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Lindsay Crawford's 'Impossible Demand'? The Southern Irish Dimension of the Independent Orange Project

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ABSTRACT

The Magheramorne Manifesto of the Independent Orange Order has been hailed as a bold attempt from an unlikely quarter to positively address the sectarian divisions and regional polarisation of early 20th century Ireland. But the Order's leading light, Lindsay Crawford, has also been indicted for formulating an 'empty radicalism' which demanded changes in the field of education that it was impossible for the Catholic community to accept. This working paper reassesses Crawford's ideological project in the light of hitherto underused sources of evidence. It highlights convergence between Crawford's thinking and that of 'Irish Ireland' activists in movements such as the Gaelic League and Sinn Fein. It argues that heterodox educational views were prevalent to a significant extent among the Irish Irelanders to whom Crawford looked for a positive response to his national regeneration project. The case is also made that, in the absence of unanimous acceptance of their desirability among lay Catholics, the support of Protestants – and particularly that of Crawford's fellow Irish Anglicans – provided existing school management arrangements with a vital source of sustenance.

Introduction

A patriotic programme of democratising political change and progressive social reform broadly inclusive of the different sectors of Irish society is not what most people would readily associate with Orangeism. Against this background it is hardly surprising that the Independent Orange Order (IOO) and the Magheramorne Manifesto it addressed in 1905 'to all Irishmen whose Country stands first in their affections'[1] have attracted a significant amount of attention and largely favourable comment in both academic and political activist accounts of twentieth century Irish or Ulster history.[2]

The apparent alignment of Orangeism with progressive democratic modes of thought at the turn of the 20th century was principally attributable to the IOO's Grand Master, Robert Lindsay Crawford. Crawford was the Dublin-based editor of the *Irish Protestant* when he was expelled in December 1903 from the Orange Order for associating himself with a group of dissident northern Orangemen that had broken away earlier that year after disciplinary sanctions were imposed on its principal figures by the Order's leadership. This alignment was sundered in May 1908 when Crawford suffered a second expulsion, this time from the IOO.

Crawford's second Orange expulsion coincided with his second editorial dismissal. In May 1906 he was ousted from the *Irish Protestant* for continuing to criticize Unionist Party leaders who had over the previous year successfully mollified much of their discontented Irish support base. In May 1908 he suffered a similar fate at the *Ulster Guardian*, official organ of the Ulster Liberal Association, due to the stances he had taken in favour of Irish self-government and against sweated labour in the linen industry. Out of work in Ireland, Crawford immigrated to Canada in 1910. There he resumed a career in journalism and played a leading role in the Self-Determination for Ireland League of Canada and Newfoundland during the War of Independence. In 1922 he was appointed its trade representative in New York by the government of the Irish Free State.[3] Here the divergent ways in which Crawford's leading role within the IOO has been appraised to date will be reviewed. Hitherto underused sources of evidence will be drawn upon to offer a reinterpretation.

Interpreting Independent Orangeism

The first detailed account of the IOO under Crawford's influence between 1903 and 1908 was provided in the early 1960s by John Boyle. Referring to Crawford's own 'evolution towards liberal nationalism', Boyle argued that this enabled the IOO to move beyond the confines of the Protestant sectarianism that had spawned it and to play a key part in a 'tenuous alliance designed to comprehend moderate unionists, new liberals, labour supporters and left-wing nationalists'. However the very rapidity of Crawford's evolution was, Boyle argues, a source of the strain that this fragile alliance proved unable to withstand. With Crawford ousted, the IOO reverted to a narrowly sectarian outlook. Official Unionism, to which the IOO's broadened outlook and the new alliance formation this facilitated had represented significant threats, consolidated its political ascendancy. For the progressive IOO fall had quickly followed rise but 'in its most liberal phase', as crystallised in the Magheramorne Manifesto, the movement 'had evolved a conception of Irish nationality that had much in common with that held by some United Irish and Young Ireland leaders'.[4]

A very different interpretation of the IOO and of Crawford's contribution is, however, put forward in Henry Patterson's revisitation of the subject almost two decades later. Patterson stresses a continuity of sectarianism rather than an evolution towards national democratic reformism within the ideology of the IOO. This sectarian outlook emphasised the power of the Catholic Church (particularly its control over education), the appeasement of the Catholic clergy by the Dublin Castle administration and the failure of Ulster's Unionist MPs to oppose ministerial appeasers within their own party. While Crawford was defining a political ideology for the IOO he remained, in Patterson's view, far removed from the developed liberal nationalist views he would later espouse and shared more common ground with contemporary Unionist commentators such as Michael McCarthy and Sir Horace Plunkett than he did with the United Irish and Young Ireland traditions. Within this perspective the 1905 Magheramorne Manifesto does not represent a high point of IOO liberalism but the elaboration of a strategic edifice that would have rested on sectarian foundations if it had not already collapsed in ruins.[5]

According to Patterson, Crawford's strategy had two parts: build an independent northern Protestant political representation by exposing the subservience of the Ulster Unionist MPs to the government and unite this force with an anti-clericalist movement of the southern Catholic laity. The northern part of this plan was confounded by the movement into open opposition to the Unionist government's policies in Ireland by the Ulster Unionist MPs that culminated in the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) early in 1905. The southern part was, for reasons examined below, simply a non-starter.

For both Boyle and Patterson political developments in the north, particularly those in Belfast, provide the main focus of the discussion, with a failed challenge to mainstream Orangeism and the official Unionism it sustained being interpreted in contrasting ways. A southern Irish dimension of the IOO's ideological project is also identified by Patterson and is placed alongside the northern one in his statement that 'by the beginning of 1905… Crawford's strategy was doubly in ruins'.[6] An exploration of this southern dimension underpins the reappraisal of the IOO project developed below. This reappraisal begins by outlining Patterson's indictment of Crawford's 'empty radicalism'.

Crawford's Radicalism – Empty or Substantive?

For Patterson the 'essential emptiness' of Crawford's radicalism in the period leading up to the Magheramorne Manifesto derived from the fact that it 'was based on what can be termed, using an analogy with the history of the socialist movement, an impossible demand: that the Catholic masses of the south withdraw their support from the political *entente* worked out between the Irish party and the Church on education'.[7] Thus 'his [Crawford's] vision of a future reformed Ireland was one which had as its central component the wholesale jettisoning by the Catholic Irish of their existing religious and cultural traditions'.[8] Added, for Patterson, to the impossibility of the demand is the implausibility of the evidence Crawford could adduce of a movement in favour of such withdrawal and jettisoning emerging among southern Catholics. Referring to a January 1905 *Irish Protestant* editorial in which Michael McCarthy and Frank Hugh O'Donnell - 'popularly regarded as renegades from Catholicism and Nationalism' – as well as Michael Davitt - 'politically isolated in his anti-clericalism' - were held out as potential leaders of such a movement, Patterson reasonably concludes that 'if he was waiting for these three to emerge as the leaders of a new political force in nationalist Ireland, then the inauguration of his national partnership would be postponed into the indefinite future'.[9]

But was this what Crawford was waiting for around the time the Magheramorne Manifesto appeared? While Patterson bases his interpretation on the content of the *Irish Protestant*, there is also relevant material of a more confidential and private nature to be found in personal paper collections that suggests a different conclusion. The collections of papers referred to are those of Crawford himself and of Douglas Hyde in the National Library of Ireland and that of the Reverend James Owen Hannay in the Trinity College Dublin Library.

In 1905 Hannay had been Church of Ireland Rector of Westport for more than a decade. Participation in language revival activities in Mayo and defence of the Gaelic League against hostile criticism in the *Church of Ireland Gazette* had led to his being co-opted onto the League's national executive body, the Coisde Gnotha, in December 1904.[10] Hannay's personal network of Irish Irelanders included the Gaelic League's President, Douglas Hyde, as well as the principal ideologue of the emergent Sinn Fein movement, *United Irishman* editor Arthur Griffith. In the Spring of 1905 Hannay published the first of sixty novels that would appear under the pen name George A. Birmingham. The success of *The Seething Pot*, with its sharply critical observations of contemporary Irish politics and society, broadened Hannay's network further to include, among others, Sir Horace Plunkett.[11] A link between Crawford and Hannay first becomes evident at the same time. The first traceable contact between the two men occurred when the latter, signing himself A Protestant Gaelic Leaguer, contributed three 'Communicated' articles on the Gaelic League to the *Irish Protestant*, the first of which appeared in the 20 May 1905 issue. An accompanying editorial footnote explained that:

> As in the case of correspondence the Editor does not hold himself in any way responsible for the views expressed in 'Communicated' articles. Much has been said and written regarding the *Gaelic League* and we therefore allow the author of these articles, whose attachment to Protestant principles is as sincere as our own, to deal with this movement from his own standpoint as A Protestant Gaelic Leaguer.

In the course of the first of the articles Hannay, for his part, likened the Gaelic League to the IOO in the following terms:

> Both are profoundly democratic in spirit. Both demand in their members, and tend to create in them, a vigorous independence of thought and action. Neither body relies on or receives the help of the rich or the patronage of the great.

Five letters from Hannay to Crawford – two from May 1905, two from July 1905 and one from June 1906 – survive but, alas, none of Crawford's letters to Hannay seem to have been preserved. The earliest of the Hannay letters, dated 26 May 1905, shows him circulating Crawford's pamphlets and speeches to, among others, Sir Horace Plunkett. Douglas Hyde, as we will see, was also a recipient. Another letter, written three days later, was prompted by comments in the *United Irishman* of 27 May on a lecture which Crawford had delivered on Irish Unionist Representation in the Past, Present and Future in Ballymoney Town Hall earlier in the month. These comments were in the main warmly approving but, to Hannay's annoyance, they disparaged the fear expressed by Crawford that Home Rule could turn out to be Rome rule:

> I read the United Irishman and wrote a letter to Griffith (for publication) protesting against his sneer about our "seeing the Pope in every bush". I crave the union of the two Irish democracies so deeply at heart that I want it made perfectly plain from the start that while we are willing to trust our R.C. fellow countrymen we are not going to shut our eyes or allow them to shut theirs to a priestly tyranny. I believe Griffith is able to see the danger as clearly as we do & I was unwilling to allow a cheap sneer like that of his to pass unnoticed. Whether he will print my letter or not is another question.[12]

Hannay went on to refer to a series of article he was preparing on the eighteenth century Volunteer movement. He told Crawford that he intended to offer these to the *Irish Protestant*, adding 'however you may not like what I write'.

The *United Irishman* of 3 June printed Hannay's letter, which was signed A Protestant Irishman. The letter referred to a power that had been strong enough to wreck Parnell's career and 'three years ago to insist on the elected representatives of the Irish people helping an English government to pass their Education Bill'. Turning to the present and future, it continued: 'we are not sure what this power might force our fellow-countrymen to do in an independent Ireland and, may I add, we look in vain, outside the pages of the United Irishman, for any indication that there is in Ireland even the will to resist a tyranny inaugurated by the Roman Catholic hierarchy'.

The editorial comments accompanying the letter depicted fear of the power the Catholic hierarchy might wield as a 'baseless apprehension' propagated by British policy and sought to defend the significance and liberality of Catholic lay opinion in Ireland. Parnell had been brought down by British Liberals and Irish parliamentarians as well as by the Catholic hierarchy: but for the moral issue, 'the three would have been impotent'. The English Education Act of 1902 had scarcely impinged on the man in the Irish street's consciousness. Going back into the first half of the nineteenth century, the comments depicted the Catholic laity as having defeated the hierarchy over university education when the Queen's Colleges were created in the 1840s and earlier still over the proposition that the British government might be given a veto over Catholic episcopal appointments in Ireland. Particular significance was attributed to this latter episode: 'we know of no "tyranny inaugurated by the Roman Catholic hierarchy" but we do know that the Catholics of Ireland who forced their hierarchy to recant the Veto possess both the will and the power to resist such a tyranny if it were attempted'.

Also on 3 June Douglas Hyde wrote to Hannay thanking him 'for taking the trouble of writing at such length to explain to me the position of the new parties' and observing:

> I take it that the object of the new party is to see to it that Home Rule, when it comes, will be fenced around with as many safeguards for the minority as possible, and in that I cordially concur, though I don't personally doubt that the majority would make an excellent use of their power and not oppress in any way. Still it's no harm to get all the guarantees possible. Lindsay Crawford's speech is a positive revelation. We use the phrase Irish Ireland in slightly different senses but it comes to the same thing in the end.[13]

Hannay responded the following day that 'I must have expressed my last letter to you very badly' and sought to clarify what was being undertaken as follows:

> What we agreed in Crawford's office to go for with our new party was the old volunteer constitution "The King, The Lords and Commons of Ireland" modified as far as necessary for the 20th century. Of course this an immense way off. We have first of all to get the idea of nationalism into the heads and hearts of Orangemen. Crawford had a general meeting of the Independent Orange Order yesterday in Portglenone (Co. Antrim) & laid our ideal before them or as much of it as possible…He wired me in the evening – "meeting satisfactory". I shall no doubt get a letter on Tuesday. On Thursday he has a big public meeting in Larne. Those wretched Conservative Association people, Moore, Craig & Co., are holding an opposition meeting in the same place on the same day. They have republished Crawford's speech with the comments of Griffith attached & some remarks of their own & are circulating it all over Ulster. This I think will do us good and not harm. I am starting next week in the Irish Protestant a series of articles giving a short history of the volunteer movement of 1780. I want to rub it in that the thing was a Protestant patriotic movement, a stand for Irish rights and that it was the thing Protestants have more reason to be proud of than anything else they ever did in Ireland. I mean in the end to draw the inevitable conclusion.
> "This is our constitution. As patriots, Protestants and loyalists we are bound to see that our legal constitution is – not given back to us for it never could be legally taken away – but recognised and acted on."[14]

'A Neglected Chapter of Irish History' appeared in five consecutive issues of the *Irish Protestant* from 17 June to 15 July 1905. At no point was the authorship of the articles indicated and no disclaimer of editorial responsibility like the one that accompanied the start of the 'Contributed' series on the Gaelic League appeared at any stage. The first of the letters written by Hannay to Crawford in July accompanies returned proofs of a pamphlet reprinting the five articles. A sub-title, 'Rewritten for Irish Protestants', is added as is an authorship: 'Eoghan is a pen name with which I have already signed several contributions to the press so I think I will stick to it for this piece of work'. The second letter, written on 15 July, congratulates Crawford on the IOO's Magheramorne Manifesto, 'the most hopeful document which has appeared in Ireland for the last hundred years'.[15]

Nationalism, Sectarianism and the Magheramorne Manifesto

The material just discussed suggests that in 1905 Crawford looked for the spawning grounds of a political force in nationalist Ireland complementary to the 'Protestant Democracy' in Ulster not to the chimera of a popular following emerging for a figure like Frank Hugh O'Donnell but rather to the Gaelic League and the nuclei of the Sinn Fein party, both of which were vibrant manifestations of an Irish Ireland milieu with genuinely popular appeal. Hannay, as we have seen, credited the Gaelic League, with the creation of an IOO-like spirit of independence of thought and action in its members.'The old volunteer constitution "The King, The Lords and Commons of

Ireland" modified as far as necessary for the 20th century' endorsed by Crawford, according to Hannay's account of their discussions, converged with the dual monarchy model put forward the previous year in a key formulation of the emergent Sinn Fein perspective, Arthur Griffith's *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland*:

> The Renunciation Act of 1783 is still the law, and since it is the law the King of England so long as he govern the country through the British Parliament is *not* the constitutional King of Ireland, and all recognition of him as such is an offence against the Constitution.[16]

Connecting Crawford's thinking in the period just before the Magheramorne Manifesto with Irish nationalist rather than Protestant sectarian concerns, this evidence appears to bend the stick away from Patterson's revision and back towards Boyle's original interpretation. However the nationalism evident in the documentary survivals of the collaboration between Crawford and Hannay is a distinctively Protestant variant distinguished by strong fear of Catholic clerical power and the demand that Catholic nationalists acknowledge and take remedial action against the phenomenon giving rise to this fear. Both Griffith, looking back to the historical precedent of the Veto, and Hyde, looking forward to the emergence of a countervailing lay Catholic political elite once Home Rule was in operation, were plainly at odds with the emphasis that defined this brand of nationalism.

Moreover even nationalism of this distinctively Protestant type was, in terms of acceptance by the IOO rank-and-file and other adherents of 'Protestant Democracy', a final destination acknowledged by Hannay to be 'an immense way off' from current ideological perspectives. Here another analogy with the history of the socialist movement is suggested. The early Social Democratic parties usually proposed both maximal and minimal programmes: the former envisaged the abolition of capitalism and its replacement by a classless society, the latter proposed a series of reforms to be implemented under capitalism. Modernised Volunteer constitutional nationalism seems in mid-1905 to have represented Crawford's maximal aim: his minimal concerns centred on retaining the support of the IOO membership in the face of attacks from what Hannay termed 'wretched Conservative Association people'. This meant that in practice the relationship between 'liberal nationalism' and 'Protestant sectarianism' within Crawford's project was characterised by mutual co-existence not mutual exclusion. Thus, for instance, Crawford can found in the late Summer of 1905 deploying a discourse of unadulterated Protestant sectarianism against George Wise, a leading figure in Liverpool's extreme Protestant politics who had initially supported the IOO in its dispute with official Orangeism but changed his position to one of opposition after the Magheramorne Manifesto was published.[17]

Contrary to Patterson's assertion that developments within official Unionism culminating in the formation of the UUC had left the northern dimension of Crawford's strategy in ruins by the beginning of 1905, a considerable degree of short-term success was attained in relation to his project's minimal goal. A Pastor Wise-style defection from the IOO by the Independent Unionist MP for South Belfast, T.W. Sloan, was aborted and Sloan successfully retained his seat at the 1906 general election with his colours still attached to the new order's mast.[18] In North Antrim at the same election the grassroots strength of the IOO played a key role in a local alliance that replaced Charles Moore, the sitting MP and one of the creators of the UUC, with the Liberal, R.G. Glendinning.[19] The long term – and, indeed, ongoing – significance of the UUC is undeniable. But in 1906 official Unionism also succumbed at the polls to the combined efforts of diverse enemies in West Belfast and only very narrowly survived a Labour challenge from William Walker in North Belfast.[20] In West Belfast the victor was Joseph Devlin, leading light of the Belfast United Irish League whose 'robust nationality' had been hailed in the *Irish Protestant* as the harbinger of an emerging realignment of forces favourable to national regeneration.[21]

With regard to progress towards the maximal goal of Crawford's project, the touchstone was clearly identified as being support for radical reform of educational management. Many quotations could be taken from the *Irish Protestant* to illustrate this but, in the light of the convergence between Crawford and Griffith on a modernized version of 1780s Volunteer nationalism identified above, perhaps the most apposite one is a January 1905 comment on developments within the General Council of County Councils (GCCC). An umbrella body for the local authorities created by the 1898 reform, to which Griffith's *The Sinn Fein Policy* would assign a key role as the 'nucleus of a national authority' that would fill the space left by the abstention of Irish members from taking their seats in the Westminster parliament,[22] the GCCC had initially confined itself to dealing with non-contentious subjects. In October 1904, however, it resolved to allow itself to discuss 'all matters affecting the public welfare', prompting a withdrawal by dissenting northern Unionist delegates. In January 1905 the GCCC passed a resolution asserting the Irish people's right to govern themselves through their own parliament couched in virtually identical terms to those used by the Volunteers in the 1780s. The *Irish Protestant* sympathized with the Unionist withdrawal on the grounds that the GCCC's original modus operandi had been unilaterally repudiated and commented as follows on the January 1905 resolution:

> Who ever heard of the Irish Volunteers of 1782 passing resolutions that, while they claimed the right to govern themselves through a parliament in College Green, they were unfit to control the primary education of the country? When Sir Thomas Esmonde [Chairman of the GCCC] and his merry men assert their right to the freedom from priestly control enjoyed by the Protestant Volunteers of 1782, the assertion of the higher right of self-government will carry more weight and respect.[23]

The key assumption underlying Patterson's critique of Crawford's 'empty' radicalism is that no substantial body of Catholics was prepared to reject the school management status quo and support a system that placed publicly funded schools under the control of popularly elected office holders. But was this in fact the case? It will now be argued that heterodox educational views were prevalent to a significant extent among the Irish Irelanders to whom Crawford looked for a positive response to his national regeneration project. The case will also be made that, in the absence of unanimous acceptance of their desirability among lay Catholics, the support of Protestants (particularly that of Crawford's fellow Irish Anglicans) provided existing school management arrangements with a very important source of sustenance.

Critics and Defenders of the School Management System

Adhering to a position that had led to their being assailed by the Magheramorne Manifesto as 'the chief obstacle to the spread of democratic principles and to the supremacy of the people in national affairs'[24], the Catholic bishops meeting in Maynooth in October 1906 resolved:

> Whilst we are prepared to support an agitation for the reform of the National Board that will give adequate representation to the educational interests of our people, we wish to warn our priests and people against any movement that may result in a change calculated to interfere with or endanger the authority or control of our Catholic managers which is our chief security for the safety of religion in the school.[25]

The National Board referred to was the body that had presided over the Irish primary education system since the 1830s. This Board made building and salary grants to local schools established under the management of some important local figure. By the end of the century this important

local figure was almost invariably a Catholic or a Protestant clergyman and the norm was for denominationally segregated schools to be operated without any element of local democratic accountability. The central board presiding over the system had since the 1860s been composed of an equal number of Catholic and Protestant nominees.

At the turn of the twentieth century two factors disturbing the equilibrium of this system began to operate. Curriculum content, the qualifications required of teachers and related issues were obvious matters of major concern to the growing movement for the revival of the Irish language and, mobilizing its mass membership, the Gaelic League began to exert relentless pressure from below for changes in educational financing, policy and practice. At the apex of the system the National Board of Education was also subject to a novel form of pressure from above.

In the early 1900s Unionist government proposals for the reform of the national schools came to be based on the premises that the absence of public opinion on educational matters together with the divorce between government financial responsibility and clerical managerial powers lay at the heart of the system's chronic deficiencies (such as the large number of schools lacking basic sanitary facilities). The remedy, it was held, was to make the local authorities, reformed on a more democratic basis in 1898, responsible for the operation of the system, thus allowing central subvention to be supplemented by local rates as in Britain. In order to stimulate movement in this direction the policy of withholding financial resources from the existing system was adopted.[26]

An active public opinion did in fact emerge in response to financial stringency, but not along the lines envisaged by government educational experts. Rather the Catholic Church authorities, the teachers and the newly emergent language revivalists formed a united front against the 'parsimonious' English Treasury and the 'supine' National Board. Divergence between this new public opinion and government educational expert views came to a head during the Unionists' last year in office (1905) when an agreement between the Treasury and the National Board switched resources into extending the use of kindergarten methods in infant classes through the abolition of fees paid to teachers for teaching 'extra subjects' outside normal school hours. The subject for whose teaching most of the abolished fees were being paid was Irish.

The 1905 Gaelic League Ard Fheis passed a motion calling for the replacement of the National Board by 'a Board in the election of which the people of Ireland would have a voice'. At the request of the Coisde Gnotha, one of the League's Vice Presidents, Eoin MacNeill, subsequently sounded out the opinions of the Catholic bishops on the launching of an agitation in support of the Board's reconstruction. Such a campaign, which also demanded the restoration of fees for the teaching of Irish as an extra subject in national schools, was launched at the Dublin Rotunda on 22 September 1905. The resolution put to this meeting contained no reference to the election of a new board – a feature distasteful to the Catholic hierarchy – but called instead for 'a representative Board which shall have the confidence and support of the school managers and teachers and of the Irish public'.[27]

The warning contained in the resolution the Catholic bishops adopted little more than a year later reflected a recognition that the agitation to change the National Board's composition to which they had given their imprimatur had contributed to creating an opening for the expression of heterodox views on the school management issue. Such views attained prominence in January 1906 after the Bishop of Limerick criticized the support of the Irish Party for Liberal and Labour candidates in Britain who were pledged to repeal the English Education Act of 1902, a measure that enjoyed Anglican and Catholic support but was fiercely opposed by Nonconformists. This prompted a critical response from Michael Davitt that switched the focus to Irish education and advocated its reform on the basis of 'National or popular control of our whole education system

from the village schools to the universities'. A refusal by the *Freeman's Journal* to publish further correspondence from Davitt, who died unexpectedly after an operation in May, suppressed this controversy but the issues raised by this figure from the older generation of Home Rule politicians were soon to be revisited by younger Irish Irelanders.[28]

In late August 1905 the 'Battle of Portarlington' was sparked off by insinuations made from the pulpit about the motives of women members of the local Gaelic League branch who attended its mixed sex language classes. The branch subsequently expelled the parish priest and a curate from membership. The ejected clergymen organized a rival branch that the League's head office refused to affiliate. In the run up to the 1906 Ard Fheis both sides to the dispute sought support nationally. The laity of the original Ruairi O More Branch published an *Autobiography* detailing the ways in which its members had suffered from, and stood up to, clerical authoritarianism. The Portarlington parish priest, for his part, issued a circular letter to fellow priests in June 1906 calling for the Coisde Gnotha of the League to be purged of its anti-clerical elements. When the Coisde Gnotha elections were held, however, the result was seen to be a clerical defeat.[29] Moreover, as the battleground was widened, there was also a broadening of the issues being fought over. Thus the Ruairi O More Branch's *Autobiography* stated:

> The use made of the schools in this controversy converted some of us to the view that the unlimited control of the schools and, we may add, of the teachers, now exercised by the clergy, constituted a menace to public liberty in Ireland. We were shut out of the schools for our classes, unless we accepted unworkable conditions, but the same schools could be used to hold disorderly meetings to our prejudice. We think it an abuse of the managerial authority, for which the public pay, for partisan purposes. In view of the present position of the control of education in this country, we suggest that it is very imprudent of managers of schools to use their privileges in so high-handed a manner.[30]

Returning from a mammoth fundraising tour of America to find the League convulsed by the Portarlington affair, Douglas Hyde sought to step up the campaign to secure a reconstruction of the National Board in order to promote a closing of ranks within the organisation. As he did so, the Reverend Hannay - whose own position within the Gaelic League had come under attack in the wake of his public identification as the author of the George A. Birmingham novels - warned him in a letter of 4 October 1906:

> Take care… that in attacking the National Board you don't raise a lion instead of a hare & awaken the consciousness of the people about the abominable iniquity of the managerial system. That question is coming. You can hear Ryan's young men growling over it in the Peasant already.[31]

The reference here was to a Gaelic League Coisde Gnotha member, W.P. Ryan, who had become editor of a Navan-based weekly newspaper, the *Irish Peasant*, in December 1905. By the end of 1906 the paper's proprietors, the McCann family, had ceased publication under clerical pressure. This, according to Ryan, included threats to withdraw business from the family's stock broking firm in Dublin as well as a letter from Cardinal Logue in Armagh, who proposed 'to protect the people for whom I am responsible from its poisonous influence' by denouncing the *Irish Peasant* publicly and prohibiting the reading of it in his Archdiocese.[32] Commenting in a letter to Douglas Hyde on the state of the League at the end of 1906, Eoin MacNeill described the *Irish Peasant* and the Portarlington affairs as:

> the main expression of the ideas of Gaelic Leaguers at the moment. I don't say they express the ideas of the League but what they don't express is comparatively unheard.[33]

Catholic opinion at this time was not monolithic in its support of the existing arrangements that placed the national schools under clerical control and the changes that Crawford was advocating were sympathetically regarded by a prominent section of Gaelic revival activists as well as by Davitt. Rather than regarding Crawford as making an 'impossible demand' when he called for Catholic support for radical change in educational control, it is more accurate to see the shift in position he set so much store by as being one that was possible but improbable. The critical weakness of a strategy that made radical change in educational control the *sine qua non* of progress towards broader national regeneration was not so much an absolute refusal by Catholics to contemplate such change as the extent to which the orthodox Catholic attachment to the status quo found favour on the other side of the sectarian divide. The 'objection to the national control of state-paid education' was not confined to the Catholic Church, as the Magheramorne Manifesto pointed out. On this issue 'Protestant Churches are also cultivating a spirit of clericalism which threatens the rights of the laity'.[34]

Within Crawford's own Church of Ireland the synod system enabled the laity to contribute to open debates on educational management and in April 1906 Crawford spoke on the question at the meeting of the Church's General Synod. Here he attacked the idea that the Church of Ireland had more in common with the Catholic Church than with Nonconformist Protestants on this issue. This prompted a *Church of Ireland Gazette* editorial to dub him 'the solitary champion of secularism in the Synod' and to assert that 'practically the whole body of Irish Churchmen' saw themselves as having interests identical to those of the Catholic Church in relation to control of the schools.[35] The Synod's leanings were not necessarily representative of views within the wider community of Irish Protestants, however, as the activities of the Belfast-based Education Reform Association attest.[36]

The divergence of views within Irish Protestantism on the school management question had been addressed by another *Church of Ireland Gazette* editorial published two years earlier. This began by asking: 'ought we to struggle for the original principle of the National Board which is expressed in the phrase, "United secular and separate religious instruction"?' Praise for 'the tenacity and the high-minded courage with which our Presbyterian brethren have always striven to maintain this principle' was then prefaced by the statement that 'we do not think that there are many members of the Irish Church who would now endorse this policy'. Thereafter the focus shifted from a divergence between denominations to one between Northern Protestants and Protestants in the other three fourths of Ireland, with the former being indicted for 'shortness of vision' in relation to the interests of the latter. The introduction of local school rates, it was predicted, would, under the principle that there should be no taxation without representation, be accompanied by 'local school committees elected by the general body of ratepayers'. This 'in three fourths of Ireland would mean the placing of our Church schools under Roman Catholic management', the editorial asserted. It went on to ask: 'are our Ulster brethren really willing to hand us over to this; and because they are safe in their little corner, to disregard or minimise the danger which will most certainly accrue from this system to our Church outside Ulster?'[37]

Education, State Crisis and Partition

To find Crawford at odds with the *Church of Ireland Gazette* is not surprising. The editorial in the inaugural issue of the *Irish Protestant* had prefaced the definition of its own role as 'a decided and consistent Protestant journal, faithfully representing the laity of the Church of Ireland, and of Irish Protestants in general' with a characterization of the *Gazette* as 'a well organized and equipped machinery not only for the suppression of distinctively Protestant news, but for the perversion of

Protestant truth and the propagation of error'.[38] More remarkable, in the light of the state of disturbed equilibrium in the education system described above, is the subsequent absence of any changes in school control of the kind that Crawford advocated and what he disparaged as 'a clerical organ' anathematized.

With the return of a Liberal government to power in 1906 the fees for the teaching of Irish as an extra subject were reintroduced and the focus of educational reform proposals switched from involvement of the local authorities to the creation of a new central education department as part of the wider devolution scheme proposed by the Irish Council Bill in 1907. Such a department would under the proposals have been directly accountable to a three-quarters elected and one-quarter nominated Irish assembly. After the abandonment of this measure,[39] the Liberal approach to Irish education under Augustine Birrell became one of conciliating in a piecemeal fashion the major interests within the existing system. Alongside the restoration of the extra subject teaching fees for Irish, the financial squeeze on the national school system initiated by the Unionists was discontinued and a widely accepted (and *de facto* denominational) settlement for university education was put in place as the Queen's University in Belfast and the National University of Ireland, with its constituent and recognized colleges in southern centres, replaced the ill-fated 'godless' Queen's Colleges.[40]

Among the system's interest groups, the events of 1905-06 had plainly made the Catholic bishops more circumspect about any changes to primary education's status quo. While W.P. Ryan edited a new Dublin-based journal (the *Peasant*, later the *Irish Nation and Peasant*) in which changes to the school management system continued to be debated, Douglas Hyde skillfully steered the Gaelic League away from further clashes in which clerics and anti-clericals might be pitted against one another. But educational reform was sidelined above all by a growing constitutional crisis within the United Kingdom state, one of whose early manifestations was the wrecking by the House of Lords of the Bill by which the Liberals intended to dismantle the English Education Act of 1902.[41] As this crisis deepened, Home Rule came once again to the fore and subsidiary issues like education were pushed down the political agenda.

When change finally came to the lower levels of the Irish education system, it did not herald, as Crawford had envisaged, a new 'hands across the Boyne' partnership for national regeneration between former foes but followed the drawing of a border line partitioning the predominantly Protestant north-east from the overwhelmingly Catholic south. In the independent south the existing denominational control arrangements stayed undisturbed. Within the southern system the Church of Ireland was to be treated with considerable generosity in relation to the minimum enrolment numbers required for state funding support and to transport subsidization. But the suppression of one of the last vestiges of the original non-denominational design for national education – the Marlborough Street teacher training college – left Presbyterians throughout the island with no acceptable facility for acquiring qualifications. Protestant schools responded with 'embittered acquiescence' to the policy into which the educational activism of the new state was channeled, compulsory Irish at all levels.[42]

The new devolved Northern Ireland government, by contrast, moved quickly to reform education along popular control lines. Under a 1923 Act, county borough and regional education committees were set up and the public funding of schools reorganized so that schools operating under the control of the committees were fully financed while schools that remained outside or only partially within such control qualified for much more limited public support. The committees appointed teachers in the schools under their control and religious instruction in these schools was given outside compulsory school hours. But popular control, as we have seen, was only one element of Protestant educational thinking. By 1930 the publicly controlled sector

featured compulsory Bible teaching, Protestant clerical involvement in local management and the appointment of teachers at local – rather than regional – level. Rather than just the Catholic Church having put the Catholic community at a disadvantage by its total rejection of elected representative control, 'effective [state] endowment of Protestantism' had now taken place creating 'not only a system of religious segregation but one which is separate and unequal'.[43] Crucial to the changes that altered the 1923 Act regime was an alliance of Protestant clergymen that won the backing of the Orange Order for its demands and used this as a lever to successfully secure concessions from the Unionist government.[44] Of this turn of events D.H. Akenson observes that 'no band of priests in the former united Ireland had engaged in politics with the energy and efficacy of the Protestant clerics who led the [Northern Ireland] United Education Committee of Protestant Churches'.[45]

Conclusion

This article took as its starting point Patterson's challenge to Boyle's interpretation of the IOO. It presented hitherto overlooked evidence as the basis upon which an alternative version of the relationship between IOO strategy and southern Irish political forces was proposed. It then proceeded to discuss what Patterson rightly identifies as a crucial issue but does not explore in any detail - clerical control of Irish education. The significance of the fact that clergymen of more than one denomination were involved in exercising this control was stressed. The Magheramorne Manifesto indicates, albeit in an undeveloped way, that Crawford did not regard clericalism as a phenomenon confined to Catholicism. An *Irish Protestant* editorial of October 1905 goes further, declaring that 'Protestant Democracy in Ulster is struggling towards the light of national liberty against the combined forces of clericalism and plutocracy' with evidence of the 'intolerant dominion' of the former 'to be found in Protestant Ulster equally with Roman Catholic Munster'[46]. This is a crucial point as regards the development of a broader understanding of the IOO project. Compared with a compartmentalisation that confines the operation of class conflict to the north and that of (one variety of) church power to the south of Ireland, more complex combinations of political forces of the kind Crawford refers to here provide students of the IOO with a more serviceable framework of analysis.

Notes and References

1. For the Magheramorne Manifesto see *Irish Protestant* 22 July 1905.
2. For instance T.W. Moody *The Ulster Question 1603-1973* (Cork, 1974) p. 85: F.S.L. Lyons "The Watershed, 1903-7" in W.E. Vaughan (ed.) *A New History of Ireland Volume VI Ireland Under The Union II, 1870-1921* (Oxford, 1996) pp. 117-118: Jonathan Bardon *A History of Ulster* (Belfast, 1992) pp. 416-417: Flann Campbell *The Dissenting Voice: Protestant Democracy in Ulster from Plantation to Partition* (Belfast, 1991) pp. 383-393: Eamonn McCann *War and an Irish Town* (Harmondsworth, 1974) pp. 138-144: Geoffrey Bell (1976) *The Protestants of Ulster* (London, 1976) pp. 74-79.
3. On Lindsay Crawford's leading role in the IOO and his career as an editor in Ireland see J. W. Boyle "The Belfast Protestant Association and Independent Orange Order, 1901-10" *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. 13, 1962-63, pp. 117-152, hereafter referred to as Boyle "The Belfast Protestant Association". On Crawford's North American activities see J.W. Boyle "A Fenian Protestant in Canada: Robert Lindsay Crawford 1910-1922" *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. LII, 1971, pp. 165-176.
4. Boyle "The Belfast Protestant Association".
5. Henry Patterson "Independent Orangeism and Class Conflict in Edwardian Belfast: A Reinterpretation" *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* Vol. 80, Section C, 1980, pp.1-27.
6. Patterson op. cit. p. 26
7. Patterson op. cit. p.22.
8. Patterson op. cit. p. 27.
9. Patterson op. cit. p. 22.
10. *An Claidheamh Soluis* 17 December 1904.
11. Hannay's relationship with Hyde is discussed in R.B.D. French "J.O. Hannay and the Gaelic League" *Hermathena* 102, 1966, pp. 26-52 and Peter Murray "First Novels and Fierce Controversies: *The Seething Pot*, *Hyacinth* and George A. Birmingham" *Cathair na Mart* Vol. 12, 1992, pp. 113-127. His admiration for Griffith and his friendship with Sir Horace Plunkett are described in his autobiography George A. Birmingham *Pleasant Places* (London, 1934) pp. 187-191 and pp. 160-161. Hannay/Birmingham's extraordinarily prolific literary career is surveyed in Brian Taylor *The Life and Writings of James Owen Hannay (George A. Birmingham) 1865-1950* (Lampeter, 1995).
12. J.O. Hannay to Lindsay Crawford 29 May 1905, Lindsay Crawford Papers, National Library of Ireland, Ms.11,415.
13. Douglas Hyde to J.O. Hannay 3 June 1905, J.O. Hannay Papers, Trinity College Dublin Library, Ms. 3,454.
14. J.O. Hannay to Douglas Hyde undated (but - since the Portglenone meeting of 'yesterday' was held on June 3rd - 4 June 1905), National Library of Ireland, Douglas Hyde Papers, Ms. 18,252: emphasis in original.
15. There is a copy of the pamphlet *A Neglected Chapter of Irish History: Rewritten for Irish Protestants* in the J.O. Hannay Papers, Ms. 3431.
16. Arthur Griffith *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland* (Dublin, 1904) p. 96.
17. *Irish Protestant* 19 August and 2 September1905: on the role of Wise in Liverpool politics see Frank Neal *Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914* (Manchester, 1988) Chapters VIII and IX.
18. Boyle "The Belfast Protestant Association" pp. 137-138 and pp.140-143
19. J.R.B. McMinn "Liberalism in North Antrim, 1900-14" *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. XXIII, 1982-83, pp. 17-29.
20. "Protestantism and Unionism" *Irish Protestant* editorial 1 April 1905.

21. Boyle "The Belfast Protestant Association" pp. 142-143.
22. Arthur Griffith *The Sinn Fein Policy* (Dublin, 1906) pp. 27-28.
23. *Irish Protestant* 21 January 1905.
24. *Irish Protestant* 22 July 1905.
25. *Freeman's Journal* 11October 1906.
26. W.J.M Starkie *Recent Reforms in Irish Education, Primary and Secondary, with a 2the View to their Coordination* (Dublin, 1902); F.H. Dale *Report of Mr. F.H. Dale, His Majesty's Inspector of Schools, Board of Education, on Primary Education in Ireland* Parliamentary Papers Volume XX 1904; David Miller *Church, State and Nation in Ireland, 1898-1921* (Dublin, 1973); Alan Titley *Church, State and the Control of Schooling in Ireland 1900-1944* (Dublin, 1983).
27. Miller op. cit. pp. 132-133.
28. Francis Sheehy-Skeffington "Michael Davitt's Unfinished Campaign" *Independent Review* Vol. 10-11, 1906, pp. 298-312.
29. Sheehy-Skeffington op. cit. pp. 309-310; W.P. Ryan *The Pope's Green Island* (London, 1912) Chapter VIII.
30. Portarlington Gaelic League *Autobiography of the Ruairi O More Branch of the Gaelic League, Portarlington* (Portarlington, 1906) p. 57.
31. J.O. Hannay to Douglas Hyde 4 October 1906 [letter is misdated 4/9/1906] Douglas Hyde Papers, Ms. 18,252.The latest of the preserved letters from Hannay to Crawford – that of 10 June 1906 - refers to an instance of retaliation directed against Hannay in his Gaelic League capacity as a result of offence taken at depictions of the Catholic clergy in the George A. Birmingham novels, a second of which – *Hyacinth* – had appeared early in 1906. In this letter Hannay characterises 'many of the younger priests' whose support had surprised and gratified him as 'men as much in love with liberty as you and I are'. But in the 4 October letter to Hyde Hannay writes that 'in spite of the rare beauty of individual characters here or there, the Roman ecclesiasticism is what I said it was "a great anti-national & tyrannical power"'. On the making of Hannay's position within the League untenable see French op. cit. and Murray op. cit.
32. W.P. Ryan op.cit pp. 9-10; Brian Inglis "Moran of The *Leader* and Ryan of The *Irish Peasant*" in Conor Cruise O'Brien (ed.) *The Shaping of Modern Ireland* (London, 1960) pp. 115-118.
33. Eoin MacNeill to Douglas Hyde, 19 December 1906, Douglas Hyde Papers, Ms. 21,099.
34. *Irish Protestant* 22 July 1905.
35. "The Church of Ireland and Denominational Education" *Church of Ireland Gazette* editorial 4 May 1906: the General Synod debate is reported in a Supplement to the same issue.
36. See the Education Reform Association's statement "Popular Control of Secular Education" *Northern Whig* 14 May 1906 and its pamphlet *Secular Control of Secular Education* (Belfast, 1904).
37. "Irish Primary Education" *Church of Ireland Gazette* editorial 29 April 1904.
38. "Our Policy" *Irish Protestant and Church of Ireland Review* editorial August 1901. A shorter title and weekly publication date from October 1903.
39. See A.C. Hepburn "The Irish Council Bill and the Fall of Sir Antony MacDonnell 1906-07" *Irish Historical Studies* Vol. 17, 1971, pp. 470-498.
40. Miller op. cit. Chapter IX.
41. Division within the Catholic clergy was a notable feature of the controversy over 'essential Irish' in the National University of Ireland matriculation syllabus - Ryan op. cit. Chapters XI and XII: on the fate of the 1906 English Education Bill see John D. Fair

British Interparty Conferences: a study of the procedure of conciliation in British politics, 1867-1921 (Oxford, 1980) Chapter III.

42. Kurt Bowen *Protestants in a Catholic State: Ireland's Privileged Minority* (Dublin, 1983) Chapter 6, especially pp. 137-138 and p. 157; D.H. Akenson *Education and Enmity: The Control of Schooling in Northern Ireland 1920-1950* (Newton Abbot, 1973) pp. 119-121; D.H. Akenson *A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland 1922-1960* (London, 1975) argues that 'the Protestants were tolerated and well treated as a religious minority but were penalized and ill-treated as a *cultural* minority' (pp. 118-119).
43. Patrick Buckland *The Factory of Grievances: Devolved Government in Northern Ireland 1921*-39 (Dublin, 1979) p. 263; Akenson *Education and Enmity* pp. 194- 195.
44. Akenson *Education and Enmity* Chapters 4-6; Buckland op. cit. Chapter 11.
45. Akenson *Education and Enmity* p. 88.
46. "The Priest in Politics" *Irish Protestant* editorial 14 October 1905.