in the Dominions in the form of repayable loans as well moneys for assisted passages and outfitting. Despite some Treasury opposition the Empire Settlement Act was passed with little opposition.

There is no doubt, despite some high sounding rhetoric about maintaining the Anglo-Saxon nature of the Empire, that this was a policy of exporting the unemployment problem. It was certainly the rise in unemployment that gave the impetus for the act over treasury opposition. Equally, despite the Dominion’s involvement in drawing up the scheme there was varying degrees of ambivalence, Canada being a case in point. There had been a history of Canadian anti-migrant feeling although in this case there is a certain irony as to the recipients of that antagonism given the tone of the anti-Irish campaign:

While employers disliked the alleged militancy of British immigrants and their low tolerance of low pay and conditions. Canadian labour unions argued, conversely, that they undercut jobs and wages. English migrants especially found it difficult to shake off perceptions that they were wayward or arrogant. Occasionally they were compared unfavourably with Scots or Irish. Keir Hardie visiting Canada in 1907, noted the particular unpopularity of Londoners, for their alleged intractability and ‘inveterate habit of grumbling.’ In 1930 Dr Mary Percy, recently arrived from England, lamented

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<sup>314</sup> K. Federowich, *Unfit for Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire Between the Wars*, (Manchester University Press, 1995), p38.

<sup>315</sup> K. Williams, *A Way Out of Our Troubles*, p38.

the Canadian perception that 'England is populated by a race who lives on the dole and is incapable of work.'<sup>316</sup>

Whatever the truth, or untruth, of that perception it is certainly the case that Canada's more 'robust' stance on the repatriation of migrants, as will be seen later, did have an effect on the Empire Migration Committee's arguments on Irish immigration. With the economic crisis of 1929 heralding an even worse unemployment crisis it is understandable that Empire migration was once again seen as a possible palliative, but with the Depression being a worldwide phenomenon there was even less of a desire on the part of the Dominions, struggling with their own domestic unemployment, to accept migrants from the United Kingdom. This in turn made the economic returns from the Empire Settlement Act even tighter and raised the spectre that they could be entirely negated by Irish immigration to the United Kingdom. This would be an area to which the Committee would give special attention.

The Committee's report which was produced in July 1931 contained a considerable section devoted to Irish immigration in general and to the problems of repatriation in general. After analysing trends in the Irish birth rate and in passenger movements between the Free State and the United Kingdom the Committee came to the conclusion that the net influx in to Britain would be approximately 12,000 per annum. At the same time they cautioned that, 'There are no statistics which throw light on the extent of the influx across the land frontier, which includes not only those who after crossing the frontier remain in Northern Ireland, but also those who move on thence to Glasgow and other places in Great Britain. But it probably amounts to a considerable number.'<sup>317</sup> Johnston's influence on the Adamson Memorandum seems to have had its effect. This in itself would not necessarily have rung alarm bells within the Government, although the numbers seem to be somewhat at odds with previous statistics, but the following paragraph emphasised the point:

The magnitude of this immigration from the Irish Free State into Great Britain and Northern Ireland thus materially reduces the benefits to this country of the Emigration resulting from the Empire Settlement Act. We realise that any restriction on the free entry into this country of British citizens from the Irish Free State or any other

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<sup>316</sup> M. Harper and K. Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, p29.

<sup>317</sup> NRS, HH1/564, Economic Advisory Committee Empire Migration Committee part III (VI), Miscellaneous Questions Irish Immigration into the United Kingdom.

Dominion would constitute a striking departure from the historic policy of this country and would require careful consideration before it was raised with the Dominion Governments. We feel, however, that this question merits serious consideration by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. We suggest that, in any case, steps should be taken to obtain such powers as may be necessary to secure fuller statistics, with a view to determining the full extent to which Irish immigration is neutralising the effect of the expenditure incurred by the Overseas Settlement Department.<sup>318</sup>

Essentially the Committee had indirectly accepted three of the contentions raised by the Church deputation to Adamson the year before, that there was a need for more statistics, that Irish immigration materially reduced the benefit of resettling emigrants in the Dominions and the Colonies (Mr Reid Christie's point) and that the Government should seriously consider immigration restriction even if this meant reversing historic policy. Again it is not difficult to see why this report was not for public consumption. It would undoubtedly have been seized upon by the Church of Scotland as vindication of its whole campaign, especially in view of the subsequent conclusions of the report, which considered the position regarding the deportation of citizens to the country of origin who became a public charge. The Report highlighted the situation in Canada where 'persons can be, and are deported if they become a public charge ... at any time within five years of their arrival in Canada. Even after the expiry of that period, persons are deported on this and other grounds if the Dominion authorities are satisfied that they come within any of the classes of 'prohibited migrant' at the time of their arrival.'<sup>319</sup> The Report went on to complain of what it saw as the inequity of the position of Canada, and the Dominions generally, where citizens of the United Kingdom could be, and were, deported back to the United Kingdom if they became a public charge in Canada even after five years residence and that the absence of similar powers in Britain was operating with considerable detriment to the Mother Country, the position with Ireland being the case in point: 'As ... pointed out above a considerable number of immigrants enter the United Kingdom every year from the Irish Free State. Many of these subsequently become a charge on the public funds, but there is no power to deport or to recover any part of the cost of their maintenance.'<sup>320</sup> The Committee concluded that the present arrangements were unjustifiable and that the Government should consider the barring of 'prohibited migrants' that is to say

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<sup>318</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid*

those with a criminal record, insane or who became a public charge. This latter point it was conceded would have been problematical but it was still suggested that the British Government raise it at the next Imperial Conference. The concept of what constituted a prohibited migrant was an issue to which the British Government would return but at this point it is the immediate response to the report that is significant.

By July 21<sup>st</sup> MacDonald's office was writing to Adamson and Thomas, Secretary of State for the Dominions, asking them to particularly consider the paragraphs relating to Irish immigration as it was an issue that the Prime Minister wanted to bring before the Cabinet. That same July the May committee had reported, forecasting a Government deficit of £120,000,000 and recommending a cut in unemployment benefit of £67,000,000 (the very issue that would split and bring down Labour) and yet MacDonald still took the issue of Irish immigration seriously enough that he wanted it discussed by the Cabinet. In reply Adamson sent a detailed letter in which he restated the case that large scale immigration was not particularly evident and outlining the measures taken in the 1931 Census in Scotland to measure the numbers of persons from both Northern and Southern Ireland who had settled in Scotland. It would appear that Adamson did not share the Prime Minister's anxiety on the subject: 'Accordingly, while I should be glad, even in existing circumstances, to have power to control immigration from the Irish Free State into Scotland, I cannot claim that this is a matter of great urgency at the present moment; and I think that further consideration of this question might await the Census information.' Even MacDonald would have to wait upon 'due consideration.' Whilst Adamson's letter does not, by and large, display any major concern about the Irish in Scotland, although he agreed with the Committee that they may become a problem and immigration levels should be watched, he once again returned to the mantra of the reciprocal repatriation agreement and complained to MacDonald, that despite numerous approaches, nothing had been heard from the Irish Free State on the issue:

The whole subject was raised in a Dominion's Office dispatch of February 1928, to the Irish Free State Government; but the Irish Free State Government appears to have shown no disposition to come to any decision. The matter was again raised at a Conference with representatives of the Irish Free State at the Dominions Office in April last – the Conference being held to discuss various other points on which agreement with the Irish Free State Government appeared desirable. The Irish Free State representatives said however, that they had not come prepared to discuss the question of the mutual repatriation of paupers, and they were only able to undertake that on their

return they would take up the matter with a view to a reply being sent to the Dominions Office Dispatch of February 1928. I have heard nothing more on the subject and I think that the point should be further pressed. It is of considerable importance so far as Scotland is concerned, because statistics show clearly that in proportion to the native population, Irish born persons form an undue proportion of the total numbers of paupers, and are responsible for an undue burden upon Scottish poor rates. If arrangements for the repatriation of paupers cannot be obtained, then the case for considering some control of immigration will be strengthened.<sup>321</sup>

Adamson's, or more accurately the Scottish Office's, description of the 'negotiations' with the Free State Government do not seem to support the idea that a committee had been set up by Dublin to look into the matter. If anything, significant silence for three and a half years would imply that the Irish Government had absolutely no intention of replying to the Dominions Office dispatch if they could possibly avoid it. Even a face to face request at a conference had received no reply a year later. On the other hand, the Scottish Office remained fixated on this concept as though it would somehow solve the whole issue of immigration. It is the political mindset that intrigues here. Mass Irish immigration in Scotland had been exposed as a myth on more than one occasion, it had been pretty fairly debunked in the press, there was no evidence that it was a either much of a vote winner or vote loser and it took up a great deal of departmental time and effort. Yet time and again the Scottish Office, no matter the political complexion of its masters, would hanker back to a golden pre-1922 era when they could repatriate Irish paupers and demand a return to the status quo, literally ante bellum. It appears that at a visceral level there was something in the Church's arguments that struck with a chord with both officials and politicians in Scotland.

Whatever the Scottish Office's view of the situation, J. H. Thomas<sup>322</sup> the Dominions Secretary made it clear that he wished to steer clear of the whole issue as far as possible, even to the extent of having his private secretary reply on his behalf to the Prime Minister's office rather than directly to MacDonald as did Adamson and Clynes the Home Secretary. The Dominions Office letter was in its way a masterly piece of disassociation. After briefly recounting the history of the issue insofar as it affected the current Government and pointing out the differing analysis of the situation Thomas made it clear that as far as the Dominions Office was concerned this was a matter for the Migration Committee, the Scottish Office and

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<sup>321</sup> NRS, HH1/564, Letter from Adamson to MacDonald, July 29th 1931.

<sup>322</sup> James Henry Thomas (1874-1949) Secretary of State for the Dominions 1930-1935.

the Home Office to sort out between themselves. ‘Mr Thomas has not the material, and, in any case, hardly feels that it is for him to attempt to reconcile these diverse opinions. Moreover, it would appear to be primarily for the Home Secretary to say to what extent it is possible to carry the recommendations of the Committee (namely that more accurate statistics should be obtained) into effect.’<sup>323</sup> He did, however, point out that while it might have been logical to consider the Free State in the same case as any other “overseas Dominion” its physical proximity and ‘possessing so similar a social structure there must always be a certain fluidity of population’<sup>324</sup> meant that Britain and the Irish Free state could not be sharply delineated. In his opinion the question was not one of migration but of labour supply.<sup>325</sup> In one very important aspect these observations were revealing about the ambivalent British Government attitude to the Irish Free State. It was a Dominion, but not really a Dominion. Its citizens were, like all Dominion citizens, still British subjects, but it was next door whereas ‘real’ Dominions were far away. In essence the realities of the Treaty had never really sunk in to certain sections of the British establishment any more than they had to the more ‘pure-milk’ republicans in Ireland. Despite the War, the Treaty, the Imperial Conferences, the Statute of Westminster, Ireland was still not the quite the same thing as a Canada, an Australia or a New Zealand. In fact there had even been an attempt to exclude Ireland from the Statute of Westminster during its passage through the Commons.<sup>326</sup> The irony was that the Free State Government expended a great deal of money and effort to differentiate itself from the British State<sup>327</sup> and the main thrust of its diplomatic activity had been concentrated on giving meaning to Patrick McGilligan, the Minister for External Affairs, 1926 concept of Dominion status.

Legislative functions which previously belonged to the British Parliament now belong to the Parliaments of the other members of the Commonwealth as well. Whatever the Parliament of the United Kingdom can do, the Parliament of any other of the Associated States can do; whatever the Parliament of any other of the Associated States can do, the Parliament of the United Kingdom can do, but no more.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> NRS, HH1/564, Reply by Marsh, Private Secretary Dominions Office to Vincent, Private Secretary Prime Minister Office, August 5<sup>th</sup> 1931.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>326</sup> M. Daly, The Irish Free State and the Great Depression of the 1930s: the interaction of the Global and the Local in *Irish Economic and Social History* 38, (2011), pp. 19 – 36.

<sup>327</sup> R. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600 – 1972*, (Penguin, London, 1989), pp516-535.

<sup>328</sup> D. Harkness, *Patrick McGilligan: Man of Commonwealth*, p122.

Given the more fundamental difficulties the British Government would have in the future with insistence on adherence to the minutiae of the Treaty, it does appear remarkable that the Dominions Office seemed, in this instance, to ignore articles one and three of the Treaty which specifically set out the constitutional status of Ireland with reference to Canada. As Mansergh put it, 'There was no doubt, however, on which side the future lay. Equality was proclaimed to be the root principle of British Commonwealth relations, Equality meant, *negatively* the ending of legal or constitutional inequalities as between Britain and the Dominions and *positively* the opening of the high road to further advances in dominion nationalism.'<sup>329</sup> Essentially all member states of the Commonwealth, from 1931 onwards, were, theoretically at any rate, equal in status. This may well have been the case but it does not seem to be a point that the Dominions Office had altogether grasped in the Irish context. Thomas's most practical suggestion was an offer to chase up the Irish Government with regard to the reciprocal arrangements dispatch of 1928 which was considerably further than the Home Secretary J. R. Clynes was prepared to go.

In his memoirs<sup>330</sup> John Robert Clynes (1869-1949)<sup>331</sup> devoted a whole chapter to the 'Irish Question'. It begins 'Had there been no Irish question I should not have been born in a Lancashire town in the year 1869. In his early manhood my father, with thousands of others, was driven from the West of Ireland by acts of repression which forced him into poverty and compelled him to seek a living elsewhere.'<sup>332</sup> The son of an Irish immigrant with personal history of supporting Ireland, Home Rule and opposition to the Irish War, whose constituency support in Manchester contained a sizeable Irish contingent, was hardly likely to support the restriction of Irish immigration into Britain or indeed the deportation of those immigrants. He was also Head of a Department that would have the responsibility, effort and expense of enforcing that restriction, a task for which the Home Office had already shown little or no enthusiasm. In this respect Clynes' response was to a certain extent predictable. It is, however, his range of objections that are of particular interest. It is noticeable that he refers to 'England' when discussing the levels of Irish immigration:

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<sup>329</sup> N. Mansergh, *Nationalism and Independence: selected Irish Papers*, (Cork University Press, Cork, 1997), pp110-111.

<sup>330</sup> J. R. Clynes, *Memoirs*, (Hutchinson, London, 1937).

<sup>331</sup> J. R. Clynes Home Secretary 1929-1931.

<sup>332</sup> J. R. Clynes *Memoirs*, Volume 1, p303.

the conclusions which I reached were, that the Irish born population in England is decreasing, that there is now no great volume of Irish immigrants, that the balance of immigrants from the Irish Free State to England (after allowing for those who emigrate from English ports) consists mostly of women who are no doubt mainly domestic servants, and the damage, such as it is, caused by Irish immigration is already done and the problem in England is rather one of the natural increase of the Irish population who settled here some time ago.<sup>333</sup>

The terminology is very similar to that used by Joynson-Hicks in his report to Cabinet in 1929<sup>334</sup> and that of Adamson in his memos to the Cabinet, except that Clynes specifically refers to England. This may have been the usual conflation of England meaning Britain but this whole issue had a Scottish origin and had been recognised as such by all parties who had generally gone out of their way to make that point even if they were a UK department. It could also be that he was referring specifically to England but it does look as though he has deliberately substituted the term England for Scotland in this instance. He may well have been making the point that this was not an English problem and by extension not a British one. Clynes then introduced a rather obscure legal argument as to what would constitute a British subject that properly belonged to the United Kingdom and then clinched his case by highlighting the costs and difficulties of enforcing restriction which would still be comparatively easy to evade:

...experience has shown that the effective maintenance of a system of control over the passenger traffic between Great Britain and Ireland is a matter of great difficulty. The opportunities for evasion are almost unlimited. The cost of establishing and maintaining a staff to control the traffic throughout the length of the west coasts of England, Wales and Scotland would be very heavy and could not be justified in peacetime; nor could there be any guarantee that there would be no slipping ashore at unfrequented places from small boats which could easily cross the Irish Sea or even from fishing boats etc. in the course of their legitimate traffic. In addition the land frontier between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State could not possibly be adequately closed; so that it would be necessary to treat Northern Ireland for this purpose as outside the United

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<sup>333</sup> NRS, HH1/564, J R Clynes to MacDonald , August 13<sup>th</sup> 1931.

<sup>334</sup> See Chapter Five p 99.

Kingdom. Finally, any such control as would be necessary would arouse intense resentment among the business and travelling community.<sup>335</sup>

Apart from the delightful image of Irish ‘boat people’ being smuggled ashore on the wilds of the Ayrshire and Galloway coasts on moonless nights by unscrupulous Free State fishermen, Clynes’ objections followed the classic civil service line designed to kill off unwelcome proposals. They were a legal minefield, they were expensive, they would require more staff, they would inconvenience the general public, there was no guarantee they would be effective, they were against immemorial traditional policy and in this case it would require treating Northern Ireland as a separate country. All this effort would have to be expended on a problem that was not all that much of an issue in the first place. What, for the sake of brevity may be described as the ‘Clynes objection’ was a fair summation of the Home Office position for the whole of the 1930s, and survived even the appointment of Sir John Gilmour as Home Secretary. In fact this letter was to be one of Clynes’ last acts as Home Secretary as that August the Labour Government fell, to be replaced by the National Government although still lead by MacDonald. It is remarkable, nonetheless, that with a Government collapsing around them an issue such as Irish immigration still managed to intrude on the considerations of Cabinet Ministers.

While these momentous events were taking place, Thomas, probably at the prompting of MacDonald, had, on 20<sup>th</sup> August, written two letters to Patrick McGilligan, the Irish Minister for External Affairs. The first was an official dispatch reminding the Free State Government of the Amery dispatch of February 1928 and asking for an official reply, the second was a personal letter asking McGilligan to use his good offices to expedite a reply and reminding him that Cosgrave had written to Amery saying that he would personally take up the issue with a view to an early reply.<sup>336</sup> Even this personal appeal from Thomas did not manage to extract a particularly swift response from McGilligan and it was not until January 1932 that Free State responded to the original Amery dispatch of 1928, almost four years to the day later. In the meantime two British Governments had come and gone and for the rest of the decade it would be a National, in effect a Conservative, Government in power.

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<sup>335</sup> NRS, HH1/564, Clynes to MacDonald.

<sup>336</sup> NRS, HH1/564, Letter from Thomas to McGilligan, August 20<sup>th</sup> 1931.

*V Ireland says No*

McGilligan's eventual reply was to provide little comfort for those who had invested so much faith in the idea of a reciprocal repatriation agreement with the Irish Free State. Patrick McGilligan (1889-1979) himself was not only a distinguished classicist and later law professor at University College Dublin; he had in his time as Minister for External Affairs devoted his political career to promoting the concept of free and equal association between the Dominions and Britain. He had in fact been one of the major movers in the Imperial Conferences of 1926 and 1930 which led to the Statute of Westminster. The possessor of a fine legal and constitutional mind, he was much admired in the wider Commonwealth. The list of referees on his 1934 application for the post of law professor at UCD included General Herzog, Prime Minister of South Africa; Bennett, the Prime Minister of Canada as well as the President of University College Dublin and the Chief Justice of Ireland.<sup>337</sup> It should, therefore, have come as little surprise that he was unsympathetic to any request for the type of arrangement being sought by the British Government regarding the forced repatriation of emigrants:

His Majesty's Government in the Irish Free State whilst recognising the circumstances which have led to this proposal cannot conceal their view that, though equitable in form, it would not differ substantially in practice from a revival of the Poor Removal Acts which for a long period regulated the compulsory deportation of poor persons from Great Britain to Ireland and in their operation gave rise to widespread resentment amongst the poor law authorities in this country.<sup>338</sup>

McGilligan went further in gently chastising the British for their outdated views on social provision and the removal of paupers: 'The (Irish) Government have resisted proposals to introduce a law of settlement and a power of removal, being of the opinion that such measures would be out of harmony with the modern conception of public social services freely given to all residents however recently they have migrated to a new district.' Being told that their views were 'out of harmony with the modern conception' by a man who was on record as saying of Irish rural welfare that 'people may have to die in the country, and die

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<sup>337</sup> D. Harkness, *Patrick McGilligan: Man of Commonwealth*, p118.

<sup>338</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Department of External Affairs Irish Free State, January 12<sup>th</sup> 1932, Dispatch No.17 McGilligan to Thomas archived in Scottish Office Irish Immigration Files.

through starvation'<sup>339</sup> must have been difficult to swallow. Having further pointed out that Ireland had nowhere to house any of the removed poor, the former workhouses having been converted into hospitals or homes for the aged, he concluded that:

The growth of humane ideas and the recognition of the wasteful expenditure and the hardship which arose from time to time in their in their operation were steadily bringing the practice of compulsory removal in desuetude. ...An arrangement to regulate removals would, therefore seem a step out of keeping with the trend of legislation. In Great Britain its effect would be to perpetuate a practice that appears to be dying out and exists only in connection with the Poor Law Service. In the Irish Free State its effect would be to set up for the first time a system of deporting poor persons to Britain and to revive the poor removal acts.<sup>340</sup>

McGilligan did allow that the Free State would be happy to accept those who opted for voluntary repatriation but this was as far as the Irish Government was willing to go. It is interesting that nowhere in the letter did he allude to any sub-committee having been set up to consider the issue. It hardly seems likely that he would have required its services. Equally there was nothing in the letter that any of his Irish opponents could object to, and his rejection of the British request was couched in terms that allowed him to maintain the social and moral high ground.

The most vehement reaction came from the Scottish Office, particularly from John Jeffrey at the Department of Health. As an official, Jeffrey had been consistently involved with Irish issue and had in fact been present with Sir John Lamb at the first deputation of the Church of Scotland in September 1926. Throughout his involvement he had never demonstrated much sympathy for the Church's case but the terms of the McGilligan letter seems to have touched a raw nerve. In March 1932 he produced an almost line by line refutation of McGilligan's case. While he was not particularly surprised that the proposal had been rejected given the fact it would certainly have impacted far more on Ireland than on Scotland, it was the terms of the rejection to which he took exception:

Nevertheless the fact remains the Scottish Authorities in addition to carrying the burden of relieving their own poor are saddled with the costs of maintaining a considerable

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<sup>339</sup> R. Foster *Modern Ireland* p 520.

<sup>340</sup> NRS, HH1/561 McGilligan to Thomas.

number of Southern Irish poor. Removal machinery is operative as between Scotland, England and Northern Ireland and Scottish Authorities are at a disadvantage in that they are now precluded from returning to Southern Ireland cases that are a burden on them. It can be fairly claimed that, so long as folks from the Irish Free State continue to move to Scotland, tending to congest an already overcrowded labour market, the Free State should at least raise no difficulty when it comes to supporting some of the social failures.

It is submitted that the Free State while entitled to cherish conceptions as to “public social services”, referred to in Mr McGilligan’s letter in so far as they affect only the Free State’s pocket, are hardly within their rights in urging these conceptions as a reason for refusing to relieve Scotland of burdens they themselves should assume.

Irishmen from the Free State use Scotland as a field for employment but their Government refuse to take back a small proportion of the “misfits”.<sup>341</sup>

Jeffrey then went on to draw a parallel with Scotland and the position taken by Canada and the United States who were by this point repatriating substantial numbers of immigrants:

The Dominion of Canada is willing to admit workers but she asks to be relieved of the failures. Scotland’s position is parallel, except that she claims to be relieved, not of all failures but only of a relatively limited class – broadly speaking, those who become chargeable on the ordinary poor roll. In return she is prepared to take back Scottish cases being afforded poor relief in the Free State.<sup>342</sup>

It is striking that Jeffery was using expressions like social failures and misfits. It would also appear that Scotland was being particularly generous in only being asked to be relieved of a ‘limited class’ of failures. These are remarkably strong terms for an official, moreover one who had not previously displayed any notable enthusiasm for the restriction of Irish immigration. It also displays a rather intolerant attitude to those on poor relief generally. Even in the midst of one of the gravest worldwide economic crises, there still remained a nineteenth century liberal tendency to blame the poor for their poverty. Jeffrey’s observations on the McGilligan letter were a spirited defence of the Poor Law provisions and a complaint

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<sup>341</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Observations by John Jeffrey on the letter from The Minister of External Affairs, Irish Free State dated January 21<sup>st</sup> 1932, Department of Health Scotland March 8<sup>th</sup> 1932.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid*

about the ‘inequity’ of allowing removals to Northern Ireland but not to the Free State, the constitutional difference between the two notwithstanding. It would simply be ‘a restoration of the powers prior to the partition of Ireland.’<sup>343</sup> This was precisely something that no Irish Government was ever going to concede, and highlights the rather limited understanding in some circles, of Ireland’s post-Treaty, and certainly post-1931, position. Jeffrey concluded with curious justification ‘That the regulation of removals would seem a step out of keeping with the trend of legislation is a suggestion that is not entirely borne out. ... Whatever may be urged against it, the fact remains that it has persisted for 400 years and that it still remains the law here.’<sup>344</sup> In Scottish colloquial terms this might be described as the ‘Aye been’ defence. The supposed antiquity of the principles of Scottish Poor Law provision trumped any ‘modern conception of public social services.’ In Jeffrey’s defence, however, it was perhaps stretching a point for the Free State’s concept of social provision to be described quite as liberal and progressive as McGilligan made out.

McGilligan had, however, made his point as far as the Dominions Office and the UK Ministry of Health were concerned, both of whom now considered the matter closed, especially in view of the fact that de Valera was now in charge. Despite this implication the Scottish Office refused to relinquish their position and urged that the British Government reserve the right to reopen the question in the future. The Liberal Sir Archibald Sinclair was now Secretary of State for Scotland and it appeared that he too was not disposed to let the matter rest and directed Sir John Lamb to write to the Dominions Office informing them that given the ‘extent and nature of the problem in Scotland he feels bound to reserve the right to re-open the subject again, if, as a matter of general policy, it is deemed inexpedient to press at the present time for reconsideration of the decision of the Irish Free State Government.’<sup>345</sup> Interestingly, Sinclair suggested that as the matter of the repatriation of migrants was a Dominion wide concern that it might be brought up at the Ottawa conference that August, a suggestion that was rejected by the Dominions Office. After Sinclair had received replies from the Dominions and Home Office he wrote personally to Ramsay MacDonald. The exchange highlights MacDonald’s particular interest in the subject:

Archibald Sinclair to Ramsay MacDonald 24<sup>th</sup> March 1932

Dear Prime Minister

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<sup>343</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>344</sup> NRS, HH1/564.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid*

As you are aware, the Dominions Office sent a dispatch to the Irish Free State Government on the 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1928, containing proposals for the conclusion of arrangements for the compulsory repatriation of persons of Irish Free State origin in the United Kingdom and persons of United Kingdom origin in the Irish Free State who become chargeable to the poor rate relief before they acquire a status of irremovability. The Irish Free State Government's reply of 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1932, to this dispatch was communicated to me by the Dominions Office on the 11<sup>th</sup> ultimo and in view of your special interest in the question of Irish immigration, I think you will be interested to see the enclosed copy of the reply which I have sent to the Dominions Office. I shall communicate further with you on this matter generally when the Scottish Census figures, which will show the extent of Irish immigration into Scotland during the past few years, are available

Ramsay MacDonald to Sir Archibald Sinclair 25<sup>th</sup> March 1932

My Dear Sinclair

I am very glad indeed that this matter of Irish immigrants is being taken up. It is becoming a perfect scandal, and even if the Irish Government showed a greater spirit of unity than it does, the question ought not to be allowed to arise.

With kindest regards

I am

Yours very sincerely

J Ramsay MacDonald (signed original)<sup>346</sup>

#### *VI Civis Britannicus sum?*

On the 8<sup>th</sup> March 1932 the Home Office produced a lengthy, complex and legalistic memorandum for what would later be called the Irish Situation Committee but at the time was referred to as the Cabinet Committee on the Question of the Irish Free State Land Purchases Annuities. This memorandum set out to examine the legal position of any measures to be taken against the Irish Free State in the event of its seceding from the Commonwealth or what would constitute secession from the Commonwealth without a formal declaration. In other words with what actions could the British Government realistically threaten de Valera, although the legal advisors at the Home office did not put it

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<sup>346</sup> NRS, HH1/564.

in quite those terms? 'It is ... assumed that HMG do not contemplate that as a preliminary to any measures that may be taken there should be anything in the nature of any formal recognition of the secession, but may wish to consider what is the position which would automatically arise as a result of the action of the new Irish Government, with a view to warning them of the practical consequences of their action.'<sup>347</sup> The interesting feature of the whole Land Annuities dispute or 'Economic War' as it came to be described in some circles was that it was fundamentally an argument about the concepts of identity British or Irish, alien or subject. In a perverse way, and certainly not in a manner designed to give any comfort to de Valera, the Church of Scotland had grasped one fundamental principle more readily than succeeding British Governments. After 1921 the idea that citizens of the Free State were British subjects was an increasingly threadbare legal fiction. It was a fiction, however, that British Governments would go to almost any lengths to maintain:

Unless and until the fact of secession is established by some formal declaration, the question whether or not there has been a secession will depend on the true legal inference to be drawn from the state of affairs at any moment. Circumstances might arise in which this question might come before the courts to be decided; but so long as it remains unsettled it would be hazardous to act on the assumption that a secession has occurred.<sup>348</sup>

Having started from the premise that a secession had not actually occurred until de Valera declared a Republic, or, conversely, the British Government thought that a secession had taken place, the memorandum went on to set out the legal position of Irish citizens. The memorandum stated, reasonably enough, that in any secession Irish citizens would cease to be British subjects and owe allegiance to the new state. Free State passport holders would be considered citizens of the new State and it could be pointed out to de Valera that Britain would in future require anyone coming from the Free State to be in possession of a passport. But it is at this point that the Home Office, or their legal advisors, began to discover legal difficulties with the definition of a British subject.

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<sup>347</sup> NRS, HH1/568, Cabinet Committee on the Question of the Irish Free State Land Purchase Annuities Memorandum by the Home Secretary, March 8<sup>th</sup> 1932.

<sup>348</sup> NRS, HH1/568.

For the purpose of applying in the United Kingdom any restrictions upon them as aliens, doubtful cases would obviously arise until the conditions determining who are the persons who have changed their allegiance as a result of the secession have been settled. It follows that until the conditions have been settled, the application in the United Kingdom to persons belonging to the Free State of any law relating to aliens would give rise to serious difficulties. So long as it remained uncertain whether a particular person had ceased to be a British subject, his treatment as an alien would be open to challenge in the courts and an adverse decision would have embarrassing consequences. Moreover, one of the most important powers in regard to aliens - that of deportation - could not be effectively exercised until the relationship of the Free State to this country is definitely recognised to be that of a foreign state, so the ordinary rule of international law that a state is bound to receive back its nationals could be invoked against the new state.<sup>349</sup>

Being a complicated subject it would take some time for the British Government to work out exactly who was and who was not a British subject. This was, in the Home Office's opinion, not necessarily a bad thing, as a period of time would have to elapse between any threat being made to the Free State and the actual implementation of the policy. During which time there might be a 'change of policy and feeling in the Free State.'<sup>350</sup> The policy advice was to hold on in the hope that Cumann na nGaedheal would be re-elected. This was not an entirely unfounded hope as de Valera's election victory in 1932 had not given him an overall majority. This situation was considerably altered by the snap General election of January 1933 in which Fianna Fail won exactly half of the Dail seats and could count on the support of a further eight labour members.<sup>351</sup> But, as Harkness states: 'in 1932 the political situation in Dublin was far from clear and a return to Office by Mr Cosgrave was possible, particularly if ill-considered action by the British Government did not strengthen Mr de Valera's hand.'<sup>352</sup>

In the meantime any warnings that might be given to de Valera were on the lines that Ireland would lose Dominion preference with regard to trade, Free State nationals would require passports to enter the United Kingdom and would be treated as aliens in terms of employment, the franchise, eligibility for the civil service and liable to deportation. Thus far

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<sup>349</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>351</sup> David Harkness, Mr de Valera's Dominion: Irish relations with Britain and the Commonwealth 1932 – 1938, *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 8:3, (1970), p 210.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid* p 207.

the advice, despite the dubious Home Office opinion that secession from the Commonwealth would set up a 'new' state, appeared relatively straight forward. Had it rested its case at this point the constitutional position may have been clarified to the benefit of all sides. However, a further complication was introduced: 'It is now proposed to consider whether any, and if so what, action might be taken by the HMG on the basis that the Irish Free State, while formally retaining membership of the Commonwealth, has, nevertheless, by breaking the Treaty (e.g. by abrogation of the oath of allegiance) forfeited all claim to the privileges and advantages of its membership of the Commonwealth so far as its relations with the United Kingdom.'<sup>353</sup> At this point the traditional Home Office reluctance to enforce any form of restriction on Irish immigration again came to the fore in a more detailed and legalistic form of the 'Clynes objection.' First of all, if the Irish abrogated the Treaty by abolishing the Oath of Allegiance would that necessarily mean that they had seceded from the Commonwealth? If Ireland was not legally or diplomatically a foreign state then their citizens were still British subjects and it would require possibly contentious legislation to provide for immigration restriction.

Again the objection was raised as to what would constitute a British subject. How could these sanctions be applied to what were British subjects, even if they were applied to those born in the Free State? 'one of the main difficulties to be considered would be the definition of the class of persons against whom the measures were to be directed. Amongst that class it would not presumably be thought desirable or practicable to include the Southern Irish Loyalists.'<sup>354</sup> Why the Southern Loyalists should be considered a special case was not made clear in the Home Office memorandum but it may be that their inclusion was an attempt to cover every emotional, legal and practical base possible. Again, as had been pointed out in the Clynes' letter the Home Office emphasised that the whole thing would be expensive, impossible to enforce, and inconvenience the British public more than the Irish. Even if legislation could be passed Ireland as a member of the Commonwealth would not, under international law, be obliged to accept any of its nationals that were deported. The clinching argument was the appeal to Empire unity and the amour propre of the Mother Country:

Apart from these practical difficulties, any measures differentiating between various classes of British subjects would mean a complete change of the policy, which has hitherto been maintained in this country, that a British subject irrespective of his origin has a legal right to enter and remain in the United Kingdom. A constitutional principle

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<sup>353</sup> NRS, HH1/568.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid*

of the highest importance is thus involved. The readiness of the Mother Country to receive all British subjects is an extremely valuable bond of Empire and any change of policy in this respect would be likely to have far-reaching and perhaps unforeseen consequences.<sup>355</sup>

It may have sounded very Palmerstonian, but in actual fact many of the Home Office's arguments were extremely weak - for example, the idea that Ireland, as a member of the Commonwealth was not obliged under international law to accept back those of its citizens who were deported by another Commonwealth country. Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa deported other Commonwealth citizens back to their country of origin on a regular basis and had the United Kingdom incorporated such legislation then the Irish position would have been no different. It is not so much the technical rights and wrongs of the Home Office's position that is important to this discussion. It is the tenor of those arguments. Up until this point in the whole debate on Irish immigration, those opposed to restriction had been able to fall back on the 'British subject' argument that had largely been accepted as the overriding principle. The addition of de Valera to the equation changed the parameters of the debate. For the first time the British Government was confronted with providing a definition of what constituted a British subject. At the same time it was faced with the prospect of a Commonwealth country either seceding or redefining its membership of the Commonwealth without the inclusion of an oath of loyalty to the Crown, the oath having been the red line issue in the Treaty negotiations just over ten years earlier. The crucial importance of both the Clynes' letter and the 1932 Cabinet memo is that the British Government had to consider the very real possibility of no longer being able to define the Irish Free State as British and to seriously contemplate whether it should, or indeed could, impose restrictions on Free State nationals both inside and outside its borders. It was a point that did not escape other observers. In an editorial, the *Scotsman*, while lambasting de Valera for seeking to abolish the oath of allegiance, nevertheless ended its denunciation with the observation that 'So far as Scotland is concerned separation from the Free State would not be unwelcome considering that it would provide this country with the power of checking Irish immigration.'<sup>356</sup>

Despite the Home Office's concerns, as early as the fourth meeting of the Irish Situation Committee in May, the Cabinet had been informed that the Ministry of Labour 'were

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<sup>355</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>356</sup> The *Scotsman*, May 4<sup>th</sup> 1932, p10.

disposed to regard favourably any scheme to place special restrictions on persons coming to this country from the Irish Free State to seek employment.’ As such the Ministry was requested to provide a memorandum on its views on the issue.<sup>357</sup> The Ministry of Labour’s conclusions were in some ways quite startling and in others quite conventional. It did not think that restricting Irish immigration would make a huge difference to the unemployment position but it would nonetheless ‘afford a small but desirable relief.’ On the other hand were the Government to ‘repatriate all persons in this country born in the Irish Free State there might be some temporary dislocation in the case of employers, particularly in Liverpool and Glasgow, with a high percentage of Free State labour, but there is no doubt that under present conditions the total number of workers born in the Irish Free State with the possible exception of those engaged in private domestic service, could be replaced rapidly and without much difficulty by workers born in Great Britain.’<sup>358</sup> In the Ministry’s opinion the removal of its estimated 350,000 Irish-born labour in Britain would not be a major inconvenience. It did not, however, explain how exactly this was to be accomplished, short of herding every Irish-born emigrant in Britain on to a succession of one-way ferries.

It is clear that moves to change the status of Irish immigrants had its attractions for those in Government, at the very least as a sabre to rattle. While the subject was not officially brought up at the Empire Economic Conference in the August of 1932 it did not stop Thomas raising the subject in private in conversation with Sean T O’Ceallaigh:<sup>359</sup>

Thomas did say that if we decided to leave the Commonwealth now it would be regarded by Britain as a hostile act...He talked of the likelihood of their expatriating 350,000 or more Irish born people in England and Scotland. He also talked of their cutting off hundreds of thousands of our people who are now drawing unemployment relief in England. Likewise he mentioned in or about 10,000 Irish born people employed in the British civil service, who, it was suggested, would be returned to Ireland. He was reminded that this was a two edged weapon but he said he hoped things would not reach such a stage.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> NRS, CAB27/523, Irish Situation Committee 4th Meeting, Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May 1932.

<sup>358</sup> NRS, HH1/568, Irish Situation Committee Immigrants from the Irish Free State Memorandum by the Ministry of Labour, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1932.

<sup>359</sup> Sean T. O’Celleaigh, (1882-1966), Vice President of the Council. Close associate of de Valera later second President of Ireland.

<sup>360</sup> Documents on Irish Foreign Policy, UCDA No 103 p150/226 [www.difp.ie](http://www.difp.ie), Letter from Sean T O’Ceallaigh to Eamonn de Valera, August 8<sup>th</sup> 1932.

It does not seem from the general tenor of O’Ceallaigh’s letter to de Valera reporting this conversation that he was inclined to take this threat overly seriously. It is, however, obvious from Thomas’s wording that the Cabinet discussions had run along those lines. It is likely that he had been agreed to make this observation to O’Ceallaigh in precisely these terms. Throughout the following year the diplomatic tussle between Britain and the Free State continued, the British holding fast to the terms of the Treaty and de Valera equally determined to abolish the oath of allegiance.

In Scotland the results of the 1931 census had at last been analysed and after ten years of claim and counter-claim, civil service investigations and inter-departmental wrangling there was now some definitive data to be examined. Jeffrey produced a summary of the Registrar General’s findings. The immediate conclusion was that the Irish-born population had been steadily declining ever since 1861 and by 1931 comprised 2.57 per cent of the total Scottish population. Actual annual immigration in the 1920s had averaged around 2,000 (a considerably lower figure than the 9,000 constantly cited by the Church) and even then ‘it has to be borne in mind, ... that this inward movement during 1921-31 was probably more than offset by the numbers of Irish-born included in the excessive emigration from Scotland during that period.’<sup>361</sup> Despite this the Department of Health was still concerned at the level of immigration: ‘Under normal conditions an annual accession of about 2,000 immigrants from Ireland would be immaterial but with trade and industry heavily depressed, as it has been during the past ten years, even that number must have had an effect in aggravating an otherwise difficult situation.’<sup>362</sup> The actual numbers involved were in fact not that great. In 1931 the number of male working-age Irish immigrants in Scotland (including those from Northern Ireland) of less than ten years residence amounted to 5,461. Of these 4,895 were listed as having an occupation although a large proportion were (27 per cent) were classified as unskilled or labourers while the unemployment rate for male migrants ran at 1,059 or 22 per cent.<sup>363</sup> As most of these were concentrated in the West of Scotland, a 22 per cent unemployment rate was running close to the average for the time. When the numbers were actually broken down they were considerably less than the flood that the Church and others had been describing. What is interesting is the Scottish Office reaction to these figures:

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<sup>361</sup> NRS, HH1/568, Department of Health for Scotland, Memorandum as to Irish Immigration into Scotland, May 24th 1933.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid*

Although in itself the number of immigrants is not large it is sufficient to make a material difference in the economic position of these areas. To the extent to which the immigrants have obtained employment, they have kept others, probably Scotsmen, out of work and to the extent to which the immigrants are themselves out of work they have probably added to the expenditure on public assistance.<sup>364</sup>

Had the authoritative equivalent of these figures been available at any time in the preceding decade they would have undermined the Kirk campaign even more effectively than the *Glasgow Herald* articles. In which case it would be natural to suppose that the 1931 census sounded the death knell, in political terms, for the anti-Irish campaign. There was, however, still some mileage left in it and this would come from the Scottish Office itself.

### *VII A Last Appeal*

In reply to Home Office enquiries concerning the attitude of the Scottish Office attitude to the question of Irish immigration, the issue once again coming before the Cabinet, Norman Duke replied that the census information largely bore out the contention in the Adamson letter that the problem of immigration per se was not particularly pronounced and that the real difficulty was the multiplication of the Irish descended 'colony': 'The main problem seems therefore to lie in the birth rate of Irish persons – and their descendants – who have already settled in Scotland. The complete stoppage of Irish immigration would not solve this problem.'<sup>365</sup> In almost every official discussion on Irish immigration, even if the actual numbers entering Scotland were not considered a concern, there seems to have been a universal consensus that the Irish and their descendants were still a problem. This does point to an institutional prejudice against the Irish in general, understandable perhaps given the context of the times and the mores of a late imperial civil service, but with the possible exception of Clynes there seem to have been few in official circles who could be considered as champions or defenders of the Irish. Duke went on to make the further point that although the numbers of Irish immigrants was comparatively small any proposal to restrict immigration or provide for the deportation of 'undesirable Irishmen' would be an improvement on the present situation:

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<sup>364</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>365</sup> NRS, HH1/568, Letter to C. G. Markbreiter, Home Office, from Norman Duke, Scottish Office, August 17<sup>th</sup> 1933.

In times like the present we cannot afford to shelve this aspect of the question, merely because the volume of Irish immigration is not now so large as it has been in the past. Again, statistics show that the population of Irish extraction is less orderly than the native population, and is responsible for more crime and heavier proportionate charges on the poor law and other public funds. It is therefore in the public interest that any possible steps should be taken to limit the increase in the Irish element.<sup>366</sup>

This comment from a senior Scottish Office official is of considerable importance. It demonstrates a hardening of the attitudes inside the Scottish Office towards the Irish population in Scotland. Restricting the 'Irish element' was now in the public interest. It was a sentiment that would have gladdened the hearts of the General Assembly had they but known of it. They would have been delighted had they seen the draft memorandum for the Cabinet produced for Sir Godfrey Collins<sup>367</sup>, the Liberal successor to Sinclair. This memorandum, even though it did not lead to actual Government action, is as important a document produced inside the Scottish Office as any during the whole saga of the anti-Irish campaign. For the first time a Secretary of State urged to Cabinet, not only a policy of restriction, but of deportation of Irish immigrants.

The memorandum itself set out the case that had been presented to succeeding Secretaries of State by the Churches concerning the Irish inability to assimilate, their lack of 'independence' and consequent drain on public funds, their criminality and general undesirability. It also outlined the Churches' suggested solutions including restriction, repatriation for those who became a public charge, proof of employment and even an approach to the Vatican to suspend the *Ne Temere* decree in Scotland although the latter point did not make the final draft of the Memorandum. In addition, it rehearsed the arguments of the Empire Migration Committee and the abortive efforts made to reach a reciprocal repatriation arrangement with the Free State. It included the latest census statistics and while Collins found these 'reassuring' he still felt 'it is necessary to take other factors into account in considering what action would be justified to meet the representations of the Scottish Churches and other bodies who are dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs in Scotland, and to give effect to the recommendations of the Empire Migration Committee.'<sup>368</sup> Then,

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<sup>366</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>367</sup> Sir Godfrey Collins (1875-1936), Liberal MP for Greenock, Secretary of State for Scotland 1932-1936.

<sup>368</sup> NRS, HH1/568 August 1933 Draft memorandum to Cabinet from Secretary of State for Scotland entitled, *Immigration from the Irish Free State and Other Dominions: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland*.

using the census statistics, he outlined the case in almost exactly the same terms as the Church. The Irish did not intermarry and therefore did not assimilate, they had prolific numbers of descendants, they had a tendency to pauperism, criminality and lunacy, and most interestingly of all ‘The frequent and sometimes serious outbreaks of sectarian disorder caused by the existence of these “colonies” in the midst of Protestant communities, which impose a heavy burden on the police forces of certain districts, and lead to abnormal expenditure for the purpose of preserving law and order.’ Collins was writing during the rise of the Scottish Protestant League and Protestant Action and sectarian disorder was an issue he would have to deal with in the very near future. Having made these points Collins concluded with a demand for action:

On a review of all circumstances I am strongly of the opinion that the time has now come when the Government would be fully justified in taking powers already taken by many of the Dominions in respect of their own territory.

(i) to prohibit the admission to the United Kingdom of British Subjects from any of the Dominions, including the Irish Free State, in cases where the persons have criminal records or are insane

(ii) to deport from the United Kingdom to the territory of the Dominions in which they were born or with which they have the closest connection persons who become a charge on the public funds or commit offences within a specified period (say 5 years) after their arrival in the United Kingdom or are discovered to have been prohibited immigrants at the time of their arrival in the United Kingdom.

And I desire to recommend that the Cabinet should authorise the necessary steps to be taken to give effect to these proposals.<sup>369</sup>

Almost ten years after the Church’s original *Irish Menace* report the Scottish Secretary was presenting the Cabinet with almost exactly the same demands for almost exactly the same reasons. Collins also requested, if it were feasible, that there should be a prohibition on the employment of anyone entering Britain without a permit from the Ministry of Labour. Such permits would only be granted where no suitably qualified labour was available locally, although he recognised that this may have raised issues with Dominions. One hesitates to use the term ‘moral victory’ in this case but it is without doubt that Church had wrought better

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<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*

than they knew. Certainly there is little in the memorandum with which the Church would have disagreed and the evidence suggests that by the early 1930s their arguments were receiving a more sympathetic hearing than has been previously acknowledged by scholars of the period.

In the event, of course, the Cabinet came down on the side of the Home Office arguments but not without serious consideration. In the November of that year the Irish Situation Committee prepared a draft for transmission to Dublin which contained a warning that the status of Irish nationals would be affected by de Valera's alteration of the Irish Constitution.

On ceasing to be British subjects they would become subject as aliens to the provisions of the Aliens Restriction Act by which they could not enter or remain in this country without special sanction, registration with the police, restriction of employment and liability to deportation as provided by that Act. They would become ineligible for employment in the Public Services of the Crown either in this country or in the colonies, and they would no longer be entitled to the benefit of the protection or facilities offered by the British Diplomatic and Consular Services. They would also be ineligible for the franchise.<sup>370</sup>

This paragraph was deleted from the final dispatch but it does illustrate how close the British Government came to acceding to the restriction of Irish immigration.

### *VIII Conclusion*

It is not the purpose here to chart the eventual course of the negotiations with Irish Free State throughout the 1930s, save to point out that Scottish concerns were raised at the Irish Situation Committee meetings throughout the period and MacDonald himself was still making a case for repatriation as late as 1936 when he was Lord President of the Council.<sup>371</sup> Ironically enough, the issue was settled through the diplomacy of MacDonald's son Malcolm, as Secretary of State for the Dominions, although his relinquishing control of the Irish naval bases was to be a sore point with Churchill throughout the war. The purpose of this chapter has been to highlight a neglected area of the controversy and to make the point that far from being a dead issue after 1929 the whole subject of Irish immigration, and indeed the position

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<sup>370</sup> NRS, CAB 27/523, 18<sup>h</sup> Meeting of the Irish Situation Committee, November 30<sup>th</sup> 1933.

<sup>371</sup> NRS, CAB 27/523, 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting ISC Monday May 25<sup>th</sup> 1936.

of the Irish in Scotland, received a new lease of life. The Collins memorandum may have been the last meaningful occasion where the Scottish Office attempted to influence the debate and despite their lack of success it is in the terms in which they couched that debate that is important. In the end the need for a concept of Empire unity, however meaningless that had become in the Irish context, won out.

## Chapter Six

### The Committee for Kirk Security: 'Church Interests' 1930-1938

*It is not enough, Burke has said, to have right opinions; we must make right opinions prevail*

John D. Rose, Rector Emeritus, Kirkcaldy High School 1934<sup>372</sup>

*The General Assembly view with deep concern the evidence that Roman Catholic immigration from Ireland continues to displace and disadvantage Scottish labour and appeal to members of the Church and to the Scottish people generally to pay due regard in offering private and public employment, domestic, industrial and commercial to the rights of their own countrymen. The Assembly express the hope that occasion shall no longer be given for the remonstrances which have been made in Scottish cities and industrial areas against the practice of preferring Irish labour where Scottish labour is already available.*

Paragraph 5 of the Deliverance of the Church Interests Committee to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland May 1935<sup>373</sup>

*It was a poor sort of religion that moved one to abuse and ridicule another religion than his own. The only way to deal with Roman error was patient quiet teaching of their own people. They must speak the truth but let them speak it in love.*

Dr J. Cromarty Smith, Church Interests debate, General Assembly of the Church of Scotland Thursday May 30<sup>th</sup> 1935<sup>374</sup>

#### *I Introduction*

The history of the brief and inglorious career of the Church Interests Committee of the Church of Scotland is in some ways an apt metaphor for the whole anti-Irish campaign. It appeared, as a separate entity, out of the Church and Nation Committee in 1931 and disappeared back into it in 1938. In the intervening years it accomplished very little other than to keep an overtly sectarian agenda before the General Assembly and as a useful forum in which some, but by no means all, ministers could vent their frustrations about the 1918

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<sup>372</sup> J.D. Rose, *Scotland's True Glory: the Story of the Church of Scotland from the earliest Times to the Present Day*, (Marshall, Morgan and Scott, Edinburgh, 1934), p158.

<sup>373</sup> NRS, CH1/21/6, *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, Deliverance of the Church Interests Committee 1935.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid*

Education Act in particular, and on all things ‘Roman’ in general. This does not mean, as Callum Brown has it, that ‘the Church sought to appear responsive to the feelings of its constituency without fanning the flames of bigotry. A committee of the assembly merely went through the motions for the remainder of the inter-war period, making an annual appeal to the Secretary of State for the ending of immigration.’<sup>375</sup> The preceding chapters have confirmed the Church was not merely ‘going through the motions.’<sup>376</sup> It is possible to make a case that the Church Interests Committee, through their sheer ineffectuality, were going through the motions but it will be argued in this chapter that there was a deeper cause underlying their activities and it would be a mistake to dismiss them out of hand. Especially so as one of its members, Professor Burleigh, was to rise to considerable prominence in the post-war Church, and the slow death of the Committee tells us much, not just about the inter-war church but about inter-war Scotland itself. It should be stated at the outset that some of the actions of this committee appear rather remarkable for a group of clerics. Edwin Muir may have been exaggerating when he compared Bolshevism and Presbyterianism, ‘in content these two creeds are quite dissimilar, but in logical structure they are quite alike,’<sup>377</sup> but in the case of the Church Interests Committee he perhaps had a point.

The title of this chapter is the Committee for Kirk Security, and it is a reasonable description. Its members undoubtedly believed that their remit was to monitor those perceived hostile to the reformed religion, in this case the Roman Catholic Church, and to propose counter measures. The General Assembly set it up in the following terms:

The General Assembly approve the report on the preservation of our Protestant heritage and resolve to set up a committee to be called the Committee on Church Interests, initially of sixteen members for the purpose of maintaining the position of the Church of Scotland as representative of the Church Catholic in this realm and for the purposes of reviewing tendencies and activities hostile to the maintenance of the Church’s inheritance in the historic Reformation of religion in Scotland and in other lands and in connection therewith of compiling information and furnishing advice to the advantage of the Church and of its ministers and members and agencies. The General Assembly instruct the Nomination Committee to propose sixteen members for this Committee, after consultation with the representatives of the Committee on Church and Nation; it

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<sup>375</sup> C.G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*, (Methuen, London, 1987) p238.

<sup>376</sup> In fairness to Brown he was writing in 1987 and subsequent scholarship has overtaken his assertion.

<sup>377</sup> E. Muir, Bolshevism and Calvinism, *European Quarterly*, May 1935, in M. P. McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism*, (Glasgow, 2004), p356.

being understood that the Committee so appointed shall have the power to co-opt additional members from time to time as may be required.<sup>378</sup>

Apart from the clerical terminology the above is a reasonably good description of the functions of an intelligence service. From what exactly was this security service to protect the Church? Professor W.A. Curtis<sup>379</sup> of Edinburgh University, later to be the first convenor of the Committee, in seconding the deliverance set out the challenges to the Church of Scotland as he, and presumably the rest of the Church and Nation Committee, saw them. He could not be accused of understatement:

He did not conceal the fact that this proposal meant a grave and solemn step...there was a challenge to their Church that it would be unworthy to ignore. Let no one imagine that there was no danger or urge that the dignified thing was to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye. Let them permit him to name some of the indications which their Committee had been considering as a result of the changes that had occurred. The influx of an Irish population had already engaged the attention of the Church. Prayers were offered Sunday by Sunday to regain Scotland to Rome. Convents and monasteries had sprung up. Money was poured out. In this city a Franciscan Church had been established near the University. Two Dominican friars in the robe and habit of the order which was forever associated with the inquisition had conducted a mission in the hall of the University Union two successive winters. Jesuit centres existed in their cities, representing an order not in good odour at the moment in Europe, which had again and again for sufficient reasons been expelled from countries by kings and governments...The finances of the Roman Catholic Church were used in propaganda through books published by the Catholic Truth Society...Properties purchased, processions, pilgrimages and demonstrations – these things reminded them of challenges that confronted the Church. He was offering no counsels of panic, but they must know the forces arrayed against them. They had to furnish literature, advice and information and train young men and marshal their tremendous resources. He had no doubt as to their standing with their hostile ecclesiastical neighbours, but was it not time their ministers and people should be given the facts and that the information they

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<sup>378</sup> NRS, CH1/21/2, Deliverance of the Church and Nation Committee Clause 11, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1931.

<sup>379</sup> Professor W. A. Curtis (1876-1935), Dean of the faculty of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh and later Principal of New College.

needed should come from people they trusted?...He ventured to say that in years to come they would be found in the front line of defence and advance, throughout the world, vindicating with their allies the principles and ideals which the Reformation rescued and for the service of God and Mankind (applause).<sup>380</sup>

From this it would seem that the Church of Scotland stood in its greatest danger since the Reformation. The ‘robes and habits’ of the Inquisition had been seen in the University Union and the Jesuits were in the cities. The professor was not offering ‘counsels of panic’ but hostile forces were arrayed against the Church. It is easy, by more secular standards, to find Curtis’ rather bombastic and verbose speeches in the General Assembly either distasteful or risible or both. Perhaps that is why in the secondary literature of the period the Church Interests Committee is generally mentioned, if at all, in passing. It will be argued here that this would be a mistake. As this chapter will concentrate on its activities it should be pointed out that this Committee provided the mood music that was heard outside of debates on the Mound. It can be seen from the above extract that Curtis employed a quasi-military terminology. ‘Hostile neighbours’ had to be confronted in the ‘front line of defence and advance’. What the inception of the Committee marked was a change from the emphasis of John White’s racial campaign against the Irish to a more overtly hostile attitude to the Roman Catholic Church. This may well have lain at the heart of the original campaign but the veneer of non-sectarian bias had worn away. If the Church had been careful in its previous public utterances to make the point that its issue was with *Irish* immigration and not Catholicism per se, the Church Interests Committee felt under no such obligation. The Church of Rome was the enemy. In order to understand how and why this change of emphasis came about it is necessary to briefly examine the position of the Church of Scotland in 1930.

## *II A Second Wind*

After the General Election of 1929 which returned a Labour Government and following the *Glasgow Herald’s* fairly comprehensive public demolition of its case it would be logical to assume that the Kirk would have had more pressing concerns than the seemingly fruitless pursuit of the restriction of Irish immigration. It could be argued that the Church was simply being ‘thrown’ in its persistence in a lost cause or that the ‘Irish menace’ had become by sheer repetition something of an article of faith in itself. It is certainly the case that the re-

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<sup>380</sup> NRS, CH1/21/2, *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1931.

unification of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church in 1929 had given the new body a surge in self-confidence and belief that it had a renewed mission as the social, and to some extent political, arbiter in Scotland. On the other hand the leading lights of the Church were a sophisticated and, in many cases, politically well-connected group. They had had to be to push through Parliament the legislation necessary for reunion to take place As has been pointed out in Chapter Two Dr John White himself was ‘a whole-hearted Unionist.’<sup>381</sup> Why should such men have thought, after nearly a decade’s worth of effort, that they were any more likely to receive a sympathetic hearing from a newly elected Labour government? A Government supported by many M.P.s whose election the Church had roundly denounced in the past as being the product of an Irish Catholic block vote in the West of Scotland? Certainly they could carry on their campaign as a means of embarrassing the new Government over the issue but surely it defied political logic to imagine that they could persuade a Labour Government to take the issue seriously when it appeared that they had manifestly failed to persuade the previous incumbents. However, there was an internal Kirk logic to the continuation of the campaign. As has been pointed out in the previous chapter the Church was largely unaware of the behind the scenes politics concerning the issue in the early 1930s and so continued this as an increasingly internal debate. Had they known of, for example, the Empire Migration Committee’s conclusions it may well have entirely changed the dynamic of the debate.

In order to understand the progress of what might be termed the Church’s second campaign, it will be necessary to make a brief digression into the history of Church re-unification. Both the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church (and indeed the Free Church) had been united in their anti-Irish campaign and had even participated in joint deputations to Government on the issue. In a nation of inveterate hair splitters, and where no hair is split more finely than on matters of religion, the Presbyterian Churches could at least agree on the iniquities of the Church of Rome. This common cause was one with which the reunified Church could pursue with a renewed self confidence in its mission. It also began with a profound sense of unease about the nature of the country. It fundamentally believed that it had a right to leadership but some of her more prominent adherents recognised that the Scotland of 1930 was not the Scotland of 1914. As John Buchan put it:

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<sup>381</sup> I.G.C. Hutchison, *Scottish Unionism between the Wars*, in *Unionist Scotland 1800-1997* C. M. M. MacDonald (ed.), (Donald, Edinburgh, 1998), p82.

The difficulties are great, but I believe they can be overcome; the losses are grievous but they can be made good. Scotland has always had one gift above others, the power of adapting herself to altered circumstances...She has to accept changes but to make sure that in the process of change she does not sacrifice those qualities and institutions which have built up her historic character...but a leader is needed if she is to keep what she cherishes in the older Scotland, and at the same time adapt herself courageously to the demands of the new. And her natural leader, now as in the past, is that Church which is her most idiomatic possession,<sup>382</sup>

It was a confusing philosophy of stepping boldly into the future while holding steadfastly to the past. Buchan's *History of the Church of Scotland*, written in conjunction with Principal George Adam Smith,<sup>383</sup> was produced, as it has it in the preface, 'at the request of the leaders of The Church of Scotland who desired to have in some popular form a memorial of the great events of last year.'<sup>384</sup>

It was not the only work produced in the early thirties. The quotation at the beginning of this chapter from John D. Rose comes from his history *Scotland's True Glory: The Story of the Church of Scotland from the earliest Times to the Present Day*. In his preface he states that

No nation possesses a Church which has played so great and decisive a part in national history as the Church of Scotland, and no Church has a more interesting and inspiring history...It has worked out in blood and tears the true relationship which should exist between church and state, and in the process has raised a formerly insignificant, and lawless, and barbarous nation to the high place it now holds among the nations of the world.<sup>385</sup>

It may appear a somewhat hyperbolic statement but it is a sentiment with which many in the Church in Scotland would have agreed. The problem for the Church by the late 1920s and early 1930s was that of transferring this concept of itself into a tangible and concrete reality. The Church's position in Scots society seemed to be, and arguably was, under threat and

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<sup>382</sup> J. Buchan and G. A. Smith, *The Kirk in Scotland 1560-1929*, (Hodder and Stoughton, Edinburgh, 1930), pp238-239.

<sup>383</sup> George Adam Smith (1856-1942), Moderator of the United Free Church 1916-1917 Principal of The University of Aberdeen.

<sup>384</sup> J. Buchan and G.A. Smith, *The Kirk in Scotland 1560-1929*, p v.

<sup>385</sup> J.D. Rose, *Scotland's True Glory*, p v.

from forces that the Church itself did not truly comprehend. The Church, that was still in the process of self-congratulation over the achievement of reunion, was nevertheless troubled by many aspects of the twentieth century with which it found difficult to compete. Popular diversions like music, football and the cinema seemed to undermine Presbyterian traditions and attendance. The Sabbath itself, in the major towns at least, seemed under threat. What the Kirk had previously taken for granted, it now needed to defend. In that defence it could not necessarily assume that it had the loyalty and adherence of the majority of the population.

A world view like that of Rose in which the Church of Scotland was so evidently a force for good could not understand those who viewed with indifference the Kirk's pretensions. It explains in some ways the Church's persistence in its hostility to the Catholic Irish into the 1930s. It has been one of the arguments here that the Irish War of Independence gave the initial impetus to that hostility but that alone would not account for the longevity of the campaign. It could be argued, that, for some ministers at least, it continued out of sheer sectarian prejudice but that would be to miss the fundamental point. The Catholic Irish were more than just an alien incursion, they were a visible manifestation that Scotland was no longer the heterogeneous Presbyterian nation that the Kirk had raised out of 'insignificance, lawlessness and barbarism.' It then followed that the Irish were a threat to all that the Church had achieved. If that was true then it became a spiritual, and national duty to defend Scotland from the Irish. In more ecumenical times this may not appear a tenable position, and even in the 1930s there were those, as will be discussed below, who challenged it. It did, however, have a theological and political logic that appealed to many, particularly in the General Assembly. As memories of the Great War began to fade and new threats appeared on the horizon, reunification should have given the Church confidence in its prospects for the future. To a certain extent this was true as can be seen by the quote from John Buchan above. But still the 1920s had not been a happy decade for the Church any more than it had been for the wider nation. The experiences of the slump, the General Strike and seemingly intractable unemployment combined with Scotland's increasingly uncompetitive export-led industries, all contributed to a deep sense of insecurity. The Kirk convinced itself that it had diagnosed Scotland's malaise, the Irish, and it followed that the cure was the exclusion of the Irish. As economic and social conditions grew markedly worse in the 1930s then so did the urgency that this cure be applied.

Re-unification of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland had been a fairly long and sometimes tortuous process. It is not intended here to enter into great detail about the legislative and theological hurdles the Churches had to overcome, particularly between

1904, when the first concrete moves were made to heal the disruption of 1843, to the final reunification of 1929. It is however useful to understand the mindset of the members of both churches. As Buchan and Smith put it 'One church had been formally pledged by annual resolutions for nearly half a century to disestablishment and disendowment as a policy not only of expediency but of justice, while the other clung to the historic association with the state.'<sup>386</sup> They further quoted Lord Sands:

The differences which to a stranger seem most obscure are often the most difficult to reconcile. When two denominations are separated by some difference clear and palpable, there may be no need to justify separation...But when the difference is not of this character, it is felt that separation needs to be justified in the eyes of the world and this leads to the attachment of immense importance to the ground of quarrel and the most tenacious and meticulous adherence to the one position or the other.<sup>387</sup>

This, apart from being a neat and judicial definition of pedantry, raises an interesting although unintentional point in the Churches joint anti-Irish campaign. If Church reunification was held back, as it certainly was, by nit-picking arguments over what divided them, then it would undoubtedly have been useful to have an issue around which they could agree. As has been argued above both churches could unite around hostility to the Irish Catholic minority. It does raise the question as to whether the comparative religious harmony between Protestant and Catholic that existed prior to the Great War was deliberately sacrificed as a price for Presbyterian reunification. Equally, the persistence of the campaign into the 1930s may have been the means of reinforcing unification after 1929. Rose, writing in 1934 referring to the difficulties facing the new church stated that 'over 1,000,000 people of Protestant descent had lost touch with the Church and were living in practical heathenism. The forces of secularism and materialism were becoming a menace to society and a reorganisation of the Christian forces was absolutely necessary if the problem of Christianising Scotland was to be solved. This reorganisation could not take place as long as the two churches remained separate.'<sup>388</sup> He later expanded on this theme in relation to the Catholic Church:

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<sup>386</sup> J Buchan and G. A. Smith, *The Kirk in Scotland*, p98.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid* p98

<sup>388</sup> J.D. Rose, *Scotland's True Glory*, p 149-150.

A fresh difficulty is the growth and claims of the Romanist Church in Scotland during the last century, owing to the great immigration of Irish into the industrial west. It numbers 645,000 members, and by their lower standards of living and conduct they have become a danger to Scottish national life and character. They do not mix with the native Scots, but their priests keep them alien and aloof, and use their united votes as a means to extort advantages from all political parties. They are a large cause of unemployment to Scottish workmen, break the national tradition of Sunday observance and boast openly of the coming conquest of Scotland by Romanism. It is inconceivable that freedom loving Scotland will ever submit to the dictation of an Italian priest which it shook off four centuries ago, but unless the Church pays more attention to instructing the people regarding the unscriptural doctrines and arrogant claims of Rome a serious position will arise. Here again it takes too much for granted.<sup>389</sup>

These sentiments were fairly standard regarding the Irish but Rose was also making the case that one of the purposes of reunification was to tackle not just heathenism and secularism but Romanism. This was not necessarily a universal view. J R Fleming, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Alliance,<sup>390</sup> in his *History of the Church in Scotland* written in 1933 and dedicated to the reunited Church, was inclined to be a little more charitable although he too was no friend of the Irish: ‘So long as Roman Catholics in Scotland were of native growth, clinging to their home and soil and merging peaceably with the general population, racial bitterness was absent...and one laments that the new situation caused by the introduction of an alien and unmixable element has altered things for the worse.’<sup>391</sup> By this point Fleming did not see that ‘any agitation for the disenfranchisement or repatriation of Irish immigrants will be successful’<sup>392</sup> but he did believe that there were still grounds for a Commission of Inquiry ‘to safeguard the future and prevent the ideals, traditions and spiritual foundations of the Scottish Race being undermined by hostile forces.’<sup>393</sup> Despite the almost routine denunciation of the Irish, Fleming did go on to give a tribute, if a slightly backhanded one, to the efforts of the Catholic clergy:

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<sup>389</sup> J.D. Rose, *Scotland's True Glory*, pp. 161 – 162.

<sup>390</sup> Presbyterian Alliance founded 1875. Originally this organisation was a worldwide alliance of reformed churches holding the Presbyterian system, since 1970 The World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

<sup>391</sup> J. R. Fleming, *A History of the Church in Scotland 1875 – 1929*, (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1933), p150.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid*

Neither Faith nor Morals has flourished amidst the squalid industrial surroundings where the congested Scots-Irish population is mostly to be found. An ungrudging tribute is due to the devoted clergy who have sought to keep these alive in a difficult community... *Giant Pagan, in his modern guise of secularising materialism is an enemy more to be dreaded than Giant Pope, deprived of his persecuting weapons, striving at least to secure the allegiance of his followers to a large part of Christian truth and duty* (my italics). Even the unreformed Church in Scotland, so far as she cares for her own, and voices a venerable testimony, deserves more recognition and toleration than she is prepared to give. The original core still retains somewhat of a national character and outlook, and one may hope that the recent accretion will in time become a worthy addition to a common religious citizenship.<sup>394</sup>

While this was hardly a ringing endorsement for an ecumenical approach by the Church of Scotland it is important as it demonstrates that some senior church members were beginning, slowly, to reconsider their uncompromising attitude to the question of the Catholic Irish in Scotland. Nonetheless, Fleming's realism on the likely success of agitation for disenfranchisement or repatriation does not appear to have been shared by other influential churchmen in the first flush of reunification.

Certainly John White thought that there was still a battle that could be won. In January 1930 at a meeting of the Glasgow Elders and Office Bearers Union he stated that in his opinion 'Rome now menaced Scotland as at no other time since the Reformation' and that it was 'only a question of time until the Roman Catholic element predominated in the West of Scotland.'<sup>395</sup> In this speech he made a direct attack on the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland expressing the view that it was 'becoming aggressive in its attitude to the faith of their Church and was indeed engaged in propaganda.' This further hardening of attitude ended on a more ominous note: 'Hitherto they had remained tolerant but it was not easy to remain silent when their faith was described as an unmitigated hoax. They had cause therefore, in the face of reactionary propaganda, to emphasise afresh the Reformed and Protestant character of the Church and to show clearly that this and not medievalism represented the true Church of Christ and that the spread of Romanism would retard Christian progress and enlightenment.'<sup>396</sup> He followed this up with a speech in Dumbarton on February

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<sup>394</sup> *Ibid* pp. 150 - 151

<sup>395</sup> *The Scotsman*, January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1930, p15.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid*

25<sup>th</sup> on much the same lines, and while he was positive that ‘The Reformed faith and the Presbyterian government of the Church of Scotland were too strong in the hearts of true Scotsman... the fact remained that the Roman Catholics were patiently working to secure a grip on the other departments of the nation’s life.’<sup>397</sup> The Church of Scotland could not remain silent or inactive on this apparent onslaught against their faith - ‘The Church of Rome never proved anything. They relied on the wearing down of points by constant persistence and unproved assertions.’<sup>398</sup> This was a more pointed attack on the Catholic Church and indicated a greater willingness to focus the whole case as a matter of religious rather than simply racial conflict.

At the General Assembly in May of that year the Reverend Hutchison Cockburn, presenting the Church and Nation report, once again returned to the familiar attack on the Irish and their alleged habits. The criticisms against the Government in this report have been addressed in the previous chapters but one or two points in his speech are worth repeating. There was a call for the restriction of immigration, the franchise and repatriation of those who committed crime or became a public charge, (all to general applause). Interestingly, he mentioned the Free State Committee, ‘The answer given the other day from an authoritative quarter was that the governing body in the Irish Free State appointed a committee to investigate this matter in 1928 but they were evidently still investigating it for no report had come to hand.’<sup>399</sup> There is no indication where he came by this particular piece of information especially, as has been pointed out in the proceeding chapter, the Government were keen that knowledge of the existence of this committee (if exist it actually did) did not become public. Of course there had been oblique mentions during the election campaign by Gilmour but it would be instructive to know the identity of Hutchinson Cockburn’s ‘authoritative source.’ Cockburn’s speech on the whole was an attack on the Government over the issue ‘demanding’ immigration laws ‘comparable to those in operation about all the British Dominions and a declaration of policy on the issue.’<sup>400</sup> He also read out a letter alleging that a steamer had recently arrived in Greenock from Cork ‘with hundreds of young Irishmen on board who had been guaranteed employment in a new works outside Glasgow.’ When an elder from Glasgow, J.B. Galloway, expressed the opinion that this story was ‘grossly inaccurate’ Cockburn informed him that he had had it confirmed by telegram, he did

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<sup>397</sup> *The Scotsman*, February 26<sup>th</sup> 1930, p13.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>399</sup> NRS, CH1/21/1, *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1930.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid*

not say by whom. What is particularly striking about the debate of that year is the addendum to the deliverance moved by Mr Mathew Babington, minister of Glamis.

Babington was unimpressed with the Committee's approach to the issue of Irish immigration and held out little hope that any Government would legislate to prevent or regulate Irish immigration. As far as he was concerned the appeal should be directed to the employers of Scottish labour:

He would like the Committee to ask all their principal industrial concerns how many Irish people they employed. Let them apply to the Corporations of Edinburgh and Glasgow and to the great railway and industrial concerns and ask them how many of their foremen and gaffers were Irishmen, and whether their foremen and gaffers preferred their own countrymen. ...So long as Scottish employers of labour were willing to employ, and offered employment to Irish people, they could not prevent them coming in....What they wanted was the regulation of the supply of labour, and the appeal was, not to the Government but to the loyalty and patriotism of the Scottish employers of labour (applause) he moved that the following be added...The General Assembly instruct its Committee to appeal to Scottish employers of labour to employ Scottish labour where such is available.<sup>401</sup>

Babington was seconded by A Stanley Middleton of Edinburgh, who illustrated his arguments by citing instances where 'numbers of Irishmen were being called over from Ireland by telegram to take up work in under public bodies in the West of Scotland where Scotsmen had been refused work.'<sup>402</sup> He also gave an instance where an Irish housekeeper had been appointed and within months all the indigenous domestic staff in the household had been replaced with natives of Ireland. It is a remarkable feature of these debates that so much unsubstantiated anecdote was treated as accurate by so many in the Church of Scotland. What is of particular interest is Hutchinson Cockburn's response to addendum which he accepted 'gladly' as 'that was the line on which they had been moving for the last seven or eight years.'<sup>403</sup>

This debate raises some fundamental questions about the nature of sectarian employment practice in Scotland in the inter war period. First of all the General Assembly in 1930 by

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<sup>401</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid*

adopting this deliverance and the addendum was issuing a specific instruction for the Committee to directly urge Scottish employers to institute a hiring policy that would exclude 'Irish' workers, in effect to put up the 'No Irish need apply' sign figuratively if not literally. Although it has to be pointed out that if such signs were commonplace then it is probable that the Church would not have been so exercised on the issue.<sup>404</sup> It is noteworthy that in the history of the period the general assumption has been that it was the Irish who were disadvantaged and yet the General Assembly spent a considerable amount of time arguing the direct opposite. The second point is that there has not been found, as yet, any documentary evidence that either the Kirk or the Government made a direct approach to major industrial concerns regarding their ethnic or religious employment practices. Neither does there appear to be any evidence of a response by Scottish employers, either individually or collectively, to such an appeal. This in turn raises the crucial question was there a general policy on the non-recruitment of 'Irish', in effect Roman Catholic, labour? Given the fact that throughout the 1920s and 1930s the Kirk was repeatedly urging Scottish employers to do their patriotic duty and employ only Scotsman where possible suggests not. The quotation at the beginning of this chapter from the Church Interests Committee illustrates the point

The lack of documentary evidence to either prove or disprove this point is one of the more tantalising aspects of the period. Hutchinson Cockburn informed the Assembly that that was the line they had been moving towards for a number of years, and while there is copious correspondence in the Government files on Irish immigration, and the issue of Irish employment in public works schemes had been taken up with the Scottish Office and Ministry of Labour, it does not seem that that there was any comparable effort made with the private sector. On such a fundamental issue one is reluctant to speculate, it may well be that such correspondence has simply not survived, or that a specific study on this particular issue has yet to be undertaken. Research in the papers of the industrialist Sir James Lithgow,<sup>405</sup> (1883 – 1952) who was particularly active in the Church, have not revealed any correspondence on the matter. However, as Anthony Slaven points out, 'Another characteristic of these men of business was their close identification with their local communities, their civic and philanthropic roles....The local churches were particularly well

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<sup>404</sup> See Richard Jensen's, No Irish Need Apply: A Myth of Victimisation, *Journal of Social History* 36 :2, (2002), pp. 405-29 for a study on this phenomenon in the United States. There has not yet been a comparable study in Scotland but the similarity of mythology is interesting.

<sup>405</sup> GB 0248 DC 035/15, Sir James Lithgow Papers, Glasgow University Archives.

endowed by our men since many were active in church affairs as elders over many years.’<sup>406</sup> It is highly likely that many of these men were in fact present at General Assemblies where these exhortations were made and perhaps personal contact was more the order of the day. It still begs the question why the Kirk felt it necessary to make these public appeals to employers if they were already operating a selective employment policy? Hutchinson Cockburn did make the point that he had asked the government whether they would make it a condition of grant for public works schemes that employment be limited to those born in the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State had replied: ‘I do not consider it would be practicable to make this a condition of grant but it is open to local authorities to lay down conditions with regard to classes of unemployed men they are prepared to receive from the Employment Exchanges for relief work.’<sup>407</sup> Hutchinson Cockburn trusted that ‘all Town Councils and public bodies would take notice of the fact.’<sup>408</sup> It was a broad hint if nothing else.

### *III A Committee of Vigilance*

The Church Interests Committee began its work slowly but it did not lack ambition. At the first meeting the Committee set out its aims:

- (1) To accumulate stores of exact knowledge to be used in statistical information and literature.
- (2) To link up the Church with the other churches and agencies throughout the world e.g. The Protestant League
- (3) To issue a questionnaire to all ministers
- (4) To prepare a memorandum on the Roman Catholic Church and Scottish Education
- (5) To examine Roman Catholic Manuals of English and Scottish History and the publications of the Catholic Truth Society
- (6) To prepare volumes composite on Papal Infallibility, Church and State and similar big questions<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> A. Slaven, *The Origins and Economic and Social Roles of Scottish Business Leaders, 1860 -1960* in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Elites: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar University of Strathclyde 1991-1992*, (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1994), pp162-164.

<sup>407</sup> NRS, CH1/21/1.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>409</sup> NRS, CH1/5/187, Church Interests Committee Minutes, November 19<sup>th</sup> 1931.

In the first year of its existence it produced a questionnaire to be sent to every minister in Scotland, although lack of funds delayed its transmission until September 1933 when an unnamed donor came to the rescue.<sup>410</sup> Regrettably the actual questionnaire itself is no longer extant but it is possible from the Committee's reports to the Assembly to reconstruct the sense of the questions asked. Essentially ministers were being asked to report back on the numbers of Roman Catholics in their parishes, their activities, what properties or lands were being purchased, what was the state of inter-communal relations and what steps individual ministers were taking to combat Romanist propaganda and errors. The ministry as a whole were to be used as an intelligence gathering service on the actions of the Roman Catholic Church and they were to report back to the Committee on Church Interests who would then analyse the material provided and make recommendations to the Assembly for counter measures. Curtis set out the proposed plan to the Assembly:

They were not a company of mere alarmists, but a committee of vigilance...They resolved to keep watch themselves and to stimulate watchfulness in others throughout the land. Forewarned was forearmed and they were doing what was an obvious duty to all that they counted dear and sacred in Scottish life and religion. As they were acting on behalf of all, they called on all...to lend support to their efforts... Whether the danger threatened from outside or confronted them within the Church in tendencies disloyal to the genius of their faith and worship they had to consider where they would lead their people and what injury they might work upon the historic spring of their religious character.<sup>411</sup>

It was apparently not just the Roman Catholics who were dangerous but a disloyal element within, presumably those in the Church who did not share Professor Curtis' appreciation of the situation. The language of Curtis' speech, for one who was not a 'mere alarmist,' was designed to alarm. The Reformation was in danger and the faithful needed to be vigilant and report to a Committee set up specifically to protect them. Substitute revolution for reformation and Muir's point, quoted above, is well made. Apart from the rather idiosyncratic suggestion that the Church of Scotland consider setting up public schools on the English model to attract the well-to-do, the Committee's action plan consisted of compiling statistics of the growth of Roman Catholicism in Scotland, differentiating between the Scottish and

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<sup>410</sup> NRS, CH1/5/187, March 30<sup>th</sup> 1933.

<sup>411</sup> NRS, CH1/21/3, *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly*, June 10<sup>th</sup> 1932.

immigrant population. They would also ‘review the manifold forms of Roman Catholic propaganda’ in their country.’ In effect this meant reading the entire output of the Catholic Truth Society as ‘He thought they ought to know what their Roman Catholic fellow citizens were taught about their own faith as well as about their heretical and unbelieving selves’<sup>412</sup>. This would be carried out by ‘Church History Professors’, in other words by Professor Burleigh. The Catholic propaganda machine was one which Curtis admired and feared at the same time, ‘They were emissaries of suggestion.... Gifted writers like Mr Chesterton and Mr Belloc wrote as men with a mission and by fair means or foul aimed at revolutionising history as they had known it’.<sup>413</sup> Finally he raised the questionnaire that the Committee intended to send out to every parish although he would give no details of its actual content, the General Assembly not, according to Curtis, being the time or the place for such information, and expressed the hope that all ministers would take the time to respond. He ended on a fine rhetorical flourish:

Knowing the facts ... they would know the needs and knowing the needs they would do their best to advise the Church how to meet them. Their people required guidance; their people deserved guidance. They were uneasy whereas they used to feel secure. They felt that an invidious menace was spreading through the land. They were not content with vague reassurances. They were sure that the way to meet the Roman threat was not to imitate Rome’s fashions and ideas or to compromise with her system to stage manage worship or coerce obedience in rival to her methods.

...How many hundreds of millions of her adherents did she not owe to simple persecution? What instruments had she not stooped to employ in Christ’s name in order to preserve her unity and her sovereignty? ...To despise her was folly. To ignore her was irresponsible. To follow her...was to destroy themselves. Calmly and patiently ...they were called to guard their heritage in religion as their most sacred trust.<sup>414</sup>

Curtis, having chilled the blood of the General Assembly, was immediately followed by Hutchinson Cockburn, seconding, who reinforced the point in case there were any present who might be considering such sentiments as somewhat intolerant for a Christian Assembly. The Roman Catholic propaganda in his opinion was doing active harm, ‘It appealed to

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<sup>412</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid*

passion and ignorant prejudice. They owed it to themselves that their appeal should be well founded and reasonable. The slackness of mind which was called tolerance was sheer intellectual laziness and moral cowardice. The Roman Catholic Church played up to it and yet none were so intolerant...If Scotland by slackness or indifference ever became Roman Catholic it would serve her right and the punishment would not be undeserved.'<sup>415</sup> On occasion it is best to let the protagonists speak for themselves. The report was overwhelmingly approved.

It is clear from the speeches the approach that some in the Kirk were adopting. This was now a direct attack on the Roman Catholic Church although the distinction was still made between Irish and home-grown Catholics. The Church of Rome was a direct threat to the Church of Scotland and by extension Protestants everywhere. Despite the Church facing such a dire situation the Church Interests Committee managed to achieve almost nothing at all in the following year, in fact there was no Committee meeting between 17<sup>th</sup> March 1932 and 30<sup>th</sup> March 1933. Professors Curtis and Burleigh did visit the Stockholm Assembly of the World Alliance for the Protection and Furtherance of Protestantism 'but having regard to the changed conditions on the continent it was agreed that, while contact should be maintained actual affiliation should not be pressed until the situation became clearer.'<sup>416</sup> Hutchinson Cockburn produced a pamphlet in 1933 entitled *The Protestant Outlook in Scotland* which was largely a rehash of past Church and Nation Committee reports although he did allude in it to the forthcoming questionnaire of the Church Interests Committee.<sup>417</sup> He did, however, emphasize in the preface that some of his best friends were Catholic.<sup>418</sup> The Committee report to the General Assembly of 1933 was in fact so thin that it prompted one minister, Dr Neil Meldrum of Aberdeen, to enquire when the Committee 'were going to get a move on?'<sup>419</sup> He need not have worried, the Committee came back in 1934 and this time armed with the preliminary results of the Questionnaire.

The Committee report of 1934 and Deliverance of 30<sup>th</sup> May 1934, while not including the actual questions asked, does provide the information that the Questionnaire itself was six pages long, consisted of twenty-two questions in five sections. This provides good reason why by, 1934, one third of parishes had not responded and the Assembly was asked to urge defaulters to complete the form. The report described the response as 'gratifying ...But it is to

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<sup>415</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>416</sup> NRS, CH1/5/187, Minutes of the Committee for Church Interests.

<sup>417</sup> J. Hutchinson Cockburn, *The Protestant Outlook in Scotland*, (World Evangelical Alliance, London, 1933).

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>419</sup> NRS, CH1/21/4.

be regretted that not every parish has as yet sent a reply. Some of these in which the questions raised must be acute are still in default.' However, reading between the lines of Curtis and Burleigh's speeches of that year it seemed that there were those in the ministry that responded who were not quite so ready to fall in with the Committee's agenda. Curtis stated that 'Only in one or two instances did they receive replies which resented the Committee's action, though under the authority of the General Assembly, as stirring up trouble and as an attack on the Roman Catholic Church.'<sup>420</sup> He also felt it necessary to defend the questionnaire on the grounds that there was 'widespread apprehension; and a growing determination to resist encroachment: and they desired to ascertain how far these fears were well grounded and at what points resistance was called for.'<sup>421</sup> The fact that Curtis felt the need to justify the Committee's actions does imply that the returns he had received did not, at the very least, display the sort of unanimity he was expecting, particularly if one considers Burleigh's seconding speech. In it Burleigh rejoiced that 'so many returns had come to hand from parishes which had nothing to report save the complete absence of Roman Catholicism. In every way that was gratifying.'<sup>422</sup> He was not quite so gratified that some ministers appeared less than impressed with the whole exercise:

It was true that there were those who deprecated the stirring up of old, and as they hoped dying controversies and who had seen in the questionnaire the sign of unworthy fanaticism. It was interesting to see that counsels of moderation often came from those Highland parishes where Romanism was strong, if not predominant and where the two faiths dwelt together in amity untroubled by racial and national feuds. Yet even from industrial cities occasional voices were raised telling them of friendship and co-operation in some directions at least. The Assembly, however, would not be surprised if a complete scrutiny of the returns should reveal the fact that a chasm still yawned between the two faiths.<sup>423</sup>

It would seem that the negative reaction to the questionnaire was more widespread than Burleigh, and certainly Curtis, were prepared to admit. Unfortunately neither the Committee's report nor the surviving minutes give a statistical breakdown of the responses. Judging by the rhetoric employed it is a reasonable hypothesis that the questionnaire itself

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<sup>420</sup> NRS, CH/1/21/5, (In Highland parishes Roman Catholics would not be predominantly Irish).

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid*

may have been designed, deliberately or unconsciously, to elicit the responses that the Committee expected. The fact that both Burleigh and Curtis were forced to admit to the Assembly that there were dissenting voices raised suggests that a significant section of the Church was not in sympathy.

There were, however, those who thought that the Committee was not going far enough. The Reverend F.E. Watson of Bellshill attempted to introduce an addendum asking the Committee, with the authority of the General Assembly, to secure the repeal of the 1918 Education Act. Watson was something of an enthusiast on this issue. As Tom Gallagher describes him, 'he was still imbued with the zeal of the convert, having been a Wesleyan minister for sixteen years before being admitted to the Church of Scotland in 1930. He was also himself a relative newcomer to Scotland, having spent his first forty-five years in the North of England.'<sup>424</sup> It is interesting to note in Curtis' response to rejecting this addendum he did not do so because he was out of sympathy with the sentiments expressed, but rather 'to talk of repeal was to court a rebuff and was out of the question. Such sweeping demands were a hindrance to their cause...sufficient harm had been done to the Protestant cause by impulsive and ill-considered demands.'<sup>425</sup> This may well have been a tacit recognition that constant insistence of the Church for legislative action since 1923 was beginning to prove counterproductive, or simply that even Curtis recognised there was little chance of that particular 'demand' ever passing Parliament.

The actual report of 1934 gives an interesting snapshot of inter-faith relations in the period, but not altogether one that the Committee was perhaps expecting. For example, from the replies received from ministers on the propagandist activities of the Roman Catholic Church nowhere was it reported the propagandist literature was in circulation and apparently the most that could be described as an activity took the form of 'social evenings, dances and whist drives, especially on Sundays.'<sup>426</sup> Whilst this may have offended the more strictly sabbatarian feelings of some in the clergy the report conceded that there was little evidence of proselytising by Roman Catholic priests. Even the *Ne Temere* Decree<sup>427</sup> and the danger of mixed marriages, which had so exercised the Reverend Duncan Cameron in the 1920s seemed not to be having any effect and there were no reports of substantial losses to Rome. It would seem that if anything mixed marriages resulted not in a loss to Rome but the severing of all church connection. Nevertheless, 'The mixed marriage is universally held to be a great

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<sup>424</sup> T. Gallagher, *Glasgow, the Uneasy Peace*, p138.

<sup>425</sup> NRS, CH1/21/5.

<sup>426</sup> NRS. CH1/8/70, Report of the Church Interests Committee, May 1934.

<sup>427</sup> The *Ne Temere* Decree of 1908 obliged children of mixed marriages to be brought up as Catholics.

evil even where it does not lead to domestic dispeace (sic) or unhappiness.<sup>428</sup> Perhaps it was this belief that resulted in the loss, by both churches, of family connections.

It is a feature of the reports produced by this committee that there was frequent use of terms like ‘there is a widespread impression’ without any quantitative evidence given to support its assertions. Given that the Kirk was so statistically obsessed it is remarkable that in a report, which in itself was supposed to be a statistical exercise, the actual figures are notable only by their absence. It does mean that some of the information must be regarded with caution. On some issues, however, the report probably gives a reasonably accurate reflection of opinion within the Church at the time. On the issue of the 1918 Education Act, the report states: ‘it is clear that there is in the minds of our ministers a widespread misgiving and even resentment, regarding the effect of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1918.’<sup>429</sup> The real resentment appears to have been for basic economic reasons. In taking over the Roman Catholic Schools by the state it was felt that the Roman Catholic Church had been in receipt of a massive financial windfall courtesy of the public purse. No such windfall had come in the direction of the Presbyterian Churches after the Education Act of 1872. Minor issues such as the Roman Catholic Church being allowed to use their school premises in the evenings for free while ministers in some instances had to pay for a use of a hall in what had been their own schools prior to 1872, was, according to the Committee a source of irritation. The Committee’s recommendation was that ‘whether there ought not to be instituted a careful and dispassionate survey of the whole situation with a view to ascertaining whether the Act of 1918 can be regarded as a permanent settlement, and, if not in what direction amendment should be sought.’<sup>430</sup> From this it can be seen another reason why Curtis was reluctant to accept Watson’s addendum. The Committee wanted to refine their approach on this issue although how ‘careful and dispassionate’ the survey they actually produced in 1935 will be discussed below.

On other issues regarding the relations between Catholics and Protestants any increase in Roman Catholic activity, especially with regard to the purchase of property and setting up of institutions, was regarded with suspicion, especially as the funds for these were widely regarded to have come from the public purse as a direct result of the Education Act. Again the Committee relied on unsubstantiated assertion rather than on specifics, ‘many cases have occurred where Church of Scotland congregations strongly resent the policy on the part of the

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<sup>428</sup> NRS, CH1/8/70.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid*

Roman Catholic Church of thrusting itself into the heart of the Protestant community.’<sup>431</sup> If the Committee were vague on this issue they were even vaguer on, as they put it, ‘the replacement of Protestant by Roman Catholic labour.’<sup>432</sup> It is important to note here that the term Roman Catholic was used and not *Irish*. Up until this point the argument had always been, ostensibly at any rate, that Irish labour was supplanting Scottish labour and here it was Roman Catholic supplanting Protestant. It is an important distinction and does mark the introduction of a specifically religious element into the debate. Undoubtedly it had been at the heart of the entire controversy but this change in terminology points to a public, if possibly unconscious, admission of the fact. The conflation of the terms Irish and Catholic, which the Kirk had been at such pains to avoid, was now made overt in the Committee’s report. Even so the Committee could bring precious little evidence to support their case as they acknowledged themselves:

It is naturally difficult to bring forward specific instances of such replacement, but in many areas there is very considerable suspicion in regard to this matter...and in the industrial districts it is the subject of general comment that where there are Roman Catholic foremen distinct preference is given to their co-religionists....Here is a matter calling for investigation, if only because the suspicion of unfair treatment accorded to native workmen is giving rise to bitter feeling.<sup>433</sup>

The Committee did concede that as far as relationships between the adherents of the respective faiths they were generally ‘amicable’ and that between ministers and priests it varied ‘from complete aloofness to friendliness and co-operation especially on Education Committees.’<sup>434</sup> Rather than welcoming this development the committee noted that a ‘tendency is also to be noticed in some quarters to defer, in the name of toleration and charity to the Roman Catholic Church, a tendency which is being exploited to the full by that Church.’<sup>435</sup>

How was all this to be combated? The Committee had asked ministers what measures they took to counteract ‘Roman Catholic propaganda’ and what help might be given to their efforts. By and large, it appears that most ministers preached special sermons and gave

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<sup>431</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid*

instruction in their bible classes, as this was the job of a Church of Scotland minister it does not appear that many thought there was a special requirement to be constantly combating Rome, although some new literature on the principles of the reformed faith would be welcomed. The responses did point out that, ‘Great care must be taken to avoid what is commonly recognised as a grave danger – viz. adding gratuitously to the tale of bitterness and enmity which already exists and which some of the methods being employed to defend the Reformed Faith inevitably augment.’<sup>436</sup> This wise advice was not followed by the Committee in its report of the following year but it does show that the Church was beginning, slowly, to take note of what was happening outside of its debates on the Mound even if the Committee itself thought that its actions were entirely fair and reasonable, despite the rhetoric on the dangers of toleration.

What the report and debate of 1934 constitutes, and why so much space has been devoted to it here, is the first attempt to canvass opinion within the reunited Church of Scotland specifically on the issue of its relations with the Roman Catholic Church. It was not an exercise in comparable scale to the first and second Statistical Accounts of Scotland, and certainly, for a report compiled by academics, the standards of evidence employed were less than rigorous. However, that is not to say that it should be overlooked or that the information contained within it is entirely worthless. It does demonstrate there were those in the Church who were not altogether happy with the line being taken and that hints, if no more than hints, of unease about the whole anti-Irish, and by this stage overtly anti-Roman Catholic line were beginning to emerge. It would also appear that on the ground co-operation rather than mutual hostility was the usual relationship between priest and minister. The report also provided no conclusive proof that Scottish employers were favouring Irish or Roman Catholic labour over the indigenous, and conversely, that the opposite was true. Surely any employer who was willing to publicly express a ‘patriotic’ policy of employing Scots first, or Scottish jobs for Scottish workers, would have earned the public approbation of the Committee and General Assembly. Instead the evidence seems to suggest frustration on the part of the Church that they were unwilling to do so. The report was accepted with no dissenting voice at the General Assembly, but in a way it marked the beginning of the end of the whole campaign.

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<sup>436</sup> *Ibid*

#### *IV St. John XVII, 21*

S. J. Brown states that ‘By the mid-1930s, however, interest in the Church Interests Committee was waning.’<sup>437</sup> This is partly correct but the events of the years 1935 and 1936 undoubtedly had an accelerating effect on this process. In the immediate aftermath of the debate the Reverend Alexander Cameron of the Protestant Institute wrote to the *Scotsman* claiming that the concluding words of Professor Curtis had ‘thrilled the Assembly with their persuasive tone of warning and appeal’<sup>438</sup> although he had conceded that the debate ‘fell to be discussed in a thin house after the luncheon hour.’<sup>439</sup> The fact remains that there had been no overt challenge to the Committee’s activities in the General Assembly. The Committee’s own minutes are particularly thin for the entire period but it does not appear that they believed that they faced any great challenge to their work, although there were some glimmers of problems to come, mainly in their inability to hold on to a Convenor for any length of time and, even as early as 1933, there was a proposal to subsume the Committee back into the Church and Nation Committee.<sup>440</sup> The Committee had been given the specific remit from the General Assembly, ‘in view of the widespread misgiving and resentment regarding the socially unjust provisions’<sup>441</sup> of the Education Act, to institute its ‘careful and dispassionate survey’ as to how the Act could be repealed or amended. It became the Committee’s last significant contribution but at the time there was no indication that this was to be the case.

The report set out the five main grievances of the Committee, and by and large it is reasonable to consider them the grievances of at least a substantial proportion of the Church. Essentially it was felt that the Act had not created a truly national education system, that it institutionalised segregation on religious grounds, was a means of state subsidisation of Roman Catholic teaching and in the process had enriched that church enabling it to develop its buildings and improve its position in Scotland and, finally, that it had legally enshrined religious instruction in these schools without a similar provision for non-Roman Catholic schools. It would appear that it was the perceived injustice of alleged state subsidy that rankled most. These were not new grievances then or indeed now but this time the Committee set out a list of remedies, including ‘A national system of education embracing children irrespective of their religious belief.’ This on the surface would appear as a reasonable

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<sup>437</sup> S. J. Brown, “Outside the Covenant”: Scottish Presbyterian Churches and Irish Immigration, 1922 – 1938 *Innes Review*, 42;1 (1991), p39.

<sup>438</sup> *The Scotsman*, June 1<sup>st</sup> 1934 p13.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>440</sup> NRS, CH/5/187, June 29<sup>th</sup> 1933.

<sup>441</sup> NRS, CH1/71, Report of the Church Interests Committee 1935.

request but was in effect a call for the abolition of state-funded Roman Catholic education, or a return to the status quo ante. They further demanded that no more denominational schools be built or taken over by public authorities, religious tests for teachers be abolished and that members of religious orders be forbidden from teaching in state schools and finally that periods be set apart for religious instruction either by staff 'or by officially recognised representatives of the Churches.'<sup>442</sup> The Reverend Watson need not have worried; his 1934 addendum had carried after all even if the wording in this case was slightly more subtle.

The perceived economic advantage pertaining to the Roman Catholic Church from the provisions of the 1918 Act fed into the sense of grievance of the Committee. According to the information claimed to be provided by the questionnaire 'in many places in Scotland a steady policy is being pursued of purchasing land, houses, churches, cinemas, &c which are devoted to the interests of propaganda. A purpose would seem to be indicated of building up a "skeleton" organisation embracing the whole country...'<sup>443</sup> The report listed in support of its case examples of disused Protestant churches being bought up and converted into Catholic use, notably the old United Presbyterian Church in the Cowgate in Edinburgh converted into St. Patrick's. Other instances, included a former 'Palais de Danse' in Paisley being acquired by the Roman Catholic Young Men's Guild and transformed into a meeting hall. The objection in this instance was that it was located 'almost opposite the South Church'.<sup>444</sup>

After cataloguing the publicly financed spiritual and physical takeover of Scotland the report returned to the issue of the alleged unfair advantages Roman Catholic labour enjoyed in Scotland. The second quotation from the deliverance cited at the beginning of this chapter highlights the Committee's impatience with Scottish employers on the issue. In the report itself, it once again relied on unsubstantiated rumour to make its case: 'In many cases it is commonly said that no Protestant has the least chance of employment in certain undertakings so long as there are Roman Catholic unemployed.'<sup>445</sup> Again there was the overt use of the terms Catholic and Protestant rather than Scottish or Irish. The Committee then went on to issue a stern warning as to what it considered would be the consequences of this dereliction of duty on the part of Scottish employers:

What is abundantly plain is that there is a rising tide of indignation, the exploitation of which is likely to lead to most unfortunate and undesirable intrusion of sectarian

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<sup>442</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>445</sup> *Ibid*

animosity into public life, of which a beginning has already been made. The only remedy would seem to be a greater care on the part of Scottish employers of labour for the interests of their own fellow countrymen.<sup>446</sup>

It was, in its way, a prescient warning, although not for the reasons the Committee asserted. But it was obvious that the activities of the demagogues Ratcliffe and Cormack were beginning to impinge on the minds of the Kirk. This warning from the Committee is one of the more remarkable, in a campaign that had more than its fair share of remarkable, even outlandish statements. What was abundantly plain was that the Church, in various guises, the latest being the Church Interests Committee, had spent the last thirteen years attempting to create ‘a rising tide of indignation’ and exploit it for its own purposes and if any one organisation had a major responsibility for an ‘unfortunate and undesirable intrusion of sectarian animosity into public life’ it was the Church of Scotland itself. Now, in the somewhat convoluted logic of the Committee, any sectarian unpleasantness that ensued would be the responsibility of Scottish employers for not enforcing a sectarian employment policy in favour of Protestant workers as demanded by the Church of Scotland.

The fact of the matter was that the promoters of the anti-Irish, now anti-Roman, campaign had been pursuing this less than rigorous approach in the General Assembly for years without any detailed examination of their case. On this occasion they were not to be quite so fortunate. Gallagher has pointed out that there were church opponents of the anti-Irish line.<sup>447</sup> However, Dr J. Cromarty Smith,<sup>448</sup> minister of Coatbridge, was the first to stand up in the General Assembly and state that, methodologically speaking, the Committee had no clothes, and that further it ‘appeared to be animated by a spirit of intolerance.’<sup>449</sup> It was a masterly forensic demolition of the Committee’s report and *raison d’être*. As such it deserves far more attention than historians, with the possible exception of Stewart Brown, have given it. In the process of dissecting the report Cromarty Smith did not mince his words: ‘The report of the Committee appeared to him to have many statements purporting to be fact but was singularly devoid of evidence in support of the statements so much so that the report as it stood was a

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<sup>446</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>447</sup> T. Gallagher *Glasgow The Uneasy Peace*, pp. 139 – 143.

<sup>448</sup> Dr James Cromarty Smith (1863-1944), 1888-1905 Minister for Alexandria West Dunbartonshire, 1905-1939 Minister for Coatdykes, later Trinity, Coatbridge. President Scottish Church Society 1913-1914 and 1930-33, GB 247 Ms 917, Special Collections Glasgow University Library.

<sup>449</sup> NRS, CH1/21/6 ,Speech by Dr J Cromarty Smith, Debate on the Deliverance of the Church Interests Committee, *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly*, Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May 1935.

document which it was difficult to deal with, and impossible to take seriously.<sup>450</sup> Having begun in this forceful manner he proceeded to refute practically every point made in the Committee report concerning the numbers of teachers in religious orders, the numbers of Irish student teachers in Scotland and even the terms on which they were admitted to the Catholic teacher training colleges at Notre Dame and Craiglockhart. It was obvious that he had been well briefed, or, unlike the Committee, had thoroughly researched his subject:

...in no single case did the report condescend on figures. How utterly unreliable some of the vague statements were might be gathered from the following..."Quite a number of the students come from Ireland, as the output of qualified Scottish students is not sufficient to staff all the transferred schools". What were the facts? He had in his possession there a statement of the National Committee for the Training of Teachers signed by the Executive Officer of the Committee. The output of students at Craiglockhart and Notre Dame not sufficient! The case was the precise opposite. The officer told him that there were too many students and that there was, he would quote the precise words "definite unemployment among the students."<sup>451</sup>

He took issue with the claim that many of the students were Irish, giving figures on the actual enrolment and pointing out that Irish students not only paid their own way but gave a written undertaking not to seek or accept employment in state supported Catholic schools in Scotland. He then proceeded to point out that if the Catholics had secured a 'proper religious atmosphere in their schools' they were absolutely right and that they 'knew their business and he feared that in matters educational they did not know theirs....The Committee was instructed to consider in what way the Act of 1918 might be amended. They found in the result of their lucubrations (sic) four recommendations. He did not know which of the four was the most fantastic or ridiculous.<sup>452</sup> Having made more trenchant criticisms of the report Dr Cromarty Smith sought the heart of the matter:

He deplored and despised the too common methods of anti-Roman propaganda -- the so called demonstrations gathered by dint of beating the Protestant drum, appealing to the passions and fanaticism of the groundlings, meetings in which the superstitions of the

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<sup>450</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid*

more ignorant Romanists – and they did have their superstitions – were held up to ridicule - such methods did not a particle of harm to Rome, but inflicted infinite harm on all spiritual religion.<sup>453</sup>

He concluded with the quotation cited at the beginning of this chapter. Cromarty Smith was then ably supported by the Reverend Dickie from Rothesay who prophetically pointed out that there was much more to fear from rampant nationalism and paganism on the Rhine than there was to be feared from Rome. Their amendment to the Deliverance, however, was overwhelmingly defeated. The significance of both speeches is that for once the gaping holes in the arguments had been exposed for all to see. If the majority of the General Assembly opted for the quiet life in approving the Deliverance and, by implication the report, they were to be rudely disabused by the events of next few months in Edinburgh when John Cormack brought Protestant mobs out, not only onto the streets of Edinburgh but onto the streets of one of its most salubrious suburbs. The Cormack phenomenon is discussed in the following chapter but it undoubtedly had an effect on the deliberations of the Assembly the following year.

At the General Assembly of 1936 the outgoing Moderator Dr Marshall Lang (1868-1954) preached his final sermon as Moderator. He took for his text St John XVII, 21 ‘That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.’<sup>454</sup> It was a plea for Christian unity in an increasingly troubled world but it was also a veiled rebuke to the Kirk itself and a public acknowledgement that perhaps the Church’s preoccupations had not been where they should:

...the subject of Christian unity must be considered in these days as one of supreme and vital importance to the world. Need I emphasise its importance, need I emphasise its importance? No matter how complacently we ourselves may live from day to day in our several compartments of domestic, social and even religious life the world is full of discord and trouble, and from that trouble and discord we cannot wholly disassociate ourselves from some part in that trouble, either by our own negligence or by our practice can we wholly excuse ourselves.<sup>455</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>454</sup> Gospel According to St John, Chapter 17 Verse 21, Holy Bible, King James Authorized Version.

<sup>455</sup> NRS, CH1/ 21/7, Dr Marshall Lang Outgoing Moderator’s Sermon Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 1936.

It was a belated, and indirect, recognition that perhaps the Church had been turning a blind eye to the consequences of its own actions and that in an increasingly dangerous world the rather petty obsessions of doctrinal difference were of considerably less importance than the very real threats facing humanity. In fact to continue on this path was to run contrary to the spirit of Christ:

...the Body of Christ through which His Spirit works is broken into units with each claiming a special portion of his Spirit but keeping the portion it claims from the other parts. Not until we become ashamed of this rending of the Body of Christ...not until we repent and seek to become one in some measure as he is one with God, not in short until we achieve a real working unity within Christendom will the Church be other than it is – a more or less parochial concern....Meanwhile from this historical and hospitable pulpit I venture to appeal for the open heart and the open mind that banning all pride in our separate ‘isms’ whether Presbyterian, Anglican or Episcopalian – or even Roman – and sinking all prejudice of one branch of the Church towards another, we may zealously and unweariedly (sic) strive for that corporate unity which is in accordance with the mind of Christ.<sup>456</sup>

This is possibly one of the most important sermons preached by a Moderator in the inter-war period because it effectively signalled the real end of the anti-Irish campaign. It did not mean the end of calls to halt immigration or the expression of inflammatory opinions in the General Assembly but it marks the sea change in which majority opinion had turned. The difference in language of Dr Lang and Professor Curtis is self-evident but it was also a radical departure from the view expressed at that the previous General Assembly. For an outgoing Moderator to essentially repudiate, in so many words, Assembly policy of the last thirteen years and to appeal for the setting aside of sectarian difference in the cause of wider Christian unity implies that something fundamental had occurred. This intervention by Lang is significant in another way. The son of a former Moderator, Church innovator and Principal of Aberdeen University, Dr John Marshall Lang (1834-1909), he had a direct connection to the more socially engaged pre-war Church (see Chapter Two). John Marshall Lang was responsible for introducing innovations such as standing for hymns and the introduction of pipe organs. Considered in his day something of a Scoto-Catholic Lang senior’s own closing

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<sup>456</sup> *Ibid*

address as Moderator in 1893 had stressed that economic insufficiency and not immorality was the main cause of poverty.<sup>457</sup> Through his brother, Cosmo Gordon Lang (1864-1945) Archbishop of Canterbury, he also had a connection with Anglo-Catholicism and was a pioneer in the ecumenical movement.<sup>458</sup> This sermon marked something of a spiritual and political shift in attitude of the Church. Not so much as a turn to the left but more of a rediscovery of its pre-war self. There are two further ironies, John Marshall Lang served the Barony parish as Minister for over twenty years, the same parish as Dr John White. Cosmo Lang's part in bringing about the Abdication of Edward VIII allowed de Valera to rewrite the Irish constitution.

It was not only in the words of Dr Lang that the change in tone at the Assembly of 1936 was so marked. In some ways it reflected a sea change in the Church that had been coming for some time even if it was not as readily apparent under the White ascendancy. In the mid-1930s a younger element in the ministry had begun to challenge the basic tenets of the White view. Between 1933 and 1937 there had been long acrimonious debates on the issue of pacifism. In the Assembly of 1934:

White delivered an impassioned speech against the pacifists, in which he appealed to the sacrifices of the First World War and denounced the pacifists for suggesting that they had reached a higher moral plane than those who had died in the war. It might be necessary, he proclaimed for a Christian country to go to war in order to defend itself, to assist a persecuted people, or 'in fulfilment of its own destiny'. White's speech was received with 'thunders of applause' and in the division the pacifists received less than fifty votes in a crowded house.<sup>459</sup>

White may still have commanded the Assembly but rising stars within the Church like George MacLeod (1895-1991) who had himself served with distinction in the war saw their pacifism as keeping faith with those who had died. There were new ideas, creeping slowly but inexorably, into White's Church from the mid-thirties onward. By 1934 MacLeod, whose family connections in the Church and rather dashing appearance, as well as distinguished war record, which had made him something of the darling of the middle-class congregation at St

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<sup>457</sup> D.C. Smith, Lang, John Marshall, (1834-1909), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 online edition.

<sup>458</sup> A. Wilkinson, Lang, Cosmo Gordon (1864-1945), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 online edition.

<sup>459</sup> S.J. Brown, The Social Ideal of the Church of Scotland in the 1930s' in A.R. Morton (ed.), *God's Will in a Time of Crisis: The Baillie Commission in the Church of Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1994) p 24.

Cuthbert's, in Edinburgh's West End, had been serving for some years as minister of Govan Parish Church. The deprivation he encountered there deeply affected his thinking. He turned to the Celtic tradition for a new direction for the Church of Scotland. In a speech to a symposium entitled "Scotland in search of her youth" he outlined the direction of his thought:

Merely to sketch the trend and purpose of the puritan tradition is to reveal the distance that almost unconsciously we have moved in these days from the ground where once we stood. For reasons that would take a book to encompass we have, in recent decades, been engaged in that manoeuvre which in every other warfare spells almost certain defeat – changing position at the dictates of circumstance, without consciously choosing our next alignment. Had the Church of Scotland resolutely maintained her Puritan tradition she might have had a great purpose to perform today; had she alternately planned her line of movement more decisively she might have performed an even greater. Her deepest distresses are due to the fact that she has done neither.<sup>460</sup>

For MacLeod the answer was to return to the practices of the ancient Columban Celtic Church which he argued was the intention of Knox and the original reformers. In essence, as Ron Ferguson points out, reintroducing Catholic practices into the Kirk on the grounds that they were actually Celtic and thus Protestant. It was 'magnificent, sweeping, polemic, bound to infuriate. And it did.'<sup>461</sup> It would also lead to accusations of 'romanisation' that would follow him for the rest of his life<sup>462</sup>. The analysis may have been on rather dubious historical ground but this return to the Celtic appealed to the romantic in MacLeod. There was also a practical side. The 1930s were a battle of ideas, Marxism, fascism, capitalism all within the economic turmoil of that decade. For MacLeod the Church was not living out the Gospel in a way that appealed to ordinary people. Issues like unemployment and poverty were issues for the Church. While there is not the space here to go into detail of the founding of the Iona Community in 1938 it is interesting to note that MacLeod did secure White's support for the

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<sup>460</sup> George MacLeod in R. Ferguson, *George MacLeod: Founder of the Iona Community* (Collins, London, 1991) p 121.

<sup>461</sup> R. Ferguson, *George MacLeod: Founder of the Iona Community*, p122.

<sup>462</sup> The author's late wife, Sharron Ritchie, worked as the head joiner on the construction of the interiors of the MacLeod Centre on Iona. She related the story that on the day of the centre's official opening in 1988 there were a number of Protestant demonstrators outside on Dun I including Pastor Jack Glass. The imprecations being hurled by megaphone were rather indistinctly heard by the participants in the centre but one was constantly repeated. Looking at the, by this time rather frail George MacLeod, my wife turned to one of her colleagues and asked 'Why is he saying George MacLeod is a womaniser?' The reply was 'No Sharron, he's saying George MacLeod is a Romaniser.'

project and that MacLeod had also been and an enthusiastic supporter of White's Church extension campaign. The two men, however, were from fundamentally different strands of the Church and the ethos of Iona was in some ways the antithesis of White's idea of the Christian commonwealth.

Apart from MacLeod there were others who were beginning to make their mark on the Church in this period and would have profound influence in the future. Perhaps the most significant of these was the Baillie brothers. John Baillie (1886-1960) and Donald Baillie (1887-1954). These two were 'the leading Scottish theologians of the mid-twentieth century whose significance extended far beyond their native country.'<sup>463</sup> Sons of a Free Church minister in Gairloch their early careers had followed a similar path. Both studied philosophy at Edinburgh University and later trained for the ministry at New College and becoming assistant ministers in Edinburgh. After the war their paths diverged, John pursuing a distinguished academic career in the United States and Canada where he had been closely involved in the ecumenical movement while Donald remained in the ministry in Scotland until 1934, as result of his rising reputation as a scholar, he took up the Chair of Systematic Theology at St Mary's College, St Andrews. In the same year John returned to Scotland to become the Chair of Divinity at Edinburgh. Having been out of the country for nearly fifteen years John Baillie had little connection with the Church's policies. 'Although no social radical, he had been extremely unhappy with the conservatism of the of the Church's social teachings...and had felt a need "to turn to Christian socialism to offset the emphasis on quietism."' <sup>464</sup>

The social attitudes of the Baillie brothers had been formed by the increasing social concerns of late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As A.C. Cheyne has illustrated:

'A concern for social justice lay very near to the core of his understanding of the Christian faith.' With these words (to be found in the biographical essay which he prefixed to Donald's posthumously published *The Theology of the Sacraments*) John introduced the most explicit account anywhere available of his brother's attitude to social questions, He continued as follows: 'He was zealous not only for religious but for political and especially economic freedom; zealous also for equality, not in a doctrinaire understanding of it but in the sense of the removal of many unjustified

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<sup>463</sup> D.S. Fergusson (ed.), *Christ, Church and Society: Essays on John Baillie and Donald Baillie*, (T. & T. Clark, 1993) p vii.

<sup>464</sup> S.J. Brown, *The Social Ideal of the Church of Scotland*, p27.

inequalities with which he felt our society to have been traditionally burdened. He was thus inclined rather strongly to the left in his political convictions...'

...there is little doubt that the biographer shared the view he was describing.<sup>465</sup>

These were attitudes that had been largely quiescent in the Church of Scotland since the war but by the late 1930s, with war looming, the Church gradually rediscovered its social conscience. The Baillies epitomised the new, or perhaps more accurately, rediscovered social thinking in the Church. The rising reputation of John Baillie led to his appointment in May 1940 as the convenor of the Church's special Commission for the Interpretation of God's Will in the Present Crisis. While strictly speaking the 'Baillie Commission' itself lies outside the scope and timeframe of this thesis it is useful to make some comment on it here to illustrate the change that was beginning to stir in the General Assembly of 1936. The Commission undertook to examine a wide range of issues but the following quotation from its 1942 report demonstrates how far progressive Church thinking had changed from White's conservative Christian commonwealth.

Christians have often failed to distinguish adequately between the religious and political spheres, and have thus misled the Church into making pronouncements on questions which it only imperfectly understood. But we hold it as certain that the greater harm has come about through the opposite error – through the indifference of Christians to the maladjustments of that civil ordering of society in which they like others have a part, and the consequent failure of the Church to bring its own light to bear upon the problems so created. If it were merely that Christians were so exclusively absorbed in heavenly things as to be indifferent to the earthly ills of themselves and their neighbours, that alone would spell a serious falsification of the true Christian temper; but it is to be feared that many of us must plead guilty to the even more damaging charge of complacently accepting the amenities, and availing ourselves of the privileges of a social order which happened to offer these things to ourselves while denying them to others...We long for a revival of spiritual religion, but there are many who suspect the spirituality to which we call them of making too ready a compliance

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<sup>465</sup> A.C. Cheyne, The Baillies' Churchmanship in D.F. Fergusson (ed.) *Christ, Church and Society: essays on John Baillie and Donald Baillie*, (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1993) pp180-181.

with a social order that for them means only hunger, slum conditions, unemployment, or sweated labour.<sup>466</sup>

It was a far cry from the General Assembly of 1926 that had given Baldwin so rapturous a welcome after the General Strike. In this report, as S. J. Brown has argued ‘the Commission ...decisively reversed the positions held by White and the older leadership that the Church should not speak out on economic and political issues and that it should support a racial nationalism... it was the duty of the Church to inform itself on political and social issues...The Church must also set itself against racism and racial nationalism, as contrary to the Christian ideal of world brotherhood.’<sup>467</sup> In 1936 the Baillie commission was still in the future but even some of the ‘old guard’ were beginning to tone down the stridency of the previous year and recognise that there were other voices within the Church and that these were beginning to question the orthodoxies of the 1920s and early 1930s.

In 1936 the Reverend Maclagan, by now Convenor of the Church Interests Committee and a veteran of the anti-Irish campaign almost from its inception, made, what was for him, a conciliatory speech in which he conceded that the Committee’s functions should be amended from what was originally conceived and that it might perform a useful role in preserving the unity of their own church:

In their own Church they had parties leaning to one side and parties leaning to the other.... It seemed to him if the Assembly had a Committee where both schools of thought could be represented, where both aspects of the truth could be presented to the Assembly it might with official sanction of the Assembly, present a unified policy acceptable to the whole Church. The primary intention, however, was to maintain their Catholic inheritance and their Protestant inheritance. The policy of the Committee was largely a positive constructive one. He did not suppose the Assembly would like the Committee to enter into acrimonious discussions with people of other religious beliefs.<sup>468</sup>

MacLagan supposed rightly. The responsibility for consideration of the 1918 Education Act was transferred to the Education Committee and it was clear that in the intervening period a

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<sup>466</sup> A.C. Cheyne, *The Baillies’ Churchmanship*, pp 184-185.

<sup>467</sup> S.J. Brown, *The Social Ideal of the Church of Scotland*, p27.

<sup>468</sup> NRS, CH1/21/7, Church Interests Debate, May 28<sup>th</sup> 1936.

considerable change of heart had come over many in the Church, not necessarily MacLagan himself but he was still able to state that ‘negotiations were going on for an amicable settlement of what was really a very difficult situation...he thought that Assembly would agree that it would be infinitely better and happier for the Church and for the purposes of education that a spirit of amity and agreement should be developed and furthered.’<sup>469</sup> From whence had come all this amity and cooperation? Perhaps the clue can be found in the closing words of MacLagan’s speech: ‘He thought it was for the good of the Christendom that they, as successors of those who laid the foundation of that great Church, should do what they could to keep the foundations strong and to keep their fair name clean.’<sup>470</sup> It was not to the satisfaction of all of course: the Reverend Watson was of the opinion that the previous year’s report had been heroic but the Committee had now lapsed but he was now in the minority. It is quite possible that the events of 1935-1936, described in the following chapter, had brought about a serious change of heart. Theories of racial superiority and robust defence of the Church Reformed were designed to bring the flock back to the Church, not bring stone-throwing mobs into the Edinburgh suburbs. The consequences of their own actions had been brought home to them. Despite the fact that the Cormack disturbances were largely sound and fury they had had the potential to have been considerably worse. Oddly enough in the very last Church Interest Committee minutes at the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> November 1936 there was a brief ‘mention of an article in the Madrid clerical newspaper ‘Debati’ which gave an account of the recent ‘anti-Romanist troubles in Edinburgh’ 16<sup>th</sup> July 1935’<sup>471</sup> which in some ways is a fitting epitaph.

### *V Conclusion*

By 1937 the Church Interests Committee was effectively killed off and its functions, such as they were by that point, subsumed into the Church and Nation Committee. It did not mean that that was entirely the end of calls for the restriction of Irish immigration, even a bitter leader in the *Scotsman* of May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1939 called for it although that was more to do with Irish neutrality and resistance to conscription than anything the Church had had to say on the issue. The Committee itself faded away and would no longer trouble the deliberations of the General Assembly. This, however, does not detract from its importance. It began, as described at the beginning of this chapter, as the overseer and defender of the Protestant faith

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<sup>469</sup> NRS, CH1/21/7 ,Church Interests Debate, May 28th 1936

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>471</sup> NRS, CH1/5/187.

from all enemies, foreign and domestic, a Committee of Kirk Security indeed. It may be asked why it is necessary to give a detailed analysis of its activities when its' influence in the end was so minimal. The answer lies not so much in what the Committee says about itself as what it says about the Church at the time and Scotland in general.

Firstly, it has been asserted by Callum Brown that it was merely going through the motions in order to keep its congregations happy.<sup>472</sup> Tom Gallagher has argued that 'the protagonists were a small but vocal minority of ministers who had a larger element of the faithful behind them. Most ministers were probably careful to keep out of the firing line and preferred not to get involved',<sup>473</sup> and Steve Bruce has suggested with specific reference to the 1923 *Menace* report that 'It is obvious from the actions of the Church of Scotland ministers in positions of power...that the overt racialism of the authors of the *Menace* was restricted to only a small group, and more than that, a small group confined to certain parts of Scotland.'<sup>474</sup> On the other hand S. J. Brown has made the point that:

The campaign represented a new departure for Scottish Presbyterianism. It was concerned not with converting Catholics to Protestantism, but rather with isolating, marginalising and even driving out of the country an ethnic minority that was viewed as belonging to an alien and 'inferior' race, and whose presence was blamed for many of the social and economic problems afflicting Scotland.<sup>475</sup>

There are elements in each of these arguments that can be considered by a study of the Church Interests Committee.

The rationale behind the Committee was that a special body was required to defend Protestantism and that a subcommittee of Church and Nation was insufficient. This implies one of two things, either the Church and Nation Committee had tired of the whole campaign and its members wanted to transfer the whole issue over to the enthusiasts, or that it was felt that Protestantism was genuinely under threat and a dedicated body was necessary to examine its defences. On balance, considering the recent re-unification of the Church and the immense prestige of John White at the time, the latter is probably the more likely explanation. Protestantism re-united needed a champion not only to define what it was for

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<sup>472</sup> C.G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*, (Methuen, London, 1987) p238.

<sup>473</sup> C. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland*, p140.

<sup>474</sup> S. Bruce, *No Pope of Rome: Anti-Catholicism in Modern Scotland*, (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1985).

<sup>475</sup> S. J. Brown, *Outside the Covenant*, p41.

but what it was against. What was the re-united Church's place in Scotland and who or what were its foes?

The Committee's questionnaire attempted to answer these questions. While it was not, as pointed out above, in any way comparable to a statistical account of Scotland, it is still possible to glean a little about the prevailing attitudes, and in the absence of any comparable study for the period it makes the examination of the Committee's work a worthwhile exercise. In fact the questionnaire does go some way to answering the crucial question of how far was the anti-Irish/Roman obsession shared by the rest of the Church. The answer is not as far as that Committee thought, or perhaps hoped, but also extended further than Bruce, Callum Brown or Gallagher have argued. It does not appear that ministers thought that they were in a day-to-day battle with Rome or it would not have taken more than a third of them over a year to bother to reply to the Committee and this from areas in which the Committee thought the problem would be at its most acute. On the other hand there is no escaping the fact that the 1918 Education Act rankled with the clergy, but that did not mean there was an overwhelming desire to abolish it so much as to amend it. It was the perceived unfairness of the financial privileges accorded to the Roman Catholic Church mixed with a little, not unnatural, envy that they had not negotiated a similar deal for themselves when they had the chance that caused the ill-feeling. This does not mean that the Church Interests Committee members were considered fanatical zealots by a substantial number of the ministers. As far as it is possible to judge from the reports of the debates, the contributions were generally well received and overwhelmingly supported. Gallagher may well have a point that many were opting for the quiet life but if so what does that say about the Kirk at the time. Hutchinson Cockburn had denounced the 'slackness of mind which is called tolerance' as 'sheer intellectual laziness and moral cowardice.' Apart from the positively Orwellian tone of the phrase he did have a point, although not in the sense that he would have understood it. If the majority, or even a substantial minority, were opting to keep below the parapet then tolerating the Committee's intolerance was indeed 'sheer intellectual laziness and moral cowardice.' It must have occurred to more than Cromarty Smith and Dickie that the Committee reports were intellectually weak and were attempts to retrospectively justify a prejudice as a hypothesis. Yet it took a minister who, by his own admission had spent forty-seven years ministering in parishes with a large Roman Catholic presence, to stand up in the General Assembly to point this out.

In one other respect the Church Interests Committee is an invaluable source of material, if only by interpretation. There was the constant emphasis on the alleged disadvantage of

Scottish, and in this case, Protestant labour, in relation to Irish, in this case Roman Catholic, labour. The fact that the Committee specifically used the religious definition rather than the racial is of particular importance. This was no longer the racial campaign of the 1920s, this was an unashamed appeal for preferential treatment on the grounds of religious affiliation. It was indeed still anti-Irish but there was less of an overt attempt to separate the terms Irish and Catholic. The constant reiteration of the issue implies that the Committee did not consider Scottish employers were doing enough to protect 'Protestant' labour whereas to a Catholic audience hearing such appeals from the Church of Scotland it would be natural to assume that these appeals were being heeded and acted upon. In which case every unsuccessful application for a job, on both sides, could be put down to religious prejudice. Viewed from the outside the statements of the Committee could look very much like institutional bigotry, viewed from the Committee's perspective it was the protection of indigenous labour from unfair competition. In the end it was a combination of the sheer intellectual paucity of their case, more important developments in Europe, the influence a younger and more questioning element in the Church and, crucially, the actual public manifestation of sectarian strife on the streets put paid to the Church campaign as well as the Committee.

## Chapter Seven

### Sectarianism in Suburbia: The John Cormack Phenomenon

*'I might be bored in Parliament,' he reflected, 'but I should love the rough and tumble of an election. I only once took part in one, and I discovered surprising gifts as a demagogue and made a speech in our little town that is still talked about. The chief row was about Irish Home Rule, and I thought I'd better have a whack at the Pope. Has it ever struck you Dick, that ecclesiastical language has a most sinister sound? I knew some of the words, though not their meaning, but I knew that my audience would be just as ignorant. So I had a magnificent peroration, "Will you men of Kilclavers," I asked, "endure to see a chasuble set up in your market-place? Will you have your daughters sold into simony? Will you have celibacy practised in the public streets?" Gad, I had them all on their feet bellowing "Never!"'*

John Buchan *The Three Hostages* 1924<sup>476</sup>



**Morningside Road circa 1930**

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<sup>476</sup> J. Buchan, *The Three Hostages*, (Stratus, Thirsk, 2001), p56

## *I Introduction*

This chapter deals exclusively with the events in Edinburgh during the summer of 1935. It may be questioned why the occurrences of a few months of one year in the capital should merit a separate chapter in a study of Church and State and the anti-Irish campaign. John Cormack (1894-1978) and his Protestant Action Society had no affiliation with the Church of Scotland and, by and large, PAS activities were directed against any and all Catholics of whatever nationality, not only the Irish. There is no evidence that Cormack had any encouragement in his anti-Catholic meetings and demonstrations from any official Church of Scotland body. However, the activities Protestant Action on the streets have had a profound effect on the understanding of sectarianism in Scotland and may, in their own way have been responsible for the demise of the Church campaign. The actual disturbances have been variously described by Tom Devine as ‘the most violent anti-Catholic riots seen in Scotland this century,’<sup>477</sup> and by Michael Rosie as ‘one rowdy demonstration in the leafy suburb of Morningside.’<sup>478</sup> Whichever interpretation is preferred it is certainly the case that a whole mythology surrounding the period has grown up in succeeding years. Possibly this is because the sectarian disturbances took place in Edinburgh not noted, then or now, as a hotbed of religious tribalism, and that the most serious outbreak of violence occurred in Morningside, the epitome of suburban respectability.

However, it will be argued here that much of what has been written about the Edinburgh ‘riots’ has been coloured by one account in particular, that of Tom Gallagher,<sup>479</sup> and that account itself was heavily influenced by the press reports of the time and the reaction of Archbishop MacDonald in the immediate aftermath. It will also be argued that it is time to re-examine the evidence concerning the activities of John Cormack and the Protestant Action Society from the standpoint of those who had to deal with him and his supporters, the legal, civil and police authorities. It is a feature of the study of Protestant- Catholic relations in Scotland that, in the words of Aldous Huxley, ‘an unexciting truth may be eclipsed by a thrilling lie’. The bureaucrat, the magistrate and the policeman do not usually have much of a ‘heroic’ function in this kind of history other than to provide authority figures whose purpose is to do down one side or the other. It is not intended here to ascribe a heroic function to any of the actors in these events but to intrude an unexciting truth into some of the more thrilling

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<sup>477</sup> T.M. Devine, *The Herald*, July 18<sup>th</sup> 1998.

<sup>478</sup> M. Rosie, Protestant Action and the Edinburgh in Irish in M. Mitchell (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland*, (John Donald, Edinburgh, 2008). p 148.

<sup>479</sup> T. Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided: John Cormack and No Popery in the 1930s*, (Polygon, Edinburgh, 1987).

‘exaggerations.’ For this reason there will be considerable attention paid to the course of the disorders and to piece together as accurately as possible what actually happened and how Cormack was privately viewed by the Scottish Office, the City Council and the police. Communist Party member Fred Douglas produced a pamphlet in 1937 entitled *The Protestant Movement X-Rayed* in which he accused the authorities of allowing sectarian strife to ‘prosper by police licence’ and that the Edinburgh Council were complicit in allowing Cormack to proceed with his activities as a welcome diversion from working class solidarity: ‘the responsibility of our reactionary civic heads for tolerance and encouragement towards religious strife is a heavy one.’<sup>480</sup> The accusation was an unjust one, though perhaps understandable given the author’s political persuasion, but it is of a piece with much that has been written about the period. What it is intended to be shown here is not that there were two sides to this particular controversy, but a third one as well and that that ‘third side’ has been ignored to the detriment of our understanding of the period.

At this point, as much of what follows takes some issue with the analysis, it is well to set out the Gallagher thesis. It should be said at the outset that *Edinburgh Divided* is still the most authoritative account of the period and the pioneering work but as Michael Rosie points out ‘all pioneers ...need to be followed by others filling in gaps and redrawing the contours.’<sup>481</sup> Indeed Rosie’s chapter in *New Perspectives on the Irish in Scotland* goes a considerable distance in doing just that. Nevertheless, it is to the Gallagher account that scholars must turn first for an understanding of what he describes as the ‘Hot Summer of 1935’.<sup>482</sup> There are three main contentions in Gallagher’s analysis of the Cormack phenomenon firstly that: ‘He (Cormack) was a vital catalyst who demonstrated that even in the absence of deep and readily understood divisions, a city or community can almost be torn apart by the sudden emergence of a charismatic individual who can move people to deeds which they would not normally contemplate;’<sup>483</sup> secondly that after the Morningside ‘riot’: ‘Isolated and almost friendless, with Protestant Action dominating the streets, Cormack’s threat to Edinburgh Catholics seemed only too real as the “hot summer” of 1935 drew to a close;’<sup>484</sup> finally, and most contentiously: ‘The fact that no major Edinburgh institution such as the Kirk, the police, or the press took a major stand against Cormack or consistently sought to deflect public opinion away from him is something else that causes apprehension even at a

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<sup>480</sup> Fred Douglas, *The Protestant Movement X Rayed*, the Edinburgh Communist Party, 1937 in T. Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided*, pp103-102.

<sup>481</sup> M Rosie, Protestant Action and the Edinburgh in Irish, p148.

<sup>482</sup> T. Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided*, p35.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid* p 45

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid* p58

distance of fifty years.<sup>485</sup> Taking all three of these points together it is easy to come away with the impression that Edinburgh in 1935 was ruled by a street demagogue with an angry citizenry at his back, where a persecuted Catholic minority fearfully awaited the pogrom while a complacent, if not complicit, establishment looked the other way. While there is an element of truth in this analysis it will be a major function of this chapter to show that there is also considerable evidence to the contrary. It is conceivable that the actions of the Protestant Action Society on the streets of Edinburgh may finally have brought home to the Scottish establishment the reality of sectarianism in Scottish society. It may well have contributed to ending the Church of Scotland's obsessive campaigns on Irish immigration and the 1918 Education Act. These may have been beneficial results of the law of unintended consequences. However, the fact remains that the majority response to John Cormack was one of appalled contempt and there is little or no evidence that he received any official or unofficial encouragement for his activities.

To be fair to Gallagher this subject is one in which it is sometimes difficult for Scottish historians to be completely detached. As he readily admits in his preface 'I grew up a Catholic in a working class area of Glasgow, which some readers may consider a double disqualification for writing such a book about Edinburgh.'<sup>486</sup> Certainly he does a good job of academic detachment but there is, in his methodology, certain critical gaps that affect the overall thesis. The scholarship is in many ways ground-breaking and his use of oral history, particularly with past members of the Protestant Action Society, is invaluable but it may be that it is the very use of oral history that adversely affects the analysis. His interviews are, rightly enough, with PAS members, Edinburgh Catholics and old labour stalwarts like Jack Kane but he nowhere seems to have thought it necessary or even desirable to interview former Moderate Councillors, any surviving members of the civil service or indeed any policemen. Equally, in the use of the documentary evidence, his account of the street disturbances is largely dependent on press accounts when there is a considerable body of evidence in the official file (NRS HH1/777) which contradicts some of the more lurid reporting of the time. Finally, and perhaps most controversially, he appears to be more impressed with the version of events given by Archbishop MacDonald than those of contemporary commentators to the extent of including the Archbishop's statement to the press as a separate appendix to his book. It is not of course Gallagher's fault that his account has been taken at face value by some scholars but it is remarkable that comparatively few

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<sup>485</sup> *Ibid* p187

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid* p ix

have sought to re-examine the primary sources. What follows here is an attempt to re-evaluate those sources.

## *II Edinburgh in 1935*

In order to understand John Cormack and his Protestant Action Society it is necessary to understand Edinburgh. A feature of Edinburgh of the 1930s as compared with the present day is that there was still a large working class living and working in the city centre. Since World War II much of this community has been relocated to housing schemes, largely built on the periphery. This was a process begun in the 1930s with schemes built in areas like Stenhouse in the west, which was as far as the tram would go at the time. As many of the city's inhabitants moved out, only the very poorest remained behind in the slums of the old town and a disproportionate number of these were the descendants of Irish Catholic immigrants. As Gallagher points out:

The community was overwhelmingly working class. In a city where strong social distinctions existed, not only between the less well-off and the rich, but within the working class and the different gradations making up the middle and upper classes, they were predominantly unskilled labourers....Though relatively small in total numbers, Catholics were not scattered throughout the city but located in streets and lanes running off the High Street and the Canongate...They were tightly packed in tenements or lodging houses in Blackfriars Street, St Mary's Street, the Grassmarket and the Cowgate...There were four main Catholic parishes, stretching from St Cuthbert's in Slateford through to the Sacred Heart in the Lawnmarket...then St Patrick's in the Cowgate...down to St Mary, Star of the Sea, in Leith.<sup>487</sup>

What was left of the medieval old town had been converted into overcrowded tenements and lodging houses. There had been efforts at slum clearance in the nineteenth century, with the creation of Cockburn, Jeffrey and notably Chambers Streets, but even in the 1930s the provision of new social housing was a desperately slow process. The Irish immigrant community, being later arrivals, found themselves, as in so many other instances, at the back of this particular queue.

Another factor to bear in mind is that Edinburgh was dull. Even though Edinburgh, in comparison to other cities in Scotland, was not as badly affected by the depression, there was

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<sup>487</sup>T. Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided*, pp35-6.

still significant unemployment in certain areas and a sizeable proportion of its population in enforced idleness. The opportunities for diversion in Edinburgh in the 1930s, where not only was the cinema forbidden on a Sunday but citizens would not so much as hang out their laundry on that day, were severely limited. In his day Cormack *was* public entertainment in Edinburgh. This is not to say that Protestant Action was simply an extreme form of street theatre, but it is well to remember that large sections of the crowds that Cormack brought onto the streets, or attended his meetings in the Usher and Oddfellows' Halls, were composed of the curious and thrill seeking, as well as the trouble making. However, in a drab dull city, in a drab dull time he represented excitement and the possibility of something out of the ordinary. It is interesting to note that a large section of Cormack's admirers were female; this is not perhaps a comment on his sex appeal, but more that he provided an outlet for a section of society whose options were, certainly for working-class women, severely limited.

If in 1935 the Catholic community in Edinburgh formed a disproportionate number of those on the lowest economic rung, living in some of the poorest housing conditions in the city, it did not mean that they were regarded as a threat either by the Edinburgh bourgeoisie or their working class neighbours. Inter-marriage may have been frowned upon, but it was frowned upon by both sides. Edinburgh never had a gang culture to the same extent as Glasgow, but that does not mean that territorial disputes did not break out or that brawls were unheard of, but at the beginning of the year it would have been difficult to find anyone in Edinburgh who seriously believed that major civil disturbance was about to break out in the streets. This is not to say that the events came out of a clear blue sky. Cormack since his election to the City Council had been making great play with his accusations that the Council had a policy that favoured the employment of Roman Catholics.

The mere fact that the Council found itself having to officially deny some of Cormack's wilder allegations gives some idea of the effect that his propaganda was having in 1935, especially as it was aimed at the poorer sections of society and their main concerns, namely employment and housing. Still at this stage there was still no inkling of the trouble to come. However, on 4th March the Catholic Church announced that it would be holding a Eucharistic Congress in Edinburgh, the first since the Reformation.

It was doubtful at the time, that one in ten Protestants in Scotland knew what a Eucharistic Congress was. Catholic ceremonies had been taking place in Edinburgh and throughout Scotland with little or no public comment. In fact the only indications of disapproval came from the Reformation Society on March 20<sup>th</sup>. At their annual meeting the Chairman, the Rev. Dr Alexander Stewart, put the society's view that:

A few days ago it was stated in the press that it was proposed to hold a Eucharistic Congress in the city on some future date. This proposal might be only in the nature of a bluff or as a feeler to gauge the reaction of the people of Scotland to such an undertaking. If the necessary authority were granted for such a ceremony, would there not be grave danger of serious public disorder, as it was not likely that the people of Edinburgh, the city of John Knox, would tolerate a spectacle so repugnant to the deepest convictions of all true Protestants.<sup>488</sup>

All this was in the future. The really unique thing about the year 1935 was the concatenation of circumstances that allowed Cormack the opportunity to get Protestant Action out of the meeting hall and onto the street. The immediate cause of disorder came with the decision to grant a civic reception to the Catholic Young Men's Society which was holding its annual conference in the city. As Gallagher points out: 'It was not unusual for civic authorities to honour or acknowledge religious organisations in this way, even if they were controversial...In 1933, the Edinburgh council had honoured another Catholic gathering in similar fashion.'<sup>489</sup> By now Cormack, boosted by the success of Protestant Action in winning a council by election in central Leith on April 2nd and joined on the council by his colleague James Marr, felt he was in a position to test his powers. At a meeting at the Usher Hall on April 17<sup>th</sup> attended by 3000 people the following resolution was passed:

This great meeting of Protestants...respectfully requests the authorities concerned that they take steps to cancel the civic reception which has been granted to the Catholic Young Men's Society.

We ask this on two grounds – firstly this body of people are disloyal to our Protestant King and Queen; secondly, this body of people have proved themselves to be a danger wherever they have received the ordinary advantages of a British citizen.

In view of the aforementioned facts there is every possibility that if this reception is carried through, serious disorder may take place, causing danger to life and limb of our Protestant citizens, combined with damage to property. We, as Protestants, do not wish this to happen but nevertheless we are determined

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<sup>488</sup> The *Scotsman*, March 20<sup>th</sup> 1935, p9.

<sup>489</sup> T. Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided*, p39.

despite the cost, to keep this city Protestant, having nothing to do with Popery or papists.<sup>490</sup>

This was a direct challenge to the city authorities and sailing perilously close to an incitement to violence. It was not the sort of language the city was used to and prompted condemnation from both the Lord Provost Sir W. J. Thomson and the voice of the Edinburgh establishment, the *Scotsman*:

My reply – as Lord Provost of the City – is this: - If Councillor Cormack or any of his adherents or followers causes, or seeks to cause, any disturbance on this occasion the whole powers at the disposal of the authorities will be utilised to quell the trouble and to bring to justice all those who take any part whatever in it, directly or indirectly. After having arrived at decisions by constitutional means the authorities will not be intimidated by any section of the community which may set out to break law and destroy order<sup>491</sup>

On the same day the *Scotsman* published a leader which took Cormack and Protestant Action in general severely to task. It is a long article but it is worth quoting extensively from it as it goes to the heart of the argument that the press made no major stand against Cormack. Essentially the *Scotsman* pointed out that civic receptions, for groups holding national conferences in the city, were a normal civic courtesy no matter what creed or religion they represented and expressed its resentment that Protestant Action should see fit to challenge the Lord Provost's committee. It saved its harshest criticisms for Cormack himself although he is not mentioned by name in the article:

...the Protestant Action Society has unfortunately coupled its protest with something in the nature of an incitement to violence. At a recent meeting at the Usher Hall...speeches were delivered and resolutions passed which were to say the least deplorable. One of the resolutions carried through stated that if the reception was carried through 'serious disorder might take place causing danger to life and limb... This was bad enough but the statements attributed to one of the speakers were worse. He is reported to have said that 'the time had come' that it

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<sup>490</sup> The *Scotsman*, April 26th 1935, p9.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid*

was ‘one thing or the other – Protestantism or Popery’ and that he was afraid to think ‘of what was going to be’ on April 27<sup>th</sup>. Later warming to his subject, he exclaimed – ‘We will have to fight this. There may be bloodshed. Are you afraid of it?’ And there was we are told an answering cry of ‘Noes’. Finally, if he is reported correctly he declared that Edinburgh which in his lifetime had never known ‘a real smash up’ was going to know it if the civic reception went on.

Upon this heated atmosphere the Lord Provost now enters with a cooling reminder of the consequences of fomenting disorder... His words are a warning to which all good citizens will take heed and we hope that in this we may include the leaders, followers and adherents of the Protestant Action Society. The general public who are not interested directly in the quarrel should, in their own interests, keep aloof from the scene of the threatened trouble and we would earnestly enjoin upon all partisans whether of the Protestant or Catholic camp to do the same. The sectarian spirit is a heady thing and some people seem to have lost their moral and mental balance over this subject...Every honest minded British citizen deplores Jew baiting in Nazi Germany, we want no baiting of Roman Catholics here....There is enough ill will in the world, and even in our own country without adding the fires of religious fanaticism to it.<sup>492</sup>

Cormack himself knew precisely who the paper was aiming at and wrote to the editor the following day attempting blame any resulting violence from his protests on the Catholic Church, As can be seen by the editor’s addendum to the letter it was not an argument that received much sympathy.

Sir Your leader in to-days issue practically places the onus on myself for inciting to disorder. If my language gave that impression, I had reason for it, the said reason being an article in the Catholic Times of April 12. The article refers to a motion put forward to the Town Council by myself and Councillor Marr and states – The disgusting intolerance of the motion should ensure its rejection but we are becoming tired of these tyrannous attacks on our brethren in Scotland and we remind all concerned that they are trying to start a game at which two can play, and that once started will end in civil commotion such as rent and

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<sup>492</sup> The *Scotsman*, April 26th 1935, p8.

dishonoured Liverpool to such a degree that a Royal Inquiry had to be held. We do not intend to take such treatment lying down.

Incitement to violence is contained in the above. We are only going to be prepared.

(We read Mr Cormack's letter as implying that he and his party will not seek trouble or begin it. In that case he will, we presume recall the advice which he gave in the Usher Hall recently when he was reported to have asked 'all those who were present and those they represented to go into the streets on Saturday week even if nothing but to cry No Popery. They could leave the other part of the business', Mr Cormack added suggestively, 'to the young people.' Editor)<sup>493</sup>

The *Scotsman* was to be disappointed in one of its earnest wishes that the good people of Edinburgh would 'keep aloof from the scene of threatened trouble.' Indeed their own reports and those in other sections of the press, as well as the Lord Provost's statement, practically guaranteed that a sizeable crowd would turn out for the occasion. Giving so much prominence to Cormack was free publicity, and the prospect of tumult on the High Street to be witnessed for free on a Saturday night proved irresistible to many of the citizenry. In the event a large crowd assembled outside the City Chambers on the evening of Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April. At this point it is useful to examine differences in the press reports. Gallagher states that the Lord Provost's intention to take stern measures was no bluff: 'Not only was all police leave cancelled and the special constabulary mobilised, but a detachment of Gordon Highlanders, stationed at Edinburgh Castle, was placed in readiness and the mobile section of the Royal Army Service Corps at Leith Fort was also mobilised.' (For the information on the mobilisation of troops the citation is the *Protestant Times*.)<sup>494</sup> He then goes on to cite the *Edinburgh Evening News*

At seven o'clock the High Street presented an amazing scene...the High Street entrance...was guarded by policemen standing shoulder to shoulder. In the High Street, the crowds at either end were held back by mounted men and a large number of foot police, and the streets were closed to pedestrians except those attending the function ...

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<sup>493</sup> The *Scotsman*, April 27<sup>th</sup> 1935, p17.

<sup>494</sup> T. Gallagher, *Edinburgh Divided*, p40.

A large saloon car conveying the Archbishop ...and another church dignitary approached Cockburn Street entrance. The crowd surged forward and one young man jumped on the running board. He was immediately pulled off by policemen...earlier, the arrival of Councillors Cormack and Marr was greeted with thunderous cheering. When Councillor Marr came through the crowd, the noise was such that it frightened several of the horses of the mounted police, and, in one case, a policeman had great difficulty in controlling his horse which was rearing wildly.<sup>495</sup>

The *Scotsman* on the same day published its version of events. The *Scotsman* and the *Evening News* did not operate in mutually exclusive markets and many Edinburgh citizens took both papers but it is fair to say that the *News* appealed to a more popular audience while the *Scotsman* was very much the voice of the Edinburgh establishment. The style is somewhat less breathless and the accounts do not differ significantly about major events but the tone of the *Scotsman* report is instructive. It is also interesting that it flatly contradicts the story that troops had been kept in reserve.

Extraordinary street scenes were witnessed in Edinburgh on Saturday night. The sectarian spirit and mere curiosity combined to draw large crowds in the vicinity of the City Chambers where a civic reception to delegates attending the annual conference of the Catholic Young Men's Society, but thanks to the good sense of many of the onlookers and the commendable tact shown by the police the tension passed without any serious developments. Protestants had been openly urged by the Protestant Action Society to turn out in their thousands...the response was sufficient to create difficulties in the maintenance of order but the crowds were so discretely handled that little more than congestion and noisy demonstration occurred... Many of the sympathisers with the Protestant "action" movement had, it is understood come from Glasgow, Prestonpans, Broxburn and other districts. Two or three young men were detained by the police. One is alleged to have jumped onto the running board of a car in Cockburn Street in which two or three of the guests proceeding to the reception were seated...

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<sup>495</sup> *Ibid* p40

During the evening a disturbance broke out in the Cowgate ...for a time the situation looked serious. Bottles, stones and a hammer were among the weapons that came into play, but prompt action was taken by the police and the trouble blew over quickly.

A rumour was current that troops in the city had been held in readiness but Chief Constable Ross who was in charge of the police arrangement stated there was no truth whatever in the story. As a matter of fact the police had the situation well in hand though out the evening. It is many a day since Edinburgh experienced acute sectarian trouble. Chief Constable Ross, who is retiring shortly, after 35 years' service in the city, has never been called upon to quell any serious faction fighting in the city.<sup>496</sup>

The rather extensive quotations from the press used here give some idea of the different interpretations that were put upon the disturbances both in 1935 and later. The *Scotsman* seemed determined to play down the event and was staunchly on the side of the police. In truth it appears that Protestant Action's first major foray into the street was more sound and fury than anything else. Certainly the reports of the military being on standby appear to have been exaggerated and on balance the Chief Constable's statement that 'there was no truth whatever in the story' would appear to be accurate.

Archbishop MacDonald himself made light of the occurrence when introducing Bishop Daniel Mageean of Down and Connor at a meeting in the Usher Hall the following day; 'the Chairman said that the members of the city appeared to have endeavoured to give the speaker the kind of welcome generally associated with Belfast (laughter). They could, however, assure him that the members who had been so very vocal the previous night certainly did not represent the best class of Edinburgh (applause).'<sup>497</sup> The Catholic press were a little less forgiving but even the *Clydesdale Catholic Herald* considered the demonstrators as unrepresentative of the City.

The Lord Provost of Edinburgh...made it clear in a letter to the press that the civic forces would be mobilised to check the agitation and prevent personal injury, and it was clear to the onlooker that the better class of citizenry bitterly resented the proposed anti-Catholic demonstration.

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<sup>496</sup> The *Scotsman*, April 29<sup>th</sup> 1935, p9.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid p9

But a demonstration of an alarming nature did take place. One Sunday paper reported that the military stood by in readiness for possible rioting, another that his Grace Archbishop MacDonald “ran the gauntlet”. No military reinforcements were marshalled in the background, but the car in which his Grace drove to the City Chambers was heralded by menacing and slanderous hooligans and only the close vigilance and protection of the police ensured its safe journey, as was the case with nearly all limousines and taxi cabs carrying the delegates.

The publicity given in advance to proposed “Protestant” protest brought several thousand people attracted by curiosity to the vicinity of the City Chambers on Saturday evening and the High Street, Princes Street and the Mound were for several hours densely crowded. Traffic was disorganised despite the efforts of mounted and foot police. Catholic churches and institutions were guarded by police and detectives.

For the most part, the taunts and blustering threats were treated with the measure of attention they deserved.<sup>498</sup>

Whatever the case, Cormack had not had his real ‘smash up’ but he had attracted people onto the streets in numbers, even if the majority were no more than the idly curious, and his movement had been given momentum and it needed to keep that momentum going. It is a feature of all protest groups that they need to keep in the public eye to exist. Protestant Action’s meetings at the various venues around the city were packed and many were coming to hear Cormack on the Mound and in Leith. He also used the platform of being on the Town Council to keep himself at the forefront of local news. Cormack, whatever else he was, was a superb self-publicist, but to keep up the enthusiasm of his supporters he still needed the public spectacles. His next opportunity came with the decision of the Town Council to award the Freedom of the City to the Maharajah of Patiala, John Buchan and the Australian Premier Joseph Lyons at a ceremony to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> June at the Usher Hall.

The conferring of the Freedom of the City on the premier of a Commonwealth country would normally have been un-contentious, apart from the fact that Lyons was a Catholic. The public honouring of a Catholic was both an anathema and a golden opportunity for Cormack. His initial attempts in the Council to have Lyons name struck off the list on honourees failed. This gave him the chance to steal the limelight at a major public ceremony in the City and

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<sup>498</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1935.

demonstrate once more his ability to bring crowds onto the street within a few weeks of the High Street demonstration. In the event this protest amounted to very little more than what the *Scotsman* described as an ‘unseemly disturbance.’ Certainly Cormack and a few of his supporters managed to briefly disrupt the proceedings with cries of ‘No Popery’ and ‘Down with the papas’ swiftly drowned by organ playing. It was not a particularly effective protest and as the *Scotsman* reported ‘...High Constables or official police were after a few minutes able to conduct all those who had attended simply to protest out of the hall, and quietness having been secured, the Lord Provost proceeded.’<sup>499</sup>

Outside the hall a crowd of about two thousand gathered to support Cormack although on this occasion the scenes were somewhat different to that at the City Chambers. As the *Scotsman* reported it contained a large element of farce. A crowd of about two thousand in which, it was noted that women largely outnumbered men, had assembled in Lothian road and kept up a chant of ‘no Popery’ until, in the words of the journalist, it became monotonous. Having little else to fill their time the crowd vented its anger on the unfortunately dressed:

Ladies dressed in green and even men wearing green hats were singled out by the crowd as objects for “booing”. Nor did people who drew up to the hall in green cars escape attention. This demonstration of “booing” had its humorous side. Stalwarts of the Church of Scotland, who were unrecognised by the crowd, or were mistakenly assumed to be adherents of another faith, were subjected to “boos”. These ministers merely smiled and passed into the hall...<sup>500</sup>

After Cormack had been expelled from the Usher Hall he attempted to address his followers but was dissuaded by the police and his supporters contented themselves with carrying him shoulder high to the West End. It had not been a particularly effective protest although it undoubtedly severely embarrassed the Lord Provost and the city dignitaries who were unaccustomed to this sort of behaviour. Nonetheless, it kept PAS and Cormack on the front pages and it was drawing attention outside of Edinburgh. There was still the forthcoming Eucharistic Congress which would give Cormack his greatest opportunity to bring his brand of Protestantism out onto the streets in greater numbers.

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<sup>499</sup> The *Scotsman*, June 11<sup>th</sup> 1935, p9.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid* p10

### *III The Scottish Office*

The protest against Lyons may have been faintly ridiculous but behind the scenes Cormack's activities were beginning to cause some concern in official circles. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of May Sir Godfrey Collins, the Secretary of State for Scotland, was asked a Parliamentary Question from Dr O'Donovan M.P about the events at the City Chambers and whether steps were being taken to prevent a recurrence. At this point Collins was reasonably sanguine about the situation:

Sir Godfrey Collins- I have obtained particulars of the meeting held in Edinburgh on 17<sup>th</sup> April under the auspices of the Protestant Action Society and of the demonstration held on the evening of 27<sup>th</sup> April when a civic reception was accorded by the Corporation of Edinburgh to the Catholic Young Men's Society. I understand that special police precautions were taken on the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> April, and that although a few incidents occurred, some of which resulted in arrests being made, there was no serious disorder. The police who are responsible for the maintenance of law and order, will, I am satisfied, take steps to prevent any disturbances in future.<sup>501</sup>

The publicity given to this reply prompted Cormack to write personally to Sir Godfrey. It is worth quoting in full as it gives an insight into Cormack's mind-set at the time and his intentions towards the Eucharistic Congress. It has to be noted that the spelling and punctuation are idiosyncratic and are reproduced here without any amendment.

Letter from Protestant Action 14<sup>th</sup> May 1935

Dear Sir

The answer which you gave to Dr O'Donovan M.P. in the House of Commons, in connection with the recent Protestant Demonstration in Edinburgh, was reported in the "Daily Express", I noted it, and hasten to assure You, Sir, that when, and where the popish Authorities openly propagate their blasphemous doctrine, we, the Protestants of Edinburgh will turn out in Protest, despite the assurance you gave the House to the contrary. We are Protestant "Actionists" not jelly fish. If the papists are allowed to hold a Eucharistic Congress in June, 30, or

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<sup>501</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Anti Roman Catholic Demonstrations in Edinburgh 1935-1940.

40 thousand, Protestants will know the reason why. I am quoting here-with from popish Papers, the Universe and the Catholic Herald, to prove to you the DECEIT of the popish Authorities here in Scotland. In a letter, dated, Cathedral House, York Place, Edinburgh, May 4<sup>th</sup>, Mgr., McGettigan, writes the Congress, is not to be, and was never intended to be an international congress, nor even a national one.” “The Congress is for the Catholics of Edinburgh.” I read in the Universe, dated, May 10<sup>th</sup>, this Special arrangements are being made in all districts of the East of Scotland, for Catholics to take part in the Congress which is the first of its kind ever held in the country. Many will want to take part in the ceremonies from Glasgow and the West” Is this for Edinburgh Catholics only? In the light of the fore-going?

I trust You Sir, will realise, there is something “fishy” about the so-called Congress. We must Demonstrate and Protest.

I remain,

Always a 100% Protestant

John Cormack (Councillor)<sup>502</sup>

At least the Scottish Office would not now be able to say that it was unaware of Cormack’s intentions. It took the letter seriously enough to write to the Chief Constable of Edinburgh, Roderick Ross, for his comments who replied confidently that he was certain that he could ‘deal with any situation which may arise.’<sup>503</sup>

Despite this reassurance Collins and his officials were receiving more representations on the subject of Cormack. Alfred Denville, theatrical impresario and Conservative MP for Newcastle, received the following communication from James Conan, a journalist on the *Edinburgh Catholic Herald* which he duly passed on to the Scottish Office asking if any action could be taken. This correspondence is important as it shows how the Government’s position was overtaken by events and there is evidence of a certain amount of complacency in official circles. Conan’s cutting came from the *Evening News* of the 20<sup>th</sup> May reporting Cormack’s threat to invade the grounds of Canaan Lane where the Eucharistic Congress was due to be held.

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<sup>502</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Letter from Cormack to Collins, May 14<sup>th</sup> 1935.

<sup>503</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Letter from the Chief Constable of Edinburgh to Sir John Lamb May 15<sup>th</sup> 1935.

Dear Mr Denville

I would esteem it a favour if you would read the enclosed cutting. I am afraid the police here are too lenient with this man who is causing a lot of trouble especially in public works etc. You might consider it having it passed on. It is really something to be attended to at once. You may not know me but your son will when you tell him Conlan of the Catholic Herald wrote you. Of course this is a private affair and not for the papers I am writing you. Of course I will tell the clergy I wrote you. Go all out with this even if to the Home Office.

Yours sincerely

James Conlan<sup>504</sup>

Denville wrote three times to Sir Godfrey Collins on 20<sup>th</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May asking what could be done. An official reply was drafted but not sent, much to the relief of the officials involved in the light of subsequent events.

You wrote to me on 22<sup>nd</sup> inst enclosing letters and cuttings received from Mr James Conlan 13, Roseneath Street, Edinburgh regarding statements made by Councillor Cormack about the Eucharistic Congress to be held in Edinburgh this month and about the conferring of the freedom of the City of Edinburgh upon the Australian Premier, and on the 24 inst you sent me another letter from the same correspondent enclosing a newspaper cutting concerning the arrest of a man on a charge of murder.

The subject of possible sectarian disorder is a matter on which the Chief Constable has recently been communicated with, and he has indicated that the police are in a position to deal adequately and firmly with any situation that may arise. The maintenance of law and order in Edinburgh is, as you are probably aware, is a matter for the police, subject to the general supervision of the magistrates...

The enclosures to your letters are herewith returned.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Letter to Mr A Denville M.P. from James Conan, May 21<sup>st</sup> 1935.

<sup>505</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Hand written draft of reply for Mr A. Denville M.P not sent.

Mr Cheale

You will remember that following the receipt of (Denville letters) you gave instructions that the letter prepared in reply ... should be held up to see what happened at the conferring of the freedom of the City on Mr Lyon, the Australian Premier.

The freedom was conferred on 10<sup>th</sup> June and since that date the file has been unfortunately overlooked. I think, however that in view of what happened at the Eucharistic Congress on the 24<sup>th</sup> instant it is just as well that we did not write Mr Denville as in your draft attached. Before the actual events the CC assured us that the police were in a position to cope with any situation which might arise. We know now that they were unable to prevent disorder. It may be that to do so might have been humanly impossible but the fact remains that the CC was unable to prevent an outbreak of trouble.

In the circumstances it is for consideration whether we should ask the CC for a report on the occurrences and whether a written or final reply should go to Mr Denville. Also whether Mr Denville's letters require a reply at all and whether it would be expedient to send one.<sup>506</sup>

As the enclosures are still within the file it is reasonable to suppose that Mr Denville never did receive his reply.

For three months Cormack had succeeded in raising the tensions in the city in the lead up to the Eucharistic Congress. He had demonstrated his ability to bring out the crowds and ugly scenes had taken place outside Catholic Churches. He was the news topic of the hour in Edinburgh but, as can be seen from the above correspondence, there was still uncertainty as to what form his protest would take. Before going on to discuss the events of June 1935 it should be pointed out that these fall into two separate categories, the riot itself and the aftermath. Piecing together the actual events based solely on the press reports can give a distorted picture and so the account that follows will also concentrate on the Procurator Fiscal of Edinburgh's report to the Lord Advocate of the 2<sup>nd</sup> August. One of the main gaps we have in the period is the actual reaction of Sir Godfrey Collins. Regrettably Collins did not

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<sup>506</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Minute note referring to the unsent draft letter intended for Arthur Denville dated June 17th 1935.

keep personal papers covering this period<sup>507</sup> and Pottinger's biography of the Secretaries of State for Scotland makes no reference to what was the single largest incidence of civil disturbance during Collins' tenure as Secretary of State.<sup>508</sup> The available official sources are then dependent on the Scottish Office file relating to the period. It is for this reason that the Fiscal's report becomes critical in determining as accurately as possible the sequence of violence as it occurred over the period of the Eucharistic Conference. This report does not appear in any of the secondary sources for the period, although it was available in the sources quoted by Gallagher, and this is the first attempt to establish the course of events using this source. It will contrast this report with Archbishop MacDonald's account given in a letter to Sir Godfrey Collins of June 28<sup>th</sup>.

#### *IV The Riots*

The Eucharistic Congress held in Edinburgh in 1935 would probably have passed unnoticed by the City's Protestant inhabitants but for Cormack. It is doubtful that many non-Catholics knew what was involved although there had been a sizeable Eucharistic Congress held in Dublin in 1932 attended by worldwide Catholic clergy and including a papal benediction broadcast on Irish radio. It was certainly an occasion used for propaganda purposes by the nascent Irish Free State<sup>509</sup> and it may have been this that prompted the opposition of the Reformation Society outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Certainly the outdoor nature of Eucharistic Congresses may have been considered provocative but in this case it was to be a considerably more modest affair and the adoration of the sacrament was to take place in the grounds of the Priory owned by the Catholic Church in Morningside. In the case of Cormack it was undoubtedly sufficient that the ceremony was Catholic even if it was to take place out of sight of the easily offended. Steve Bruce in *No Pope of Rome* states that the Catholic Church's plan was for thirty thousand Catholics to 'collect in Canaan Lane Park, celebrate mass and then march in procession along Princes Street.'<sup>510</sup> Had this been the case it probably would have been provocative for the times but there exists no evidence that such a programme was ever contemplated. As there is no park in Canaan Lane and Bruce places the

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<sup>507</sup> C. Cameron, S. Whitehead and C. Woodland (eds.) *A Guide to the Papers of British Cabinet Ministers 1900-1964*, (Royal Historical Society, Cambridge, 1996), pp108 – 109.

<sup>508</sup> G. Pottinger, *The Secretaries of State for Scotland 1926 – 1976; Fifty Years of the Scottish Office*, (Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1979).

<sup>509</sup> University College Cork Multitext Project in Irish History, *The Pursuit of Sovereignty and the Impact of Partition 1912 – 1949*, Case Study 1932 Dublin Eucharistic Congress.

<sup>510</sup> S. Bruce, *No Pope of Rome*, (Mainstream, Edinburgh, 1985), p89.

riot in 1936 it is possible that he has confused the events. In fact Bruce's account of the 'Morningside riot' is indicative of how distorted the picture has become: 'On the day, between thirty-five and forty thousand Protestants encircled the park. Again there was violence with the police charging the protestors and Action members retaliating with their newly acquired knowledge of anti-horse drill. The technique they had developed in earlier encounters involved pulling the riders foot out of one stirrup and then jabbing the horse with a sharp instrument, causing it to bolt and dislodge its rider. The demonstration was a success; the procession was cancelled.'<sup>511</sup> As will be shown there is absolutely no evidence of any of what he describes ever taking place and regrettably he does not cite the sources for this information.

Accounts of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 1935 are confusing and conflicting. Even the press reports of the time disagree with each other as do historical ones. For instance, Gallagher in his account of the disorders states that 'A suitable opportunity for venting hate did not present itself until Monday evening, June 24<sup>th</sup>.' This is not the case as was pointed out both in Archbishop MacDonald's letter to Sir Godfrey Collins and in the report of the Procurator Fiscal

On the evening of Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> ulto on the occasion of a meeting of men in Waverley Market, everything passed off quietly till the men were returning home. As the buses conveying them passed along Princes Street, however, they were met by a crowd coming from a meeting in the Usher Hall organised by the Protestant Action Society. This crowd held up the traffic and treated the occupants not only of private buses, but also of those on their ordinary journeys, to a torrent of abusive epithets and threats – and pedestrians were assaulted not only on the street but in the station. One instance will suffice. A Priest proceeding westwards was thrown from the pavement to the street, jostled and struck several times while on the roadway, and only escaped further injury by boarding a bus travelling in the opposite direction and the Conductress slamming the door behind him.<sup>512</sup>

The Procurator Fiscal's account tallies largely with the Archbishop's in this case although there is no mention of a priest being attacked or of his fleeing on a bus with aid of a helpful

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<sup>511</sup> *Ibid* p89

<sup>512</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Letter from Archbishop MacDonald to Sir Godfrey Collins, June 28<sup>th</sup> 1935.

conductress. Indeed there are several discrepancies in the reports of the 'riots' between the Archbishop and the Procurator Fiscal. In the aftermath of the riots both collected evidence although those still in the Catholic archives show that MacDonald was keen to find instances of outrages perpetrated on priests, nuns and individual Catholics. This was natural enough in the circumstances but it should make the historian at the very least careful with the material. The evidence collected by the Procurator was, as can be gathered from the language, largely provided by policemen and again some caution should be exercised. The police did have an interest that they should be seen to have had the situation well in hand. On balance though it would seem that Procurator's report is the more accurate as it was his responsibility to prosecute the disturbers of the peace and as will be shown he took that responsibility seriously.<sup>513</sup>

The following night saw scenes of considerably more violence as a meeting of women was held, again at the Waverly Market, at the east end of Princes Street. On this occasion a large hostile crowd had gathered. In Archbishop MacDonald's account the crowd actively attacked the participants:

Pedestrians were jostled and stones were thrown at least one car conveying Clergymen to the meeting, while others, (including my own) were surrounded and efforts made to effect an entrance. When this was frustrated the crowd covered the cars in spittle and used the most vile language towards their occupants. I am informed on good authority that a number of those who attacked our cars were armed with loaded sticks.<sup>514</sup>

Whereas the Procurator Fiscal stated:

...large numbers of the supporters of the Protestant Action Society gathered in the vicinity of Waverly Bridge. These certainly shouted abusive epithets at persons proceeding to the meeting. Beyond this, however there was no attempt at interfering with the participants.<sup>515</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Procurator Fiscal of Edinburgh's Report to the Scottish Office on anti-Catholic demonstrations.

<sup>514</sup> NRS, HH1/777, MacDonald's letter to Collins.

<sup>515</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Procurator Fiscal's report.

It was nonetheless a fact that nine persons were arrested, seven of whom were later fined the substantial sum of £10 or one month's imprisonment in the Sheriff Court. It was to be something of a feature of the Court's handling of individuals brought before it on charges related to sectarian violence that exemplary sentences were handed out, with even Douglas conceding that 'some of the dupes have been harshly dealt with.'<sup>516</sup> It would certainly not appear to be the case that Cormack's supporters were given any leniency. The Waverly Market disturbance appears to have looked worse than it actually was but it was sufficiently alarming for the police to take extraordinary measures for the conclusion of the Congress the following evening.

It is well to pause here and consider composition of the Edinburgh police force in 1935. The total strength of the regular Edinburgh police in 1935 was 798 comprising one Chief Constable, one Assistant Chief Constable, six Superintendents, 29 Inspectors, 87 Sergeants, 647 Constables, two Female Investigating Officers, the remainder being administrative and medical staff. In addition the Chief Constable could theoretically call on the services of 901 special constables, (although there was a recognition that not all of these were able bodied and in 1936 the specials were reorganised into a uniformed unit 300 strong of those aged between 25-50 and a further reserve unit of 500 of those under the age of 60).<sup>517</sup> Unfortunately, the Chief Constable's reports do not break down the figures between the motor, foot and especially mounted sections. It is reasonable to assume that the official mounted section was comparatively small given the expense of maintaining it and the limited need. What is certain is that there was a substantial Special Mounted Unit under the command of Colonel J M B Scott OBE TD. It held regular monthly drills and at its sixth annual inspection carried out at Redford Barracks on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1936 28 members of this unit were awarded the Special Constabulary Long Service Medal.<sup>518</sup> At the very least then the Chief Constable had at his disposal a mounted unit of approximately thirty and probably more. The actual numbers deployed at Canaan Lane are, unfortunately, not available and so it is a matter of conjecture how many police were on the streets that night. However, given the logistical and geographical difficulties involved the numbers must have comprised the larger part of the Chief Constable's available resources.

It is useful to examine a map of the Morningside district and using the information in the accounts, and what is known about the composition of the Edinburgh police, to attempt to

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<sup>516</sup> Fred Douglas, *The Protestant Movement X Rayed*, the Edinburgh Communist Party, 1937 in T. Gallagher *Edinburgh Divided*, p103.

<sup>517</sup> Edinburgh City Archives, Chief Constable of Edinburgh's Annual Report 1936, p25.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid*

reconstruct the ‘battlefield’ and the events of the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup> June 1925. Morningside has not changed significantly since 1935 and the streets and houses are still largely of their original Victorian and Edwardian construction and layout. The Priory itself now belongs to the NHS and a Roman Catholic Primary school occupies part of the grounds but otherwise the area is unchanged. The geography of Morningside plays an important part in assessing the accuracy, or otherwise, of some of the accounts and in evaluating which version of events is likely to be closer to the truth than others. The roads immediately surrounding the Priory, Canaan Lane, Newbattle Terrace and Grange Loan, as can be seen from the photographs, are particularly narrow and must have made difficult access for buses bringing participants of the Congress. This was a significant factor in the later course of events.



**Figure 1. Grange Loan looking east. Pilgrim buses parked here**

The main approach to Canaan Lane is from Morningside Road to the west of the Priory and all accounts agree that this is where the main body of the protesters were gathered. The Procurator Fiscal reported that on the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> while most of the participants of the Congress arrived on foot: ‘Many, however, from outlying parishes came by bus. The arrival of these was carried out without hitch, and when the ceremony commenced it was estimated that over 10,000 people were present within the priory grounds. Motor buses to the number of

170 were parked in police care in Grange Loan'.<sup>519</sup> This immediately contradicts the Gallagher version of the beginning of the Congress; 'Buses conveying pilgrims ... were met by hostile demonstrators shouting, throwing stones, and spitting at the vehicles as they passed into the Priory...Molly Regan remembers one old Irishwoman in her bus who said, "And sure, aren't they giving us a grand welcome." "Nobody made any attempt to answer that this was no friendly reception."

Gallagher's story is an entertaining one but given the logistics of getting motor buses to the Priory it is extremely unlikely that it ever happened. For one thing, as will be shown below, access to the Priory from Morningside Road, the location of the bulk of Cormack's supporters, was blocked off by the police. The Fiscal further states that the pilgrims' 170 buses were parked in Grange Loan. As the photograph of Grange Loan demonstrates this is a particularly narrow stretch of road. At the conclusion of the Congress the buses were routed through Whitehouse Loan and Pitsligo Road which would have necessitated that all the buses parked in Grange Loan to have been facing west. As it is physically impossible for a bus, even in the 1930s, to perform a U-turn in Grange Loan and the 170 buses would have stretched beyond Kilgraston Road then the only possible route to the Priory would have taken them a considerable distance out of the way of the PAS protestors. It would seem that the Fiscal's assertion that this part of the exercise was 'carried out without a hitch' is the more accurate and that the recollection of Molly Regan apocryphal.

(The Bartholomew Plan of Morningside in 1933, on the following page, covers the main areas of the disturbances and the photographs illustrate the exit routes used by pilgrim buses from the Priory).

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<sup>519</sup>NRS, HH1/777, Procurator Fiscals Report.

# Bartholomew Plan of Edinburgh and Leith, 1932-33.

Maps of Edinburgh





**Figure 2 Whitehouse Loan exit route one for buses**



**Figure 3 Canaan Lane and Grange Loan leading to Pitsligo Road**



**Figure 4 Pitsligo Road exit route two.**

At 7pm Cormack made his first attempt to approach the Priory. He, along with 40 followers, approached Woodburn Terrace through Nile Grove and was informed that the area was closed to through traffic. After establishing that this was under the orders of the District Inspector, Cormack and his supporters retreated to Morningside Road where the bulk of the PAS protestors had assembled. At 7.30, by this time leading a considerable crowd, Cormack was confronted by mounted police at Nile Grove and was forced to redirect his followers to Morningside Road so at this time the bulk of the protestors were at the bottom of Morningside Road in the vicinity of the station. At this point it is possible to appreciate the difficulties of the police considering the area they had to cover. As the *Scotsman's* report put it, 'for three or four hours Morningside Road was thronged from the Station to Bruntsfield Place. This meant that the police had to control a crowd which stretched for about three quarters of a mile in addition to watching various points in other districts where sympathisers with the Protestant Action organisation had gathered.'<sup>520</sup> If the Procurator's estimate of

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<sup>520</sup> *Ibid*

20,000 is correct this must have been a formidable exercise in crowd control for a force with no more experience than policing Saturday afternoon football matches.



**Figure 5 Nile Grove: Cormack stopped by mounted police here.**

By nine o'clock the buses were being loaded and leaving via Pitsligo Road and Whitehouse Loan. As can be seen from the map both these routes lead out into Bruntsfield and several buses were stoned in the vicinity of Barclay Place which means that elements in the crowd now stretched a considerable distance. It is remarkable that the numbers attacked were as small as they were. This does tend to lend support to the argument that the actual trouble-making element was relatively small. Had all the crowd, or even a substantial number been involved it is difficult to see how a convoy of 170 buses could have escaped largely unscathed, despite the best efforts of the police. At ten o'clock batons were drawn at the junction of Colinton Road and Bruntsfield Place in what seems to have been the most serious outbreak of trouble and a direct attack on the police. The *Scotsman's* account describes a baton charge although this is not altogether confirmed from that of the Procurator Fiscal.

It appears from the accounts that a large and hostile crowd had gathered the length of Morningside Road and into Bruntsfield. However, given the difficulties of policing the area it would appear that Edinburgh force did a commendably professional job, as the Archbishop later admitted. Is it accurate to describe the affair as a riot? In Edinburgh terms the answer

probably has to be yes, though in terms of what other cities might describe as a riot, it was a protest with sporadic outbreaks of violence swiftly contained. However, it was a psychological shock, but it was in the aftermath that the true effects were felt. It is in the reactions to the riot, rather than in the seriousness or otherwise of what actually occurred, that provides the lasting controversy.

### *V The Reaction*

The initial responses to Cormack and Protestant Action's behaviour were, naturally, hostile in the Catholic Press but it was not limited to that outlet alone as the *Clydesdale Catholic Herald* acknowledged on the 6<sup>th</sup> July. It reprinted in full the leading article of the *Edinburgh Bulletin*:

#### Sectarian Folly

The demonstrations against the Roman Catholic Eucharistic Congress in St Andrews Priory, together with the recent protestations made at a freedom ceremony in Edinburgh have re-established the Capital in its old time reputation as a city of religious intolerance. The temper if not the intelligence and high moral purpose of John Knox still lives. But John Knox belonged to the sixteenth century and we are now in the twentieth. The enthusiasts might be asked to keep an eye on that fact.

...there can be no doubt that the action of agitators in Edinburgh and the persecution of unoffending Roman Catholic citizens must have alienated the sympathy of many rational minded people. Such outbursts as the Capital has witnessed could not have been conceived in missionary zeal. There was nothing exalted and nothing inspiring in their origin or evidence. They bore witness rather to unchristian qualities of malice and ill will and brought upon the whole Presbyterian community an incriminating sense of shame.

Of what avail is it to send missionaries to foreign fields and leave hordes of misrepresentatives at home forcing such disservice upon us?

It is for the Church to take in hand these over emphatic and narrow, prejudiced upholders of Protestantism, and turn them away from notions of propaganda that are despised even among football crowds when Tynecastle clashes with Parkhead in a cup tie. And in the meantime it is vital that the Church should in some

prominent way make itself known as entirely contemptuous of scenes enacted in Edinburgh this week.<sup>521</sup>

This call for the Church of Scotland to take a hand in putting Protestant Action in its place may well have struck a chord with some of the Ministers who had attended the General Assembly only the previous month. It would seem to have done so in it at least one case as the *Catholic Herald* illustrated. In its own editorial it was not sparing in its opinion of Protestant Action but what is of note is its appreciation of the *Bulletin*, a letter by a Protestant clergyman in the *Scotsman* and in indeed of the authorities and the police:

... that action aroused the lowest form of bestial hate in the tatterdemalions of Edinburgh who acclaimed their superiority to "Popery" by howling foul blasphemy, attacking women, isolated groups of Catholic men, and even Catholic Priests. In this issue we publish the comments of a leading daily newspaper and a Protestant clergyman. They are not kind in their attitude towards Edinburgh's bigots.

Nor are the authorities.

Edinburgh's police were admirable in the manner in which they carried out their duties. But if confidence in full civic protection for the law abiding citizens is to be restored, it is to be hoped that the hooligan element, which rears its head when anyone or anything is to be attacked or fouled, will on such occasions be firmly dealt with.<sup>522</sup>

There was some foreign press coverage of the riot including an editorial in the *Osservatore Romano*, and an article in the Times was to incur the wrath of Archbishop MacDonald. However, the *Catholic Herald* describing the *Osservatore* article as 'scathing' did not reprint it in full, perhaps because the author, Count della Torre did his own argument no great service as was pointed out in a letter from the British Legation in Rome to the Foreign Secretary. The events in Edinburgh were having unfortunate repercussions outside the city.

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<sup>521</sup> *Clydesdale Catholic Herald*, July 6th 1935, p6.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid*

British Legation to the Holy See

Rome

July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1935

Sir

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, slightly abbreviated, a translation of an article published in the "Osservatore Romano" of the 29th ultimo, over the initial of its editor, Count della Torre, on the subject of an attack which appears to have taken place in Edinburgh, on a Eucharistic Congress recently held there, when the intervention of police is said to have been necessary to restore order.

You will observe that the style of the aged Count is a very involved one; and I feel that his report of intolerance would carry more weight, if he made it clear that he dislikes it wherever met with and in every form. As the "Osservatore Romano" is an official organ and this article is by its editor, I feel bound, however to bring it to your notice; though I do not think that any other action is called for by this legation.

I have the Honour to be,

Etc. Charles Wingfield

To Sir Samuel Hoare

Foreign Secretary<sup>523</sup>

As mentioned above Archbishop MacDonald wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland on 28th June and it is obvious he was a very unhappy man and had no doubt as to who bore the responsibility for the anti-Catholic campaign, Cormack, and who would be responsible if widespread sectarian fighting broke out if nothing was done, Collins:

I wish, however, to again stress the fact that if disturbances ensue, the blame will not rest on the Catholic population. They have, as the Press has testified, borne themselves with commendable restraint in the face of this campaign of vilification and slander of themselves and all they hold dear. I trust that they will continue to do so, and shall do everything in my power to achieve that end, as one can realise that if trouble should break out it will be years before peace can be restored. But I fear that unless something is done on the other side a breaking

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<sup>523</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Letter to Sir Samuel Hoare forwarded to the Scottish Office, July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1935.

point may be reached, and serious consequences ensue throughout a great part of Scotland.

There can now be no doubt that there has been incitement to violence and disturbance has ensued, yet those responsible for it are apparently to be allowed to continue unchecked to publicly preach a continuance of this conduct.

I would beg that you give the matter your most serious consideration, and that the danger to the commonweal which is thus being engendered should no longer be underestimated. Only by a complete understanding and an immediate and firm grasp of the situation can peace and tranquillity be preserved to the community.

In view of the seriousness of the situation, it is my intention to send a copy of this letter to each member of Parliament – and I reserve the right to publish the correspondence.<sup>524</sup>

While the Scottish Office was digesting this and initiating enquiries, Archbishop MacDonald was conducting an investigation of his own and asking for witness statements from his clergy as to the violence at the Eucharistic Congress. Many of these are still retained in the Scottish Catholic Archives. As these came in it appears that the Archbishop became even more unhappy and, with an unconscious irony, issued a lengthy statement to the press that appeared on the 12<sup>th</sup> July. In it he repeated many of the points made in the letter to Collins and reiterated his point that if widespread violence did break out it could not be laid at the door of the Catholic community. He also, in this case, made an appeal to the city itself:

The disgraceful scenes to which I have referred have become known in every quarter of the globe, and have sullied the fair name of a city which was justly regarded as a leader in all culture, thought and civilisation. It seems to me that the public of the capital of Scotland cannot regard such a result with equanimity. I am certain that the bulk of the citizens, fair minded and enlightened as I know them to be, must when the facts are brought to their knowledge regard with abhorrence the actions of what after all is a mob of the lowest elements in the city, supported by importees of a similar class from other parts of the country.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> NRS, HH1/777, MacDonald to Collins June 28<sup>th</sup> 1935.

<sup>525</sup> MacDonald's statement published in the *Scotsman*, July 12th 1935.

It was perfectly understandable that MacDonald was making a case for the authorities to arrest and try Cormack for incitement to violence and he expected the wider public to support that call. From his point of view the facts of the case were self-evident and irrefutable. Cormack and his supporters had spent the summer vilifying the Catholic Church, he had called for mass demonstrations, his language had certainly seemed to imply the threat of violence and violence had ensued. Unfortunately every word of his statement was most likely to have been music to Cormack's ears and there is no doubt that the authorities thought that he exaggerated his case. In a letter to the Scottish Office from the Lord Advocate which accompanied the Procurator Fiscal's report:

Letter from the Lord Advocate 3<sup>rd</sup> August accompanied by PF's report 2<sup>nd</sup> August  
The situation is being closely watched by the Crown Office and no case has been reported which would justify a prosecution for incitement to violence.

... The Archbishop's letter is considerably exaggerated. I suggest that in reply he be informed that the S of S has made enquiries and finds the situation is being closely watched by the criminal authorities. It might be added that the result of the enquiries show that during the period of the Congress certain disturbances took place owing to religious feeling running high and violence was used in some cases but that on the whole order was well maintained by the police and arrests were made and prosecutions followed when possible

I am arranging for any future disturbances or anything in the nature of incitement to violence being reported to the CO<sup>526</sup>

Perhaps the most telling comments on the Cormack phenomenon come in the last page of the Procurator's report:

On the question generally, there is in my view no doubt that Cormack keeps the Society alive very much through publicity. When the newspapers are not giving him paragraphs in the news columns, he rushes in with striking advertisements. He, however, apparently prefers to have the actions of the Society and its propaganda blazoned forth in the news columns, and there is little doubt but that a number of reporters play up to him in this matter. The trouble caused on

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<sup>526</sup> NRS, HH1/777.

these occasions to which I have referred was invariably very much exaggerated in the majority of the newspapers, and one can conceive that if it could be possible to stop publicity for him his whole propaganda would come to a quick and ignominious end.

The exaggeration, however, is not wholly on the part of the press. There is too considerable exaggeration on the part of His Grace the Archbishop. He went to the press with a statement on 12<sup>th</sup> July which accompanies this report.<sup>527</sup>

The procurator was not alone in his attitude. Those who had to deal with Cormack on a daily basis, the Town Council, also considered Cormack a creature of the press, and did not consider the Archbishop's public interventions helpful. In a revealing minute from a meeting of the City Magistrates Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> August to discuss a letter from the Scottish Office inviting their comments on the Archbishop's letter it was officially noted that:

There was submitted a letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> August last from the undersecretary of Scotland transmitting copy letter dated 16 July from Archbishop MacDonald and a copy of the Scottish Office reply thereto relative to events which took place in Edinburgh on the occasion of the Civic reception to the Catholic Young Men's Association and of the Eucharistic Congress. There was also submitted letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> July on the same subject from Councillor Cormack on behalf of the Protestant Action Society asking the Lord Provost to require an apology from Archbishop MacDonald for certain statements alleged to have been made by him.

After consideration the Magistrates instructed the Depute Town Clerk to reply to the Scottish Office that the corporation are satisfied that everything possible was done to meet the situation caused by the disturbances referred to, that steps considered adequate in advance to deal with any situation that might emerge and that the Authorities were quite satisfied that they have the matter well in hand, and, further resolved to take no action on the letter from the Protestant Action Society.<sup>528</sup>

What is particularly interesting is that in the letter sent to the Scottish Office is the following statement that does not appear in the minutes:

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<sup>527</sup> NRS, HH1/777.

<sup>528</sup> Edinburgh City Archives, Minutes of the Magistrates Committee 1935, p202 paragraph 29.

The view is held that the late sectarian strife is subsiding and that the less public notice taken of it the sooner it will finish. The situation, however, is not helped by certain communications which have been sent to the press. The Authorities are quite satisfied that they have the situation well in hand.<sup>529</sup>

It would seem that there had been more discussion of the issue than would appear from the minutes and the apparent consensus between the Council, the legal authorities and the Scottish Office was not to pander to Cormack's craving for publicity by making him a martyr. Legally it might have been difficult to mount a successful prosecution for incitement to violence that would stand up in court. In any case, with Cormack at the height of his notoriety, a successful case could only increase his stature while an unsuccessful one would be potentially disastrous. The approach appears to have been to officially ignore him as far as possible, while keeping a close watch on his activities and at the same time handing out especially stiff sentences to his adherents involved in violent actions. In this case the Procurator Fiscal made it clear that any such were to be dealt with in the Sheriff Court and not the police court.

I have given definite instructions to the Police that cases arising out of any of these meetings are to be reported to me, and not sent direct to the Police Court in future, as I think it very undesirable that such cases, if they are at all serious, should be dealt with by Magistrates, who are in touch with the two Councillors referred to, and who are being faced with electoral questions, and asked to take sides for or against the party which is organising much of this disturbance.<sup>530</sup>

It is clear from the press reports that fines of £10 pounds or thirty days in jail were commonplace. £10 was a substantial sum in 1935 (Cormack himself only made £4:5/- a week from the Society and his council colleague, James Marr, £2)<sup>531</sup> There is equally no doubt that they took a dim view of the Protestant Action Society and the evidence does not support the contention that were covertly in sympathy with him. As Michael Rosie points out: 'One

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<sup>529</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>530</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Procurator Fiscal's Report.

<sup>531</sup> NRS, HH1/777, Procurator Fiscal's Report.

reason for the exaggeration of the extent and effectiveness of PAS violence is the palpable shock experienced in a city relatively unused to sectarian controversy and where, until very recently, Catholic activities had been rarely publicly criticised let alone physically challenged. Archbishop MacDonald complained that the fact that a “riot...did not actually take place” in Morningside was due only to police action “deserving of the highest commendation” and to the commendable self-restraint of Catholics. He urged that further steps be taken against ‘incitement to violence.’<sup>532</sup> The scale of the remembered violence seems to have been rapidly magnified by the absence, in MacDonald’s view, of an adequately wide and sympathetic recognition of the Catholic experience. Equally Gallagher contends that: ‘Isolated and almost friendless, with Protestant Action dominating the streets, Cormack’s threat to Edinburgh Catholics seemed only too real as the hot summer of 1935 drew to a close.’ This is somewhat exaggerated also. At no time did the police lose control of the situation and the sympathies of the Edinburgh establishment were not with Cormack, however irritated they may have been MacDonald on occasion.

## *VI Conclusion*

The Cormack phenomenon had some more time to run and in 1936 saw a high point with more Protestant Action Councillors elected, although it was brief victory. Cormack himself would retain his Council seat until 1962 and would still regularly harangue passers-by at the Mound on a Sunday afternoon.<sup>533</sup> Nevertheless, the summer of 1935 remains a puzzling and almost bizarre episode in the city’s history. It certainly caused more ink to be spilt than blood to be shed and at a distance of 77 years it is still difficult to establish all the facts. The object here has been to examine the position from the perspective of those who had to deal with Cormack as an issue of public order. In many ways it was an awkward and invidious position. The authorities had obviously not taken his threats of violent disorder seriously enough. This was Edinburgh after all. On the other hand the disorder had not been all that serious and if they were seen to be mounting a prosecution at the behest of Archbishop MacDonald it could have inflamed the situation even more. MacDonald’s understandable outrage grew after the events as the tales came into his office but a more measured response than some of his statements to the press might have engendered a little more official sympathy and a little less official irritation. Cormack, to the authorities, was a rabble-rousing trouble maker, and worse,

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<sup>532</sup> M. Rosie, *Protestant Action and the Edinburgh Irish*, p150.

<sup>533</sup> The author’s mother recalls Cormack speaking at the Mound in the 1950s although by this time he had become something of a figure of fun to the younger generation.

in Edinburgh terms, an embarrassment. He was not, however, solely an embarrassment to the City. The General Assembly of May 1935 had indulged in some fairly inflammatory language of its own and now reaped, if not quite the whirlwind, an uncomfortably cold blast of reality. This had been obliquely pointed out in the *Bulletin's* editorial and expressly in the unnamed clergymen's letter to the *Scotsman*. Thirteen years of unremitting hostility to the Irish immigrant community, and by extension their religion, had resulted in violent disorder in the streets and opprobrium for the nation's capital city, all done in the ostensible defence of Protestantism. The *Menace to our Scots Nationality* had not turned out to be the Irish after all. In the words of the old saw, the Church of Scotland had 'looked upon the enemy and it was us.'



## Conclusion and Epilogue

The anti-Irish campaign in Scotland was, ultimately, a failure but was it an exercise in futility? It was undoubtedly based on pseudo-scientific racism, dubious statistics and, in some cases, sheer sectarian prejudice. Its motivation was fear – fear of the Irish certainly – but fear of Scotland also. The Great War had swept away all the certainties of the past but rather than view this as an opportunity the Kirk chose to take a reactionary path. Callum Brown has argued, ‘the sense of insecurity within Presbyterianism in the 1920s forced Protestantism on the retreat.’<sup>534</sup> The retreat was to an intellectual and social laager that saw itself surrounded by the foes of Romanism, modernism and socialism. This was not the Scotland with which these men (and women) had grown up. If the Irish were aliens then Scotland, too, was becoming alien. The ‘churchless million’ were arguably a greater threat to Presbyterianism than any number of ‘Irish Catholics’. The social and economic upheavals of the 1920s and 1930s were more responsible for the decline in the Church’s pre-eminent position as social and moral arbiter of the nation than any notion of bolshevism. The suburban and middle-class identification of the Church that roundly condemned the General Strike and Labour MPs as men ‘bringing disgrace and scandal on the house of Commons’<sup>535</sup> did little to attract working-class Scots to emptying pews. A concerted attack on the Irish did not change British immigration policy, indirectly led to some public disorder and may have unnecessarily embittered Catholic – Protestant relations for years to come. Given that unenviable record the answer to the question posed in the first sentence would appear to be an unequivocal yes. However, putting aside the ethical and moral dimension, the main argument of this thesis is that the Church case was also an extremely effective and, in some ways quite sophisticated, political campaign that came far closer to success than previous scholarship has allowed.

It could be argued that ‘almost’ does not count in politics but that would be to miss the point here. The Churches managed to put the Irish campaign high on the political agenda on several occasions between 1923 and 1935. They initiated several large scale internal enquiries and debate within Government and prompted a major press investigation by the *Glasgow Herald*. At various times the Church had influential supporters in Governments of every political persuasion who sought to convince their colleagues of their case. The intellectual arguments deployed, while distasteful, not to say repugnant in the light of subsequent world events were not considered so at the time. It should be remembered that the

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<sup>534</sup> C.G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p145.

<sup>535</sup> Reverend William Main reported in *The Scotsman* May 30<sup>th</sup> 1923.

nativist and eugenicist argument had been at the intellectual heart of the Immigration Restriction League in the United States. Those self-same arguments had been largely instrumental in persuading the largest liberal democracy in the world at the time, a nation founded entirely on immigration, to introduce a national origin quota system for immigrants. If those arguments could be successful there, there was no reason to suppose that the same case could not be successfully argued in Scotland. One of the striking things to come out of an examination of the official documents was the almost universal consensus that the Irish population in Scotland were considered a ‘problem,’ even if there was no consensus on how to deal with it. Tom Gallagher has argued that in 1935 for Walter Elliot ‘the manipulation of religious feeling was repugnant to him.’<sup>536</sup> Perhaps in 1935 it was, but that repugnance was not quite so in evidence in 1928/9 when he was attempting to persuade his party to introduce restrictions on Irish immigration and writing to Baffy Dugdale that, ‘The anti-Irish Bill...is the absolute minimum we can get away with.’<sup>537</sup>

Gallagher further argues that, ‘it would be quite wrong to assert that Scottish Tory MPs invariably adopted an Orange position on Ireland or related religious matters.’ In this he is quite correct but only up to a point. Antipathy to Irish immigration was an Orange position but it was not an exclusively Orange position. It will be noted that in this thesis there has been comparatively little mention of the Orange Order because there is no evidence to suggest, with the possible exception of Gilmour, that they had any meaningful impact at a decision-making level. There were plenty of individuals with no Orange connection who had no great love for the Irish. Ramsay MacDonald thought Irish immigration ‘a perfect scandal,’<sup>538</sup> Sir Archibald Sinclair formally reserved his right to reopen the question<sup>539</sup> and Sir Godfrey Collins produced a memorandum for the Cabinet in 1933 arguing for the restriction of Irish immigration using many of the Kirk’s points.<sup>540</sup> John Jeffrey was outraged at the Free State’s refusal to consider a reciprocal arrangement for the repatriation of paupers and take back a ‘small proportion of the “misfits.”’<sup>541</sup> Even Tom Johnston thought that the Irish of the third generation should still be classified as Irish and that ‘So long as our own

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<sup>536</sup>T. Gallagher, *The Uneasy Peace*, p149.

<sup>537</sup> NLS, Acc 12267/11, Letter to Baffy Dugdale, December 24<sup>th</sup> 1928.

<sup>538</sup> NRS, HH1/564, Letter from Ramsay MacDonald to Sir Archibald Sinclair, March 25<sup>th</sup> 1932.

<sup>539</sup> NRS, HH1/654, Memo from Sir John Lamb to Dominions Office.

<sup>540</sup> NRS, HH1/568, August 1933 Draft memorandum to Cabinet from Secretary of State for Scotland:

*Immigration from the Irish Free State and Other Dominions: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland.*

<sup>541</sup> NRS, HH1/561, Observations by John Jeffrey on the letter from The Minister of External Affairs, Irish Free State, January 21<sup>st</sup> 1932. Department of Health Scotland 8th March 1932.

folk are unemployed there should be no importation'.<sup>542</sup> The point is that for a variety of reasons, not all of them religious or even racial, the idea of restricting Irish immigration, or at the very least repatriating paupers, had its attractions for the political class of all parties and none.

The immigration argument also had international dimensions. The Empire Migration Committee of the Economic Advisory Council certainly took on board the Scottish Office's submission with regard to Irish immigration<sup>543</sup> and that submission was heavily, if not entirely influenced by the anti-Irish campaign. Certainly without the Church's persistence on the issue it is highly unlikely that such suggestions would ever have been made. The Scottish debate also informed British-Irish relations and the development of Dominion nationalism. The concept of what was, and what was not, a British subject bedevilled the whole question of the restriction of immigration, as it would the constitutional and economic wrangling between the Free State and Britain. What is interesting about this aspect of the debate is that there appears to have been much more willingness on the part of Scottish politicians and officials to consider the Irish as aliens than there was in the wider British Government. The 'immemorial policy' of allowing British subjects, no matter where they were born, free entry into the mother country did not appear to have had the same emotional resonance in Scotland as it did in Whitehall. The fact that Australia, Canada and New Zealand imposed immigration restrictions on British migrants made it seem perfectly equitable that these should be imposed in turn on Dominion citizens. It was an argument consistently made by the Scottish Office and consistently opposed by the Dominions and the Home Office. Once again this was an issue that was first seriously addressed as a direct consequence of the Church campaign. It is a question that may well have arisen on its own during the Economic War in the 1930s but it had been given a thorough airing in the previous decade and the issues raised informed the subsequent debate. What sort of a Dominion was Ireland? Did its physical proximity mean that it was a special case? If Ireland became a Republic would the imposition of immigration restriction still be, as argued by the Home Office, practically impossible to enforce? At the time of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty it was envisaged, by London at any rate, that Ireland was still firmly within the Empire. Before the Free State had reached its first birthday the Church of Scotland was effectively questioning if being within the Empire was the same as being British. Even if

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<sup>542</sup> NRS, HH1/563, Private letter from Tom Johnston To William Adamson, September 19th 1930.

<sup>543</sup> NRS, HH1/564, Economic Advisory Committee Empire Migration Committee part III (VI), Miscellaneous Questions Irish Immigration into the United Kingdom.

it were the case, was it possible to be British and still a threat to Scots nationality? It does raise the question of a possible divergence of the concept of Britishness in the immediate aftermath of the Great War.

Why was the Irish community in Scotland the recipient of so much of this attention? It has been argued at the beginning of this thesis that the Irish War of Independence made the Irish community visible in Scotland in a way that it had not previously been. Certainly they appeared a lot more threatening than they had previously. Prior to 1914 the common middle-class perception, or misperception, of the Irish was of a convenient cheap labour force; with an unfortunate predilection for strong drink and brawling, priest ridden undoubtedly, but useful nonetheless. Those that had the vote could be counted on to provide it solidly for the Liberals, as much as their Orange counterparts could be counted on for the Unionists. This was not a particularly sophisticated understanding of the Irish in Scotland but at the high noon of Empire prosperity for Scotland there were not that many that felt the need to make the effort. The very insularity of the Irish population did not help alter this view. As ‘strangers in a strange land’<sup>544</sup> the natural tendency to keep to themselves and look to their own institutions, in this case the Catholic Church, did little to advance their absorption into the mainstream of Scottish society or dispel the common anti-Irish prejudices. Even the Scottish Catholic Church was less than enthusiastic about their presence. Despite this the Irish were not unduly threatening. Certainly, the successive Home Rule crises impinged on Scottish politics but with a large part of the country solidly Liberal the Irish could even be viewed as allies in some quarters. There were many in Scotland who viewed Carson with as much askance as others did Redmond, despite attempts to appeal to a common Covenanting tradition between Scotland and Ulster.

The Irish War changed that perception radically. The Irish were no longer just an ‘other’ they were a dangerous ‘other.’ As the economic position worsened and unemployment rose there was a natural disposition to protect one’s own and a less forgivable tendency to turn on a minority. Why should Scots be forced to compete in a shrinking job market with a dangerous, disloyal alien group who drove down living standards with their willingness to undercut wages? Why should hard pressed rate payers and taxpayers be forced to support the non-indigenous poor? Why should the law-abiding majority tolerate a criminally disposed foreign underclass? Why should this group’s religion be given apparently exceptional privileges in education at public expense? From the source of cheap labour that had provided

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<sup>544</sup>T. Gallagher *The Uneasy Peace* pp 42-86

much of the basic muscle power that had allowed Scotland's industrial expansion the Irish were now a luxury the country could no longer afford. At the very least no more should be allowed entry. It was a simple but effective argument, which is probably why it has been used, to a greater or lesser extent, against almost every migrant group in the United Kingdom ever since, and is still brought out by certain sections of the popular press to this day. It may have been a 'straw man' argument applied to an entire ethnic group, but it was populist and plausible and in fairness to its advocates they undoubtedly genuinely believed it. The Church and Nation Committee certainly went to great lengths to prove it statistically. Dr White argued the case from a moral and modern scientific standpoint. The moral may have been dubious and the 'science' a nonsense but there is the danger of being anachronistic here. At the time it was a highly respectable argument. It had the added attraction of being an apparent solution to the economic woes of the time. With politicians struggling with unprecedented levels of unemployment anything that could provide even a partial remedy had it appeal. Even when it had been conclusively and repeatedly proven that high Irish immigration was a myth, and publicly exposed as such, that they were no more disposed to pauperism, criminality or lunacy than any other section of the population, the issue was constantly re-examined for some possible way in which action could be seen to be taken.

This raises two vital points. Firstly, as stated above, there were those who sympathised with the anti-Irish case and secondly that, as far as the Scottish Office was concerned, they were sensitive to the pressure being brought to bear by the Churches. The evidence presented here suggests that it would be wrong to assert that politicians and officials were hostile or indifferent to the Kirk's representations. Why should this have been the case? The 19<sup>th</sup> century idea of blaming the poor for their poverty still had a conceptual hold on middle class opinion and whatever else the majority of the 'Irish' population was at the time they were largely poor. Classical liberal economics as well as Victorian concepts of class and race were as much a part of the intellectual make-up of the Scottish Office as they were of the General Assembly. They were men (and in this case largely men) who were a product of their time and if the times were changing they had not changed yet.

This thesis has set out to provide another narrative to the anti-Irish campaign. This is not to say that it is an alternative narrative to that of previous scholars or indeed the definitive one. It is hoped that it is a complimentary one. As was pointed out in the introduction much of the historiography concerned with religion and Scots-Irish relations in this period has tended to come from a particularly West of Scotland viewpoint. The aim here has been to approach the period from an alternative perspective, that of the political and official establishment. The

thesis has sought to demonstrate that this was much more complex question for decision makers than a simple reluctance to get involved in the issues. In the process this has required the examination of some fairly dense archival material but it has brought to light some surprising, and hitherto quite unsuspected actions and attitudes of some of the major Scottish political figures of the inter-war period many of whom were not previously thought to be concerned in the issue. In concluding a thesis one is also acutely aware of the questions that remain unanswered rather than of the ones that have been. It is especially so in this case when so many promising, and unexpected, avenues of enquiry have been opened up that for reasons of time and space (and in some cases economics) it was not possible to pursue. For example a thorough re-examination of the Ramsay MacDonald's papers with a view to establishing his private views on Irish immigration may well provide a fresh perspective on British-Irish relations at the beginning of the 'Economic war'. It is not an area that has been explored by any of his biographers perhaps because they did not recognise the significance. It has been pointed out here that there was a particular Scottish input on this issue and one which could be profitably further investigated. Equally the relationship between the State, Kirk and commerce on the question of Irish, or indeed Roman Catholic employment between the wars would bear further examination. The Church Interests Committee was instructed by the General Assembly to pursue the matter with Scottish employers, as indeed the Scottish Office had been encouraged to do by Joynson-Hicks. As yet the 'smoking gun' of archival evidence has not been found, but given some of the material discussed here it is perhaps time for another search. There is, of course the last of the great conundrum of the period, the comparative silence of the Catholic Church. A possible explanation has been advanced here but it is still an area that requires further enquiry. Sadly, at the time of writing, proposals are afoot to disperse the Catholic archives currently based at Columba House which would make this an even more difficult proposition. It may well be that some of the answers lie in the Vatican archives.

This thesis ends prior to the outbreak of war because it closes a particular chapter in the history of the anti-Irish campaign. This section of the thesis, however, is entitled conclusion and epilogue for a reason. There are still other chapters to be written. The effect of Irish neutrality in Scotland during the Second World War; the position of the post war Kirk and the political tensions between the traditionalists and the modernisers; the rise of a catholic middle-class and its relationship with the Catholic Church are but some of the issues yet to be fully explored. The history of the Irish in Scotland in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is yet

to be written. It is hoped that what has been discussed here will provide at least one starting point for that history.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix One**

#### **National Records of Scotland HH1/541 Church and Nation Committee of the Church of Scotland Pamphlet on Irish Immigration in Scotland**

#### **Open letter to Sir John Gilmour December 1925**

Sir,

In accordance with a remit from the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church, and the Free Church, and after consultation with other Churches, we desire to approach His Majesty's Government upon a question of vital importance to our Scottish people – viz., the serious situation that has arisen in Scotland owing to the influx during the last number of years of many thousands of Irish immigrants, and to the emigration of many thousands of the native population.

While migration under normal circumstances may be a good thing, we are convinced that the situation in Scotland to-day is such that there is urgent need for the regulation thereof in the interests of the Scottish nation.

Our reason for this is that the process of unregulated migration out of and into Scotland in the past has brought about a situation where there is the danger of the control of the affairs of their own country passing out of the hands of the Scottish people, and even to the endangering of the continued existence of Scottish nationality and civilisation.

If this were for the good of Scotland, if it were the case of an inferior race being supplanted by a superior race, however unpalatable it might be, we would be compelled to resign ourselves to it.

But we are convinced that the very opposite is the case; that a law abiding, thrifty and industrious race is being supplanted by immigrants whose presence tends to lower the social conditions, and to undermine that spirit of independence which has so long been a characteristic of the Scottish people, and we are of the opinion that, in justice to our own people steps should be taken to prevent the situation becoming worse.

We recognise the fact that the presence of the immigrants referred to was due originally to a demand for their labour. They accepted lower wages and were satisfied with poorer conditions of life and work, and by doing so have doubtless helped Scotland to win her present place among industrial nations. We have no desire to do anything in the nature of injustice to those whose services the country has accepted, and who have now settled down

and made their homes in our midst. With the question of the price Scotland has paid for these services, in the drain on her public and philanthropic funds, in the creation of slums in her large industrial centres, and in the increase of the legal machinery necessary to deal with this immigrant population, not to mention the demoralising effect on her own people, we will deal later. The point that we would draw attention to here is that, though there is now no longer any demand for immigrant labour – in fact there are many tens of thousands walking the streets idle – they are still coming in. It has been stated in the House of Commons that 9,000 persons immigrated to Scotland in 1924, and yet there are as many as 70,000 unemployed persons in Glasgow alone. And it is a fact that, thanks to the influence of Irish foremen, recent immigrants are often able to secure a job which there are thousands of Scotsmen competent and willing to take.<sup>545</sup>

Apart from the financial aspect of the question, this constitutes a very grave injustice to our own working people, who are beginning to feel that the position is growing hopeless that their only chance of a decent livelihood is to emigrate, with the result that the industrial areas are being largely recruited from a people whose whole social, mental and moral outlook is on a lower plane than that of the stalwart sons and daughters of our native hills and glens. Already many of the larger towns in this industrial area are one third Irish. We refer you to such towns as Coatbridge, Wishaw, and Dumbarton, which are examples of what is happening all through the populous and wealth producing counties of Renfrew, Dumbarton and Lanark, where there seems unfortunately only too good reason to believe that in the not very distant future the Scottish race may actually be in the minority. For wherever the Irish population tends to dominate, the Scottish population will not stay.

The Scot, who as a colonist is eagerly sought after by all the Dominions and by America, is being driven from his own shores and his place taken by an immigrant who makes a very much less satisfactory citizen. That is not only our own opinion, but finds striking corroboration in an official inquiry in the United States of America. The Congressional Committee that conducted that inquiry furnished statistics which proved that, while the Balkans and Russia provided undesirable immigrants, Ireland provided the most undesirable of all. Under the heading of “Dependence on the Community or Pauperism” Ireland contributed nearly six and a half times its normal quota.

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<sup>545</sup> We know of a recent case where an Irish foreman was dismissing Scotsman and engaging Irishmen, and was even bringing men over from Ireland and putting them on the job.

We have known cases where public schemes undertaken to provide work for our own unemployed have been partially recruited from immigrants of a few weeks and months standing.

The result of this inquiry is seen in recent legislation with regard to immigration into the United States. At present the British quota is 34,000 and the Irish quota 28,367. In 1927 the British and North of Ireland quota is to be 83,000 and that of the Irish Free State only 8,000. America is anxious to have a larger number of British (including Scottish) immigrants, but she has determined ruthlessly to cut down the number from the Irish Free State. What the result of this will be on Scotland is only too manifest. It means large numbers of those refused admission to the United States will come to Scotland. The 8,000 to be admitted from the Irish Free State will, we may be sure, be the best of those who apply, and Scotland will get those that America does not want. If the situation is bad at present, it promises to become very much worse before very long.

The following are some of the figures upon which our conclusions are based:-

Between 1881 and 1901 Irish population increased by 32 ½%

“	“	“	Scottish	“	“	18 ½%
“	1901	1921	Irish	“	“	39%
“	“	“	Scottish	“	“	6% (sic)

And since 1921, as is manifest from the returns of the Registrar-General for Scotland, the same tendency still prevails. There is evidence of a persistent decrease in the numbers of the Scottish race, and a steady increase in the numbers of the Irish race.

This disproportion cannot be explained by the difference in the birth rate. Our inquiry leads us to believe that the birth rate among the Scottish working class is as high as among the Irish.

As regards the general thriftlessness of the Irish people, and the readiness with which they seek financial relief, we have made extensive enquiry from those who administer parochial, municipal and philanthropic funds, and the opinion is unanimous that, out of all proportion to their numbers, they are a heavy financial burden to the community. In Glasgow, for example, where they number about 25% of the population, they account for about 70% of the relief funds. And the anomalous position is that, though recent immigrants from the Irish Free State become chargeable to the parish, no claim can be made against their native parish. In theory they may be repatriated on a Sheriff's warrant, but in practice the law is ineffective, as they just come back again.

From judicial statistics it is clear that this immigrant population is responsible for crime again out of all proportion to its numbers. Those describing themselves as “Irish” contributed 33% to the “convictions” in 1920, and 29% in 1921. It does not seem clear whether in these returns the term “Irish” means “born in Ireland” or “of Irish extraction”. Those “born in

Ireland” constitute about 3 1/3% of the population of Scotland: those of “Irish extraction” about 14%. So that in either case this immigrant population is proved to be excessively productive of crime. In fact, we are convinced that, if anything it is an underestimate to say that in proportion to their numbers, they are three times as productive of crime as the rest of the population.

Such are the people who are gradually taking possession of our native land. Meanwhile what is happening to our own people? In 1922, 31,014 left our shores for lands overseas: in 1923, 71,042; in 1924, 80,000. It might be argued that what is Scotland’s loss is the Empire’s gain. But that is not wholly true. From July to November 1924 it is estimated that, while 25,000 Scots emigrated to Canada, 30,000 went to the United States of America. America was the chief gainer and not the British Empire.

These tens of thousands of emigrants, representing some of the finest young manhood and womanhood of Scotland, have left our shores for good; and the tragedy of it is that many of them might have been kept at home, and found ample scope for their Scottish grit and stamina in our industrial areas. Instead of which this great race movement is allowed to continue, and Scotland is being gradually divided into two great racial camps, different in ideals, with different traditions, and with widely diverging characteristics. These two races do not fuse to any appreciable extent. The tendency is the very reverse. The Irish race in Scotland keep largely by themselves, and their habits are such that our Scottish people do not readily mingle with them. The condition is such as to make the danger of racial strife and hatred very real.

We wish it to be understood that our criticism of the Irishman in this statement refers to the unsatisfactory type of immigrant into this country, and is not meant to apply to the Irish people as a whole.

In view of the above considered statement, we would respectfully urge upon His Majesty’s Government to institute an inquiry into the whole subject, and thereafter to take such action as may seem to them to be necessary or desirable.

We remain

Sir,

Your humble Servants

John White, *Joint-Convenor*

J. M’N. Frazer, *Hon. Secretary*

## **Appendix Two**

### **National Records of Scotland, HH1/541**

#### **Irish Immigration Briefing Paper for the Secretary of State for Scotland 24th December 1926**

Note for the Secretary of State's use at Deputation from the General Assembly's Committee on Church Nation with regard to Irish Immigration – Edinburgh 24 September, 1926.

##### Previous history of the question

The question has not so far had much Parliamentary prominence. In February, 1925, Mr Stephen Mitchell asked for statistics as to the number of immigrants from the South of Ireland to Glasgow and the West of Scotland and was told that the information was not available; and in July, 1925, Sir Alexander Sprot called attention by a question to the fact that Irish Free Staters, their country having acquired Dominion status, could not be deported nor the cost of their maintenance be recovered.

##### Memorial of the Church of Scotland Committee on Church and Nation.

In December 1925, the Church of Scotland Committee on Church and Nation forwarded a memorial on the subject and asked for a reception of a deputation. The main points put forward were as follows:-

I. The proportion of Scottish folk in Scotland is decreasing and that of Irish increasing, since Scots emigrate largely to places outside the British Empire, and the Irish immigrate.

Apart from other reasons immigration of Irish into Scotland is increased by –

- (a) the practice of Irish foremen to give jobs to compatriots;
- (b) the restriction of Irish immigration into the United States of America.

The proportion of Irish in the population is especially noticeable in large industrial towns such as Coatbridge, Wishaw and Dumbarton.

II. The results are:-

- (a) general lowering of social conditions;
- (b) competition with Scottish unemployed;
- (c) heavy burden on poor, etc., funds without the possibility of deportation or recovery of cost of maintenance;
- (d) filling of prisons;
- (e) danger of social strife;

Information on the subject from Government Departments etc.,

I. The Registrar General reports that –

- (a) at the 1921 Census there were fewer born-in Ireland persons enumerated in Scotland than at the 1911 census;
- (b) the percentage of Roman Catholic marriages is growing, but only slowly

II. The Prison Commissioners report that, while the criminal statistics do not distinguish persons of Irish extraction as opposed to persons born in Ireland, the number of Roman Catholic prisoners who may be taken to be for the most part of Irish birth or extraction is a high proportion of the total, and they say that there is no doubt that a very large section of the criminal population is Irish.

III. A report by the Scottish Board of Health shows that –

- (a) The number of Irish-born persons in receipt of ordinary poor relief has not grown recently; it is less than it was in 1910 and the percentage of the total number chargeable (excluding able-bodied unemployed) is also less.

The figures, as at 15.5.25, were:-

9,300 Irish chargeable, excluding able bodied,

= 7.1% of total

1,844 Irish able-bodied chargeable with 4,542 dependents = 8.4% of total able bodied + dependents

At the census of 1921 there were 159,020 Irish born persons in Scotland, about 3% of the population.

As regards the employment of Irishmen in Scotland, the Scottish Board of Health hold that there is reason to think that men from Ireland secure, in the face of serious unemployment in Scotland, some of the low paid work there, especially in industrial areas in the Clyde valley.

IV.

The Glasgow Inspector of Poor reports that the position is now much the same as it was in January, 1925, when figures for 20 parishes showed that there were therein 1,206 Irish Free Staters, who would have been removed to Ireland but for the Dominion status of the Irish Free State. To check the influx of Irish the Glasgow council decided to refuse to relieve Irish immigrants before they had been three months in Scotland.

The Association of Poor Law Unions, after communication with the Scottish Poor Law authorities, recently approached the Ministry of Health with a view to reciprocal legislation with the Irish Free State for the repatriation of paupers.

The Dominions Office have told the Ministry of Health that they were ready to recommend such reciprocal arrangements to the Irish Free State, but could not guarantee that the Free State Government would agree; as a first step they suggested investigation by English and Scottish departments and possibly an inter-departmental conference.

It would appear that although the figures above cited supplied by Scottish Departments do not reveal a very serious state of affairs, there certainly is an Irish problem in the South West of Scotland, and that there has been one for some time. There is no doubt that the Irish impose an undue burden upon poor law authorities and that too great a proportion of the prison population is of Irish birth or extraction: and, further, it seems that Irish, (sic) whether by accepting lower wages and worse conditions or through the action of compatriot foreman, obtain employment in the face of serious unemployment among Scotsmen.

It is doubtful whether there has recently been any serious intensification of the problem, but there are two important factors of which the influence may prove greater as time goes on. These are –

(i) The acquisition of Dominion status by the Irish Free State and the consequent inability to repatriate pauper Irish:

(ii) The check put by the United States of America upon Irish immigration.

Any mitigation of (ii) is probably out of the question, but something may be done with regard to (i) In the past pauper Irish could be repatriated from Scotland to Ireland (but not vice versa). That is now impossible since the Free State was constituted and the difficulty is that it is doubtful whether the Free State would agree to reciprocal arrangements for repatriation, such as suggested by the Poor Law Unions, for presumably more Irishmen would fall to be repatriated than Englishmen or Scotsmen. It would appear to be desirable, as the Dominions Office suggest, for the problem to be investigated first by English and Scottish Departments in consultation before the Free State Government is approached.

It is of course possible for immigration from the Free State either by itself or along with immigration from other Dominions to be restricted by Statute, and this possibility has been kept in view, as is shown by the attached copy of a memorandum by Captain Elliot dated 7th July, 1925.

The Deputation might be informed that the matter is receiving the careful consideration of the Secretary of State in consultation with other Departments interested, and it might be pointed out in this connection that the question affects England as well as Scotland.

Scottish Office

September 1926.

## **Appendix Three**

### **National Records of Scotland HH1/556 Elliot Strategy Document**

#### **Major Elliot February - April 1929 Scottish Government Factors which must be considered before the General Election**

A re-examination of Scottish government and its relation to the United Kingdom Parliament is imminent. The governing fact of the situation is that two parties out of three are definitely committed to the proposition of a legislature for Scotland. These two parties have almost for twenty years or more, held a majority of Scottish seats, and even when they have not, as in the present Parliament, they practically balance the Conservatives. It is not within the range of practical politics to suppose that this situation will be altered to the Conservative advantage in the forthcoming election.

The imminence of the situation arises from the fact that Ireland is now out of the way. The existence of the Irish problem meant that the Scottish question was entirely academic. The Conservative party was opposed to Home Rule on principle, and the Liberal party recognised that, in fact Irish Home Rule would require all the power of at least one Parliament. Any establishment of a Scottish legislature was accordingly always at least one or possibly two General Elections away, and this meant that for all parties it was shelved indefinitely.

This 'shelving' factor does not now exist. Do we recognise, however, that this means that the establishment of a Scottish legislature is thus brought forward as a possibility not of the next ten years, but as a possibility of the next eighteen months? Both Liberal and Labour parties are deeply pledged to the proposal of such a measure, and resolutions in its favour have been repeatedly carried in Parliament, with their official support, over many years. I do not know that the Conservative party has recently made any clear statement of policy on the matter.

It is not necessary to consider the prospects of the General Election, save to say that in any election, there are three possibilities of a clear majority against the Government, or even with an indeterminate situation, it may be taken that the combined Labour and Liberal representation in Scotland would exceed the Conservative. In either of these cases a Scottish Home Rule Bill would almost automatically be brought forward in the first year of the new Parliament. I do not think that it is a matter on which English Conservative members feel themselves bound on principle. They would certainly demand a very clear and reasoned lead from Scottish Conservatives, and they would attach more weight than usual to the attitude of non-party men and of the press.

But even in the event of a clear Government majority there are several factors which demand very close examination. The first is in the existence of the Scottish Grand Committee. This Committee is a constitutional anomaly of the first magnitude. It is a committee (so called) which does not represent the composition of its parent body. It is also a committee to which a mass of important business stands automatically referred, which business cannot be considered elsewhere, save by explicitly waiving the definite procedure laid down by the house. The Committee has the unfettered right of coming to decisions in conflict with the presumed wishes of the main body, and the main body has the equally unfettered right of overturning these decisions (on report). It is clear that this Committee has power without responsibility, and all the ingredients for friction are present and must at some time become active.

As has been pointed out earlier, the normal relation of parties in Scotland under present conditions is much closer to the Liberal Labour majority than is the case in England. The return of a purely Conservative administration at once makes this apparent. The most recent and most useful example was the return of the Bonar Law Government. Here the Conservative party had a majority of about 80, a comfortable working majority. The Scottish representation made Labour the largest single Scottish party (it approached in fact a majority over both other parties combined) and left the Government with such a negligible minority that it was impossible for it to face the Scottish Grand Committee at all.

That Parliament came to a sudden end and the full implications of the situation did not become apparent. Mr F C Thomson and myself, however, who with Mr Patrick Ford were at that time responsible for Scottish business in the Commons, had the precariousness of our position deeply impressed upon us. The difficulties in the first year were dealt with by 'tacking' carried to almost absurd lengths. (The prolongation of payments of relief to Scottish able-bodied unemployed for instance, was tacked to a bill regulating London inter-borough finance.) I do not think that affairs could thus have continued for a whole Parliament, and in fact the then Secretary for Scotland had had to consider the only logical step. That is, the abolition of the Scottish Grand Committee.

Scottish Members will readily realise the extreme difficulty of taking any such step in the 1929 Parliament, as practically the first proposal of the new administration towards the Scottish. Only the Chief Whip can give any firm estimation of the possibilities of such a situation arising, but it would seem that unless we do better in 1929 than we did in 1924, it is certainly highly probable. (The added members reflect the proportion of the house, and cannot be relied on for so heavy a Conservative weighting in the next Parliament as this.)

English Members would certainly look askance at such a step. The arguments of congesting the business of Parliament would be urged with much force. They would also feel they are being led into an untenable position. It is therefore improbable that this step would be taken. The machine would no doubt be made to run for some time by tacking, by stringent use of financial resolutions, and by taking vital business in Committee of the whole House. But it would leave the Government open to all sorts of humiliations for its own business, and at the mercy of the Oppositions for any Private Members Bills brought in, of which a Scottish Home Rule Bill would be amongst the earliest.

In all this I have said nothing of the Nationalist movement in Scotland. It is undesirable to emphasise new developments unduly. All the factors which I have enumerated were present in 1923. But the new movement at least does not point to any weakening in the autonomist position. It seems to me possible that the anti-Government swing of the pendulum may lead to a certain number of the disgruntled finding in the 'Nationalist' label a handy compromise, of the same kind as that which leads to the return of independent Members when discontent is about, and when no alternative Government exists.

The Nationalist movement however contains two elements naturally opposed whose temporary union has given them strength. These elements are the 'Gaelic-Irish' and the 'Edinburgh Protestant'. The 'Gaelic Irish' are the literary men and some of them, such as Compton Mackenzie, preach the re-constitution of Scotland on a Roman Catholic basis. Needless to say this is an anathema to the East-country men and the Kirks. It would be easy to split these two. The steps hereafter detailed would do so. But it is probable that Unionist action along the lines previously considered might consolidate them.

In any case it is clear that several members will have Nationalist candidates run against them at the next election and that very clear pronouncements will be demanded from all of us.

The essence of the relationship between the two kingdoms is finance. It is for consideration whether Conservatives should not be prepared to set up a Royal Commission on the relationship between the two countries with special reference to finance. It would be no use, of course, to set up such a commission unless the Conservative party were prepared to accept fully its findings, and give legislative effect to them if desirable- in fact to envisage a Conservative Home Rule Bill- for that is what it might lead to.

But the proposal of a Royal Commission might be taken as simply a device to shelve indefinitely an awkward problem. It would not be so in fact, since, as has been shown, the permanent factors of the situation will remain and will demand some action. Is there any

immediate line we can take for the coming campaign? I think there is. Consider the present situation of the labour market in relation to immigration. We have a mass of unemployed labour comparable to a refugee problem. We are appealing right and left for charity, and are quite rightly pleased with every dozen or so men we can transfer into other districts and other employments. We take advantage of the demand for seasonal labour in Canada to move 8,000 men to and fro across the Atlantic.

These facts seem to me the justifiable basis for suspending overseas immigration altogether at present, (that is to say Irish immigration). As all Scots Members know this goes much deeper than any surface or temporary questions and indeed accounts for a large proportion of the autonomist movement.

Hitherto it has been difficult to see what practical steps could be taken to give effect to any such policy. The administrative problem seems however capable of solution along the following lines

1. Use the machinery of unemployment insurance and refuse to issue a new insurance book to any save scheduled classes of applicants (home born). This at once gets rid of any 'Ellis Island' immigration control station difficulties, and gives a scale of penalties for contravention. Precedent exists for this in the present limitation of entry into the mines, and to some extent in limitation for entry into sugar beet factories.
2. Defend this on the basis that the insurance fund balances at some figure, (I believe 800,000, 900,000) but certainly far below the existing figure. Promise, if desired, to review the situation, or even to withdraw the embargo, when unemployment falls to that figure.
3. Leave immigration open to all countries within an Unemployment Insurance scheme. This obviates difficulties with England and Northern Ireland.
4. Introduce Scottish legislation making paupers chargeable to their country of origin and accepting the same responsibility for Scottish paupers overseas.

To sum up

1. The position of Scotland vis-à-vis England will come up for review at a very early date
2. The existence of the Scottish Grand Committee makes it impossible to allow things to drift
3. The Conservative Party must be able to make some clear statement of its position
4. Scottish members are hereby asked to consider the desirability of:-

- A) A Royal Commission on the relations between the two countries, not blinking the fact that it might report in favour of some sort of autonomy.
- B) An embargo on immigration worked through Unemployment Insurance, not blinking the fact that this would be an embargo on Irish immigration and would raise all the questions of race, religion and our own emigration overseas.
- C) Legislation laying down reciprocal responsibility for paupers, again recognising that this would involve mainly the Irish Free State.

#### Appendix Four

#### National Records of Scotland HH1/563 Final memo submitted to the Economic Advisory Council Committee of Empire Migration signed by William Adamson dated October 1930.

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland on Irish Migration into Scotland

1. During the past few years strong representations have been made to me and my predecessor in office by the Church of Scotland, the United Free Church, and by others, in favour of legislation to enable Irish immigration into Scotland to be regulated and to provide for the repatriation of immigrants who become dependent on public funds. It has been argued in support of these proposals :-

- (a) That there is already a large Irish population in Scotland:
- (b) That Irish immigration into Scotland is continuing on an unduly large scale:
- (c) That the Irish population does not assimilate with the Scots:
- (d) That the Irish population is less independent than the native population and gives rise to a disproportionately heavy burden on the poor rates and on public funds generally:
- (e) That the Irish population in Scotland is less orderly than the native population and is responsible for an undue proportion of crime:
- (f) That their low standard of living enables them to accept employment at low rates of wages, thereby under cutting Scotsmen who are being driven to emigrate from Scotland.

2. As regards these contentions:-

- (a) The following table gives particulars as to the Irish born persons in Scotland at the last three Censuses

Census	Total population of Scotland	Number of Irish born persons	Decrease in inter - Censal period	Percentage of Irish born population
1901	4,472,103	205,064	-	4.59%
1911	4,760,904	174,715	30,349	3.67%
1921	4,882,497	159,020	15,695	3.26%

The figures in column 4 show that there was a decrease in the number of persons of Irish birth in each of the inter Censal periods. Further information on this point will be furnished by the 1931 Census.

(Marginal note in pencil: The original Para (a) gave most of this information in narrative form. It has now been put in tabular form).

The above figures do not of course give a complete picture of the Irish element in the Scottish population, since they do not include the Scottish born descendants of

ancestors who came from Ireland. Information as to the number of such descendants is not available.

(Marginal note: The original had for ancestors ‘parents who were born in’).

- (b) No definite figures are available to show the extent of immigration into Scotland from Ireland during the present or recent years. During the first 5 months of 1930 approximately 390 persons arrived at Scottish ports from Irish Free State ports in excess of the number of persons who arrived at Irish Free State ports from Scottish Ports. On the other hand, during the year 1929 the persons arriving at Scottish ports from the Irish Free State ports were 251 fewer than the persons moving in the contrary direction ( this has been confirmed by information contained in the Irish Free State returns). During the 5 years 1925 – 1929 the persons arriving at Scottish from Irish Free State ports exceeded those going to Irish Free State ports from Scottish ports by 6,136. Deductions however can only be drawn from these figures with much reserve. The figures (which are collected by the Board of Trade) relate to passenger movement and not actual migration. There is no record of numbers actually travelling between ports in Northern Ireland and Scotland (which may be substantial) (marginal note: These words did not appear in the original memo), or of the movement over the land frontier between the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, and there is no record of the number of migrants who may proceed from Ireland to Scotland and vice versa via English ports. There is, however, undoubtedly some migration from the Irish Free State into Scotland via ports in Northern Ireland such as Belfast and Portrush or via England. (Marginal note This sentence did not appear in the original memo).

A summary of information furnished by the Ministry of labour in July, 1930, which tends to indicate that there is little evidence of any pronounced volume of immigration at the present time from the Irish Free State to Scotland, is contained in appendix 1 to this memorandum.

- (c) This is to some extent a matter of opinion. But insofar as Irish immigrants into Scotland are of Roman Catholic denomination there is no doubt that there is a strong tendency, in the absence of any considerable Scottish Roman Catholic population, towards intermarriage of Irish immigrants, and that this is accompanied by the formation of ‘colonies’ of Irishmen in various parts of the country, particularly Lanark, Dumbarton and Renfrew.
- (d) The following statistics regarding Irish born paupers in Scotland have been furnished by the Department of Health for Scotland

Year	Irish – born persons (percentage of total population)	Irish born paupers (percentage of total number of paupers)
1911	3.67%	7.9%
1921	3.26%	6.8%
1929	(see below)	7.4%

(Marginal note: In the original memo this information was given in narrative form. It has now been put in tabular form)

Although definite figures as to the total population and the total number of Irish-born persons in Scotland during the years 1929 are not available, there seems little reason to doubt that the pauperism percentage remains, as in past years, much in excess of the population percentage. On the other hand it may be noted that in no year from 1921 onwards has the percentage of Irish pauperism in Scotland reached the level (7.9%) which it attained in 1911.

Opportunity has also been taken to consider to what extent Irish born persons, and Roman Catholics, contribute to the population of lunatic asylums in Scotland. The following figures have been supplied by the General Board of Control for Scotland:-

		Total No of lunatics	No. of Irish Born	% of Irish born to total	No. of Roman Catholics	% of Roman Catholics to total
Nov 1928	Private lunatics	3,105	135	4.3%	159	5.1%
Nov 1928	Pauper Lunatics	14,394	936	6.5%	2,168	15%
July 1930	Private lunatics	2,912	121	4.2%	155	5.3%
July 1930	Pauper lunatics	14,744	914	6.2%	2,267	15.4%

- (e) As regards the total numbers of convicted prisoners, Borstal inmates and criminal lunatics in Scotland, information collected by the Prisons Department for Scotland shows that the percentages of Irish born persons in recent years have been as follows:-

1925	25.2%
1926	22.7%
1927	22.1%
1928	20.7%
1929	20.1%
1930	17.1%

These percentages include persons born in Ireland and persons born elsewhere if the father is Irish. The figures bear out the contention that in Scotland the Irish population is responsible for an undue proportion of crime. At the same time it will be seen that from 1925 onwards this proportion has progressively diminished.

It may be mentioned that the figures for the first six months of 1930 indicate that, of the total number of persons (1,180) included in the proportion of 17.1% approximately half were born in the Irish Free State or elsewhere of Free State fathers: approximately half were born in Northern Ireland or elsewhere of Northern Ireland fathers.

- (f) No definite information is available to indicate the average wage received by Irish born persons employed in Scotland. During the 5 years 1925 – 1929, however, 211,899 persons emigrated from Scotland to places out of Europe presumably to seek employment or better their condition – while during that period, as indicated in (b) above, there is reason to suppose that a number of persons may have migrated from the Irish Free State to Scotland. Further, information supplied by the Scottish Education Department indicates that during recent years the enrolment of pupils in Roman Catholic Schools in Scotland shows a marked tendency to increase, whereas enrolments in other schools are decreasing. The total average enrolment of Roman Catholic schools in Scotland rose progressively from 71,293 in 1901-02 to 123,430 in 1928-29. The total average enrolments of other schools in Scotland was 713,662 in 1901-02 and rose to 756,491 in 1919 – 20 but fell to 696,109 in 1928-1929. The following figures give the percentage of the total school population, in the years specified, attending Roman Catholic and other schools respectively:-

	Roman Catholic Schools	Other Schools
1901 - 02	9.1%	90.9%
1910 – 11	10.9%	89.1%
1919 – 20	13.1%	86.9%
1928 – 29	15.1%	84.9%

As the Roman Catholic Schools are mainly recruited from persons of Irish descent, the school figures point to a rapid multiplication of the Irish population in Scotland, in spite of bad trade and falling wages.

In this connection reference may also be made to the seasonal movement of Agricultural workers in considerable numbers to Scotland from Ireland. It is understood that one potato firm alone employ from 300 to 400 Irish workers for 9 or 10 months in each year. (Marginal note: These words are new and the words ‘and vice versa’ after Ireland in the original Memo have been deleted.) Information furnished by the Department of Agriculture for Scotland on this subject in July 1930, is contained in appendix II to this memorandum.

- As regards repatriation to Ireland of persons who become chargeable to the poor rates in Scotland, this is possible by statutory process as between Scotland and Northern Ireland; but following on the Irish Free State (Consequential Adaptation of Enactments) Order, 1923, warrants authorising the removal to the Irish Free State of paupers born there can no longer be obtained by Scottish Poor law Authorities, and

removals to the Irish Free State can only be effected on a voluntary basis. Negotiations with a view to arranging for reciprocal repatriation of persons who had become chargeable to the poor rates were entered into some years ago with the Irish Free State, but no settlement has been reached.

4. As regards control of migration from Northern Ireland or from the Irish Free State to Scotland, this would be a matter of great practical difficulty owing to the variety of possible routes, and the opportunities for evasion. Further, it would involve a departure from the immemorial policy of allowing British subjects, from whatever Dominion to enter Great Britain freely.

As an alternative, it has been suggested that control might be exercised through legislation prohibiting for a term of years the employment of any person arriving in Great Britain after a specified date who had not obtained a permit from the Ministry of Labour. The permit would specify a particular occupation and a particular employer, and no such permit would be issued if workmen capable of performing the work were available locally, or could be made available from other Employment Exchanges. The proposal, of course, involves the taking of power to remove an immigrant found to be in contravention of the scheme.

5. The information available about immigration from the Irish Free State to Scotland cannot be regarded as conclusive but taken as a whole it appears to indicate that there is no very pronounced volume of such immigration at the present time: and that the growth of the Roman catholic element in Scotland (as evidenced, for example, by the school population figures) is due to the rapid multiplication of relatively old established 'colonies' in Scotland, rather than to any existing substantial volume of immigration from the Irish Free State.

Nevertheless, I consider that the reciprocal arrangements for repatriation of paupers, mentioned in paragraph 3 above, should be restored.

The existence in Scotland of considerable State benefits, such as Health and Unemployment Insurance, State-aided housing schemes, unemployment relief schemes, etc., is a matter which will require careful consideration in connection with the forgoing questions. ( Marginal Note: The words after etc., have been substituted for the following words which appeared in the original memorandum "appears to render it not unreasonable that provisions should be made whereby the right to draw insurance benefits should not emerge until a considerable period of employment has elapsed").

## **Appendix Five**

### **National Records of Scotland HH1/564 Economic Advisory Committee Empire Migration Committee part III (VI) Miscellaneous Questions Irish Immigration into the United Kingdom 11<sup>th</sup> July 1931**

173. In appendix II (note 12) we give figures showing the trend of population for Ireland as a whole from 1821-1921, and from that year for the Irish Free State separately. Since the famine the population of the Free State has been declining in spite of an excess of births over deaths owing to the fact that emigration has removed more than the natural increase. The crude birth rate has been low for a number of years and has shown no marked tendency of late to decline further. The lower birth rate is due almost wholly to few and late marriages. The fertility of married women shows little change, and there is, therefore, little sign of contraception. The marriage distribution has reached a condition of approximate stability, and, though the material for the necessary calculation is not available, it can hardly be doubted that there is at least a replacement birth rate and probably more.

174. According to the figures of the Irish Free State Department of Commerce and Industry the passenger traffic (British and aliens) between Irish Free State ports and the rest of the British Isles showed an outward balance of 15,253 in 1928. This figure takes no account of the movement across the land frontier. Of the 15,253, however a substantial number, about 3,400 were emigrants travelling overseas via United Kingdom ports. Thus the net influx into Great Britain and Northern Ireland via Free State ports may be put at nearly 12,000. (The correction to be made on account of aliens is negligible). There are no statistics which throw light on the extent of the influx across the land frontier, which includes not only those who after crossing the frontier remain in Northern Ireland, but also those who move on thence to Glasgow and other places in Great Britain. But it probably amounts to a considerable number.

175. The magnitude of this immigration from the Irish Free State into Great Britain and Northern Ireland thus materially reduces the benefits to this country of the Emigration resulting from the Empire Settlement Act. We realise that any restriction on the free entry into this country of British citizens from the Irish Free State or any other Dominion would constitute a striking departure from the historic policy of this country and would require careful consideration before it was raised with the Dominion Governments. We feel, however, that this question merits serious consideration by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. We suggest that, in any case, steps should be taken to obtain such

powers as may be necessary to secure fuller statistics, with a view to determining the full extent to which Irish immigration is neutralising the effect of the expenditure incurred by the Overseas Settlement Department.

B. Repatriation of Migrants within the Empire

176. The immigration laws of all the Dominions make provision for the deportation to the country of origin of immigrants who become a public charge, at the expense of the Steamship Company by which they were carried to the Dominion. In the latest periods available (1929-30 in the case of Canada and in 1930 in that of Australia and New Zealand) the number of such deportations was as follows:-

Canada 2,350

Australia 218

New Zealand 1

177. On account, mainly, of the present economic depression these figures are abnormally high, but those from Canada are always considerable. From that Dominion, persons can be, and are deported if they become a public charge, even for a short period during winter unemployment, at any time within five years of their arrival in Canada. Even after the expiry of that period, persons are deported on this and other grounds if the Dominion authorities are satisfied that they come within any of the classes of 'prohibited migrant' at the time of their arrival.

178. It appears to us inequitable that the Canadian Government should thus send back to this country migrants who have proceeded to Canada with the encouragement of that Government and who, owing to the prevailing economic conditions, have become unemployed and for the time being a public charge, especially when the persons concerned may have been in Canada for as long as five years. We are confirmed in this view by the consideration that there is no restriction on the admission of Canadian or other Dominion citizens into the United Kingdom and no power to deport to the Dominions any British subject from in the Dominions who becomes a charge on the public funds of the United Kingdom. As we have pointed out above a considerable number of immigrants enter the United Kingdom every year from the Irish Free State. Many of these subsequently become a charge on the public funds, but there is no power to deport or to recover any part of the cost of their maintenance.

179. In our own view there is no justification for the continuance of the present one sided arrangements in this matter, operating as they do to the detriment of the interests of this

country. We are strongly of the opinion that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom should be free to refuse admission to citizens from the Dominions falling within any of the categories of 'prohibited immigrants' viz.:- persons with criminal records, insane persons &c. The repatriation of migrants who become a public charge in any part of the Empire is a more difficult question, we suggest should be carefully considered by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom with a view to its being discussed with similar questions at the next meeting of the Imperial conference.

## **Appendix Six**

### **National Records of Scotland HH1/564 Correspondence between Prime Minister's Office and The Scottish, Dominions and Home Offices concerning the Empire Migration Committee 21<sup>st</sup> July 1931 to 13<sup>th</sup> August 1931**

#### **Letter from PM's Office 21<sup>st</sup> July 1931 to Adamson**

Dear Secretary of State

The Prime minister has been reading EAC(c) 66- the report of the Committee appointed by the Economic Advisory Council to consider Empire Migration-and he wishes to draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and yourself to paragraphs 174 and 175, dealing with Irish Immigration into the United Kingdom. He would be glad if you would consider the question. He feels that it is one that should come before Cabinet.

I am writing similarly to the Secretary of State for the Dominion Affairs.

H G Vincent PS to PM

#### **Adamson to MacDonald 29<sup>th</sup> July 1931**

Dear Prime Minister

You invited my attention on the 21<sup>st</sup> July to EAC (c) 66 – the Report of the Committee appointed by the Economic Advisory Council to consider Empire migration and in particular paragraphs 174 and 175 dealing with Irish immigration into the United Kingdom.

The recommendation of the Committee on Empire Migration on this point (paragraph 175) is that “steps should be taken to obtain such powers as may be necessary to secure fuller statistics, with a view to determining the full extent to which Irish immigration is neutralising the effect of the expenditure by the Overseas Settlement Department.

I have already given effect to this, so far as I am able to do by administrative action, by arranging, in connection with the 1931 Census for the incorporation in the Householders Schedule of a column asking for information as to the length in Scotland of persons from elsewhere but now permanently resident in Scotland. This (with suitable adjustments which the Registrar General is able to make on account of the death rate) will provide information for each year in the last 25 years or so, as to the number of persons who came from Southern or Northern Ireland and settled in Scotland. These figures should furnish a conclusive measure of the extent, from year to year of Irish immigration into Scotland. The full figures for Scotland will not be available until the census code and card punching operations have been completed – probably in 1932.

While I agree entirely with the Empire Migration Committee's view that immigration from the Irish Free State may at any time become serious in its extent and effects, and should therefore be carefully measured and closely watched, I do not think at the present time serious apprehension need be occasioned by any existing volume of immigration from the Irish Free State into Scotland.

The Report of the Committee on Empire Migration quotes figures for the year 1928. There is, however, reason to believe that in that year immigration into the United Kingdom may have been exceptionally high. Thus in 1928 persons landing at Scottish from Irish Free State ports exceeded persons moving in the contrary direction by 3,055, but in 1929 the balance swung on the other side, the persons landing at Scottish from Irish Free State ports being fewer by 251 than the persons moving in the contrary direction.

I went into this matter very closely in connection with the enquiry by the Committee on Empire Migration, and collected a good deal of information on the subject, including information from the Ministry of Labour as to the numbers of Irishmen (a) being registered for employment in Scotland: (b) to whom Unemployment Insurance books were being issued in Scotland: and (c) being employed on state assisted relief schemes in Scotland etc. All this information was put before the Committee on Empire Migration, and I need not recapitulate it here. While not conclusive, it appeared as a whole to indicate that there is no very pronounced volume of immigration from the Irish Free state into Scotland at the present time; and that the growth of the Roman Catholic element in Scotland (which is clearly evidenced by the enrolment figures in Roman Catholic and other schools respectively) is occasioned by the rapid multiplication of relatively old established Irish 'colonies' in Scotland rather than by any existing substantial volume of immigration from the Irish Free State.

Accordingly, while I should be glad, even in existing circumstances, to have power to control immigration from the Irish Free State into Scotland, I cannot claim that this is a matter of great urgency at the present moment; and I think that further consideration of this question might await the Census information. I may point out that the complete stoppage of immigration from the Irish Free State would not remove what appears to be the main ground for the complaints addressed to me – the marked tendency for the Irish (and Roman Catholic) element already in Scotland to increase in numbers, as compared with the native population.

Control of immigration leads to the question of the repatriation of migrants. Persons coming to Scotland from Northern Ireland and becoming chargeable to the poor rates in Scotland before completing five years continuous residence there, can be repatriated by statutory process to Northern Ireland; but since the Irish Free State (Consequential Adaptation of

Enactments) Order, 1923, similar warrants can no longer be obtained by the Scottish Poor Law Authorities, and removals to the Irish Free State can only be effected on a voluntary basis. I am most anxious that reciprocal arrangements should be made with the Irish Free State on the lines of the existing position in regard to Northern Ireland, for the repatriation of persons who become chargeable to the poor rates, i.e. that arrangements should be made which will in effect restore the pre 1923 position so far as the Irish Free is concerned. The whole subject was raised in a Dominion's Office dispatch of February 1928, to the Irish Free State Government; but the Irish Free State Government appears to have shown no disposition to come to any decision. The matter was again raised at a Conference with representatives of the Irish Free State at the Dominions Office in April last – the Conference being held to discuss various other points on which agreement with the Irish Free State Government appeared desirable. The Irish Free State representatives said however, that they had not come prepared to discuss the question of the mutual repatriation of paupers, and they were only able to undertake that on their return they would take up the matter with a view to a reply being sent to the Dominions Office Dispatch of February 1928. I have heard nothing more on the subject and I think that the point should be further pressed. It is of considerable importance so far as Scotland is concerned, because statistics show clearly that in proportion to the native population, Irish born persons form an undue proportion of the total numbers of paupers, and are responsible for an undue burden upon Scottish poor rates. If arrangements for the repatriation of paupers cannot be obtained, then the case for considering some control of immigration will be strengthened.

Finally, on the question of repatriation of migrants, I feel that some arrangement must be arrived at with the Dominions generally, as the Empire Migration Committee recommend (paragraph 179). The matter is largely one for the Home Office and no doubt they can furnish full information. But in recent years various cases have come to the notice of the Scottish Office where very undesirable persons, with little connection to Scotland, have been deported to Scotland from the Dominions. A person born in Scotland may go abroad in his early childhood; may spend all his life in one of the Dominions; and in his old age, after his becoming a criminal may be deported to Scotland. He has no friends or relatives in Scotland, and has indeed no connection with Scotland beyond the accident of his birth there. He is bound on deportation to become a public charge in Scotland, and may engage in crime there. The knowledge that cases of this kind do occur leads me to endorse very strongly the recommendations in paragraph 179 of the Empire Migration Committee's report

**Reply by Marsh, Private Secretary to Thomas, to Vincent 5<sup>th</sup> August 1931**

Dear Vincent

Mr Thomas has carefully considered the passage relating to emigration from the Irish Free State into the United Kingdom in the report of the Empire Migration Committee of the Economic Advisory Council to which, at the Prime Minister's wish you called his attention in your letter of July 21<sup>st</sup>.

This question has, as no doubt the PM will remember been before the Cabinet on previous occasions. It was considered by the late Government in the summer of 1928 when the then Home Secretary was authorised to consult the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland confidentially on the subject. The matter was further considered by the late Government in February 1929, and ultimately by the then Secretary for Dominion Affairs undertook to press Mr Cosgrave to concur in proposals previously made for the mutual repatriation of persons from the Irish Free State and the United Kingdom who had become a public charge. Mr Amery did so but without result.

The subject first came before the present Government in July 1930 see CP 35(30) Conclusion 6 – when the Secretary of State for Scotland undertook to collect further information which will be found in CP in CP229(30). This was considered by the Cabinet (CP 47(30) Conclusion 6) when further consideration of the matter was postponed until after the Imperial Conference. It will be remembered that the Empire Migration Committee of the Economic Advisory Council was set up immediately before the Imperial Conference, and after the Conference was over, as it was understood that the Committee would deal with the question, the matter was left to them. They had before them memoranda by the Secretary of State for Scotland (EAC (EM) 55) and by the Home Secretary (EAC (EM) 93). Mr Adamson was of the opinion that the information available appeared to indicate that there was no very pronounced volume of such immigration but he considered that the reciprocal arrangements for the repatriation of paupers should be restored. Mr Clynes took the view that the broad conclusion to be drawn from the figures was that they furnished no evidence of any considerable migration of labour from the Irish Free State to Great Britain, and that the comparatively small migration did not appear to warrant any departure from the traditional policy of allowing free admission into this country of all British subjects whatever their origin.

It was, however, in the figures supplied by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Home Secretary that the Empire Migration Committee came to conclusion that “the magnitude of this migration from the Irish Free State into Great Britain and Northern Ireland

thus materially reduces the benefits to this country of the migration resulting from the Empire Settlement Act...we feel...that this question merits serious consideration by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. We suggest that in any case steps should be taken to obtain such powers as may be necessary to obtain full statistics with a view to determining the full extent to which Irish migration is neutralising the effect of the expenditure incurred by the Overseas Settlement Department.

Mr Thomas has not the material, and, in any case, hardly feels that it is for him to attempt to reconcile these diverse opinions. Moreover, it would appear to be primarily for the Home Secretary to say to what extent it is possible to carry the recommendations of the Committee (namely that more accurate statistics should be obtained) into effect. So far as Mr Thomas is concerned he would only wish to make the following observations:-

- (a) that however logical it may be to regard the Irish Free State as an "overseas Dominion" in connection with migration as in other matters it seems doubtful whether the Irish Free State and Great Britain (and still more the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland) can, as a matter of practical politics, be so sharply distinguished as the report suggests. In the case of two countries so close to one another and possessing so similar a social structure there must always be a certain fluidity of population. In other words the problem is one of Labour supply, not of migration. For a similar reason the Overseas Settlement department has never regarded as seriously affecting the policy of assisted migration to Canada the fluidity of population between Canada and the United States (to which the Empire Migration Committee does not allude).
- (b) That the principle that every British Subject has a right to remain in the United Kingdom is a long established one and should not be lightly abandoned. It is possible, of course, that if any drastic action were taken by Canada as regards deportations (this was rumoured in the press but now, fortunately, seems unlikely) such action would affect the question from this point of view.

Mr Thomas assumes, however, that it would be the Prime Minister's wish that he should continue to press for a reply from the Irish Free State on the question of the mutual repatriation of persons in receipt of relief. On this point a dispatch was sent to the Irish Free State as long ago as February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1928, since when a number of reminders have been sent without producing anything except promises of the supply of information which has not materialised.

At Mr Thomas' wish, I am sending copies of this reply to the Private Secretary at the Scottish Office and of your letter and the reply to the Private Secretary at the Home Office.

G Marsh

PS Many thanks for sending us a copy of Mr Adamson's letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> July (received since the above was prepared), which Mr Thomas read with interest. So far as he is in a position to judge, he is disposed to agree generally with Mr Adamson's views as to Irish Free State immigration and the mutual repatriation of paupers. The general question of the repatriation of migrants, referred to in the last paragraph of Mr Adamson's letter is under consideration in the Dominions Office but as the PM will appreciate it is one of considerable difficulty.

I have added a copy of Mr Adamson's letter to the PS at the Home Office

**Clynes Home Secretary to Ramsay MacDonald 13<sup>th</sup> August 1931**

Dear Prime Minister

In your letter of the 30<sup>th</sup> July you asked me consider the question of Irish Immigration into the United Kingdom, which is raised in paragraphs 174-175 of the Report of the Committee on Empire Migration appointed by the Economic Advisory Council. This question is by no means novel. Various aspects have continually come to my notice while I have been Home Secretary and my predecessor also devoted a good deal of attention to the problem.

I had considerable enquiries made at the request of the Committee on Empire Migration and furnished them with such information as I was able to collect. I need not trouble you with the details, but briefly, the conclusions which I reached were, that the Irish born population in England (sic) is decreasing, that there is now no great volume of Irish immigrants, that the balance of immigrants from the Irish Free State to England (sic) (after allowing for those who emigrate from English ports) consists mostly of women who are no doubt mainly domestic servants, and the damage, such as it is, caused by Irish immigration is already done and the problem in England (sic) is rather one of the natural increase of the Irish population who settled here some time ago.

...There is at present no power to exclude or deport from the United Kingdom a person who is a British subject, and any proposal to take such power would involve legislation, which, in view of the entirely new principle introduced, could only be justified by absolute necessity. Moreover the practical difficulties are enormous.

In the first place, it would be necessary to define which British subjects properly belong to the United Kingdom. This is already a difficulty with which we face in the negotiations referred to above.

...Secondly even if the United Kingdom and each Dominion establish which particular British subjects are to be regarded as what I may call for convenience "local subjects", it is

easy to see that there may be a considerable number of persons who possess British nationality but do not fall to be regarded as local subjects of any particular part of the Empire. ...Thirdly – and this brings me back from the more general aspects of the problem to the particular issue question of the Irish immigration into the United Kingdom – experience has shown that the effective maintenance of a system of control over the passenger traffic between Great Britain and Ireland is a matter of great difficulty. The opportunities for evasion are almost unlimited. The cost of establishing and maintaining a staff to control the traffic throughout the length of the west coasts of England, Wales and Scotland would be very heavy and could not be justified in peacetime; nor could there be any guarantee that there would be no slipping ashore at unfrequented places from small boats which could easily cross the Irish Sea or even from fishing boats etc. in the course of their legitimate traffic. In addition the land frontier between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State could not possibly be adequately closed; so that it would be necessary to treat Northern Ireland for this purpose it would be necessary to treat Northern Ireland for this purpose as outside the United Kingdom. Finally, any such control as would be necessary would arouse intense resentment among the business and travelling community.

I have no means at my disposal to obtain any statistics to assist in determining the full extent of the Irish immigration, but, subject to any further information which other departments may be able to collect, I am bound to say that I am not satisfied that there is any urgent necessity which would justify legislation to reverse the historic policy of the mother country

J R Clynes.

## **Appendix Seven**

### **National Records of Scotland HH1/561 Letter from Patrick McGilligan to J.H. Thomas**

**12th January 1932 Dispatch No.17**

Sir

I have the honour to refer to Mr Amery's Dispatch of the 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1928, no 54, inquiring whether His Majesty's Government in the Irish Free State would be prepared to agree in principle to a reciprocal arrangement for the compulsory repatriation of persons of Irish Free state origin who become chargeable to the poor rate in Great Britain before they acquire a status of irremovability and for the repatriation in similar circumstances of persons belonging to Great Britain from the Irish Free State.

His Majesty's Government in the Irish Free State whilst recognising the circumstances which have led to this proposal cannot conceal their view that, though equitable in form, it would not differ substantially in practice from a revival of the Poor Removal Acts which for a long period regulated the compulsory deportation of poor persons from Great Britain to Ireland and in their operation gave rise to widespread resentment amongst the poor law authorities in this country.

In the Irish Free State there is no law of settlement and no power of compulsory removal of poor persons from one area to another. The general practice is for destitute persons to be given assistance in the district in which they happen to be. The relieving authority has no power to remove them compulsorily out of the area to some other place to which by birth, residence or otherwise they are said "to belong". The Government have resisted proposals to introduce a law of settlement and a power of removal, being of the opinion that such measures would be out of harmony with the modern conception of public social services freely given to all residents however recently they have migrated to a new district. The utmost concession that the law in the Irish Free state has given to those who favour the removal of poor persons out of the district in which they are to some district to which liability for their maintenance is assumed to attach is to permit the poor law authorities in Dublin City and County to pay for the expenses of removal of a poor person who has not been two years in their area if they are satisfied it is generally for his benefit and that of his dependants.

Compulsory removal not being permitted by the law of the State the Government find it difficult to commit themselves to any agreement to facilitate the deportation of poor persons from outside and this difficulty is accentuated by the fact that there are now no workhouses to which able bodied people could be delivered in transfer, all the former workhouses outside

Dublin, that have not been closed altogether, having been converted into homes for the aged and infirm or Hospitals for the sick poor.

It is and always has been recognised that cases occur which removal is in the best interest of persons who have emigrated to Great Britain and who have become public charges there and the Government have not raised objection to the return of such persons when they wish to be sent back to their place of birth.

But there are wider considerations that seem to merit attention before machinery for deporting poor persons is set up. The laws of Settlement and Removal as they now stand in Great Britain are the residue of a more rigorous code that has in the course of time been modified so that large classes of poor persons that would formerly have been removed under these laws are no longer affected by them. The growth of humane ideas and the recognition of the wasteful expenditure and the hardship which arose from time to time in their in their operation were steadily bringing the practice of compulsory removal in desuetude. The Poor Law has in recent years been reformed in Great Britain and the extension of administrative areas which has been part of that reform will reduce still further the number of poor persons liable for removal. An arrangement to regulate removals would, therefore seem a step out of keeping with the trend of legislation. In Great Britain its effect would be to perpetuate a practice that appears to be dying out and exists only in connection with the Poor law Service. In the Irish Free State its effect would be to set up for the first time a system of deporting poor persons to Britain and to revive the poor removal acts.

For these reasons His majesty's Government in the Irish Free State feel that they should not depart from the view expressed in the letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1922, from the late Mr Collins to Mr Churchill. They will be prepared to give the fullest consideration to all cases in which removal back to this country is desirable in the interests of the person whom it is proposed to deport. They are not convinced that a reciprocal arrangement proposed would be of any real benefit to either country but on the contrary there is good reason to apprehend that it would give rise to unnecessary expenditure and hardship and irritation.

I Have etc.

P. McGilligan

Minister for External Affairs.

## **Appendix Eight**

### **National Records of Scotland HH1/561 Observations on the letter from The Minister of External Affairs by John Jeffrey, Department of Health Scotland, 8th March 1932.**

A reply refusing to agree to reciprocal arrangements was not unexpected. It has to be admitted that, even if reciprocal arrangements had been come to, removals from Scotland to the Irish Free State would seriously outnumber removals from the Free State to Scotland. On this ground the unwillingness of the Free State is natural. Nevertheless the fact remains the Scottish Authorities in addition to carrying the burden of relieving their own poor are saddled with the costs of maintaining a considerable number of Southern Irish poor. Removal machinery is operative as between Scotland, England and Northern Ireland and Scottish Authorities are at a disadvantage in that they are now precluded from returning to Southern Ireland cases that are a burden on them. It can be fairly claimed that, so long as folks from the Irish Free State continue to move to Scotland, tending to congest an already overcrowded labour market, the Free State should at least raise no difficulty when it comes to supporting some of the social failures.

It is submitted that the Free State while entitled to cherish conceptions as to “public social services”, referred to in Mr McGilligan’s letter in so far as they affect only the Free State’s pocket, are hardly within their rights in urging these conceptions as a reason for refusing to relieve Scotland of burdens they themselves should assume.

Irishmen from the Free State use Scotland as a field for employment but their Government refuse to take back a small proportion of the “misfits”. Compare this attitude with that of America or Canada. These countries have hitherto offered considerable opportunities of employment to the English, Scotch (sic) and Irish. We know that those who break down, for one reason or another, are being returned in considerable numbers. The Dominion of Canada is willing to admit workers but she asks to be relieved of the failures. Scotland’s position is parallel, except that she claims to be relieved, not of all failures but only of a relatively limited class – broadly speaking, those who become chargeable on the ordinary poor roll. In return she is prepared to take back Scottish cases being afforded poor relief in the Free State.

As regards the specific points put in Mr McGilligan’s letter the following remarks are made:-

Paragraph 2. Under the Poor Removal Acts referred to Ireland was not afforded the power to remove Scots poor persons from Ireland to Scotland, the reason being that the Irish guardians would have no use for such powers.

If “widespread resentment” existed it was occasioned not so much from the absence of such powers as from the knowledge that removals from Scotland to Ireland were in fact taking place from time to time. The Poor Law (Scotland) Act, 1898 modified the earlier removal procedure giving, *inter alia*, rights of appeal. In cases appealed the Department of Health are enjoined to have regard, among other things, “to any circumstances tending to show that the exercise of the power of removal would unduly injure the interests of the poor person on account of the industrial employment of his children or otherwise.”

In short, the 1898 Act puts checks on indiscriminate removals, so that at least from 1898 until the setting up of the Free State in 1920 (sic) any harshness that could be urged against earlier procedure was to a great extent, if not entirely, removed. Certainly the 1898 Act did not confer on Ireland the right to remove Scots persons from Ireland, but in negotiations initiated with the Free State a number of years ago reciprocal removal arrangements were proposed to the Free State.

While at one time there may have been widespread resentment in Ireland it has to be pointed out that ever since the constitution of the Free State Scottish Authorities have felt the inequity, not to put it too high, of the loss of their right to remove poor persons to Southern Ireland, while they can competently remove cases to Northern Ireland and particularly when they are prepared to consent to reciprocal arrangements with the Free State. An incidental grievance of Scotland is that the obtaining of a warrant for removal frequently has the effect of terminating chargeability in Scotland. Inability to apply for such a warrant will thus adversely affect the costs of relief in Scotland.

Paragraph 3. While the absence of a law of settlement and power of compulsory removal may be suited to conditions in Southern Ireland generally, exception has been made in Dublin City and County. The fact that this exception has been made weakens the argument set forth in this paragraph, and strengthens the case for the reciprocal arrangements proposed. If it is felt to be unfair to burden a populous centre like Dublin belonging to other parts, who for one reason or another drift into Dublin, it is no less unfair that authorities altogether out with the Free State should be deprived of the right of removing selected Southern Irish cases to their home country. The law of settlement and power of compulsory removal were reviewed when the Scottish Local Government bill was being drafted and it was not felt practicable or desirable to repeal them. Only if Scotland had no law of settlement or power of removal would the argument set forth in paragraph 3 hold.

Paragraph 4. It is suggested that if removals from Dublin are permissible there should be no inherent difficulty in arranging for removals from Great Britain to Ireland or from Ireland

to Great Britain. Again the closing of workhouses is not an insuperable difficulty. It is understood that institutions still exist in the form of Homes for the aged and Infirm, as well as Hospitals, and to these institutions the disabled cases that would be removed could be delivered on transfer. As regards able bodied poor, they could be removed to their last place of residence in Ireland and assisted by outdoor relief if necessary.

Paragraph 5. If by the removals to Ireland referred to in this paragraph are meant deportees, a much more involved and cumbrous procedure is involved. The interests of those having to support such cases, it is submitted, should be considered as much as the wishes of the individuals involved. Again, removals merely by deportation would not usually be suited to poor law cases and would not mitigate materially the burden resting on Scottish Poor Law Authorities.

Paragraph 6. Admittedly, as already mentioned, the rigour of the Removal Laws has been modified and, so far as Scotland is concerned, there are now reasonably adequate checks on removals, securing a distinct measure of “fair play” to individuals.

To say that the Poor Law has in recent years been reformed in Great Britain is incorrect. There has been in England, to a greater extent than in Scotland perhaps, a refashioning of administrative machinery. But there has not been any material amendment in the scope or the purpose of the poor laws as such with, perhaps, the exception in Scotland since 1921 of the admission to relief of the destitute able bodied unable to obtain employment. Certainly there has been the extension of administrative areas but that must be regarded as in the nature of a purely administrative change. How that extension of areas will reduce the number of poor persons liable to removal is not quite clear. Certainly it may afford to a greater number of people the right of appeal to the Central department against a warrant for removal.

That the regulation of removals would seem a step out of keeping with the trend of legislation is a suggestion that is not entirely borne out. Settlement certainly only exists in connection with the Poor Law service but various good reasons can be brought forward for its continuance. Whatever may be urged against it, the fact remains that it has persisted for 400 years and that it still remains the law here.

The effect of the reciprocal arrangements would be, on the one hand, to give the Free State a right they never had before to carry out removals and, on the other, to secure, so far as Poor Law Authorities in Great Britain are concerned merely a restoration of the powers prior to the partition of Ireland.

## **Appendix Nine**

### **National Records of Scotland HH1/568 Cabinet Committee on the Question of the Irish Free State Land Purchase Annuities Memorandum by the Home Secretary 8<sup>th</sup> March 1932 Proposed Measures Against The Irish Free State**

#### Part 1

1. In the preparation of this part of this memorandum it has been assumed that steps taken by the new Irish Free State Government in breach of the treaty of 1921 and of the allegiance to the Crown, but without any formal declaration of independence or formal act of secession from the British Commonwealth. It is further assumed that HMG do not contemplate that as a preliminary to any measures that may be taken there should be anything in the nature of any formal recognition of the secession, but may wish to consider what is the position which would automatically arise as a result of the action of the new Irish Government, with a view to warning them of the practical consequences of their action.
2. Unless and until the fact of secession is established by some formal declaration, the question whether or not there has been a secession will depend on the true legal inference to be drawn from the state of affairs at any moment. Circumstances might arise in which this question might come before the courts to be decided; but so long as it remains unsettled it would be hazardous to act on the assumption that a secession has occurred.
3. The most important immediate consequences of secession would be that:-
  - (1) Irish goods would be foreign goods and as such not entitled to any exemption or advantage enjoyed by goods coming from a Dominion
  - (2) The inhabitants of the Irish Free State as a whole would cease to be British subjects and would become aliens and as such would be liable to the restrictions generally applicable to aliens or any other restriction which His Majesty's Government might wish to impose.
4. As soon as secession is complete, the inhabitants of the new state will, generally speaking, owe allegiance to that state and not the Crown, i.e. they will become aliens in British law. In seeking to apply the Aliens Restriction Acts to such persons the Government would at once be confronted with a difficulty arising from the uncertainty whether in any individual case the person concerned had or had not ceased to be a British subject. There would be little doubt in the case of persons arriving from the Irish Free State in possession of Free State passports, since these documents would be evidence that the holders were recognised as Free State citizens. In any warning given to the new Irish Government it might be stated that HMG would require all persons coming from the Free State to be in possession of passports, and that further, HMG would hold themselves free to take the legislative steps to treat as aliens all

persons born in what is now the Free State unless they assert their desire to remain British and not acquire the nationality of the new State. For the purpose of applying in the United Kingdom any restrictions upon them as aliens, doubtful cases would obviously arise until the conditions determining who are the persons who have changed their allegiance as a result of the secession have been settled. It follows that until the conditions have been settled, the application in the United Kingdom to persons belonging to the Free State of any law relating to aliens would give rise to serious difficulties. So long as it remained uncertain whether a particular person had ceased to be a British subject, his treatment as an alien would be open to challenge in the courts and an adverse decision would have embarrassing consequences. Moreover, one of the most important powers in regard to aliens - that of deportation – could not be effectively exercised until the relationship of the Free State to this country is definitely recognised to be that of a foreign state, so the ordinary rule of international law that a state is bound to receive back its nationals could be invoked against the new state.

5. It is obvious therefore that if any warning were given to the Irish Free State as to the consequences which would follow from secession, a period of delay must elapse before HMG would be in a position to apply to all persons belonging to the Free State any or all of the existing laws of the United Kingdom as to aliens, including provisions as to deportation. This would have the advantage of allowing time for a change of policy and feeling in the Free State, with the result that they might abstain from further action which might lead to a breakaway from the British Commonwealth. The delay would, moreover, give time for any consideration of the practical difficulties of applying the aliens law to the new circumstances, and of preparing the machinery necessary for the purpose.
6. The main restrictions imposed on aliens in the United Kingdom are:-
  - (1) A requirement that no alien shall land without the permission of an immigration officer, and that he must be in possession of a passport
  - (2) Registration with the police
  - (3) A requirement that if coming for the purpose of employment an alien must be in possession of a permit issued to the employer by the Ministry of Labour
  - (4) Liability to deportation

#### Conclusions

1. On secession the Irish Free State would become a foreign state and its nationals would become aliens in British law

2. While it might be possible to take immediate steps to treat as aliens persons arriving from the Free State with Free State passports, it would be unsafe to treat all persons belonging to the Irish Free State as aliens until their status had been clearly defined by law.
3. In the meantime, any warning that may be given as to the consequences which must follow upon secession might include statements that
  - (a) Any advantages that the Irish Free State may enjoy as a Dominion in relation to trade would be withdrawn.
  - (b) HMG would require all persons coming from the Free State to be in possession of passports and would treat as aliens those holding Free state passports and, further, that HMG would hold themselves free to treat as aliens all persons born in what is now the Irish Free State unless they assert their desire to remain British and not to acquire the nationality of the new state.
  - (c) Nationals of the new state would become subject to the provisions of the Aliens Restrictions Acts and. In particular, to control on entry into the United Kingdom registration, restrictions as to employment, and liability to deportation.
  - (d) Nationals of the new state would in the United Kingdom become subject to the disabilities to which aliens are subject, including ineligibility for the franchise, for Parliament, and for the Civil Service.

## Part II

12. The position discussed in paragraphs 3 to 11 above is as already stated, based on the assumption that action has been taken by the Irish Free State which amounts to secession. It is now proposed to consider whether any, and if so what, action might be taken by the HMG on the basis that the Irish Free State, while formally retaining membership of the Commonwealth, has, nevertheless, by breaking the Treaty (e.g. by abrogation of the oath of allegiance) forfeited all claim to the privileges and advantages of its membership of the Commonwealth so far as its relations with the United Kingdom. On that basis, so far as action by the Home Office is concerned, it is necessary to consider whether the Irish Free state, though not legally or diplomatically a foreign state, is to be treated as though it was a foreign state and whether Irish Free State citizens, though they will remain British subjects for the time being should be subjected to restrictions similar to those applicable to aliens.

13. Any measures taken against IFS citizens while still British subjects would require special and highly controversial legislation, and would mean discriminating against a particular class of British subjects. Such measures might include:

- (a) the control of the entry of Irish Free State citizens into the United Kingdom, including special restrictions on those coming for employment;
- (b) registration of Irish Free State citizens resident in the United Kingdom
- (c) power to deport Irish Free State citizens

14. In carrying out such measures the difficulties referred to in Part I would be greatly increased by reason of the fact that the persons concerned were British subjects; and one of the main difficulties to be considered would be the definition of the class of persons against whom the measures were to be directed. Amongst that class it would not presumably be thought desirable or practicable to include the Southern Irish Loyalists. Whether the control were established on the Northern Ireland boundary or at the ports of Great Britain, it would be necessary that everyone coming from the Free State should be in possession of a document of identity and nationality. Every such person would be presumed to be an Irish Free State citizen unless, being an alien, he possessed a passport of his country, or being a British subject possessed a British passport. The control could not hope to be effective. It would in any event be cumbrous and expensive and would probably inconvenience British subjects who are not Irish Free State citizens more than Irish Free State citizens, especially as there would probably be no means of obtaining British passports in the Free State.

15. Further, it must be pointed out that, apart from penalties for breach of the law, the ultimate sanctions for the enforcement of restrictions on Free State citizens as though they were aliens would be a power to deport them. Even if statutory power were provided for this purpose, it could not be made effective unless the Free State Government agreed to admit such of their citizens as the United Kingdom might desire to deport. The Irish Free State so long as it remained a member of the Commonwealth would be under no international obligation to admit its citizens on deportation from this country.

16. Apart from these practical difficulties, any measures differentiating between various classes of British subjects would mean a complete change of the policy, which has hitherto been maintained in this country, that a British subject irrespective of his origin has a legal right to enter and remain in the United Kingdom. A constitutional principle of the highest importance is thus involved. The readiness of the Mother Country to receive all British subjects is an extremely valuable bond of Empire and any change of policy in this respect would be likely to have far-reaching and perhaps unforeseen consequences.

## **Appendix Ten**

### **HH1/568 August 1933 Draft memorandum to Cabinet from Secretary of State for Scotland**

#### **Immigration from the Irish Free State and Other Dominions. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Scotland**

1. During recent years numerous representations have been addressed to the Scottish Office on the subject of the number of immigrants into Scotland from the Irish Free State and the problem caused by the existence there of large and steadily increasing numbers of persons who have either been born in Ireland or are of Irish descent. The representations which have been made by the Scottish Presbyterian Churches and other bodies, have maintained that the Irish population does not assimilate with the Scots, that it is less independent than the native population and gives rise to a disproportionately heavy burden on the poor rates and public funds generally, that it is responsible for an undue proportion of crime, and that its low standard of living enables it to accept employment at low wages thereby undercutting Scotsman who are being driven to emigrate from Scotland. The Churches have suggested various courses of action for the consideration of the Government, including restrictions on immigration, provision for repatriation of immigrants who become a charge on public funds, and the requiring of proof from immigrants that they have work awaiting them and of proof from their employer that suitable labour cannot be obtained in Scotland. [and an approach to the Vatican with a view to securing the withdrawal of the Ne Temere Decree so far as it concerns Scotland, in order that the validity of mixed marriage may be recognised by the Roman Catholic Church.]
2. The question of immigration from the Irish Free State into the United Kingdom was considered in some detail by the Empire Migration Committee of the Economic Advisory Council which reported in July 1931 (EAC (c) 66). The Committee felt that the question of imposing restrictions on the free entry into the United Kingdom of British Subjects from the Irish Free State and the other Dominions merited serious consideration by the Government, and recommended (paragraph 175) that in any case steps should be taken to obtain powers to secure fuller statistics as to immigration. The Committee also drew attention to the fact that many of the Dominions not only imposed restrictions upon the entry of British Subjects but also exercised powers of deportation of British Subjects who, after immigration became chargeable to public funds or committed offences or who could have been refused entry on the ground that they fell within the class of 'prohibited immigrant.' The Committee took the

view (paragraph 179) that there was no justification for the continuance of the present one sided arrangements in this matter and recommended that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom should be free to refuse admission to citizens from the Dominions falling within any of the categories of 'prohibited immigrants' viz.:- persons with criminal records, insane persons, etc., and that the repatriation of migrants who become a public charge in any part of the Empire should be carefully considered by the Government with a view to its being discussed at the next Imperial Conference.

3. The unsatisfactory position of Great Britain as regards immigrants from the Irish Free State was rendered worse in 1923 by the fact that in that year, and subsequently, persons of Irish Free State birth who become chargeable to the Poor Rate in Great Britain before completing 5 years continuous residence in Great Britain ceased to be liable to compulsory repatriation to the Irish Free State. Proposals were made to the Irish Free State by the Dominions Office in 1928 for the conclusion of a reciprocal arrangement by which such persons could be repatriated compulsorily, and by which in similar circumstances persons belonging to Great Britain could be repatriated to Great Britain from the Irish Free State. The Free State's reply to this proposal was not forthcoming until January 1932, and constituted in effect a rejection of this proposal.
4. As regards statistics, I am now in a position to submit to my colleagues the attached summary of the main features of the special information relating to the Irish born population in Scotland which was obtained in the 1931 Scottish Census. The figures relate only to persons who were born on the Irish Free State or in Northern Ireland. Comparable figures relating to people of Irish descent are not available, and would be practically impossible to collect. It will be observed that the tables show that in 1931, out of a total population of 4,842,554 there were 124,296 Irish born people in Scotland, of whom 122,944 were recorded as resident and 1352 as visitors. 54, 854 of those recorded as resident and 632 of those recorded as visitors were natives of the Irish Free State. The percentage of the population of Scotland who are Irish born has steadily declined since 1861. In that year it was 6.66% in 1921 it was 3.26% and in 1931 it had declined still further to 2.5%. Moreover the tables show that the average immigration into Scotland of about 2,000 Irish born persons a year between 1921 and 1931 appears to have been more than counter balanced by deaths and by the abnormally heavy emigration which took place from Scotland during this period. Table B show the extent to which the Irish born population are concentrated in certain areas.
5. While the census figures are reassuring in that they clearly demonstrate that there has been a steady diminution of the numbers of Irish born people in Scotland, it is necessary to take

other factors into account in considering what action would be justified to meet the representations of the Scottish Churches and other bodies who are dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs in Scotland, and to give effect to the recommendations of the Empire Migration Committee. In my view the main factors so far as Scotland is concerned are:-

- (a) The strong tendency, in the absence of any considerable Scottish Roman Catholic population, towards intermarriage of Irish migrants and the descendants of Irish migrants and the consequent formation of “Irish colonies” of Roman Catholic denomination in certain districts
- (b) The frequent and sometimes serious outbreaks of sectarian disorder caused by the existence of these ‘colonies’ in the midst of Protestant communities, which impose a heavy burden on the police forces of certain districts, and lead to abnormal expenditure for the purpose of preserving law and order
- (c) The prolific multiplication in Scotland of the Irish born population and their descendants. As indicated in paragraph 4 above no definite figures are available to show the total number of persons of Irish descent, but some indication of the rapid multiplication of the Irish population in Scotland is given by the fact that the average enrolment of Roman Catholic schools, which are mainly recruited from persons of Irish descent rose progressively from 71,293 in 1901-2 to 132,289 in 1931-2.
- (d) The unduly high percentage of pauperism of the Irish born population e.g.

	Irish Born % of population	Total No.	% of Irish born to total
1911	3.6	8,444	7.9
1921	3.26	6,717	6.8
1931	2.57	11,595	7.4
1933	-	13,679	7.0

- (e) The unduly high percentage of Irish born persons in the criminal population. Of the total numbers of convicted prisoners, Borstal inmates and criminal lunatics in Scotland, the percentage of Irish born persons in recent years have been as follows:-

1925	25.2%
1926	22.7%
1927	No figure given
1928	20.7%
1928	20.1%
1930	16.5%
1931	16.1%
1932	14.6%

These percentages include persons born elsewhere if the father is Irish born

- (f) The unduly high percentage of Irish born persons in the lunatic population e.g. in July 1930 4.2% of the persons in private lunatic asylums and 6.2% of the pauper lunatics in Scotland were Irish born

6. On a review of all circumstances I am strongly of the opinion that the time has now come when the Government would be fully justified in taking powers already taken by many of the Dominions in respect of their own territory.

(i) to prohibit the admission to the United Kingdom of British Subjects from any of the Dominions, including the Irish Free State, in cases where the persons have criminal records or are insane

(ii) to deport from the United Kingdom to the territory of the Dominions in which they were born or with which they have the closest connection persons who become a charge on the public funds or commit offences within a specified period (say 5 years) after their arrival in the United Kingdom or are discovered to have been prohibited immigrants at the time of their arrival in the United Kingdom.

And I desire to recommend that the Cabinet should authorise the necessary steps to be taken to give effect to these proposals.

If it were feasible, I should also welcome legislation prohibiting for a term of years the employment of any persons arriving in the United Kingdom after a specified date who had

not obtained a permit from the Ministry of labour specifying a particular occupation and a particular employer, no such permit being issued if persons capable of performing the work were available through either the local or other Employment Exchanges. I recognise, however, that any such provision might have repercussions in the Dominions which would render its adoption by this country undesirable

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