

[1872] The Poor Law Commission, by the Local Government (Ireland) Act (1872), was made the Local Government Board. This Board was to become one of the most important of Government departments. Its duties were enormously increased by the Public Health Acts (Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, 79 gives a partial list of the duties eventually heaped on it). The Local Government Board now had supervision of the Boards of Guardians. The Ballot Act (1872) was aimed chiefly against bribery, for there was no point on bribing a voter if you did not know how he actually voted. The same applied to intimidation or victimisation. It has become an essential part of modern democracy. The Ballot Act was limited by the Lords to eight years, but when the time for renewal came up was made permanent.

By an Act in 1873 proposed by Henry Fawcett aided by Hugh Cairns all religious tests in Trinity College with regard to fellowships, including the provostship and higher degrees but excluding professors and lecturers in divinity, were abolished. Gladstone then decided to do something about university education in Ireland. His Irish Universities Bill (1873) proposed a non-denominational university in Dublin. It would have as its constituent colleges, Trinity College, Dublin and the Queen's Colleges in Belfast and Cork. Magee Presbyterian College in Londonderry and the Catholic University in Dublin should be affiliated colleges. He refused state assistance to any denominational college, thus excluding the Catholic University; he also excluded moral philosophy, metaphysics, and modern history from the course. In 1873 it was noted that Galway College had decreased from 144 students in 1861 to 141 in 1871; with these figures it was larger than all but two of the 17 colleges in Cambridge. Fawcett opposed the Bill on the grounds that it favoured denominational education and spoke strongly against Gladstone's Bill. This proved a fatal blow to Gladstone's ministry which was rapidly losing support. Disraeli referred to the ministers as 'a range of exhausted volcanoes'. Gladstone, by each measure of reform, had offended some interest, the brewers, the army, the clergy, the Nonconformists, the Trade Unions, and the Catholic Bishops who wanted support for denominational education (Richards and Hunt, *Modern Britain*, 189). Gladstone sought a general election and lost heavily. The Conservatives were returned with their first workable majority since the days of Peel.

About this time both the Conservative and Liberal Parties began to construct national organisations which could direct or control the local county organisations which were themselves quite sketchy and only called into being at election time. The Home Rule movement in Ireland broadened its appeal by including the land and education questions. With regard to land it favoured Tenant Right and with regard to education it favoured the denominational approach (Walker *Ulster Politics* 91). The Ulster Liberal Society formed in 1865 played an active role in establishing local branches, giving them instruction and advice and some financial aid. The Home Rule Association, based in Dublin, did not. Nor did Tenant Right Associations always back Home Rule. The Liberals in Ulster fully backed Tenant Right. Among the Conservatives the old way of proceeding by leaving organisation in the hands of the local grandees mostly continued though some Conservative Associations were established. The Catholic clergy were fully behind Home Rule candidates, and they claimed to have 59 members returned. But many of these were Liberals who gave a general adhesion Home Rule to get themselves elected (Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, 153). One Home Rule candidate, J.G. Biggar in County Cavan declared that Ireland would never rise from her present state of stagnation until she had her native Parliament (Walker, loc. cit.). Ireland, of course, had never been so prosperous. Only two Home Rule candidates were elected in Ulster where the Conservatives won 21 out of the 29 seats. [TOP]

The Ministry February 1874 to April 1880 (Conservative)

Prime Minister	Benjamin Disraeli (2 nd Ministry)
Home Secretary	Sir Richard Crosse
Lord Lieutenant	Duke of Abercorn; Dec 1876 Duke of Marlborough
Chief Secretary	Sir Michael Hicks Beach; Feb 1878 James Lowther
Under Secretary	Thomas Burke

[February 1874] Richard Assheton Cross (later 1st Viscount Crosse) had no connection with Ireland, but was the figure behind the great social reforms of Disraeli's second ministry. He was later overshadowed by Lord Randolph Churchill who heartily disliked him. John Winston Spencer Churchill, 6th Duke of Marlborough, was married to a daughter of the 3rd Marquis of Londonderry. His third son was Lord Randolph Churchill, and his grandson was Winston Churchill. The Chief Secretary's name was Hicks Beach but with no hyphen. Though he had no connection with Ireland he was much in sympathy with the social policies of Crosse and Disraeli. In 1876 he was given a seat in the cabinet. He was succeeded in 1878 by James Lowther from Yorkshire. He was not in

the cabinet and when the troubles of the Land League began was regarded as subordinate to the Duke of Marlborough.

Gladstone, following the defeat resigned the leadership of the Liberal Party, and the Marquis of Hartington was chosen to succeed him. Gladstone was always interested in ecclesiastical affairs and threw himself into a debate on a Bill to suppress ritualism, which had developed out of the Oxford Movement. He also opposed Disraeli's Eastern policy and detested the Turks. In a pamphlet against the Turks he wrote a passage which was to delight schoolboys for years to come: 'let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and the Mudins, their Bimbashis and their Yuzhashis, their kaimakams and their pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall I hope clear out from the province [Bulgaria] they have desolated and profaned (Richards and Hunt *Modern Britain* 195). In another oft-quoted passage Disraeli described Gladstone as 'a sophisticated rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity, and gifted with an egotistical imagination that can at all times command an interminable and inconsistent series of arguments to malign an opponent and glorify himself' (op. cit. 201).

The Employers and Workmen Act (1875) has already been noted. Before this the Factory Act (1874) cut the working week from 60 hours to 56 hours, which allowed a six-hour day on Saturdays, a point of great importance for football leagues. The Artisans' Dwellings Act (1875) allowed local authorities to clear slums and build new houses. Joseph Chamberlain, the mayor of Birmingham, took full advantage of this Act. The Public Health Act (1875) codified over a hundred different statutes and laid the basis for public health policy for the next fifty years. The Merchant Shipping Act (1876) is famous for introducing the 'Plimsoll line' which indicated the safe loading depth for a vessel. It was not however until 1890 that the Board of Trade was empowered to decide where the line would be. The Factory and Workshops Act (1878) abolished the distinction between factories and workshops and made them all subject to the Factory Acts. The supervision of the factories was transferred to a factory inspectorate (Richards and Hunt, *Modern Britain*, 190-193; Briggs and Jordan, *Economic History*, 547).

The Dentists' Act (1878) allowed the setting up of a body to regulate the practice of dentistry and to keep a Dentists' Register of qualified dentists. The British Dental Association was formed the following year (James Smith Turner DNB).

The Public Health Acts around this time showed an increasing awareness of causes of sickness from unsanitary housing, lack of clean water and proper disposal of sewage, the spread of infection, the sale of contaminated meat and so on. Some of the powers were not new. Mayors in towns for example had long a duty to inspect the meat markets. But it was now realised that the problem would have to be tackled on a wider scale. Most of Ireland was covered by dispensary districts, and the dispensary doctor was made the Medical Officer of Health. It was not expected that they would be able to do much unless a particular nuisance was reported to them. But the Act was chiefly focussed on the larger towns and cities, and also on the growing suburbs of Dublin, which were largely built-up areas, but not under either the Corporation of Dublin, or the two big Poor Law Unions. In these the provision of clean water, proper sewers, and where they did not exist, proper scavenging were the chief aims.

The Public Health Act (1878) was the most important Act dealing with local government before the Act in 1898 which established County Councils. It consolidated various provisions of earlier Acts. The sanitary laws concerned the supply of pure water, adequate street lighting, regulating public clocks, and providing and regulating markets and slaughterhouses (County Councils Gazette 5,12,19,26 January 1900). The Act vested all sewers with the local sanitary authority, with some exceptions. By the Act, within the areas, all new houses must have water closets, earth closets, or privies; scavenging and rubbish collection was made the duty of the health authority, subject to orders of the Local Government Board. Those who kept pig sties and other nuisances might be prosecuted. The dispensary district, (oddly not the Poor Law Union) was made the unit but large towns and cities could be the sanitary district. By it the medical officers of the dispensary districts were made medical officers of health, and additional salaries were paid in respect of sanitary duties. The sanitary districts survived as administrative units even after the county councils were formed though some of their powers were transferred to Local District Councils (County Councils Gazette 2 Feb 1900). There were two Poor Law Unions in Dublin, but the city itself was the sanitary authority. The suburban districts of Clontarf, Druncondra, Clonliffe, and Glasnevin, Grangegorman, and Kilmainham were separate sanitary districts. Belfast was a single sanitary district, the authorities of which were the Mayor, Aldermen, and burgesses of the town council. They immediately commenced a full sewage scheme (Allison, *The Seeds of Time*, 160) and constructed public baths. All were subject to the Local Government Board.

The Act conferred large powers on all urban authorities to regulate fairs and markets, and authorised the making of by-laws to control all markets and fairs, prevent nuisances etc (*Irish Law Times* 20 January 1900). The

Sanitary Authority could make by-laws to control building. It could regulate or provide cemeteries. Loans were available for the provision of clean water and sewers. A Royal Commission was appointed to examine the sewerage and drainage of Dublin. At the same time the Dublin Corporation, acting as the urban sanitary authority under the Public Health (Ireland) Act 1878, reorganised its department of public health originally established in 1866 and published a comprehensive set of by-laws. A Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1880 attributed the excessive mortality to the deplorable condition of the tenement houses, the improper construction of the house drains, the unsanitary condition of the dairy-yards and slaughter-houses, the want of convalescent hospitals, the concealment of infectious diseases, the absence of a disinfecting apparatus, and the intemperate and filthy habits of the people. The findings of the Royal Commission added to these criticisms of private failure the criticism of the inadequate scavenging of the streets, their imperfect paving, the absence of baths and washhouses, and the fact that the Medical Officer of Health was not a full time post (Warder 31 Mar 1900).

The Supreme Court of Judicature (Ireland) Act (1877) followed the similar Act in England in 1873. The Queen's Four Courts, the Court of Queen's Bench, Court of Common Pleas, Court of Exchequer, and the Court of Chancery, along with lesser courts like the Probate Court, Matrimonial Causes and Matters (both formerly ecclesiastical courts), the Admiralty Court and the Land Court were abolished. In their place was constituted a High Court and a Court of Appeal. The High Court was divided into a Chancery division with the Lord Chancellor, a Vice-Chancellor, the Master of the Rolls, and the Land Court; the Queen's Bench division consisted of the Lord Chief Justice, the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and judges for probate, admiralty, bankruptcy and other judges.

By 1900 the courts were ordered as follows. The first was the High Court of Appeal. Next came the High Court of Justice, divided into the Chancery and Queen's Bench divisions. The Chancery Division consisted of the Lord Chancellor's Court, the Rolls Court, the Vice-Chancellor's Court, the Consolidated Taxing Officers under Masters in Chancery, and the Land Judges under Mr Justice Ross. The Queen's Bench Division was divided into a Crown Side and a Civil Side, a Bankruptcy division, an Admiralty division, a Land Commission Court, and Probate division.

The Lord Chancellor dealt with cases in lunacy. Jurors were summoned from the city and county of Dublin, and matters could be dealt with in chambers or in court. (In medieval times chambers were rooms indoors, while the court was outside in the courtyard.) The hearings of the Land Commission were heard before commissioners; *Nisi prius* cases were heard in the Queen's Bench division; bankruptcy cases could be heard before the Justice, the Chief Registrar, or the Chief Clerk (Legal Diary 1900). The Crown Side represented the old King's Bench and the Civil Side the old Common Pleas. The various judges in the old courts retained their places in the corresponding new courts. The functions of the Exchequer Court were distributed among the others, but the Barons retained their titles while they lived.

The Sale of Food and Drugs Act (1875) and the Margarine Act (1887), and others contained powers to regulate the sale of pure food and drugs. The Rivers Pollution Prevention Act (1876) prohibited the discharge of sewage or foul matter into streams. By an Act in 1879 Irish time was made legally distinct from Greenwich Time, to deal with matters like signing wills. The O'Connor Don was responsible for the passing of the Sunday Closing (Ireland) Act (1879). In 1875 the Peace Preservation Act came up for renewal, and it was strongly opposed by a Home Ruler MP Joseph Biggar who had been elected for County Cavan in 1874, and who rapidly became one of the leading obstructionists in Parliament. He had been born a Presbyterian but had become a Catholic. In 1875 he joined the Irish Republic Brotherhood (IRB) and was elected to its supreme council, but was expelled in 1877 for failing to break his connection with the parliamentary party. In 1879 he was elected one of the Treasurers of the Land League.

[1877] In 1877 in Belfast veterinary surgeon, John Boyd Dunlop, invented the pneumatic tyre, perhaps second only to the internal combustion engine for assisting transport on land. A local cycling club used them in a contest against a club from Dublin and won every race. Soon all racing cyclists were demanding them. He moved his factory to Dublin, but later to Coventry in England which was the centre of the bicycle industry. The National Library got that name in 1877, before which it was the library of the Royal Dublin Society. It was put under the Committee of Council on Education" [Privy Council] and meagrely supported. However it continued to be housed by the Royal Dublin Society in Leinster House while the building to house it was completed.

Mrs Anna Maria Haslam, Ireland's leading suffragette was Honourable Secretary of the Irish Women's Suffrage and Local Government Association since its formation in 1874. She was born in Youghal, County Cork, a daughter of Mr Albert Fisher a corn merchant and Quaker, and was educated Waterford and York where she qualified as a teacher. In 1846 she assisted in famine relief and began the knitting and crochet school later run by the Presentation Sisters, Youghal. She married Mr Thomas Haslam, and in 1866 signed the first women's suffrage petition. She took a particular interest in the election of women to various local boards and municipalities, and advocated higher education for women. She co-operated in the formation of the Association of Irish Schoolmistresses, and owing to her efforts and those of her colleagues Alexandra College was founded and Trinity College Dublin opened to women (Weekly Irish Times 10 February 1912; Sarah Emily Davies DNB). The Russell-Gurney Enabling Act (1876) or Medical Qualifications Act (1876) gave power to all medical examining boards to examine women for medical qualifications. The Irish College of Physicians was the first to use the power and Sophia Jex-Blake in 1877 was the first woman to gain British medical qualifications and the right to practice medicine in the United Kingdom. This was the culmination of a campaign begun 25 years earlier (DNB Elizabeth Garrett, Emily Davies, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson). These medical degrees anticipated those of the Royal University.

Since the year 1875 when the Teachers' Residences Act (1875) came into force 1352 applications for loans and 72 applications for grants had been approved; but no provision was yet made for the vast bulk of the teachers. The number of free residences available to teachers from the managers' returns was 1210 out of a total of 8670 residences (Irish Teachers Journal 20 Oct 1900). The 1875 Act was permissive, and little used; it allowed the issue of loans not exceeding £250 to managers of non-vested schools; an Act in 1879 extended this to vested schools; later the provision was extended to all schools. One problem was the difficulty in securing sites and leases from the landlords. In 1892 compulsory purchase was authorised, and in 1893 this was made dependent on an order from the Lord Lieutenant. Thus in 28 years 5 Acts were passed. They had two defects; one was the smallness of the sum allowed and the other was the short time allowed for re-payment (Irish Teachers Journal 12 Jan 1901).

Sir Patrick Keenan was made the Resident Commissioner of National Education in 1871 and held that office until 1894. At the end of that period he suffered much ill-health, and it was felt that his work suffered. He was a Catholic from Dublin, who was trained as a monitor in the Board's Central Model School. He rose through the ranks, unlike most commissioners who were university graduates, becoming an inspector in 1848, head inspector in 1855, chief of inspection in 1859 and Resident Commissioner in 1871. The Resident Commissioner was the administrator of the Board; the other Commissioners merely attended Board meetings. The teachers regarded him as one of themselves, and he recognised the Irish National Teachers Organisation. As a Catholic he often had to mediate between the Government and the Catholic bishops. The 'Payment by Results' policy was introduced into Irish schools in 1872. He got the Board to recognise the teaching of the Irish language as an official subject in 1879. The great point in favour of payment by results was that it was not subjective. Standard tests were set with standard scores. The inspector just filled in the numbers and was not asked for his evaluation. Under the previous system an inspector who disliked a teacher could submit an unfavourable report. On the other hand at times it led to just coaching in spelling and arithmetic to the detriment of educating the children.

A great desideratum of the teacher's unions, namely pensions for national teachers, was secured under the National Teachers (Ireland) Act (1879). If a teacher was not able to save enough to acquire a house with a little patch of land he was liable to end his days in the poor house. The Act of 1879 aimed at giving the teacher a pension equal to two thirds of his income. There was an annual contribution, the teacher providing one fourth and the state three fourths. Obviously there was no hope of getting a contribution from the employers, the clerical managers. To meet their obligation the state set aside £1,300,000 derived from the Irish Church temporalities, which along with later grants formed the Endowment Fund. The premiums of the teachers were placed in the Contribution Account, and the £1,300,000 was placed with the Land Commission in 3% guarantee stock yielding £39,000 p.a. (The property of the Established Church was thus being used twice, to provide money for land purchase in the short term and for pensions in the longer term.) Prior to the passing of the Act the Treasury awarded gratuities to retiring teachers and in 1879 these amounted to £7,200 actuarially worth about £400,000. Women were permitted to retire at 61 and men at 65; in 1885 men who had served 40 years might retire at 61 (Irish School Weekly 22 April 1922). As time went on it became clear that the fund was becoming insolvent, so to meet the shortfall, contributions were raised by 150% and maximum pensions were reduced by 25%. The privilege of retiring after 40 years completed service was withdrawn; the Treasury agreed to give £18,000 p.a. to the Pension Fund from 1897-8. An improved pension scheme was introduced in 1914.

[1878] The foundation of the University of London (1826) marked a number of new departures in the British system of higher education. For one its matriculation examination was used as the first nationwide school-leaving certificate, which was the origin of the School Certificate and the General Certificate of Education. In

1878 the Intermediate Education Act (1878) was passed, the only education Act the Catholic bishops ever approved of. It was based partly on the industrial schools and partly on payment by results. An Intermediate Education Board was established to administer the Act. As in England, intermediate or grammar schools were in private hands, often under the direction of churchmen. Even public schools usually had a clergyman as headmaster. Though the geographical spread of secondary schools was very patchy, no Government at this time considered providing its own secondary schools. By 1869 there were 46 endowed Protestant classical schools and 47 Catholic classical schools. Of the latter 22 of which were diocesan, and 25 controlled by the Regular Clergy. Of these the Jesuits had 5, the Carmelites 5, the Vincentians 3, Holy Ghost Order 2, 5 under other Orders and 5 under teaching Brothers. In 1878 the sum of £1 million was taken from the funds of the Disestablished Church to form an endowment for all Intermediate schools, whether Catholic or Protestant, boys or girls. This sum was subsequently largely increased. From the first the funds were administered by the Intermediate Education Board which was merely an examining body. By 1921 350 schools benefited from its grants, and of these 250 were Catholic (Irish School Weekly 26 Nov 1921; Dowling, *Irish Education*, 133). At first the Intermediate Board had to rely on the inspectors of the Science and Art Department, South Kensington, but gradually acquired their own. The grants were paid equally to girls' schools.

The moneys granted to the head teachers were in proportion to the results in the Board's examinations. This allowed a large number of schools to develop even if the teachers were very poorly paid. They were not as well organised into unions as the primary teachers. The Intermediate teachers were entirely dependent for their income on their results; consequently with them 'cramming' was reduced to a fine art. The temptation to cram in the national schools was never as great, because part of the salary was independent of results. Accusations of cramming led to changes which were introduced by the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act (1900). However, under the Intermediate Board, some religious bodies like the Irish Christian Brothers could provide a full grammar school education including Latin for fees of not more than £3 or £4 a year. Small farmers, small shopkeepers, and teachers could take advantage of their exceptionally low fees while the sons of the strong farmers, professional people and business men went to the colleges run by the Jesuits, Carmelites, etc at somewhat higher fees. Many students were sent to secondary school for a few years only. (There was a celebrated remark many years later when one branch of Sinn Fein called Fianna Fail took over from the other branch called Cumann na nGael, that it was a change of government from the Jesuits to the Christian Brothers. It was an acute sociological remark.)

In 1878 Cardinal Cullen died and Archbishop MacHale in 1881. Cullen was succeeded by Cardinal M'Cabe who accepted a place in the senate of the Royal University. MacHale's successor, John MacEvilly, quickly sought the aid of the National Board because of the deplorable state of the schools.

[1879] Disraeli now decided to try his hand at [solving the impasse in Irish University Education]. The Catholic bishops had steadfastly set their faces against the Queen's Colleges while the Catholic University was not prospering. Dr. John Henry Newman, who retired in 1858, was succeeded successively in the rectorial Chair by Dr. Woodlock, Dr. Neville, Dr. Molloy, and Dr. O'Donnell. It is said that £250,000, subscribed mainly in Ireland and America, was collected and expended upon the university. After providing buildings and equipment, that sum would allow little over £8000 a year during the quarter of a century that elapsed before the fellowships of the Royal University were made available. Monsignor Molloy was a noted figure in Irish education. In 1882 the Catholic University passed under Jesuit control, and of the twenty-eight fellowships of £400 a year founded by the Royal University (below) fifteen were given to the Catholic University staff. With this slender indirect endowment it entered the lists with the Queen's Colleges and beat them all ('Catholic University', *Catholic Encyclopaedia*).

An Irish Catholic nationalist MP, the O'Connor Don, introduced a private Bill to deal with the problem. His solution had the support of almost every section of Irish political opinion. The idea was to have a university, like London University following its Supplementary charter in 1849 which allowed it, following success in its examinations, to confer degrees on students from any college in the British Empire. This had enormous success worldwide in developing education in those parts of the Empire, and they were many, which had no universities of their own. In 1858 even those not enrolled in any institution were allowed to sit for its examinations. He withdrew his Bill when the Government decided to introduce a Bill on the same lines itself.

The University Education (Ireland) Act (1879) was duly passed. It dissolved the Queen's University which linked the three Queen's Colleges together and conferred the degrees, and established the Royal University as a similar examining body. Like London University it could accept candidates for its examinations from anywhere, including England, which was to be of some importance for women. Its Senate, the majority of which was nominated by the crown were empowered to elect thirty two fellows at salaries of £400 a year to assist in

examinations. Fifteen of the fellowships were allocated to the Catholic University, soon to be called University College, Dublin and managed by the Jesuits. Sixteen fellowships were divided among the three Queen's Colleges, and one was given to Magee College, Londonderry. It is not clear why almost half the fellowships were given to the Catholic University, but presumably it was as a hidden subsidy. But the Catholic bishops were adamant: they wanted a Catholic University run by Catholics for Catholics under the control of Catholic bishops and fully funded by the Government. This aim they were never to achieve. It would have been far better for Ireland as Charles Gavan Duffy said when the Queen's Colleges were first proposed, if they had simply accepted those Colleges. But the hardliners among the bishops, led by MacHale and Cullen, rejected them and could never back down.

The Royal University, which opened in 1880 allowed women to sit for its degrees, so that women students at Girton College Cambridge could obtain valid degrees from the Royal University. Any college in Ireland could prepare students for its examinations. One of the strangest was the Trappist monastery of Mount Melleray which maintained a school. One of the monks, Fr Celsus O'Connell claimed to be the last person to graduate from the Royal University in 1908. Alexandra College and Victoria College commenced university-level courses and were soon joined by other women's colleges.

But the halcyon years of the post-Famine period in Ireland were about to come to an abrupt end. In British agriculture what became known as the 'Great Depression' commenced about 1874. The period from 1850 to 1874 when the progress and industry in agriculture came to fruition was called the Golden Age of British agriculture. But now the full force of free trade was felt and grain poured in from Canada, the Baltic, and Russia. This coincided with a succession of poor harvests, the worst season being 1879. Worse was to come when successful freezing machines could be installed in ships and frozen mutton could be imported from Australia. Landlords were in general sympathetic in England and reduced rents. By 1896 the worst of the Depression was over and farmers had turned to perishable crops which were not easily transported (Briggs and Jordan, *Economic History*, 325-328). The agricultural depression also affected commercial agriculture in Ireland but not to the same extent. Rents had not been forced so high, nor was there the same extension of agriculture to marginal lands such as the sandy soils in eastern England which relied heavily on artificial fertilisers. The problem in Ireland was the crofter class, still numerous especially in the western half of the island, in what was to be called the 'Congested Districts'. Land was the ultimate social security, and as we have seen, schoolteachers tried to acquire a small plot to sustain themselves in old age. Jesse Collings, an associate of Joseph Chamberlain, and advocate of land reform, had a slogan of 'three acres and a cow'. It might have been possible to support a family, well-instructed in horticulture on three acres of good soil. But most of the small holdings in the West with uneducated farmers were on poor boggy soil suitable only for potatoes and perhaps some oats. Most of them were still not spraying their potatoes. A failure of the potato crop still meant famine.

Isaac Butt proved too timid a leader for the Home Rule Party. A young gentleman called Charles Stuart Parnell, a grandnephew of Henry Parnell (Baron Congleton) the great ally of the Catholics in the early part of the century, had left Cambridge University in 1869 without a degree and returned to the family estate at Avondale, County Wicklow. He became sympathetic with the Fenian movement. In 1874 he introduced himself to Isaac Butt, and in 1875 was elected an MP for County Meath at the age of twenty nine. In 1876, replying to a speech by Sir Michael Hicks Beach who had referred to the Fenian 'Manchester murderers' Parnell denied that there was any murder in Manchester. He then joined the Amnesty Association, and also began a plan of systematic obstruction in Parliament. On July 31, 1877 he forced the house to sit continuously for 26 hours. Butt disapproved of his tactics but most of the Home Rule Party was delighted. In a debate in April 1878 he refused to condemn the murder of the Earl of Leitrim, an Irish landlord. On 5th May 1879 Isaac Butt died and was succeeded by a moderate politician called William Shaw. But after the general election in 1880 Parnell challenged him for the leadership and won. Meanwhile, Parnell was meeting the Fenian leaders. In December 1877 he met convicted Fenians like Michael Davitt who had been released from prison on ticket-of-leave, i.e. they could be returned to prison if they committed any other offence. He also met John Devoy, the leader of the Fenians in America. Davitt and Devoy agreed to back Parnell's parliamentary campaigns. The Fenians, while not giving up their ambition for an armed struggle, agreed to support the Home Rule Party in addition. This policy was called 'the New Departure'. Not all the Fenians (IRB) accepted this. The leadership of the IRB rejected Davitt's plan and marginalised themselves in Ireland but not in America for a generation.

Davitt continued with his idea of enlisting the crofters and small farmers of the West in a struggle against 'the landlords'. This struggle, Davitt stressed should be peaceful and keep within the law; otherwise Davitt himself would be returned straight to prison. His objective was the complete abolition of what he called 'landlordism'. This gained him great and lasting support for what he was proposing that rents should be abolished, and the tenants and crofters should own the land they were cultivating. Horace Plunkett later cited the Connemara peasant who stopped planting potatoes in 1886 when the Home Rule Bill seemed to bring

the promise of the millennium; this statement must be credited considering the universal belief among the Irish peasantry that Home Rule would mean free farms and universal luxury (Westmeath Guardian 5 May 1905). But Davitt and the Fenians who supported him had other ideas with regard to the abolition of 'landlordism'. If the country landowners were forcibly bankrupted, control of county government and national government would pass automatically to the Catholic conspirators. When studying this point it is impossible not to notice that the organisers of the Land League and the organisers of Tammany Hall were often blood brothers, or at least closely related. The policies and practices of the two organisations cannot be separated.

Davitt had a stroke of luck when there was a very poor harvest in 1879 which caused real distress in parts of the West. The people were ready for any policy which would mean the reduction of rents. He attended the famous meeting in Irishtown, Co. Mayo to denounce an evicting landlord, who happened to be the parish priest, Canon Burke. The meeting was successful for Canon Burke granted an abatement of 25% after his parish was invaded by 7,000 Mayomen shouting down with landlordism. The next move was to hold a meeting in Westport the local town, addressed by Parnell, who urged them to 'organise, organise'. This they did by establishing on 16th August 1879 at Castlebar, the county capital of Mayo, the National Land League of Mayo, which became the National Land League.

In 1873 a former captain in the army from Norfolk accepted the post of Land Agent or Estate Manager on the lands of Lord Erne in County Mayo. His name was Charles Cunningham Boycott. In 1879, Lord Erne agreed to a 10% reduction of the rents in view of the hard time. Then on 1st August 1879 a notice, in the longstanding tradition of the agrarian terrorists, was fastened to Boycott's gate threatening his life if he did not make a further reduction in the rent. Nevertheless, in that year all but three tenants paid their rent.

The Irish Government responded to the distress especially in parts of the West by passing the Distress Relief (Ireland) Act (1879) to allow advances from the Irish Church Surplus Fund to landlords who could promote works on their estates. The Lord Lieutenant's wife, the Duchess of Marlborough, established a relief fund to relieve distress (Reid, W.E, Forster, II, 236).

[1880] In 1880 Disraeli called a general election which he expected to win, but the Liberals were returned. Part of the reason may have been the bad harvest of 1879, the worst in memory. Gladstone, then 71 years old, fought a famous campaign in Midlothian in Scotland where he had agreed to contest the seat. He cast ridicule on Disraeli's gloomy prophecies of impending danger in Ireland. Voting commenced on 31 March 1880. For the Liberals 349 candidates were returned, for the Conservatives 243, and for Home Rule 60. The Irish representation was 25 Conservatives, 15 Liberals, and 60 Home Rulers. Disraeli resigned and the queen sent for Lord Hartington who declined. The queen, to her disgust, was forced to send for Gladstone. She complained that Gladstone spoke to her as if she was a public meeting.

In Ireland, North and South, the great issue was the land question. This was not surprising after the bad harvests of the two preceding years. The tenants' associations were more numerous, more determined, and more vocal than ever. The Conservative and Liberal Parties were better organised than in the previous election, and both supported a measure of land reform (Walker, Ulster Politics, 130-1). Walker notes the development of machinery in the various constituencies by both Liberals and Conservatives to increase their effectiveness at election time. But the Liberals were still relying heavily on the Catholic clergy. The Home Rulers contested only one constituency seat in Ulster, namely County Cavan. There two candidates were strongly backed by the Catholic clergy, and both were returned. It would seem that the Catholics supported the Home Ruler and the Protestants united behind the Conservative candidate. The polarisation of Irish politics on religious, not political or economic lines, was beginning to emerge (Walker, 134). Of the 60 Home Rulers 51 were Catholics; of the 15 Liberals 3 were Catholics. For the first time a majority of the Irish MPs were Catholics. The Home Rule Party was becoming the Catholic Party. The social composition of the Home Rule Party was also changing. Only 8 were landowners, reflecting the growing opposition among Catholics to the social and political positions of the landowning class. Tammany Hall was emerging in Ireland as well as America.

But the most effective organisation was developed by Joseph Chamberlain for the Liberals from 1877 onwards and contributed to their great victory in 1880. Disraeli called it a caucus. Thus the name came to be used thereafter, not in the U.S. sense of a meeting but of a closely disciplined system of party organization. Lord Randolph Churchill developed a similar central organisation for the Conservatives by promoting the establishment of Conservatives clubs