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Irish Diaspora Politics: The West Riding of Yorkshire, 1879-1886

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Abstract:

This article seeks to explore the Irish migrants' political experience within the geographical confines of the West Riding of Yorkshire during several key election campaigns during the period 1879-86. The focus will be on the constitutional, or moral force, philosophy of Irish nationalism in its diasporic/external context. The central aim is to explore how Irish migrants engaged in political activism in the pursuit of legislative independence for the homeland under the banner of Irish Home Rule. Attention will focus on specific parliamentary election contests where Irish Home Rule became *the* dominant platform. This will be achieved through an analysis of the Home Rule Confederation & Irish National Leagues of Great Britain and its activities as a political "fifth column" operating in the industrial heartlands of Yorkshire.

Keywords: Diaspora, Elections, Home Rule, Irish nationalism, Yorkshire

"Even in England, Ireland is a power"
(Heinrick 1872, 68)

The predominance of emigration in the history of a relatively small island on the north-western fringe of Europe is unmistakable. During the 19th century Irish migration is considered as "one of the most significant movements of population in modern European history, in terms of the total number of people involved and the proportion migrating" (Hickman 2005, 117). The duration and numerical significance of this exodus has resulted in the Irish making their presence felt right across the Anglophone world and beyond. Although the Irish diaspora has received much scholarly attention, especially that of the United States, a lot still needs to be done to document the Irish experience in Britain – particularly its political dimension. Moreover, specific cities and regions in Britain have predominated. Thus, the focus here

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is the political activities of the Irish diaspora community in Britain, specifically the region of West Riding, or the "Western Third", England's largest county of Yorkshire[1]. To borrow O'Day's phrase, I will essentially focus on the "Yorkshire Face of Irish Nationalism" (1977). The overall intention is to explore the intertwining of *migration* and *politics*, what are arguably *the* two most dominant themes within 19th century Irish history. Both become significantly more complex and fluid when occupying the same time and space. Thus, our attention will be towards the political dimension, through an analysis of the expatriate nationalist response to the pursuit of legislative independence in the form of Irish Home Rule, which came to represent a central facet of the diasporic experience from *c.* 1870-1920. The focus will rest upon assessing migrant political activity within the constitutional, or moral-force, philosophy of Irish nationalism in Yorkshire's most industrialised and populated area. This will be undertaken through an analysis of some of the electoral contests in which the Yorkshire-Irish community came to play a significant part.

As a direct result of mass immigration of the Irish into British towns and cities, a considerable working-class Irish vote emerged in many constituencies which soon became aware of its electoral muscle (Biagini 2007, 2). The migratory experience, largely attributable to British misrule, imbued the migrant with a sense of alienation, frustration and more importantly, a love of the homeland. There then emerged what might be described as an "ethno-political" or "ethno-nationalist" network/movement based upon "institutional affiliations" (Fitzpatrick 1993, 1). This resulted in the creation of a formal pan-British Irish political organisation (Delaney, MacRaild 2007; MacRaild 2005; Miskell 2005). The "League" as it often referred to, operated under three main titles during its lifespan: Home Rule Confederation – 1873-79 (HRC); Irish National League – 1879-1900 (INL); and United Irish League – 1900-22 (UIL), all of Great Britain. According to E.P.M. Wollaston, the guiding motive of the League centred upon the "application of electoral pressure" whereby Irish voters in specific constituencies would be "welded into a solid, disciplined unit that centred on a branch, or branches, of the Irish organisation and would deliver its votes in a solid bloc according to the policy formulated by the leaders of the Irish Parliamentary Party". This vote would then be used solely for the advancing of "Ireland's national struggle, irrespective of purely British party issues", thus creating "a weapon

[1] West Yorkshire and West Riding are interchangeable terms. The Riding is no longer a geographical reality due to electoral boundary changes in 1972, which resulted in the creation of South and West Yorkshire. The West Riding originally incorporated both of these areas and more, but is now confined to a term of nostalgia and historical reference. The word "Riding" has its origins in Old English – *thrithing*, from Old Norse – *thrithjungr*, meaning "third part" which denotes the three ancient jurisdictions of Yorkshire: East, West & North Ridings.

no English party could disregard" (1958, 8-9). Across the West Riding there emerged a network of branches headed by a regional organiser. Within towns and cities with a substantial Irish population there often existed a branch, or several branches, of the League with the Leeds-Bradford nexus containing some thirteen branches between them at its height.

Each of these successive organisations of diasporic Irish nationalism existed and operated for a variety of reasons in exerting political influence, which can be succinctly reduced to *four* main functions. Firstly, electoral registration of eligible members of the migrant community was *the* central plank in its strategy – and in the words of one contemporary, "its most potent weapon" (Heinrick 1872, 22). The *raison d'être* of the League was "to unite the Irish voters in Great Britain so that they may be an effective weapon for furthering the cause of Home Rule whenever opportunity occurs" (*Tablet*, 13 June 1908). This "weapon" was intended to create a bloc vote that could be marshalled at elections behind the banner of Home Rule, which in turn would be used to exert political influence on various electoral candidates. Holding the balance of power in certain Yorkshire constituencies was therefore the objective – a difficult task, though not impossible (Wollaston 1958, 9). The League was also charged with educating and informing the British public on Ireland, its history and claims, and the legitimacy of Home Rule. Thirdly, the nation-wide network of branches and the harnessing of an Irish electoral force contributed to the all-important financial aspect of the League and its parliamentary body. And finally, in addition to the "official" dimension, the League "unofficially" acted as a hub that fostered cultural, social and ethnic cohesion (O'Day 1993). These additional activities also included the likes of philanthropy, education, sport, Irish language and culture (Holmes 2010, 290-91). The scene was now set for a diasporic political initiative, with the region being noted as "one of the most vigorous centres of nationalism" maintained through powerful branches of the League (Wollaston 1958, 40-41).

In its simplest sense, Home Rule was based on the idea of self-government for Ireland through the re-establishment of an elected Irish parliament in Dublin (O'Day 1998; Jackson 2003). But given that Home Rule was not a fixed idea or concept, that it was indeed fluid and open to interpretation, it came to be viewed by the diaspora in slightly different terms. Thus, Irish nationalism outside of Ireland, or at a distance, emerged as a phenomenon imbued with different feelings of patriotism toward the homeland. Irish diasporic nationalism was instilled with sentimentalism and was highly emotive. It was the *idea* of Home Rule, rather than its specifics that plucked at the heart-strings of the migrant's nationalist consciousness. For the Irish in Britain there was little concern expressed as to the fine detail or framework of legislative independence, but merely that they wanted it – it was a moral duty to the homeland and the condition of its people. For them, their principal task was one of acting as a fifth column and nothing more – at least in

theory. There were no real tangible benefits to be gained by the Irish in Britain through the implementation of Home Rule and it is also worth stressing that diaspora nationalism was not altogether synchronised with that which existed at home (Belchem 1995, 112).

The Riding eventually became a melting-pot of Irishness, which facilitated an intermingling of the Irish from all parts of Ireland in forging an exile Irish nationalism that did away with parochialism and regionalism (Brown 1966, 20-21). Following the tumult of the Famine, by 1870 it was very much a settled community that had established itself firmly in the urban setting of the "Broad Acres"[2]. This stemmed from migratory patterns of settlement whereby the main industrial centres such as Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield absorbed the Irish, resulting and the creation of "Irish quarters" (Richardson 1968; 1971; Supple-Green 1990; Supple 1982)[3] or "little Irelands" that promoted resourcefulness that helped reinforce a sense of identity and solidarity (Belchem 2000, 129; Busteed 2000, 110). Deprivation at home and the attractiveness of Yorkshire's employment opportunities in the likes of the wool industry, mining, and rail construction exemplify the typical push/pull factors (Cowley 2004; McGowan 2009, 21). Sectarianism was also largely absent in Yorkshire, leading to better settler-host relations than in other British cities – namely Liverpool and Glasgow. Yorkshire's uniqueness in terms of its identity is also noteworthy as the "Tyke" identity offered succour and scope for political manoeuvre to the aspirations of the migrant in a "fiercely independent county proud of its difference" (Woodhouse 1996, 9). However, the wider British experience is captured by one contemporary migrant when writing about his activism in diaspora politics, referring to Britain as a "stony-hearted stepmother" (Denvir 2007).

Through the creation of the League there emerged *local Irish elites* (migrant political leaders) that formed part of a tripartite system of political relations, that extended to *Irish political elites* (those technically Irish-based), and *indigenous political elites* (Yorkshire politicians) who comprised the interplay of homeland-diaspora politics. Reciprocal relations developed between nationalist leaders in Ireland and the "Sea Divided Gael", whose fervent nationalism was cultivated by Irish politicians over many decades. It is also worth emphasising that in contrast to their financially stronger Irish-American counterparts, the Irish in Britain that were enfranchised and could apply their vote in the imperial parliament. Accordingly, contemporary political propagators viewed the Irish vote as a significant threat in certain

[2] "Broad Acres" is a colloquial name used for the county of Yorkshire.

[3] Richardson points to a specific example of some 500 Irish arriving from Queen's County in response to the decline of the wool trade in that region and its growth in Yorkshire. Migrants mainly came from counties Mayo, Sligo & Queens.

constituencies through an urban population that varied between 15-30 per cent – particularly in the North; but it has been argued that "in the event, Irish votes never lived up to the expectations of national leaders or fears of British politicians" (O'Day 1989, 185). It was, however, a *perceived* threat, compared with an *actual* threat, which played on the minds of many British politicians and society. The period under consideration is also noteworthy for franchise reforms that affected the potential of the Irish vote. Such reforms were critical in the development of an expat electorate, with the 1867 Reform Act virtually doubling the electorate (with further increases in 1884), "gave the Irish in Britain – many of whom were newly-enfranchised – added significance since they were potentially able to exert an Irish influence in urban Parliamentary elections" (Swift 2000, 30; Supple 1986, 238). If Hugh Heinrick's survey (1872, 58) is anything to go by, Yorkshire's urban centres contained an Irish population large enough "to exercise a political influence sufficient to rule the destinies of parties [*where*] the power of political parties is so nearly balanced that, with proper organisation and preparation, the issue of an electoral contest would depend on the Irish vote". He described the Gaels of West Yorkshire as "possessing power, position, and intelligence, and exercising in every relation of life a marked influence on the communities among whom they reside". A plan to muster the Irish vote, where it was deemed sufficiently powerful could ultimately "decide the battle of parties to restore party equilibrium, and prevent either of the rivals from weighing the scale, so that the position of power will depend on whether we choose to kick the beam and destroy the equipoise of the party" (Heinrick 1872, 67).

John O'Connor Power's (1880, 411) assessment of the Irish in Britain is also illuminating. He describes the Irish communities in Britain as "welded together" in a political organisation that has "for its object the redress of Irish grievances and the advancement of Irish nationality". He points to the Irishman residing in Britain as one who keeps tabs on Irish national politics and "where a wider franchise prevails, he finds himself possessed of a political power which he was never permitted to exercise in his own country, and his first thought on becoming conscious of this fact is that it is his duty to utilise this new power for the advancement of Irish rights and Irish interests". Amongst a population of some two million who were to be found in the "most crowded centres of large towns" he saw great political potential, but like other contemporaries he lamented the temptations of alcohol and general social degradation. He nevertheless underlined the fact that the migrant was in England, but not of it. The Irishman's "selfishness" for Ireland resulted in them being politically separated which could easily "expand into an ardent sentiment of patriotism" that had caught the attention of British politicians who were keen to court the Irish vote. He also described the migrant as not indifferent to the "welfare and glory of their native land" and that they had "nothing to gain" from Home Rule or tenant rights (O'Connor-Power 1880, 414-415).

Although the League entered its first political forays during the 1870s, the ensuing period of 1879-86 can be viewed as a crucially important era in its subsequent development as that is when the Irish question "achieved the status of the pre-dominating issue, the great and abiding preoccupation of politicians" (Hamer 1969, 237). Events specific to the Riding would set it apart from other major areas of Irish settlement and organised Irish nationalism. Events both at home, and those at the local level contributed to this. One aspect that shaped the period was the increased contact and ever-developing relations between migrant political representatives and indigenous political elites, as well as members of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP). The three-way interaction was stimulated from within the local level, but also from without, through visits from the likes of Parnell, that became the life-blood of the movement and constituted what can be termed as a process of "servicing" (Belchem 2000, 132)[4]. A migrant middle-class element acted as a conduit between the leadership of the IPP and the migrant community, a type of internal stratification that offered ethnic leadership that was both cultural and political. There were two levels to such servicing: firstly, that which emanated from the upper echelons of the Irish political establishment – from without; and secondly, servicing from within by an Irish migrant middle-class. There existed what has been termed "culture-brokers" who contributed "to the construction of an "imagined" national identity" that sought to influence the lower strata of the immigrant community and to "superimpose a wider "invented" affiliation upon traditional and instinctive sub-national loyalties" (Belchem 1999, 191-94). A prime example of such elite servicing is demonstrated in Charles Stewart Parnell's visit to Leeds in 1879. In his address to a political gathering in the city, Parnell sought to remind his fellow Irishmen that they were in a "peculiar position" and that "it was their duty as Irishmen to hold themselves entirely aloof from every political party in the town" until they received clear instructions as to which party to support in the furtherance of Irish national interest. He urged that:

> No Irishman ought to identify himself with any English political party. (Hear, hear.) He should hold himself absolutely aloof from every English political combination, for in no other way could he hope to serve his country or do his duty to Ireland. They had in Leeds a very important power. They held the balancing power as regarded the second seat. They could give it either to the Tories or to the Liberals. They could either return two Liberals or two Tories. The power was clearly theirs, and he hoped that they would exercise it calmly and judiciously for the good of their country, regardless of any other necessity, local or otherwise. Until Ireland had obtained her right it was their duty, as Irish exiles in England, to stand by their countrymen at home, and assist them in their struggle for freedom. (*Leeds Mercury*, 13 November 1879)

[4] Belchem also highlights a similar occurence in Liverpool.

Parnell went further in stressing that as Irish exiles in England, their duty was to remain true to the country "that gave them birth". Of interest here, is the stipulation that "regardless of any other necessity, local or otherwise", the Leeds-Irish should act according to their moral obligations, which was very much centred on stimulating sentimentalism as opposed to pragmatism. The issue of the *local* taking precedence over the *national* was clearly a problem for the hierarchy of the movement, as the pragmatism of local concerns invariably held greater immediacy and relevancy to the Irish of Leeds. This would be a recurring problem that would manifest itself in a variety of ways in the coming years. Nevertheless, such impassioned calls to an expatriate community in Yorkshire shows that a significant Irish population, that was well organised and strategically placed to sway political outcomes, existed in the city of Leeds.

The election year of 1880 then, would be a proving ground for the movement in the Riding. In order to fully understand the relevance of the elections to the Yorkshire branches, it is important that attention is dedicated to the election build-up as well as election outcomes. Commencing in the south, Sheffield provides an illustrative example of such activity in December 1879 for a hotly contested by-election. In many ways a traditional contest between Liberal and Conservative, it presented itself as an important seat ahead of the general election, yet it posed some serious questions for its Irish community. Unlike their more northerly compatriots in Leeds-Bradford, the Sheffield-Irish were not represented by a formal HRC branch system, but a self-styled "Irish Electoral Committee"; the apparent difference being that this Committee was beyond the jurisdiction of the central executive of the Confederation. The Committee was noted for performing the very same function as formal branches elsewhere. It sought to formally interview parliamentary candidates in relation to their position on Home Rule and other Irish matters, but this is where similarities ended.

The Sheffield by-election illustrates many of the subtleties and complexities that effectively dictated how a sub-regional variant of diaspora nationalism performed. A precursor to the general election, it shows migrant activity at the micro-level, how one locality could significantly diverge from another (i.e. Leeds/Bradford versus Sheffield) for an election where the Irish vote was considered by some as *the* determining factor. It is important to stress that Sheffield's electoral character was greatly affected by what we now term a military-industrial complex whereby the steel industry depended to a large extent on military expenditure which the Liberals had a reputation for stalling on in comparison to the Tories (Pelling 1967, 229-38; Hey 1998, 136)[5].

[5] In relation to Sheffield, Hey notes that the Irish numbers were much smaller than Leeds or Bradford.

The activity of "interviewing" prospective candidates was essentially an appendage to actual voting behaviour – canvassing in reverse. Having heard the replies of both Sheffield candidates – Samuel Danks Waddy (Liberal) & Charles Stewart-Wortley (Conservative) – the Sheffield Electoral Committee announced that the Sheffield-Irish would give their "full strength and voting power to the Liberal candidate" (*Freeman's Journal*, 22 December 1879)[6]. Before proceeding any further, it is worth pausing to highlight James Lysaght Finigan's speech (MP for Ennis) at a meeting of Irish electors at Sheffield's Temperance Hall who described himself as "an Irishman born in England [*and*] brought up in the midst of the enemy" (*Freeman's Journal*, 22 December 1879)[7]. His speech is most telling in that it reflected the sentiments of many politicised Irishmen resident in England at this time, which undoubtedly earned him a special place in the hearts and minds of his fellow expats. In direct reference to the Famine he attacked *The Times* for its negative portrayal of the Irish, which described them as "going from Ireland with a vengeance".

> They quite forgot that the Irish people, if they were going from Ireland with a vengeance, were going to England to maintain that vengeance (applause), and when English statesman imagine that they were driving the Irish out of Ireland they did not calculate that in England they will continue to be Irish–ay, more Irish than the Irish themselves. These false prophets imagined once they had got us out of Ireland that they had settled forever the Irish question, and they then thought that when they forced them into poverty and misery to settle down in the British hives of industry, in the great centres of commerce and in their great marts and seaports, they would at once become Britons. They thought when they came over here they would immediately succumb – fall down and lick the chains which bound their country. (Voices – "Never", and cheers). (*Freeman's Journal*, 22 December 1879)

Lysaght Finigan's evocative speech encapsulates the mind-set of the Irish exile and their wider experiences of being Irish in the home of the "enemy"; it was also a vital component in cultivating Irish nationalist sentiment and channelling the Irish diasporic vote. He commented further that he was not "surprised to find a committee of his countrymen in Sheffield meeting at a critical period like the present, determining to do the best they possibly could for the interests – and alone for the interest – of Ireland". Crucially though,

[6] Dr. T. O'Meara made this announcement and was a prominent member of the Sheffield Electoral Committee.

[7] "A meeting of the Irish electors" at the city's Temperance Hall, was convened for the purpose of "hearing addresses from several Irish members of Parliament on the subject of the coming election". On the platform were A.M. Sullivan, Justin McCarthy, J.L. Finnegan, John Barry (Vice President of the HRCGB) and Mr. O'Callaghan – President of the "Home Rule League", Leeds. John Delaney – President of the Sheffield Committee.

he went on to implore the Sheffield-Irish to set the bar ahead of the coming general election in sounding a "note of Irish Nationality" in England, so that their countrymen at home would thank them and "will see that the Irish race in England are determined to do battle – to do a valiant battle – for the restoration of Irish liberty and Irish freedom" (*Freeman's Journal*, 22 December 1879). The Sheffield by-election then, and the actions of its Irish inhabitants, was essentially concerned with setting the tone for successive parliamentary elections that could ultimately impact upon the future of the movement.

In what transpired to be an "Irish Victory at Sheffield" sheds light on what the nationalist press perceived to be a critical strike for Irish nationalism in Britain (*Nation*, 3 January 1880; Craig 1977, 274)[8]. Although the actual impact of the Irish vote is difficult to determine, the Liberal victory of Waddy over Stewart-Wortley could plausibly be attributed to the Irish. Waddy had certainly won Irish support as a consequence of his previous record on Irish matters in parliament, and was noted by Justin McCarthy (MP for Longford) as an individual who had "habitually voted with the friends of Ireland". It was documented that a potential Tory victory in the radical stronghold of this "great Yorkshire constituency" was once conceived of as being totally absurd, but even more absurd was the "idea that its political destinies would be finally decided by the votes of Irish Nationalists", certainly shows a coming of age for the League. Believing Conservative support in Sheffield to be significantly stronger than that of the Liberals, the journal firmly held that it was "thanks to the efforts of the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain, [that] the Irish electors are able to step in, and, on the promise of concessions to the principles they espouse, to give the victory to the candidate of their choice". The home rulers of Sheffield were deemed to have given a "stinging reply" to the Premier and his government (*Nation*, 3 January 1880). Yet in terms of religion, this by-election is not only notable for the Irish dimension being a factor, but for the tactics employed on religious grounds.

The Conservative campaign sought to draw on the support of the Catholic vote through the conduit of sympathetic English Catholic priests in swaying Irish voters. According to the *Nation*, it was compounded by the fact that almost all employers were Tory and their employees were expected to follow suit in matters of politics (Joyce 1980, 204-5). Yet it was the issue of divided Irish loyalties – that of religious fidelity versus politics – that dominated proceedings. The *religio-political* dimension of the movement was thus a kink in the armour of Sheffield's home rulers, and Irish Catholics were reminded that Waddy was "anything but a strong popular man, and his aggressive Methodism rendered him obnoxious to Churchmen [Anglicans]

[8] Result: Waddy - 14,062; Wortley - 13,584; a winning margin 3.5% (478 votes) from an electorate of 39,270.

and Catholics alike". Believing the Irish vote to be safely in their hands, the Conservative manipulation of the Irish Committee is indicative of the difficulties that could thwart the efforts of the movement. The following account by the *Nation* sheds more light on the complexity of the Catholic- and Tory-manipulated Electoral Committee:

> The local clergy, who (as is mostly the rule with English Catholics) were 'stern unbending Tories', had under their control a Catholic Registration Society, which, for the purposes of the election, was transformed into "The Irish Committee". It mustered about a score, and its members were simply nominated by persons in the background, without any elective process or popular sanction. By the aid of this body, however, and the influence of the Conservative priests, it was hoped to secure the entire Irish vote for Mr. Wortley. The secretary of the Home Rule Confederation had been in communication with this committee in the hope that due action would be taken, but only dubious and incomprehensible replies were received by him, and everything so far as outsiders were concerned remained shrouded in mystery. (*Nation*, 3 January 1880)

The result of such "dubious and incomprehensible" replies prompted the Executive of the HRC to send John Barry (ex-Fenian and founding member of HRC) to Sheffield to organise things in accordance with its objectives, only to find that the so-called "Irish Committee" had already reached a conclusion as to which candidate would be the recipient of the Irish vote. Barry's objective became one of getting this "non-selected and unrepresentative body" (partly composed of Englishmen), enlarged to approximately one hundred "and formed into an elective body representing all shades of local Irish opinion" so that each candidate could be suitably interviewed a second time. Barry was dogged, and ultimately successful, in his endeavours. Upon being interviewed by a revamped Committee, Wortley made clear that he "would not vote for the Home Rule motion unless Obstruction ceased". Waddy on the other hand issued a public letter apologising for a previous anti-Amnesty speech and "pledged himself to sweeping reforms on the land question", and in relation to Home Rule, "he promised not only to vote but speak for a measure giving Irishmen complete control over all Irish affairs". On election day proper, further electoral stimulus arrived in the shape of A.M. Sullivan (MP for Louth), Justin McCarthy and James Lysaght Finigan (all travelling from London) to address a mass meeting of the Sheffield-Irish, approximately 10,000 in number, to complete the "final rout of the English "Catholic" faction!" (*Nation*, 3 January 1880)[9].

[9] The machinery of the election is also worth discussing, as approximately eighty Irish canvassers were deployed on election day with the Irish reportedly having entirely polled by three o'clock, and following the result the *Wearing of the Green* was noted as being "never so popular in Sheffield" as it was sung by Irish and indigenous Sheffielders alike.

In fact, Waddy's success in obtaining Irish support was not solely down to a successful interview, but interestingly enough, was made possible through the efforts of a fellow Liberal – Anthony John Mundella (sitting MP for Sheffield) – who along with Waddy "signified his intention thenceforward to support the Home Rule motion" (*Nation*, 3 January 1880). The support of Mundella is important here in that he was himself a second-generation immigrant. The son of an Italian Catholic political refugee who fled to England in 1820, and a wealthy hosiery manufacturer, Mundella was elected in 1868 and noted for his Chartist leanings and popular radical agitation[10]. This pedigree and particularly his immigrant heritage, must have drawn him toward the plight of other migrants and what he must have perceived as their radical politics. As a consequence, Mundella would remain a key supporter of Irish nationalism in Sheffield for many years to come. The interventions of the HRC Executive in the Sheffield by-election was a clear indication of its electoral policy. It also signified the inherent complexities of marshalling the vote of their fellow ex-patriots in relation to competing allegiances. Yet, it was through the direct input of Barry that the Sheffield Committee was changed in its composition and structure to one that met the requirements of the Confederation – eventually being incorporated into the soon-to-be-created local branches of the HRC (*Nation*, 4 September 1880)[11].

With the 1880 general election came the first real test for Irish electoral influence in the West Riding as a whole. A brief survey of prominent constituencies provides us with a means of evaluating the extent of the Irish influence, but also the prevailing local conditions that impacted upon the operations of the HRC. The first thing to note about this election is that the Executive had opted for the "withdrawal of test pledges", that usually required would-be recipients of the Irish vote to give assurances to support Home Rule in Parliament. It was decided that in light of Lord Beaconsfield's manifesto, which was seen as a "declaration of war against Ireland and Irishmen", a significant departure from previous electoral policy was required (*Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 11 March 1880). Beginning with Sheffield, the contest there was in some respects a re-run of the by-election of the previous December but with two seats being contested on this occasion. The campaign became more anti-Irish and xenophobic in character as a result of Waddy's by-election victory over the Tory candidate Charles Wortley. Certain sections of the Sheffield electorate, fuelled by commentary in the *Shef-*

[10] Mundella held his Sheffield seat for nearly 35 years from 1868.

[11] As a direct result of the 1879 by-election the Sheffield "Electoral Committee" then decided that all future political action should be taken in the name of the Home Rule Confederation.

field Daily Telegraph and the wider Tory camp, it was argued that Waddy's victory was attained through securing the Irish vote in the town. It was an outcome that resulted in a borough of 39,270 electors (Craig 1977, 274) being deprived of its voice and "disenfranchised" through the efforts of some 800 Irish voters (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 23 & 27 March 1880). According to the *Telegraph*, both Waddy and Mundella had utilised the Irish vote previously, whereby the bludgeon of the "Home Rule Shillelagh" would be "flourished over the heads of the electors" for a second time (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 23 March 1880). In a slight U-turn however, Waddy strenuously denied that he secured Irish support for his position on Home Rule, having only received Irish support on the basis of being the best candidate in the field. As with the by-election, both Waddy and Mundella found themselves before a mass meeting of Irish electors in March 1880, under the auspices of the Sheffield Irish Electoral Committee, where both candidates were required to publicly declare their position on Irish matters. Evidently on a high from what they saw as *their* by-election victory, the Irish audience listened to the election guarantees of both candidates, the result of which was unanimous support with the following resolution being passed:

> We the Irish electors of Sheffield, desirous of promoting the best interests of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament of the United Kingdom, hereby pledge ourselves to use every legitimate means to secure the return of the Liberal candidates, Messrs. Mundella and Waddy. (*Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 30 March 1880)

Support for Mundella was a given in light of his "long and faithful services" for Ireland during his twelve-year tenure in parliament, and Waddy's brief spell as MP also made him an acceptable candidate once again. Although the "Irishmen of Sheffield were no longer obliged to hamper Liberal candidates with home rule questions" as this was not an election stipulation, and that they were always "found on the side of Liberalism", the issue of Home Rule still featured prominently (*Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 30 March 1880). Both candidates argued that they acted not to secure the Irish vote *per se*, but in following their principles of justice and equality, automatically met the desired expectations of the Irish electorate. However, this election would be different from the recent by-election. Stemming from this, the Irish vote was labelled as a "Fenian vote" from "strangers and foreigners"; accusations which Waddy sought to defuse in stating that "I look upon you not as Irishmen, but as Sheffielders". In fact, both views clearly illustrate the extent to which the Irish were perceived as integrated citizens, or as unwelcome outsiders. Sheffield was arguably a very early example of an election being fought almost exclusively on an Irish issue; not so much on Home Rule and other related concerns, but more so on the actions of a perceived internal electoral threat. This elec-

tion divided opinion along ethnic lines and proved to contain strong indigenous resentment. As a result, indigenous voters appear to have reacted to the overtures of the local press and Tory political agenda which sought to prevent the return of two Liberal members who had, in their estimations, "pandered to the Irish vote". So close was the contest that Wortley secured the second seat over Waddy by a mere forty votes, with Sheffield being noted as standing "firm and true to the old national instincts" in the midst of a "torrent of Liberal successes" in the north of England (Craig 1977, 274; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 April 1880)[12]. The 1880 general election was therefore the first real test for the HRC. It again shows that Irish support was clearly with the Liberals while united action, accompanied with central directives, was employed throughout. The effectiveness of the Irish vote is debatable, but the Sheffield by-election of 1879 shows that the vote was effective in stirring up an indigenous backlash if nothing else. Sheffield's parliamentary seats were closely fought affairs, and there is an argument in suggesting the Irish *could* in fact determine the outcome, although it is difficult to say conclusively.

Under the Third Reform Act, the resultant franchise reforms led to an increased Irish electorate that was complimented with a "splitting of parliamentary boroughs into single-member divisions, under the terms of the Redistribution Act of 1885", which held out the possibility for a small but "well-disciplined group of voters" to hold the balance of power. With these altered conditions the Irish migrant, "with their traditional flair for political management and the cohesion engendered by their common religion, were in an excellent position to take advantage of this state of affairs" even though they did not command numerical strength (Howard 1947, 42). Following this, Wakefield represented a test case for the Irish vote in the Riding ahead of the general election of 1885 (O'Day 1993, 53). The Wakefield by-election in July prompted prominent members of the Wakefield Irish community to call upon the services of Thomas Sexton (MP for Sligo) to provide guidance and direction on how they should vote. The purpose of his visit was to explain why they were "bound to vote for the Conservative candidate, Mr. [*Edward*] Green, in preference to the Liberal candidate" William Lee, in what was a marginal constituency where the Irish vote could decide the outcome. Such was the importance of winning this marginal seat ahead of the general election that Herbert Gladstone also made the trip to Wakefield to promote the Liberal cause – even travelling on the same train as Sexton. Voting Conservative was essentially perceived as a revenge tactic against Liberal policy in Ireland and as Sexton advocated, an opportunity to give a Tory govern-

[12] Sheffield election result (2 member constituency): A.J. Mundella - 17,217; C.B.S. Wortley - 16,546; S.D. Waddy 16,506.

ment "fair play" in governing Ireland. As with other elections, the influence of the Irish vote cannot be gauged precisely. But with the Wakefield-Irish consequently endorsing Sexton's proposals and voting for the Conservative candidate (who took the seat) it could be asserted that the Irish vote may well have been the deciding factor (Craig 1974; *Freeman's Journal*, 2 July 1885)[13].

Following the Wakefield by-election "victory", electoral potential of the Irish in the Riding became a growing concern for Central Executive. James J. O'Kelly's (MP for Roscommon) tour of Yorkshire and visit to Leeds highlights the regional campaign to obtain consent from local branches for Executive actions and ensure electoral consensus. In Leeds for example, the branches pledged that the Irishmen there would support Parnell and his party in "whatever policy they considered necessary to obtain the legislative independence of Ireland, and to support no candidate in any of the divisions of Leeds who was not approved of by the Executive of the Irish National League of Great Britain". Kelly outlined that he was in Leeds to make sure that the Irish vote remained separate and as representatives of the Irish nation they were morally obliged to follow IPP directives. Kelly's visit to the Riding is interesting in so much as it outlines the *realpolitik* of Irish diaspora nationalism within the confines of England in that the Irish expatriate community in Yorkshire could not return Irish members to Parliament, unless of course they were sufficiently numerous and concentrated in a given constituency to return their own Irish candidate – as T.P. O'Connor would be in Liverpool's Scotland division. Their task, then, was one of preventing what were regarded as "undesirables" being returned: "They could not help to elect Irish Members, but they could help to prevent the election of men who were undesirable in Parliament. (Cheers.) A negative exercise of political power was sometimes a very effective one" (*Leeds Mercury*, 22 September 1885). Kelly appealed to the Irish to "reserve their political action" until advised on how to act, yet it was quite clear from the Wakefield by-election what direction their political action would take (*Freeman's Journal*, 24 September 1885). Parnell's wider appeal to the Irish vote in Britain expanded upon the expected conduct of the Irish electorate that was very much a top-down dictate. He advocated that "Having given a survey of the two great political parties that were now seeking the suffrages of the Irish electors in Great Britain" the Irish electorate in Britain was duty-bound "to vote as their leaders told them" and "to be in unison of act and policy, as they will work in one heart, sentiment, and opinion", with their people in Ireland and not be enamoured by either Liberal nor Tory, but only support either party if it "is favourable to the Irish

[13] Wakefield did not appear to have a branch of the INLGB at this stage and asked for central advice in establishing one; Edward Green defeated William Lee by 1,918 votes to 1,661 (a margin of 257 votes - 7.2%); (*Leeds Mercury*, 2 July 1885).

cause and the restoration of Ireland's native Parliament" (*Freeman's Journal*, 6 October 1885). The question raised by those speeches is whether or not individual League branches in Yorkshire and their respective members, not forgetting other independent Irish voters, followed such strict directives on polling day. The political realities of operating within a diasporic context also meant that political activism was not as restricted or supressed as it was in Ireland, thus equating to more manoeuvrability and toleration in an external context, though curtailed in other regards.

Commentary on the coming election reveals the extent to which the Irish vote was viewed in certain localities. In East Leeds, for instance, where there was a highly-concentrated Irish population, the vote would be an important factor during the election. Woodhouse has described it as a "dark horse" and unpredictable for the Liberals since an estimated Irish vote of approximately 2,000 could command a great deal of respect from both main parties and aspiring MPs (Woodhouse 1996, 37). In Bradford it was noted by the *Leeds Mercury* that the town occupied a "very exceptional position". With three seats available and six candidates seeking election, the campaign was dominated by the illness and subsequent absence of two Liberal candidates – William Edward Forster and Angus Holden (the former being terminally ill). The election campaign is interesting in that Forster was absent from all electioneering in the Central Division, which in turn prompted the Conservative candidate, Mr. G.W. Waud to make "no appearances before the constituency". Regardless of absences, the Conservative camp maintained that Waud's candidature was "seriously meant in any case, and that, with the certainty of the Irish voters opposing Mr. Forster, they have reason to believe he has a good chance of being elected" (*Leeds Mercury*, 23 October 1885). In preparation for the general election, the Bradford-Irish organised one of their routine political rallies as part of the League's own electioneering. Held at the Mechanics Institute, approximately 1,600 gathered to hear T.P. O'Connor speak. The chairman on the platform, Mr John Daly, a prominent figure in the Bradford Home Rule movement, reminded the audience that:

> On the eve of the last general election they met in a similar manner and agreed to support two candidates. He believed that on that occasion the Irish vote was given in accordance with the resolution, and it swelled the great majority by which those two candidates were returned. Since then things have passed which were not very pleasant to them, and this remark referred in particular to one of the successful candidates, whom he did not wish to name. ("Buckshot" and "Forster") They knew that Mr. Forster did not act in accordance with their desires in Ireland, and he hoped that Mr. Forster would be ousted from the Central Division of Bradford. (Applause.) (*Leeds Mercury*, 19 November 1885)

In his capacity as president of the Bradford Central branch, Michael O'Flynn, also asserted that the Irish electors of Bradford placed their full

confidence in Parnell and would only vote for the sanctioned candidate. However, the bitter taste left in the mouths of the Bradford-Irish in supporting Forster in 1880 was of no small significance. They undoubtedly felt betrayed, yet possibly unsure of Parnell's guidelines as they had followed such directions previously in supporting Forster. In addition to O'Flynn and Daley, another prominent member of the local political Irish elite, William Sullivan reiterated the sentiments of his fellow countrymen in underlining the fact that "in voting they must be guided by Mr. Parnell; if their leaders said they must vote for Mr. Forster – though he hoped he would never have to vote for him – they must do it, for the sake of Ireland". The importance of the Irish vote in relation to Forster's candidature increased in significance from the perspective of both camps. Apart from Forster being attacked for his Free Trade principles by the Conservatives, the contest roused a degree of bitterness due to the interventions of the League's Executive and its proposed use of the Irish vote. According to the *Mercury* there existed sentiments of sympathy towards Forster "among all classes in the community – except perhaps amongst the extreme section of Irishmen". It was maintained that the strength of each party in the Central Division of Bradford was such that any candidate seeking election did not have the "slightest chance of being returned unless supported by the Irish voters" – estimated to be 800. There was little doubt that the bulk of Irish voters would opt for Mr. Motley Waud but T. P. O'Connor's "special pilgrimage to Bradford in order to entreat the Irish electors", to vote for the Tory candidate would be unpalatable to many of those gathered, but his task was to convince them that the "Tories were after all the real friends of Ireland!". Furthermore, O'Connor implored the Bradford-Irish "to take their revenge on the late Chief Secretary for Ireland" as a consequence of his record in office. This "vindictive advice", as it was described, given to Irish electorate by the IPP elite was deemed to be for the sole purpose of not holding the balance of power as in other English constituencies, but "with the one desire of getting rid of Mr. Forster in his absence". It was also deemed as "further proof of that persistent and implacable hatred with which Mr. Parnell and his allies have pursued him [Forster] both in and out of office", and with such support Mr. Motley Waud hoped to be returned as the first Member for the Central Division of Bradford (*Leeds Mercury*, 26 November 1885).

What can be gleaned from the following newspaper article is that the Irish vote was considered to be crucial for the Tory candidate and illustrates that not all Irishmen would follow central directives. The perceived threat of the Irish vote and the conduct of its leadership merely provided greater support and a spur in Forster's absence. This campaign ultimately represented not only a means of striking a blow against the Liberals, but was also a personal vendetta against Forster – a task laid squarely at the feet of the Bradford-Irish. The Liberals, however, recognised the "heavy odds of the Irish

vote against them", yet were still confident that they could still place Forster at the head of the poll without a large majority (*Leeds Mercury*, 26 November 1885). At a Liberal gathering convened for the "furtherance of the candidature of the Right Hon. W.E. Forster" in the town, Mr. T. A. Watson made his feelings known. He drew attention to the attempts made by T.P. O'Connor "to alienate the sympathies of the Irish electors of Bradford from Mr. Forster", and condemned his "endeavour to stir up bitterness and strife where hitherto none had existed", appealing to his "Irish fellow-burgesses not to be dictated to by this stranger from Ireland as to how they should vote" (*Leeds Mercury*, 20 November 1885).

The campaign for Bradford Central is of special significance here as it outlines the manner in which the Irish vote was perceived by indigenous politicians. Both parties were evidently appealing to what would most likely transpire to be a swing vote in this particular Division, but Forster's seat also drew added attention as it undoubtedly represented a revenge "scalp" in political terms for Parnell's party. At a more local level, and of more interest, is the way in which the external involvement of Irish elites in the shape of T.P. O'Connor (and others) was seen as wholly unwelcome and unnecessary. Regarded as a "stranger from Ireland", O'Connor's visit to the constituency reveals the extent to which the Bradford-Irish were regarded as an important minority interest vote worthy of consideration – in some ways an integral part of Bradford society and not viewed as outsiders. If Irish political elite involvement was considered to be as "alien" and in some way "foreign", then the Irish residents of the town must have been perceived in quite different terms by indigenous politicians. Also of importance, is the stress placed upon the "bitterness and strife" being roused in a town that had hitherto seen very few sectarian problems in the past – apart from the tumult caused by the "Baron De Camin" some twenty-three years previous (*Bradford Observer*, 18 September 1862). Yet, even this rabble-rousing, anti-papal ultra-Protestant hate preacher was attributable to external stimuli. It was thus felt by some sections of Bradford's political establishment that the involvement of IPP hierarchy was not welcome in this election.

The election build-up and results for Bradford are indicative of the nature of organised Irish nationalism in a Yorkshire industrial town. The added dimension of targeting Forster made for quite unique electoral activity. In spite of such efforts, the Liberals managed a clean sweep for all three seats in Bradford by returning Forster, Illingworth and Holden (Craig 1974, 79-81)[14]. Bradfordian Liberals revelled in the fact that two of their candidates were returned in spite of being "laid aside by illness" whilst facing the issues of fair

[14] Bradford election results:- Central: W.E. Forster 5,275; G.M. Waud 3,732. East: A. Holden 4,713; J. Taylor 4,367. West: A. Illingworth 4,688; H.B. Reed 3,408.

trade and the Church, along with the "utmost strength of the Parnellite faction". Whether or not the Irish voters in Bradford adhered to the directives of the Irish political leadership in London, support for Forster by the likes of Mundella from Sheffield had the possible effect of counteracting O'Connor's efforts. Though impossible to determine exactly how the Irish voted on the day, it can be assumed that the majority acted as advised (especially given the Forster factor), while the rest may have simply found it impossible to support a Conservative candidate (*Leeds Mercury*, 30 November 1885)[15].

The build-up to the Leeds election was equally important in terms of the Irish vote. In the East Leeds constituency, an Irish stronghold, the Liberal candidate John Lawrence Gane QC, a nonconformist described as a radical and a true representative of the working classes, undoubtedly had some appeal with Irish voters. At an open-air Liberal rally "composed of the poorest of the most working-class part of Leeds", indirect appeals were made by Gane to the Irish in reminding them of the "beneficial legislation passed by the Liberals for Ireland", through Disestablishment and various land laws. It was emphasised that the Liberal Party had demonstrated loyalty toward Ireland in the past, imploring Irish voters to "perpetuate their support to that party" once again, in order that "they would obtain further benefits for Ireland in the future, if they only place faith in the party as they used to do", in supporting Lawrence Gane. More importantly, however, at the conclusion of Gane's speech, he stressed that he would not support Irish separation, but a bill giving "the Irish people the management of their own internal affairs". He reminded his audience that polling day would soon be upon them and that they should place their confidence in him as his party "had fought for the working classes and for the Irish" (*Leeds Mercury*, 23 November 1885). Gane's candidacy and electioneering faced quite difficult opposition in the form of the Conservative candidate Richard Dawson. The *Leeds Mercury* stated that "there would be little doubt about the result but for the presence of a considerable number of Irish voters" in the constituency who will act upon Parnell's" advice and vote Tory. Dawson, an Irishman from Limerick, whom the Tories adopted as their candidate, was deemed a strategic political manoeuvre "in securing the support of the Irish element" due to his ethnicity. Yet if Lawrence Gane could "secure the seat for the Liberals in spite of the Irish vote, as his friends believe he will, he will score a signal victory" (*Leeds Mercury*, 24 November 1885)[16]. As shown already, Gane was fully aware of the importance of securing Irish support and he made attempts to get them

[15] Forster's majority 1,543: Alfred Illingworth 1,280: Angus Holden 346. The election was noted for a large turnout at the poll and noted as orderly with an Irish electorate in the Central Division (estimated at approximately 800) reportedly acting with "solidity" against Forster.

[16] The number of electors in the Borough is listed as 53,083 with the Central being 11,135; East at 8,831; West at 12,058; South at 10,931; North at 10,128.

on-board. In contrast to Bradford however, Leeds returned three Conservatives out of a possible five (North, East & Central) (Craig 1974, 131-35)[17]. Albeit possibly exaggerated, the *Nation* records the Irish vote in Leeds as: East 1,500, Central 800, and the North at about 400, "so that without it the Conservatives could not have obtained a single seat" in what is one of the "most Radical towns in England outside of Birmingham" (*Nation*, 12 December 1885). Nevertheless two seats were won by very small majorities in a Liberal stronghold, and the Irish in East Leeds possessed more than enough clout to decide the outcome. Despite such victories as those in Bradford the Liberal party was left without an overall majority, and Gladstone pointed to the Irish vote and its impact in this regard. In acknowledging the damaging effects of fair trade, he attributed the main reason for poor Liberal returns in borough elections as a direct result of the Irish vote. Gladstone lamented that what was needed in Britain "was the voice of Ireland from Ireland" and the voice of Britain from Britons. He pointed out that the voice that came from English counties was "tinged strongly with the Irish brogue" with the result that twenty-five seats had been decided by the Irish vote. It was an "infusion", in his words, of the Irish vote and the "delusion of fair trade" that had cost his party the general election (*Freeman's Journal*, 1 December 1885)[18].

1886

Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule intimately affected the tactics of the INL ahead of the 1886 general election, and rightly or wrongly, it brought a "moral" conviction to solving the Irish issue (Boyce 1998). Described as the "politics of humanitarianism" and a "crisis of public consciousness", Home Rule ultimately came to represent a test case for democracy. The Grand Old Man's conversion would lead to increased activity from the Irish in Britain, and he would eventually become their "surrogate leader" (Biagini 2007, 3-4, 40). But prior to the general election of July, Bradford yet again was the focus of Irish nationalist activity with respect to a by-election. The death of Forster on 5 April 1886 quickly resulted in a very interesting struggle for Bradford Central. In contrast to the position of the Irish vote in the general election, it was now operating in a different context, the reason being that the election was essentially fought on purely Irish issues, which were noted as "the burden of the platform". The Liberal candidate George Shaw-Lefevre was standing against a

[17] Central: G.W. Balfour 4,589; J. Barran 4,275. East: R. Dawson 3,849; J.L. Gane 3,504. North: W.L. Jackson 4,494; A.W. Rucker 4,237. South: L. Playfair 5,208; S.C. MaCaskie 2,869; West: H.J. Gladstone 6,130; J. Wheelhouse 3,804.

[18] Irish vote in Scotland estimated at 10% and 4% for England. Gladstone acknowledged that without the Irish vote in the boroughs, his party "had not the smallest chance even of a respectable minorority".

Conservative and Unionist candidate, Edward Brodie-Hoare. Election commentary shows that he was chosen simply on the basis of being a Unionist irrespective of his political leanings and other important political credentials. Preceding the election, placards were placed around the town "adorned with a coloured representation of the 'Union Jack', urging a vote for Brodie and to 'maintain the Empire'". Following a hard campaign, the result was a victory for the Liberals and Home Rule with Shaw-Lefevre securing a majority of 780, which again points to the Irish acting as the determining factor (Craig 1974, 79). In his victory speech, Shaw-Lefevre stated that he would go to parliament "with their [*the Irish*] mandate to give his best support to Mr. Gladstone in the task he had undertaken" in giving "contentment to Ireland" and free the English parliament from the Irish difficulty (*Leeds Mercury*, 22 April 1886)[19].

With the election proper in July of that year, Sheffield's Irish community once again came into focus through its relationship with indigenous political elites. One example is seen in a pre-election speech by Anthony J. Mundella, in which he supported Home Rule as the best and only solution to the Irish question, particularly given its stifling effects on the legislative process in England. Mundella pointed out that England had attempted to resolve Irish issues over the past quarter of a century but had failed in that it sought to give an English solution to an Irish problem. He also noted that "from the age of eighteen to thirty he had lived in Dublin, and had often heard of O'Connell', holding the view that a "reinstated Irish Parliament in line with that which existed in the late eighteenth century *was* the solution' (*Leeds Mercury*, 29 April 1886). When Mundella contested the election for the Sheffield Brightside Division, he stood against the Conservative candidate Lord Edmund Talbot, whom he had defeated the previous November by some 1,200 votes. The Tories were not in receipt of the Irish vote now as would have been the case previously – although there is doubt as to whether they voted against a friend of Ireland in Mundella – and they hoped that through better organisation they could take their seat in a working class district. The Irish vote in the division was estimated at around 300, which were solidly cast for Mundella; similarly, in the Central Division both parties were confident of victory with Mr. Howard Vincent having won the last election with a majority of approximately 1,100. On this occasion the Irish vote (described as very large) went against Mr Vincent, who won the election nevertheless with a significant majority of 4,522 to Joshua Hawkins 3,323 (*Leeds Mercury*, 7 July 1886).

[19] Shaw-Lefevre's election campaign was actively supported by Alfred Illingworth; Central Division contained 11,297 voters spread over five wards.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has shed light on some of the parliamentary political contests that constitutional Irish migrant nationalism became entangled with. What occurred in the West Riding of Yorkshire was an intertwining of emigration and nationalism, arguably *the* two dominant themes in 19th century Ireland. For the Yorkshire-Irish, political engagement in local parliamentary seats on behalf of the homeland offers a very different perspective on Irish nationalism. The League, whether under the auspices of the HRC or the INL, brought pressure to bear upon British politics from within. The effectiveness of the migrant vote has often been questioned by historians, but the evidence points to a well-organised movement capable of agitating and disrupting proceedings at a minimum, to one that could arguably determine electoral outcomes in marginal constituencies in the interests of Old Erin. The plight of the homeland instilled in the migrant a deep sense of *amor patriæ* that comprised of sentimentalism and moral obligations. Home Rule translated as something quite different to the Irish in Britain, due largely to its vagueness and malleability, which was exacerbated in diasporic contexts. The League in Britain ultimately operated in a completely different context to that which existed in Ireland, or anywhere else for that matter. Unlike their American counterparts, the Irish in Britain possessed a vote, but this vote relied upon sufficient concentrations of eligible voters to be effective and had to contend with a variety of competing allegiances and native-backlash. Politics also offered aspiring Irishmen upward social mobility though advancing purely Irish issues inhibited assimilation and integration. This would eventually change during the 1890s and the early decades of the 20th century owing to competing or shifting allegiances of homeland, Catholic Church and the lure of indigenous politics. This "diaspora dilemma" came about through fratricidal Irish politics and the immediacy of the migrant context (Hutchinson 2010, 107). The electioneering above points to a well-organised migrant community that was both strong-willed and outwardly confident in acting as a political fifth column. That same community offered the IPP a means for promoting Home Rule from within British constituencies which it exploited to the utmost, whereby the Yorkshire-Irish were more than happy to oblige.

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