

The Role of Dublin in the Irish National Movement, 1840-48

by

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A dissertation submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Leeds.

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ABSTRACT

Through the existence of a large, politically-aware middle class and the Repeal press, Dublin played a central role in the national movement. Dublin Repealers were mainly Catholics, hoping to improve their social position and restore prosperity.

Dublin provided substantial funds for the Repeal Association, and set the pattern for organisation; its residents did much of the committee and electoral work.

The leading Young Irelanders were mainly Dublin-resident professional men; support from Dublin's lower-middle classes provided a basis for the Irish Confederation.

Latent interest in Repeal outside Dublin, stemming from religious and agrarian grievances, was stimulated and organised by the capital.

THE ROLE OF DUBLIN
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IRISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT
1840-48

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PREFACE

The Irish movement for the Repeal of the Union with England, which took place during the eighteen forties, has received some attention from historians, but certain aspects, such as regional variations, and social and economic questions, have been largely neglected. Thanks to John F. Broderick's study, The Holy See and the Irish Movement for the Repeal of the Union with England, 1829-47, we know much about the way rural Ireland was organised for Repeal, through the work of the Catholic clergy. Yet rural Ireland, on the whole, took its leadership and example from the capital city, Dublin, where support for Repeal was active and widespread, and did not, in general, depend upon clerical organisation. The main aims of this study are to describe and analyse the support for Repeal which was forthcoming from Dublin during this period, to examine the way in which this was expressed, and to consider Dublin's wider role as the centre for the national movement, in terms of financial support, organisational patterns, the influence of the press and similar aspects.

I am particularly glad to be able to express my thanks for constant help and encouragement at all stages in the development of this study to Dr E. D. Steele, of Leeds University, and also to Professor Kevin B. Nowlan, of University College, Dublin, who read the draft chapters and made many valuable suggestions. To Dr Steele must also go the credit, if such there be, of first introducing me to Irish historical studies.

I have benefited from the friendly criticism and helpful comments of many scholars, in particular Professor T. W. Moody, of Trinity College, Dublin, and I owe a special debt of gratitude to Miss Jean Rowlands, for many stimulating conversations on various aspects of this work.

Thanks are due to Mr Fergus A. D'Arcy, of U.C.D., for his generous permission to consult his M.A. Thesis on the Dublin artisans, and to

Professor Maurice R. O'Connell, who kindly allowed me to look at his typescript copies of O'Connell's correspondence.

I also wish to thank the libraries and staff of the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the British Museum; the Brotherton Library, Leeds University; Dublin Chamber of Commerce; Dublin City Hall; the National Library of Ireland; the Public Record Office, London; the Royal Irish Academy; the State Paper Office, Dublin; Trinity College, Dublin; and University College, Dublin.

While willingly acknowledging the help - both practical and academic - which I have received from these and many other sources, I alone bear the responsibility for any omissions or errors of judgement.

Finally, I wish to record my thanks to my husband, Ron, not only for typing out the final draft of this thesis, but also for encouragement, patience and interest which he has shown during its progress.

J. R. H.

January 1973

ABBREVIATIONS

Add. MSS	Additional Manuscripts
B.M.	British Museum
C.S.O. R.P.	Chief Secretary's Office, Registered Papers
<u>D.E.M.</u>	<u>Dublin Evening Mail</u>
<u>D.N.B.</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
D.P.O.A.	Dublin Protestant Operative Association
<u>F.J.</u>	<u>Freeman's Journal</u>
<u>I.C.H.S.</u>	<u>Irish Committee for Historical Sciences</u>
<u>I.H.S.</u>	<u>Irish Historical Studies</u>
I.U.S.A.	Irish Universal Suffrage Association
<u>K.J.</u>	<u>Kilkenny Journal</u>
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
N.T.P.U.	National Trades Political Union
O.P.	Official Papers (in S.P.O.)
P.P.	Parliamentary Papers
P.R.O.	Public Record Office (London)
R.A. (or L.N.R.A.)	Repeal Association (or Loyal National Repeal Association)
R.D.S.	Royal Dublin Society
R.I.A.	Royal Irish Academy
S.P.O.	State Paper Office (Dublin)
T.C.D.	Trinity College, Dublin
U.C.D.	University College, Dublin

INTRODUCTION

IRISH NATIONALISM IN ITS NINETEENTH-CENTURY CONTEXT

I. As Professor Nicholas Mansergh has noted, certain European observers in the nineteenth century found difficulty in deciding whether Ireland should be classed alongside Europe's 'resurgent nations', or whether her political agitators were simply seeking better government.¹ In other words, would Irish nationalists give up their struggle if certain reforms were granted, or did their mission go beyond this? Throughout the nineteenth century, British governments worked to maintain the political link between the two countries, by passing various measures of reform, thus hoping to weaken the pressure for national independence. This aim had the support of the great majority of Ireland's Protestant inhabitants, who had become reconciled to the Union largely through fear of Catholic domination in an independent Ireland. Yet, as we now know, these reforms, which were often admittedly long delayed, were not sufficient to quieten the demand for Irish independence, which indeed grew stronger towards the end of the century, after many substantial reforms had been introduced. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the political separation of the two countries was inevitable, at least in the first half of the century. The evidence of European observers shows that in the middle of the century the eventual outcome of the 'Irish Question' was by no means certain.²

In the early years following the passing of the Act of Union, Protestant attitudes towards the measure which had robbed them of a native parliament were uncertain. Many Protestants had opposed the passing of the Union, and others had given it only luke-warm support. By contrast,

1 Nicholas Mansergh, The Irish Question, 1840-1921 (revised paperback edition), London, 1965, pp. 59-60.

2 Ibid., p. 65.

Catholics had been hopeful: they saw prospects of political and social advancement within the United Kingdom which the Irish parliament had denied them. The very reluctance, however, of the Protestants to share power with Catholics, led them gradually to support the Union, within about two decades, as their main guarantee against Catholic domination in Irish life. While Catholics made up more than three-quarters of the Irish population, they formed a small proportion of the population of the whole United Kingdom.

As Protestants came to look upon the Union as a bastion of their rights, Catholics found the Union wanting, in at least two important respects. First, the promise of Catholic Emancipation, held out before the Union was passed, remained unfulfilled until Daniel O'Connell organised his great associations in the eighteen twenties, and wrung Emancipation from a grudging government which feared the consequences of opposing a measure which had such great popular support in Ireland, and much sympathy in England. Even after the passing of the Act, Catholics found that its spirit was not put into practice, owing more to the existence of entrenched Protestant interests than to the attitude of governments. By the eighteen thirties and forties, Catholics who had made fortunes in trade and commerce were not content, as in the past, to remain second class citizens. They aspired to the same social status, and desired the same symbols of honour and responsibility which Protestants with similar wealth enjoyed.

Secondly, the Act of Union confirmed and strengthened the land settlement in Ireland, by which the descendents of armed conquerors enjoyed legal possession of the greater part of the Irish land. The native Irish tenant farmers, with memories of dispossession and conquest, had never fully accepted the legal rights of their landlords. By their tenacious clinging to 'tenant right', the tenant farmers showed their disregard for the absolute rights of landlords on the English model, and they were prepared

to back up their denial of these rights by violent agrarian outrage. Only in Ulster did a kind of *modus vivendi* emerge, partly because in that part of the island, landlord and tenant often shared a common religion. Elsewhere, relations between landlords and tenants were often embittered. The reason for this lay not so much in the wickedness of landlords, which has been much exaggerated, but in the fact that in matters of race and religion, most Irish landlords and tenants had nothing in common.

The existence of these two main grievances - religion and the land question - made it possible for O'Connell, with the help of the Catholic clergy, to organise hundreds of thousands of his fellow-countrymen, first in the campaign for Emancipation, and afterwards in the agitation for the Repeal of the Union. Although he was a landlord, O'Connell understood the widespread discontent of the Irish peasantry concerning the land system. Both he and the Young Irelanders stood for a certain modification of the land system, in the event of Repeal being achieved. Middle class Catholics saw that if Repeal was gained, their social and political aspirations could be achieved through an Irish House of Commons, not dominated as in the past by Protestants, but composed of a majority of Catholics, as their numbers, their growing political awareness, and the increasingly liberal and democratic trends of the century demanded.

It is perhaps not surprising that European nationalists, looking at O'Connell's aims and those of his followers, should have sometimes concluded that these aims were 'reformist' rather than 'nationalist' in character.³ O'Connell did hold a certain theory of nationalism, but unlike many 'romantic' national movements on the Continent, this depended on his interpretation of the constitutional relations between England and Ireland, following eighteenth-century Protestant nationalists.⁴ His great strength

3 Cavour, and even Mazzini took this line: see Mansergh, The Irish Question, pp. 68-82.

4 See Kevin B. Nowlan, 'The Meaning of Repeal in Irish History', in G. A. Hayes-McCoy (ed.), Historical Studies, IV, London, 1963, pp. 1-17 (pp. 1-5).

lay in his appreciation of the forces of discontent in Ireland and his ability to organise these discontents in political movements. It is well known that he claimed, on more than one occasion, that if 'justice' were done to Ireland, then he would give up his demands for Repeal. Yet he usually added that he knew justice would not be done. The removal of Irish grievances seemed to require such sweeping reforms, such drastic departures from all that Englishmen held good and desirable, that it was indeed unlikely that any British government would bring itself to introduce such measures. It required the great political and moral courage and conviction of Gladstone to tackle the basic Irish grievances in the second half of the century. Yet by the time these grievances had been dealt with, the forces of Irish nationalism had been strengthened by the development and extension of a theory of 'pure' nationalism, which placed emphasis on nationalism as a great good in itself, quite apart from any practical reforms which might accompany the winning of national independence.

II. The growth and spread of a doctrine of pure nationalism owed a great deal to Thomas Davis⁵ and his fellow Young Irelanders, who developed their national message during the eighteen forties. There was a precedent for Davis's concept of a non-sectarian nationalism, in the case of Wolfe Tone, who had also taught that Protestants and Catholics should unite to defend Ireland's liberties. However, Tone was active at a time when Catholics had very little political power or influence. Fifty years later the situation was very different. Most of the legal disabilities affecting Catholics had been removed, and it was clear to even the most conservative and reactionary Tories that they were coming to play an increasingly important part in the life of the country. These changes were closely associated with the Whig government of 1835-41, which, in cooperation with

5 T. W. Moody, Thomas Davis, 1814-45, Dublin, 1945, p. 44.

O'Connell, had diverted a small amount of patronage to Irish Catholics. It was therefore against a background of some improvement in the position of Catholics within the Union that Davis called on Protestants and Catholics to sink their differences and unite to repeal the Union. One implication of such a policy was that Catholics should end or postpone their campaign to improve their own position in Irish society.

What made Davis come to his decision to stress the importance of a non-sectarian national movement, in which nationalism itself, rather than reforms, was regarded as of primary importance? How much did he owe to Irish, and how much to European and British influence? A few factors may be indicated briefly here. Professor Mansergh has claimed that in general, nineteenth-century Irish nationalists showed little interest in the progress of other European national movements.⁶ We may point to the Irish expedition which intervened on the side of the Papal forces in the struggle for the unification of Italy, as evidence of this.⁷ However, the Young Ireland movement had certain characteristics in common with continental 'romantic' nationalism, in particular a nostalgia for past greatness, real or imaginary, and a stress on the importance of a native culture. In Germany, for instance, romantic nationalists looked back to the days when Germany had been at least nominally united through the Holy Roman Empire. After 1815, attention in Germany turned away from France towards German cultural matters.⁸ Young Ireland looked back to the late eighteenth century, when an Irish parliament had enjoyed a certain degree of independence, and Dublin had flourished as a capital city. There seems little doubt, however, that Davis's attention was engrossed mainly by Ireland and Irish conditions, although he was aware of developments on the Continent. A recent study

6 Mansergh, The Irish Question, pp. 60-1.

7 See A. M. Sullivan, New Ireland (sixteenth edition), London, n.d., pp. 205-18.

8 David Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon (revised Pelican edition), Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 142.

has shown that he was familiar with the works of the French 'romantic' historians, Michelet and Thierry.⁹ Thierry in particular showed interest in Ireland, and claimed that the old spirit of independence could still be found in native Irish songs and poems.¹⁰ How far Davis was influenced by such writings it is impossible to judge; but he did come to the conclusion that the non-sectarian Irish national movement which he desired to see must have its basis in a native Irish culture, and he looked back to medieval and even earlier times, in order to find a flourishing Gaelic culture.

Davis had also read the works of British poets and writers. In his student days he had been a great admirer of Bentham,¹¹ especially of his confidence in the possibility of improving the human condition. Bentham, however, placed little value on poetry and religion. But Davis was also aware of the works of men like Coleridge who stressed the importance of a 'spiritual' rather than 'mechanical' reaction to life. Coleridge saw the State as a spiritual organism within which men could realise their aims and dreams.¹² Davis too reacted against the mechanical and materialist spirit which he found in the England of the eighteen thirties and forties. He feared the extension of this spirit to Ireland, bound up as she closely was with one of the most powerful countries in the world. Yet Davis apparently did not reject industrialism entirely: he believed that Ireland must build up her native manufactures, under the safeguard of protective duties.¹³ Such duties would only be imposed by an Irish parliament: legislative independence was therefore a necessity. There are also striking similarities in the ideas of Davis and Thomas Carlyle, who,

9 Malcolm Brown, The Politics of Irish Literature, London, 1972, pp. 46-7.

10 Ibid., p. 47.

11 Ibid., p. 46.

12 Basil Willey, Nineteenth-Century Studies (paperback edition), Harmondsworth, 1964, p. 57.

13 Brown, pp. 48-50.

incidentally, was much admired by John Mitchel and was a friend of Charles Gavan Duffy.¹⁴ Like Carlyle, Davis and the Young Irelanders hated the mechanical nature of industrial society. Like him, they did not see democracy as the solution to modern problems.¹⁵ This suspicion of democracy, seen most clearly in their attitude towards the Chartists,¹⁶ sets them apart from O'Connell, who had a Liberal's faith in the value of extending the franchise. Instead, the Young Irelanders, again like Carlyle,¹⁷ believed that modern society needed the leadership of a 'true aristocracy'. It is significant that Carlyle was corresponding with certain of the Young Irelanders in the late forties, when that party was hoping above all that the Irish aristocracy and gentry would place themselves at the head of the national movement. It is clear, then, that apart from cultural matters and the stress on the importance of nationalism as such, there were other important points of difference between O'Connell's national ideas and those held by the Young Irelanders.¹⁸

There were parallels, therefore, for the ideology of Young Ireland, both on the Continent and in Britain, although as we have suggested, Young Ireland concentrated its interests and energy on Ireland and Irish conditions. The importance of the Young Irelanders lay in their development of a non-sectarian nationalism,¹⁹ its basis to lie in a native Irish culture, which must be fostered as much as possible. They saw national independence as of great importance in itself, apart from the practical benefits which they claimed it would bring. The circulation of the Nation indicated that in the eighteen forties such a theory of

14 Brown, The Politics of Irish Literature, pp. 86-7 and 117.

15 For Carlyle's views, see Willey, Nineteenth-Century Studies, esp. pp. 135-41.

16 This question is discussed in Chapter 6 below.

17 Willey, pp. 137-9.

18 The political thought of the Young Irelanders is the subject of an M.A. thesis being prepared for University College, Dublin, by Miss Jean Rowlands.

19 R. Dudley Edwards, 'The Contribution of Young Ireland to the Development of the Irish National Idea', in S. Pender (ed.), Réilscribhinn Torna: Essays and Studies Presented to Professor Tadhg Ua Donnchadha, Cork, 1947, p. 125.

nationalism was not unattractive to many Irish people, particularly the lower-middle classes in the towns. And although the ideas of 'pure' nationalism more or less disappeared from Irish politics during the eighteen fifties, the rise of Fenianism in the sixties brought the question of national independence, as the greatest and most important aim to be achieved, into the open once more. Thereafter, it did not disappear, but remained to influence later generations of Irishmen. It seems important, then, that we should try to analyse the support which O'Connell on the one hand, and the Young Irelanders on the other, won in Ireland during the eighteen forties. Can we detect social, economic or religious differences in the support which was forthcoming for the two wings of the national movement? Briefly, this study sets out to consider these and related questions with reference to the capital city, Dublin.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN DUBLIN

I. Regional studies in Irish history have been almost entirely neglected by historians, apart from work done on the province of Ulster. At first sight, this seems strange, in view of the increasing attention being paid to this aspect of English history by English historians. The accounts of the Chartist movement in various localities¹ have greatly added to our understanding of that movement, and it seems likely that regional studies would also increase our understanding of the Irish national movement.

However, studies of the Irish national movement have commonly tended to focus either on purely political aspects² or on the personalities of the leaders. A wealth of biographical works on national leaders, and studies of their aims are already in existence,³ and more are still being produced.⁴ This concentration is natural because the leaders themselves were usually concerned to relegate to a secondary position regional, economic and social differences which tended to divide rather than unite their supporters. Purely political questions were brought into the foreground. Also, newly independent nations usually welcome studies of popular leaders.⁵

Ideological issues and personalities are clearly important in Irish history, but if we look at the national movement in the eighteen forties, it is hard to believe that 'Repeal' meant the same thing to a Dublin artisan as to a peasant living in Kerry. Not only were there great

1 See Asa Briggs (ed.), Chartist Studies, London, 1959.

2 N. Mansergh, The Irish Question, pp. 101-2.

3 See, for this period, the bibliography in M. J. MacManus (ed.), Thomas Davis and Young Ireland, Dublin 1945.

4 For example, F. X. Martin (ed.), Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916, London, 1967.

5 See K. R. Minogue, Nationalism, London, 1967 and 1969, pp. 27-8.

physical differences between town and country (especially between large towns and country) but also a different social and economic environment. Although Dublin, the capital, was not a great industrial city in the forties (there were few large factories,⁶ and the pre-industrial methods of hand-loom weaving still persisted widely in the textile trades), yet her traditions and, above all, her size, meant that people living in the capital found themselves in very different circumstances from the rural population.

During the nineteenth century, the distinction between town and country was striking. In 1841, only one-eighth of Irish people lived in towns with a population of more than two thousand.⁷ Moreover, there were only eighteen towns with a population of more than ten thousand in the whole country. Almost three per cent of the population (232,726) lived in Dublin, which was nearly three times as large as the next biggest town, Cork.⁸ Size was only one aspect of Dublin's unique position in Ireland at this time. As the capital, Dublin was still the seat of the Viceroy and executive government, even though the Irish parliament had been abolished. The city was the centre of learning in Ireland, since it contained the only university in the country until Peel established the Queen's Colleges in 1845. Many well-to-do professional men received their education at Trinity College, which produced on the one hand students who jeered at Repeal processions,⁹ and on the other, many of the leading Repealers and Young Irelanders, including Thomas Davis, John Blake Dillon, John Gray and Thomas MacNevin.¹⁰ The College Historical Society (at the time exiled

6 T. W. Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland: A Study in Historical Geography, Manchester, 1957, pp. 6 and 164-7.

7 Ibid., p. 16.

8 Cork had a population of 80,720 in 1841 (Freeman, p. 25).

9 Nation, 8 July 1843, report of Trades' Repeal procession.

10 For a longer list of nationalists educated at Trinity College Dublin, see Constantia Maxwell, A History of Trinity College, Dublin, 1591-1892, Dublin, 1946, pp. 223-4.

from the College, so that meetings had to be held elsewhere¹¹), appears to have been a body which encouraged its members to take an active interest in Irish national history: Davis felt that belonging to the Society could counteract the evils of an insufficient (national) education at Trinity.¹² But the College itself was beginning to take an interest in matters that were purely Irish: in 1840 a Chair of Irish was founded.¹³ The educational tradition was also maintained by the Royal Irish Academy, the Royal Hibernian Academy, and the Royal Dublin Society. A Celtic Society was founded in 1845, proof of the growing interest in Irish history and culture.¹⁴

The professional classes were well represented in the city, through the Four Courts which attracted the elite of the legal profession to Dublin. The unusual number of lawyers in the capital was noted by a German visitor, Herr Venedey, who mentioned in the record of his trip that the Dublin Directories contained the names of over 2,800 lawyers,¹⁵ more than one per cent of the population. Medical men, too, came to study at the Royal College of Surgeons. Since members of the professional classes were to play such an important role in the leadership and support for the national movement, this concentration of lawyers and doctors was significant. It is difficult to account fully for the support for Repeal from professional men; but one factor seems to have been a sense of pride in Irish historical traditions, which made members of this class potential converts to the national movement. This sense was not confined merely to

11 (Sir) Charles Gavan Duffy, Thomas Davis: The Memoirs of an Irish Patriot, 1840-46, London, 1890, pp. 13-14.

12 Thomas Davis, An Address Read Before the Historical Society, Dublin, on the 26th June 1840, Dublin, 1840, pp. 9-10.

13 Maxwell, A History of Trinity College, Dublin, p. 194.

14 Nation, 13 September 1845.

15 J. Venedey, Ireland and the Irish During the Repeal Year, 1843, translated from the German and with notes by William Bernard MacCabe, Dublin, 1844, p. 76.

Catholics, but was shared by some Protestants who feared that the Irish legal system was being undermined by the government's policy of appointing Englishmen and Scotsmen to the top Irish judicial positions.

Further attention will be given to this question in a subsequent chapter;¹⁶ here it may be said that many barristers felt it to be a grievance that their English counterparts had certain professional advantages over them, and that remuneration tended to be less in Ireland than in England. This probably simply reflects the fact that the law was an overcrowded profession in Ireland; but at least one barrister believed that putting Irish and English barristers on an equal footing would rob the national movement of considerable support.¹⁷

II. Having noted some of the historic institutions which made Dublin pre-eminent in Ireland for learning and culture, it may now be useful to look briefly at the character of the national movement in the forties. During this decade, Dublin was the centre for two sections of the national movement, which in some ways were strikingly different, yet which had certain common features. Both the Repeal Association, under the leadership of the veteran Daniel O'Connell, and the Young Ireland party, inspired primarily by Thomas Davis, sought to gain country-wide support for their policies; but for both, and for the latter in particular, Dublin provided the most constant and informed support for the leaders, most of whom were generally resident in the capital. Dublin also provided an important proportion of their funds.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Chapter 2 below.

¹⁷ John Jagoe to Sir George Grey, 25 April 1848, P.R.O. H.O./100/257.

¹⁸ For a discussion of Dublin's financial contribution to the national movement, see below, pp.32-4 and Chapter 3, Section II.

Both these sections of the national movement aimed to divert a host of local, different grievances into political, or national, channels. Although O'Connell kept his dual aims of Reform and Repeal in mind,¹⁹ during the forties at least, the effect of his method of organising public opinion was to encourage Irishmen to believe that Repeal would solve most of, if not all, their problems. In order to do this, he had to awaken in his audiences a greater political consciousness than had existed before. This awakening began with the struggle for Catholic Emancipation²⁰ and was carried on in the Repeal movement; and the contribution of the Nation was to carry the campaign to its national conclusion. This stress on awakening national consciousness can be seen in many of the activities of the Repeal Association. The Repeal Wardens, local agents of the Association, were exhorted to learn about the present condition of Ireland and compare it with her condition before the Union.²¹ The lesson to be learned from this exercise was that the Union (a political phenomenon) was the cause of Ireland's ills. Young Irelanders carried on this work, within the Association and outside it. Education was the means of acquiring this political awareness. It is well known that Davis and the Young Irelanders did much to encourage education, through Literary Associations, Mechanics' Institutes, and by sponsoring libraries. It is not always realised that this work of education was also carried out through the Repeal Association, with O'Connell's support,²² even if he did

19 J. C. Beckett, The Making of Modern Ireland, 1603-1923 (Faber paper covered edition), London, 1969, p. 307.

20 James A. Reynolds, The Catholic Emancipation Crisis in Ireland, 1823-1829, New Haven, 1954, p. 64.

21 See Instructions for the Appointment of Repeal Wardens and Collectors of the Repeal Fund, Their Duties, Etc., Dublin, 1843: Qualifications necessary for Repeal Wardens, Nos. 5 & 6, p. 5.

22 Educational work was carried out in the R.A. through the Repeal Reading Rooms, first set up on a large scale in 1844. O'Connell's willingness to provide funds for the Rooms was noted by Davis: see Davis to Duffy, 21 September (1844), Gavan Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5756.

not at first welcome such a development. An educational campaign was thought particularly necessary at this time because of the widespread illiteracy in Ireland, as in many other European countries. In 1841 it appears that as many as three-quarters of the population in some of the western parts of the country were illiterate,²³ although in the north-east there were areas where literacy was much more common. The National Schools were to play a large part in reducing the high levels of illiteracy, but as late as 1871 it appears that forty per cent of Catholics could not read.²⁴ However, Dublin had a relatively low illiteracy rate, thirty seven per cent for the county,²⁵ which included the city. This is one reason why nationalism might find support in the capital, which was also the centre for the national press.

Since both O'Connell and the Young Irelanders relied to some extent on the printed word to convey their message (the latter more heavily than O'Connell), they both had an interest in promoting education, though with rather different ends in view. Because of his religion, and his knowledge and understanding of the problems arising from the land system in Ireland, O'Connell was aware that Ireland had special needs which British governments were failing to take into account. He wished to make people aware of the need for a Repeal of the Union by stressing that Ireland had not received the 'justice' at British hands which had been promised.²⁶

The Young Irelanders also wished to encourage support for Repeal, but they started from different premises. Davis's reading of history, philosophy and literature, combined with his hostile reaction to the spirit

23 Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland, p. 133.

24 Carlo M. Cipolla, Literacy and Development in the West, Harmondsworth, 1969, p. 73.

25 Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland, p. 136.

26 See O'Connell's speech at the Corn Exchange on the occasion of the formation of the National Association of Ireland for Full and Prompt Justice, or Repeal, Pilot, 15 April 1840.

of industrialism in England and the extension of government interference in Irish institutions, led him to stress an all-embracing nationalism which had its basis in a distinctive Irish culture. Davis believed that a nation was not worthy of the name without its own music, art, poetry, language and institutions,²⁷ and the Nation's main aim was to stimulate interest in these aspects of nationalism, aspects which played only a minor role in O'Connell's national plans.

The two sections of the national movement therefore had different priorities, and it is perhaps surprising that they managed to work together for as long as they did. In spite of their position as a minority within the Repeal Association, the Young Irelanders did, in fact, exercise a considerable influence on that body, which suggests that the Association leaders were not so autocratic and dictatorial as Charles Gavan Duffy later claimed.²⁸

III. Even during the periods when the national movement was in abeyance, such as during most of the eighteen thirties, political activity in Dublin remained at a high pitch. There were Liberal clubs in most Dublin parishes by the late thirties, debating political matters,²⁹ and promoting registration of voters at the periodical registration sessions. At that time, they were the medium through which O'Connell contacted and organised his local supporters in the city, for his Precursor Society won little popular support. These clubs were dominated by local laymen, mainly Catholics, of high standing and, in some cases, considerable wealth. Many of them entered the reformed Dublin Corporation as Repeal town councillors

27 'Our National Language', in Thomas Davis, Literary and Historical Essays, edited by Charles Gavan Duffy, Dublin, 1845, pp.173-82.

28 Denis Gwynn, O'Connell, Davis, and the Colleges Bill, Cork, 1948, p. 14. This point is further discussed in Chapter 4 below.

29 Pilot, 20 April 1840.

and aldermen in 1841,³⁰ and gained even more influence over local politics in the city through organising Repeal meetings for the various municipal wards.³¹ While the Liberal clubs represented political activity among the upper-middle classes, the National Trades Political Union was a body intended to represent the views of the working classes: founded in 1830 under a different name, it quickly lost its working-class character.³² It did cooperate with the Liberal clubs and O'Connell, in promoting the registration of voters, and was also calling for a local parliament (Repeal was one of its original aims) before O'Connell renewed the Repeal agitation in 1840.³³

More indicative, perhaps, of genuine working and lower-middle class political activity was the continuing support for Chartism, in spite of O'Connell's hostility, which in theory should have eradicated that movement from the capital. Hostility to Chartism was expressed not only by O'Connell, but by the National Trades Political Union³⁴ (which was to some extent under his influence) and by other prominent Dubliners, such as Thomas Arkins,³⁵ who used his local influence to break up Chartist meetings. O'Connell's antipathy towards the Chartists arose from his dislike of their physical force principle: in other ways he seems to have concurred with them.³⁶ Yet he persisted in classing them together with

30 See the report of the meeting of the St James's Liberal Club, at which C. P. Shannon, F. Tuite and C. Gavin were present: F.J., 20 February 1838. All three were elected to the Corporation in 1841.

31 See also Chapter 5 below.

32 F. A. D'Arcy, 'The Artisans of Dublin and Daniel O'Connell, 1830-47: An Unquiet Liaison', in I.H.S., XVII No. 66 (September 1970), pp. 221-43 (p. 224). See also Rachel O'Higgins, 'Irish Trade Unions and Politics, 1830-50', in Historical Journal, IV No. 2 (1961), pp. 208-17 (p. 213). Also Chapter 3 below.

33 Pilot, 14 February 1840.

34 See O'Higgins, p. 215.

35 Ibid. Arkins, a merchant tailor, became a prominent member of the R.A. He had always been a supporter of O'Connell and gained office under the reformed Corporation, as Sword Bearer.

36 See Nation, 6 April 1844.

Socialists and Ribbonmen and other undesirable elements.³⁷ Chartists never became very numerous in Ireland, but in 1841 they were apparently active in the city, which was the headquarters for the Irish branch of the movement. Their meetings were held in North Anne Street,³⁸ at the home of a leading Chartist, the woollen merchant Patrick O'Higgins, and in Golden Lane.³⁹ In the following year an attempt was made to vindicate the Irish Universal Suffrage Association (as the Irish branch of the movement was called), through a letter to the editor of the Freeman's Journal;⁴⁰ but in the Repeal Association they continued to be attacked.⁴¹ However, they appear to have made some converts, since in January 1843 O'Connell, speaking in the Repeal Association, regretted the spread of Chartism in Ireland, and called on all 'honest men' to reject it.⁴²

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that part of O'Connell's hostility to Chartism lay in his dislike of political movements which refused to acknowledge his authority and leadership.⁴³ The independence of the Chartists and their outspoken criticism of the Irish leader probably made his denunciations of them more bitter than they would otherwise have been. Certainly the I.U.S.A. believed that personal reasons influenced O'Connell in his campaign against them. In an address to the Catholic hierarchy in 1843, the members complained that O'Connell had portrayed Chartism as an illegal organisation, and had called on the Catholic clergy

37 Nation, 28 January and 4 February 1843.

38 S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1841/9/9505. Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, to Dublin Castle.

39 Report of R.A. weekly meeting, F.J., 5 April 1841.

40 F.J., 10 and 17 January 1842.

41 Ibid., 4 March 1842.

42 Nation, 28 January 1843.

43 O'Higgins, 'Irish Trade Unions and Politics', p.213.

to deter their flocks from joining the movement.⁴⁴ These attacks, the address claimed, had arisen because Irish Chartists refused to pay the O'Connell Tribute, to vote for him in the last two elections,⁴⁵ or to subscribe to the funds of his national associations. The address continued, 'we are called Infidels and Socialists because we do not contribute to those funds,' but in fact their only infidelity consisted in not believing in Daniel O'Connell.⁴⁶

This address was bold enough to criticise O'Connell for cheating poor people out of their money 'under the pretence of Repealing the Union with the pennies of the poor'. It also reminded the hierarchy that O'Connell had once supported the Veto.⁴⁷ Parts of the address were very disrespectful to the leader, which could hardly have won sympathy for the Chartist cause, although the provocation must have been considerable, in view of O'Connell's attitude towards them.

The surprising thing about the fate of the Irish Chartists was not that their numbers remained small and their influence slight, but that they continued as an organised group in face of such general hostility. That the hostility was in great measure due to O'Connell's dislike of the movement is evidence of his enormous influence in Ireland; but the tenacity of the Chartists owed much to the general climate of political awareness in Dublin, and the refusal of its supporters to submit to O'Connell's browbeating. This must have required considerable determination, since Chartists were more or less political outcasts in Dublin, although the events of 1848 led to a reconsideration of attitudes among a minority of

44 Address of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association to the Most Rev. & Right Rev. the Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland, Dublin, 1843.

45 O'Connell was M.P. for Dublin City until 1841.

46 Address of the I.U.S.A., pp. 7-9.

47 Ibid., p. 9. The question of a government 'Veto' over episcopal appointments had arisen as a bargaining point in the Emancipation struggle.

the Young Ireland party.⁴⁸ But most of the Young Irelanders followed O'Connell in rejecting the aid of the Chartists, although they would seem to have had a lot in common. The Irish Chartists were Repealers, while the Young Irelanders, unlike O'Connell, did not entirely rule out the possibility of using physical force to gain their ends. Yet even in 1848, when the Chartists were making their great demonstration in England, the cooperation between these two parties was very limited. Why was this? One reason was that the leaders of the Young Ireland party were almost to a man drawn from the professional classes,⁴⁹ and had strong regard for the sacredness of property. The Chartist leaders were less homogeneous,⁵⁰ and one of their chief aims was to secure the rights of the working classes.⁵¹ The United Irishman, which was to pay more attention to the Dublin working-class needs than other Young Ireland papers such as the Nation, was nevertheless suspicious of the Chartists.⁵² Even a 'radical' like Mitchel disliked the principle of secret ballot,⁵³ while the Nation took the like that cooperation might be desirable, but only on the basis of the Charter for England, and Repeal for Ireland.⁵⁴ The implication was that the leading Young Irelanders were not anxious to see the Chartist aims put into practice in Ireland.

The case of the Chartists, therefore, illustrates two important points about political activity in Dublin, which we shall have cause to

48 Kevin B. Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal: A Study in the Relations Between Great Britain and Ireland, 1841-50, London, 1965, pp. 185-6.

49 See Chapter 7 below.

50 The social composition of the leading Chartists in Ireland is difficult to analyse owing to lack of evidence. A woollen merchant, a printer and a shoemaker were among the most prominent.

51 Nation, 6 May 1848.

52 United Irishman, 29 April 1848.

53 See the letter from Dyott, secretary of the I.U.S.A., to the editor of the United Irishman, *ibid.*, 11 March 1848; also Chapter 6 below.

54 See the report of the visit of two English Chartists to Dublin, Nation, 22 April 1848.

notice again. First, the difficulty of organising any movement which ran counter to the views of O'Connell: the Young Irelanders themselves, of course, were to encounter this problem. Secondly, the considerable degree of political awareness in the capital, which gave men the necessary determination to support such movements.

IV. One of the factors which set Dublin apart from most of Ireland was the presence of a large and growing middle class. The absence of this class in any numbers in the rest of Ireland has been amply testified to by visitors to Ireland during the eighteen thirties and forties.⁵⁵ Only in the few large towns was a sizeable middle class present to play a part in politics. An important section of this middle class comprised Catholic business men, who were to play a most important role in the national movement, especially as Repeal town councillors and aldermen, serving on the reformed Dublin Corporation from 1841. In later chapters we shall be considering some of the aims of these men; here it will be well to note that although Catholics formed an important part of the Dublin middle class, they were by no means predominant among that class.⁵⁶ Moreover, it would be wrong to assume that all Catholics were supporters of the national movement. Among the comparatively wealthy merchants of Dublin there was a considerable number, both Catholic and Protestant, who during the forties attempted to steer clear of political entanglements and devote themselves to the improvement of trade. Since the bulk of this study will be concerned with the active nationalists, it will be useful here, if only for the sake of a balanced view, to look briefly at the aims and activities of this other group.

55 Mansergh, The Irish Question, Chapter 1, especially pp. 24-31.

56 See Maureen Wall, 'Catholics in Economic Life' in L.M. Cullen (ed.), The Formation of the Irish Economy, Cork, 1969, pp. 37-51 (p. 40).

The views of this section of the Dublin middle class found their main expression through the activities of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, a body which was founded in the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ Its members were to be traders of all political views; in fact, purely party questions were omitted as far as possible from the deliberations of the Chamber. This policy was maintained not so much by the ordinary members (usually amounting to some eight hundred during the decade) who included active Repealers, such as Luke Butler, ironmonger, Jeremiah Dunne, merchant (Lord Mayor in 1848) and Patrick Gardiner, tobacconist, and many others, as by the Council. This body, which ran the day-to-day business of the Chamber, was mainly Protestant, but did include several Liberal Protestants, such as George Roe, distiller, William Willans, the woollen manufacturer, and Thomas Hutton, the coachmaker.⁵⁸ Not until 1847 was a Repealer, the Catholic merchant Timothy O'Brien, elected to the Council.⁵⁹ The novelty of this choice owed less to a change in the principles of the Chamber of Commerce than to a marked decline in the active support for Repeal by some of its wealthiest supporters in Dublin, O'Brien included.

The main topics of interest to the Chamber of Commerce during the forties included the improvement of Dublin's docks and harbour, amendment of the bankruptcy laws (which the Council desired to be assimilated with English laws on the subject), reform of the Dublin markets, and, from 1847 onwards, the whole question of the future administration of the city. By and large, in spite of the political excitement of the decade, the Council did manage to eschew political questions, even in 1848, although in that

57 Report on the letter of the Trustees of the Royal Exchange, 30 June 1842. Proceedings of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce, Dublin, Box No. 1 (2 September 1834 - 5 May 1845).

58 Roe became the first Protestant Lord Mayor of Dublin under the reformed Corporation; Hutton supported a federal solution to Ireland's problems.

59 Proceedings of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce, Box No. 2 (15 May 1845 - 3 July 1850), 16 March 1847.

year an exception was made in the case of a memorial seeking mercy for Smith O'Brien, which was allowed to lie on the table for signature.⁶⁰

The part played by the Chamber in opposing the Dublin Improvement Bill from 1847 is also open to interpretation on party lines, but these were exceptions.

With such motives as the improvement of trade, and the determination to avoid political squabbles, it would be natural to assume that the Chamber of Commerce received the utmost help and encouragement from the government. However, the correspondence between them, and the Reports issued annually by the Council to its members, suggest that this only happened occasionally, and that sometimes the Council was treated with scant courtesy.⁶¹ Yet the work of the Chamber of Commerce did bear fruit in certain cases. The 1845 Report recorded a successful issue to the agitation for better postal communications between Ireland and England.⁶² To some extent, efforts to improve conditions for Irish trade and industry appear to have been hampered by laws which were relics of the penal days, and which had to be removed or altered before trade could advance. The amendment of these laws could not have provided an easy task, even for a well-intentioned government, faced with pushing Irish legislation through an unwilling House of Commons. This may explain the number of Bills drawn up and then dropped by governments in the eighteen forties.⁶³

60 Proceedings of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce, Box No. 2, 10 October 1848.

61 The attempts to reform the bankruptcy laws provide a good example. See Report of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce of Dublin to the Annual Assembly of the Members of the Association, Held the 1st of March, 1840, Dublin, 1840, pp. 7-11.

62 Report of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce... 4th March, 1845, Dublin, 1846, pp. 18-19.

63 Taking the activities of the Chamber of Commerce alone, Bills were reported to have been dropped on the bankruptcy laws (Report of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce... 2nd March, 1841, Dublin, 1841, p. 3), on marine insurance (F.J., 5 March 1842), and again on the bankruptcy laws: see the correspondence between the Chamber of Commerce, the Merchants' Committee, Cork, and the government, S.P.O. O.P. 1845/6.

Members of the Chamber of Commerce sought amelioration of Irish conditions through straightforward negotiations with the government, while avoiding as far as possible identification with any particular party. But for most upper-middle class men, whether Catholic or Protestant, it was difficult to avoid the question of party. This was not only because official patronage was still dispensed very much on a party basis - of twenty-eight Justices of the Peace for Dublin City, created in 1841 by the Tory Lord Lieutenant, Earl de Grey, at least twenty were Tories⁶⁴ - but also because it was almost impossible to gain a seat on, or place under, the reformed Dublin Corporation in the forties without the support of either the Repealers or the Tories. Only men who, by virtue of their wealth or status, did not need to seek place or position could afford to be really independent.

The consequence of this fairly rigid division into two main parties (Repealers and Tories: mere Liberals were at a discount in Dublin politics during the decade) meant that many questions became coloured with a national or anti-national complexion which in other parts of the United Kingdom had no such implications. One of these was the question of further municipal reform. The Municipal Reform (Ireland) Act of 1840 was a niggardly instalment of reform, compared with the English Act, and it left many Dubliners dissatisfied. O'Connell, who had worked so hard for municipal reform, was among these, and so were many of his supporters who felt that the Irish Act had not incorporated the spirit of the English one. In fact, a further instalment of the reform for Dublin was granted in 1849, but agitation for this began almost as soon as the earlier Act had been passed. Dissatisfaction was displayed by the reformed, Catholic-dominated Corporation of Dublin mainly on the question of the Corporation's powers. The Dublin Corporation, unlike its counterparts

64 F.J., 1 December 1841.

in English towns, had no power to appoint the city sheriffs; many normal municipal powers were wielded by a series of government boards, whose officers were in the main appointed by the government.⁶⁵ Quarrels between the Corporation and the Paving Board over the provision of piped water for the city began less than a year after the first elections held under the Reform Act,⁶⁶ and by 1845 the question of the Corporation's authority had become a major political cause in Dublin.

The issue at stake was whether civic authority should be vested in an elected Corporation, or in other, non-representative bodies. It aroused political passions, partly because, in the event of the Corporation gaining the powers it sought, many Tories would lose their jobs with the demise of the government boards. But an even more bitter quarrel raged around the charges made by Tories that the sort of men returned to the Town Council (mainly Catholic Repealers) were not fit to carry out the business of a fully-fledged Corporation. This charge was made as early as December 1841 by Sir Edward Borough, Bart., himself one of the few Tories to be returned to the Corporation in the first elections under the Reform Act.⁶⁷ As Chairman of the Corporation finance committee he claimed that the vast majority of the new town councillors were not fit to handle Corporation business.⁶⁸ The reason he gave for this was their lack of education, but a general charge of incompetence soon came to be levelled at the Corporation by Tories at large, and this charge was used by opponents of the Corporation as a justification for their opposition to the extension of the representative body's powers.

To some extent, it is possible to sympathise with Tories who saw

65 See the editor's chapter, 'Dublin and Belfast: A Comparison' in R. B. McDowell (ed.), Social Life in Ireland, 1800-45, Dublin, 1957, pp. 13-27 (p. 19)

66 F.J., 3 May 1842.

67 He resigned from the Corporation in February 1842.

68 F.J., 6 December 1841.

the Corporation being used as an instrument in the Repeal cause throughout the decade, and who were disgusted at the personal insults exchanged by certain town councillors and aldermen. But it is equally difficult not to agree with the Freeman's Journal that it ill became men who still wielded a large share of public authority, and who had opposed Catholic participation in municipal government for years, to attempt to frustrate the existing Corporation's efforts to increase its authority.⁶⁹ Opponents of further municipal reform, in their denunciation of the calibre of town councillors and aldermen, took no account of the fact that the meagre powers and authority of the Corporation encouraged the return of men who preferred making political speeches to getting down to municipal business. In fact, when the powers of the Corporation were extended in 1850, more responsible and less politically-minded men were returned.⁷⁰

It would be tedious and unnecessary to enter into the details of the Corporation's struggle to win further powers, and the campaign waged against such extension by the various government boards, the Bank of Ireland, and even the Chamber of Commerce.⁷¹ What concerns us here is that the Corporation's agitation took on political and national significance, because it was seen by nationalists as a struggle for rights which every corporate town in England possessed, and which no Irish towns should be without, let alone the capital of the Irish nation.⁷² This interpretation shows how nationalists made use of the fact that, although Ireland was nominally united with England, she was treated differently in certain important respects.

⁶⁹ F.J., 10 August 1842.

⁷⁰ An interesting though possibly biased analysis of the religion and politics of the members of the various boards and other institutions which opposed extending the Corporation's powers was drawn up by the Repealer J. H. Dunne: see Pilot, 21 April 1847.

⁷¹ F.J., 26 November 1850.

⁷² Nation, 10 April 1847.

The case of municipal reform leads us on to consider some of the underlying causes for support from the comfortably situated middle classes for the national movement. In a later chapter we shall be examining these motives in more detail; here it will be sufficient to note that a sense of inferiority, of second rate treatment, not only confined to Catholics, played an important part. The question of the Corporation's position was one example of this feeling, as the Nation rightly pointed out,⁷³ but many other instances could be given. Two other such grievances were the dissimilar municipal and parliamentary franchises in the two countries, and the different procedure for registering voters - a relatively simple process in England, an immensely complicated one in Ireland. In 1842, the Freeman's Journal, a moderate supporter of the Repeal movement, commented on the contrast between the money given to the Royal Dublin Society (three hundred pounds in 1841, and the same for the Royal Hibernian Academy) and that given to the British Museum (£33,748).⁷⁴ The same contrast was noted in a letter to Lord Eliot, the Chief Secretary, by a resident landlord, P. Reade,⁷⁵ who also complained about the paucity of Irishmen in high official positions, even in Ireland, let alone the rest of the United Kingdom.⁷⁶ The reaction of many Irishmen to this discrepancy between the treatment of Ireland and the rest of the kingdom was one of resentment. The way Ireland was governed within the United Kingdom thus provided the basis for much discontent among the substantial middle class in Dublin. We may pick out two main strands in this discontent.

First, there were the grievances of men who, as Catholics, wished to play a fuller part in the social, political and economic life of Ireland.

⁷³ Nation, 10 April 1847.

⁷⁴ F.J., 22 November 1842. See also the report of the R.A. weekly meeting, ibid.

⁷⁵ P. Reade, Whig and Tory Remedies for Irish Evils, and the Effects a Repeal of the Corn Laws would have on the Legislative Union, Considered in a Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Eliot, M.P., Dublin, 1844, pp. 17-22.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

The government had removed most of the obstacles to their advancement, but at the same time it had undermined the value of some of its reforms. For instance, at the same time as granting a measure of municipal reform in 1840, it had swept away a large number of the Irish corporations, and left the rest with reduced powers. This meant that Catholics who entered the reformed corporations in 1841 found their civic privileges had been eroded. The low Irish franchise, the omission of Catholics from juries in political trials: these suggested that Catholics were still regarded with suspicion by the government. Men with this outlook, for instance Catholic members of the Dublin Corporation, saw O'Connell as the champion of Catholic rights, which they tended to identify with national rights. They regarded his Repeal campaign as one way of achieving their ends, and in Dublin their support for the Repeal Association was of great value to the movement.

Secondly, we can detect the grievances of men, Protestants as well as Catholics, who believed that the less generous treatment of Ireland as compared with England was a slur on the country and its institutions. They felt that Ireland was being governed as a mere province. Also, the scope of government was slowly being increased; this tended to arouse fears about too much centralisation, and not enough regard for Irish institutions in their own right. For those with this outlook (found particularly among professional men⁷⁷) too, Repeal could be a remedy for their dissatisfaction. It was this feeling which the Young Irelanders, in particular, wished to foster and enlist in their support.

It should be stressed that these two strands in the discontent could run together. The staunchest supporters of Catholic rights were often outraged when the government appeared to undervalue Irish institutions.⁷⁸ Less often, those who placed greatest value on the

⁷⁷ See Chapter 2 below.

⁷⁸ A good example of this is provided by the case of the withdrawal of the parliamentary grant to the Royal Dublin Society in 1841. In previous

the uniqueness of Irish institutions might speak up for the rights of Catholics. But a broad distinction can be drawn along these lines between the outlook of the leading Repeal Association members and that of the Young Irelanders. In this sense, it would be correct to say that many of the leaders of the Repeal Association were quite closely identified with Catholic aspirations, and, by implication, might have been satisfied by reforms which fell short of Repeal. On the other hand, the Young Irelanders were less sectarian, and by rejecting the spirit of British government and its further extension in Ireland, indicated that they would only be satisfied by Repeal, if not complete separation.

V. If the government appeared to adopt an inconsistent attitude, by first insisting that Ireland was an integral part of the United Kingdom, yet nevertheless refusing to pass equal legislation for both countries on such matters as franchise reform, it was not unwilling to try to remove some of these inconsistencies during the eighteen forties. A detailed study has already been made of the relations between the Repeal party and the government in this period,⁷⁹ but it may be useful here to look briefly at some of the problems facing the government in its dealings with Ireland.

The official attitude, at any rate, of the Conservative government which took office in 1841, was one of impartiality between the different religions and parties,⁸⁰ and Peel believed that a section of the Catholic

years, Parliamentary Committees had recommended certain reforms in the R.D.S., which received one of these grants. The R.D.S. was failing to promote the 'cooperation of principal men of science in Ireland', and its membership was too exclusive. Various reforms were proposed, but not complied with, and the grant was cut off. Despite the government's good intentions, there was strong protest both from Protestants like Davis (then writing for the Morning Register) and from the Pilot, which claimed that the R.D.S. was run by a 'clique' of Tory bigots, yet protested against the withdrawal of a grant to an 'Irish institution'. (Pilot, 10 March 1841). Duffy mentions the incident in Young Ireland: A Fragment of Irish History, 1840-5, final revised edition, 2 vols., London, 1896, Vol. I, pp. 37-8.

79 Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal.

80 Ibid., p. 27.

Repealers could be detached from the national movement by a judicious use of patronage and opening of opportunities.⁸¹ These intentions were not always carried out, less because of hostility in England than because of opposition among the entrenched Protestant interests in Ireland.⁸² Peel's correspondence with his ministers in Ireland reveals the Prime Minister's concern over the practical aspects of governing Ireland; he recognised that since the government's authority rested ultimately on trial by jury (except in special circumstances), it would be impracticable to try to prevent Catholics from sharing in the government of the country.⁸³ But the extent to which any government, Whig or Tory, could place Catholics in prominent and important positions was severely limited. It has been pointed out that the new Tory Solicitor General, T. B. C. Smith, withdrew from the by-election for Dublin University in September 1842, to avoid defeat at the hands of Protestant electors who were already reacting against the government's attempts to liberalise appointments.⁸⁴

The Irish Tories' disillusionment with Peel appears strongly at the time of the increase of the grant to Maynooth. An article in the journal for educated Protestants, the Dublin University Magazine, claimed that Peel was attempting to rule Ireland as in centuries past, through 'undertakers', in this case the Catholic bishops.⁸⁵ Another article asserted that Peel's besetting sin was his want of faith (religion) and charged him with deserting the friends of order (the Protestants).⁸⁶ Thus attempts by the government to act impartially towards the two religious

81 Peel to de Grey, 22 August (1843), Peel Papers, B.M. Add. MS 40478, and Peel to Heytesbury, 1 August 1844, Peel Papers, B.M. Add. MS 40479.

82 Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, pp. 26, 34.

83 Peel to Heytesbury, 8 August 1844, Peel Papers, B.M. Add. MS 40479.

84 Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, p. 34.

85 'Peel's Policy Towards Ireland', Dublin University Magazine, Vol. XXVI No. cliii, September 1845, pp. 253-66 (pp. 258-9).

86 'The Late Crisis', Dublin University Magazine, Vol. XXVII No. clviii, February 1846, pp. 246-60 (pp. 259-60).

groups in Ireland were liable to meet with a hysterical reaction from many Protestants, especially from the working-class Protestants of Dublin.⁸⁷ When the agitation for Repeal was at its height, the Protestants occasionally threatened to take the law into their own hands. This happened not only in 1848, when the Orangemen armed in preparation against a rebellion,⁸⁸ but was also threatened in 1843 when the Repeal agitation was at an alarming pitch.⁸⁹

Fortunately, in most cases the government was able to avoid calling upon the 'loyal' element, and could discourage any general arming among Protestants, owing to the loyalty and reliability of the police force. This force had been remodelled in the late eighteen thirties by Thomas Drummond, Under Secretary at Dublin Castle, who set up an organised force in place of the watchmen who had previously acted, and weeded out Orangemen.⁹⁰ In spite of occasional rumours, which were not substantiated, that policemen subscribed to the Repeal movement,⁹¹ the Police Commissioners seem to have been satisfied that the police fulfilled their duties correctly, even at times of great political excitement. This was the view of Colonel McGregor, of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, in a report on the conduct of the police.⁹² He claimed that although Catholics formed

87 The Dublin Protestant Operative Association spent much time and energy obtaining signatures for memorials to the Lord Lieutenant on religious issues. See S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1843/Z 10352, 1843/E 12786, 1844/Z 19492, and O.P. 1844/19.

88 The evidence for this appears in the Report of the Special Committee of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, Appointed November, 1849, Dublin, 1849, especially pp. 15-24. Arms were apparently supplied to the Orangemen by certain officers of the Army, probably without the full knowledge of the Dublin Castle authorities.

89 'Repeal Agitation - the "Do-Nothing" System', Dublin University Magazine, Vol. XXII No. cxxviii, August 1843, pp. 240-52 (pp. 240-1).

90 See Timothy F. Kelly, 'Thomas Drummond and Irish Administrative Reform', Bulletin of the Irish Committee of Historical Sciences, No. 31, March 1944.

91 Police Commissioners (Castle) to the Chief Secretary, 29 May 1843, S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1843/9/10133.

92 Colonel McGregor's report, 10 December 1847, S.P.O. ex-C.S.O. Miscellaneous Letters (c. 1849-68) 1A/77/2.

an important part of the force, men of all religions 'are equally zealous and determined in the discharge of their duty', and confessed that he had often had cause to wonder that the force, 'taken chiefly from the humblest classes in Society, and exposed to the influences of violent partisans on both sides, should not only be devoid of all apparent sectarian or political bias in the discharge of their duties, but they should live in such perfect harmony as they do with one another'.⁹³ This report, even if somewhat exaggerated in its praise for the Metropolitan Force,⁹⁴ boded well for the government's ability to keep the peace in the troubled months of 1848. The reliability of the police force thus gave the government a degree of independence of its Protestant supporters; but since these supporters were so strongly entrenched in official positions, the government had still to depend on their cooperation to a very considerable extent.

VI. Having examined some of the social elements in Dublin, and the political attitudes of certain classes, it will be useful to note the role which the capital had played in the national movement in earlier years. This role helps to explain the widespread feeling in the forties that Dublin, as the capital, should be in the van of any national activities.⁹⁵ The example set by Paris in the French revolutions of 1789 and 1830 may also have contributed to this notion; but Dublin already had a tradition of national leadership.

In the late eighteenth century the headquarters of the United

93 Colonel McGregor's report.

94 If the police escaped being partisan on national issues, this was not always the case where religion was concerned. See the memorial from the D.P.O.A., 31 October 1844, on the subject of the dismissal of Inspector Flint of E Division: S.P.O. O.P. 1844/19.

95 The constant exhortation to Dubliners and Dublin Repeal Wardens to exert themselves and set an example to the country are evidence of this: see Nation, 12 October 1844.

Irishmen had been in the capital, and later, the various forms of the Catholic Association. The mercantile and professional classes had begun to play a more important national role in the last decades of the eighteenth century, strengthening the link between the capital and the national movement. A Catholic merchant, John Keogh, rose to the head of the Catholic Committee in the seventeen nineties, and did much to organise the agitation which helped win for Catholics the right to vote, in 1793.⁹⁶ Lawyers, too, began to dominate the Catholic Association for some years before O'Connell and Sheil came to lead the Emancipation movement.⁹⁷ Wyse, the historian of the Catholic Association, suggested that many young lawyers valued the Association because it provided them with an arena in which to display their talents.⁹⁸ This factor probably encouraged lawyers to join, since during the twenties Catholics had little chance to rise in their profession, and were not eligible for the higher legal positions until 1829. Many of the national leaders were either based in Dublin or came to spend a great deal of time there, as did O'Connell. In 1823, the first meetings of the revived Catholic Association took place at Dempsey's Tavern, Sackville Street, and Dubliners were the first members.⁹⁹ The capital and various other towns were the first to be organised for the purpose of collecting the Catholic Rent,¹⁰⁰ which was to provide the means for carrying on the campaign for Emancipation; the organisation spread from the towns to their surrounding districts, and then to the most remote parts of the country. Up to the eve of Emancipation,

96 T. Wyse, Historical Sketch of the Late Catholic Association of Ireland, 2 vols., London, 1829, Vol. I, p. 123.

97 Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 151-2.

98 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 54.

99 Ibid., Vol. I, pp. 198-9. See also Reynolds, The Catholic Emancipation Crisis in Ireland, p. 14.

100 Wyse, Vol. I, p. 209.

the towns contributed twice as much Rent as the counties. For the period up to the suppression of the Catholic Association in 1825, County Cork and County Dublin, containing the two largest cities, sent in most money to the Association.¹⁰¹ Thus, while the Emancipation struggle is usually noted for the involvement of the peasantry and the Catholic clergy, it should be pointed out that in financial terms the support of the towns was more significant than that of the countryside.

During the forties the financial contribution of the towns to the national movement remained very important. Dublin's support was particularly striking. In 1840, while Repeal did not stimulate much exertion on the part of the rural population, in the capital men of various classes were anticipating O'Connell in calling for a renewal of the agitation. In that year, over fifty per cent of all funds coming in to the Repeal Association came from Dublin city and county. Since funds came not only from Ireland but also from England, Scotland and elsewhere in that year, it is clear that Dublin's willingness to support Repeal in a material sense was of great importance to the cause. The money sent in from the city alone in that year came to almost seven hundred pounds, an amount collected mainly in quite small sums, many of the contributors being small tradesmen, artisans, and members of the Dublin trades.¹⁰²

Eighteen forty was the year when Dublin's financial support was most striking; as the overall amounts of Repeal Rent grew in later years, amounts from the capital also grew, but tended to stay around one-tenth of the total Rent. This in itself was far from insignificant, in view of

101 See Reynolds, The Catholic Emancipation Crisis in Ireland, p. 62. Wyse (Historical Sketch, Vol. II, Appendix, pp. cclxx-cclxxi) is evidently mistaken in suggesting that these figures refer to 1826. See also Chapter 3 below, where Dublin's contribution to the finances of the Repeal Association is more fully discussed.

102 This figure excludes members' subscriptions at one pound each, many of which also came from Dublin, so the capital's contribution is, if anything, underestimated.

the large sums sent from many other parts of Ireland, the United Kingdom, and America. Nor were direct remittances to the Repeal Association the only expression of Dublin's practical backing for the national movement. Many wealthy Dublin merchants proved willing to provide bail or securities for national leaders, and this applied not only to O'Connell and his fellows in the Repeal Association,¹⁰³ but also to the Young Irelanders. For instance, Aldermen Butler and Rooney, although staunch Old Ireland Repealers, offered bail for Charles Gavan Duffy in July 1848.¹⁰⁴

VII. One of the major problems facing the national leaders in Dublin during the eighteen forties was to convince the rest of Ireland that a Repeal of the Union would benefit the whole country. They were frequently embarrassed by gibes that only Dublin would benefit from Repeal. Why was Dublin so often connected with Repeal in the public mind, and how far did the leaders manage to extend their basic programme of Repeal, which was the central aim of O'Connell and the Young Irelanders, to appeal to people outside Dublin, where the benefits did not seem to be so clear?

To understand why Dublin and Repeal should have become bracketed together in the public eye, it will be useful to look at two factors, both connected with the concept of Repeal as envisaged by O'Connell and the Young Irelanders. For both sections of the national movement, Repeal of the Union was in many ways a backward-looking concept.¹⁰⁵ Both dreamed of the period between 1782 and 1800 when Ireland had had her own parliament, which had taken an interest in Irish affairs and had helped promote trade and industry. During that period, although the precise extent of Ireland's independence of England was uncertain, Dublin had flourished as a capital

¹⁰³ Nation, 21 October 1843.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15 July 1848, and F.J., 10 July 1848.

¹⁰⁵ For an examination of the concept of Repeal as held by the nationalists at this time, see Kevin B. Nowlan, 'The Meaning of Repeal in Irish History', Historical Studies, IV, especially pp. 5-6 and 8-9.

city. The economy had shown signs of vigour, and optimism had prevailed in many quarters. Nostalgia for past greatness, in which the capital had played a predominant role, was frequently present in the leaders' speeches, and this aspect of the national movement seems to have appealed strongly to the professional and upper-class supporters of Repeal in the capital. An extract from one of O'Connell's speeches gives expression to these feelings of nostalgia: 'It is my duty now to revive the memory of the past - while I anticipate the future, to catch a light from the flame of glory that played round Ireland in the year 1782, and which being once again brought into action will animate and encourage us to labour for the restoration of scenes of a similar description'.¹⁰⁶

This speech was made at a banquet of the '82 Club, formed in 1844, and designed to enable men of all shades of national feeling, from tentative Federalists to staunch Repealers, to assemble periodically and commemorate the more important dates in Irish history. A brief survey of the nature of the Club will illustrate how important this element of nostalgia was in the nationalism of the middle and upper classes in Dublin.

The idea of forming such a Club originated with a member of the Repeal Association, the barrister Matthew Moriarty,¹⁰⁷ and was welcomed by the Freeman's Journal as 'the first step towards making Nationality fashionable in the higher circles'.¹⁰⁸ Professional men formed a high proportion of its members, including several Protestants.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, during the period 1782 to 1800 the Irish parliament had been an exclusively Protestant assembly, so it is not surprising that some Protestants joined the Club. Many of the leading Young Irelanders, such as Davis, Duffy,

106 History and Proceedings of the '82 Club, Including an Authentic Report of the First Grand Commemorative Banquet at the Rotundo, Edited by a Member of the Irish Press, Dublin, 1845, p. 15.

107 Ibid., p. 4.

108 F.J., 11 January 1845.

109 Three vice presidents and one secretary were Protestants: Nation, 12 April 1845.

Mitchel and Dillon served on the committee.¹¹⁰ Some members of the aristocracy were also attracted, among them Lord Cloncurry,¹¹¹ who had never attended the weekly public meetings of the Repeal Association, and Lord ffrench, who was a vice president.¹¹² From time to time the Club held commemorative banquets, which afforded plenty of opportunity for the members to indulge their nostalgia for the past. Apart from the speeches, of which the extract cited above is a typical example, the room was always decorated with a wealth of national symbols, proof that it was not only the lower classes which loved to surround themselves with such displays. At the first banquet held by the Club, Kenny's picture of Grattan moving the Declaration of Irish Independence in 1782 hung over the President's chair, and the room was decorated with flags displaying various Irish emblems: harps, shamrock wreaths and others.¹¹³ A number of nationalists from outside the capital joined the Club, but it remained a predominantly Dublin affair, and an important vehicle for the expression of upper and professional class nationalism. The sense of regret for past glories was an element in the nationalism of these classes which was not fully appreciated by the government, although it is difficult to see what remedies, short of restoring an Irish parliament, could have been adopted to meet it.

The second factor which linked Repeal with Dublin even more closely, and which also looked back to the past, lay in the popular belief that the Irish parliament had had a positive effect on Irish industry, by passing measures which encouraged the growth of the textile and other trades. Historians today discount the role of the Irish parliament in creating

110 Pilot, 20 January 1845.

111 Nation, 12 April 1845.

112 Pilot, 20 January 1845.

113 History and Proceedings of the '82 Club, (First Grand Commemorative Banquet), p. 14.

prosperity,¹¹⁴ but there is no doubt that the belief was widely held.¹¹⁵

In Dublin there was particular support for such a belief, since certain luxury trades in the capital were harmed by the removal of Irish peers and gentry to London after the Act of Union was passed. The underlying belief was that only an Irish parliament would take sufficient interest in Irish affairs to bring real prosperity to the country. Only by acknowledging the prevalence of this conviction is it possible to explain why the renewal of the Repeal agitation in 1840 was so eagerly welcomed by Dublin artisans and small tradesmen suffering from the economic depression which was affecting the whole of the United Kingdom at that time.

In the years 1841-2, the movement to improve the conditions of the Dublin tradesmen and artisans by stimulating the demand for Irish manufactured goods (known as the 'Irish Manufacture' movement) was taken over by O'Connell and the Repeal Association,¹¹⁶ thus confirming the popular identification of Repeal and Dublin interests. Many Dubliners hoped that a restoration of the Irish parliament would bring back resident peers and gentry, and an increased flow of business. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that during the forties, the Repeal Association frequently had to combat the charge that only the capital would benefit from Repeal. In August 1840 the Morning Chronicle charged the tradesmen of Dublin with selfishness in seeking Repeal;¹¹⁷ in February 1842 W. J. O'Neill Daunt, one of the leaders, had to reply to taunts in the Tory Dublin University Magazine that the Association was only working for

114 L. M. Cullen, 'Irish Economic History: Fact and Myth' in Cullen (ed.), The Formation of the Irish Economy, pp. 113-24.

115 Even Tories found it hard to deny that the restoration of the Irish parliament would involve gains for Dublin's trade and industry. See Isaac Butt, Repeal of the Union: The Substance of a Speech Delivered in the Corporation of Dublin, on the 28th February, 1843, on Mr O'Connell's Motion to Petition for a Repeal of the Legislative Union, Dublin, 1843, p. 51.

116 See Report of the Board of Trade meeting, F.J., 5 August 1841, and Report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, F.J., 7 September 1841.

117 Report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, Pilot, 19 August 1840.

Dublin's good;¹¹⁸ in September 1843 the Nation printed a rebuttal of the charge,¹¹⁹ and in September 1845 John O'Connell spoke at a meeting in Kingstown, County Dublin, to the effect that every part of Ireland would be benefitted by Repeal.¹²⁰

How much truth was there in the charge that Dublin was pursuing a selfish aim in seeking Repeal? It is difficult to answer that question satisfactorily, since the leaders made so many different claims for the value of Repeal, from economic, moral and national points of view. In general, it seems likely that an Irish parliament would have taken greater interest in Ireland's condition, and her peculiar needs, than the British parliament. However, it is certainly possible to detect elements of selfishness in the attitudes of some of the Dublin Repealers, most noticeably in 1841, when an Agricultural Improvement Society was set up in the capital, to try and mitigate the conditions of the rural population in much the same way as the Board of Trade was helping Dublin's artisans.¹²¹ The whole country was suffering from the economic depression, and it seems reasonable that steps should have been taken to help the agricultural as well as the urban population. Yet some Repealers at the Board of Trade showed suspicion at the idea of an Agricultural Society.¹²² The editor of the Freeman's Journal called on the promoters of the 'Irish Manufacture' movement not to be jealous of the movement to aid Irish agriculture.¹²³ It may be that the 'Irish Manufacture' supporters genuinely feared that the rivalry of an Agricultural Society would draw off funds and support

118 Report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, F.J., 15 February 1842.

119 Nation, 23 September 1843.

120 Ibid., 13 September 1845.

121 F.J., 16 and 19 February 1841. The Society seems to have confined its activities to organising exhibitions etc. It was still meeting, as the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society, in 1849: Nation, 15 December 1849.

122 Thomas Mooney, ironmonger and prominent Repealer, was one of those who had been suspicious of such a society. He changed his mind after attending the inaugural meeting: F.J., 19 February 1841.

123 F.J., 17 February 1841.

from their own movement. Such fears were not entirely without foundation. Lord Ebrington, the Lord Lieutenant, sent two hundred pounds to the Agricultural Society,¹²⁴ but nothing to the Board of Trade. But the case does illustrate the fact that Dublin's interests and those of the rest of the country were not always the same. Many Dubliners were very concerned to further their own interests, and their active and valuable support for Repeal in the early years of the agitation, before there was widespread support from the country, was not disinterested, and probably added credence to the notion that Repeal was a question closely linked with the fortunes of Dublin.

The leaders' replies to such charges usually ran along the following lines. Dublin would certainly benefit by Repeal, through a restoration of the Irish parliament which would bring back resident gentry and encourage trade and industry. But this in turn would have a beneficial effect upon the rest of the country, since the money previously sent abroad to absentees 'would find its way into every corner of the island'.¹²⁵ Wealth would remain at home. An Irish parliament would open up natural resources. If this did not seem much to offer non-Dubliners, the Nation added to the list of benefits 'National Honor', national education, national art, national law, and attention to the economy and railways.¹²⁶

The notable exception in this collection of national benefits appears to be any but the vaguest reference to the condition of the rural population and the land question. But it would be misleading to imply that little or no thought was given to this question by the two national groups. O'Connell took a fairly radical stand on the land question. In March 1845, speaking on the Report issued by the Devon Commission, he expressed the hope that he would soon see fixity of tenure, or the tenant-

124 F.J., 19 March 1841.

125 Report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, Pilot, 19 August 1840.

126 Nation, 23 September 1843.

right of Ulster, established by law, not just in Ulster but over the whole of Ireland.¹²⁷ O'Connell also mentioned the land question twice when making out a list of reasonable concessions which the government might make to win Irish opinion away from Repeal.¹²⁸ The Young Irelanders, too, influenced by the famine, began to reconsider their attitudes towards the land question, and one element in the movement, led by James Fintan Lalor, John Mitchel and Thomas Devin Reilly, developed a radical approach.¹²⁹ This group, however, was not representative of the Young Irelanders as a whole, and it remains true that both sections of the national movement, in making Repeal of the Union their primary aim, appeared more concerned with questions affecting the upper and middle classes than with those affecting the peasantry. Among the subjects of reports issued from time to time by the Repeal Association committees, the land question was not represented before 1845. The parliamentary committee did report on Stanley's Landlord and Tenant Bill in June 1845.¹³⁰ Many faults were found in it, and the tenants of Ulster were urged to 'take immediate steps' to avert the ruin in which the Bill might involve them. We may compare this with the four reports or petitions devoted to a question like the franchise, which were drawn up between 1840 and 1844.¹³¹ The Young

127 Nation, 15 March 1845.

128 See his letter to the Liberal M.P. Charles Buller, 9 January 1844: Russell Papers, P.R.O. 30/22/4c ff 132-7. O'Connell's second point merely sought restoration of the law of landlord and tenant to its state before the Union, but his seventh required that the question of fixity of tenure be taken into the most 'deliberate consideration', and that the Devon Commission (then sitting) become a 'real' enquiry, with tenants as well as landlords sitting on it. See also Angus Macintyre, The Liberator: Daniel O'Connell and the Irish Party, 1830-1847, London, 1965, p. 282; and Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, p. 60.

129 For Lalor's ideas, see James Fintan Lalor, Collected Writings, edited by Nathaniel Marlowe, Dublin, 1918. On Mitchel's views, see P.S. O'Hegarty, John Mitchel: An Appreciation, With Some Account of Young Ireland, Dublin and London, 1917, especially p. 68.

130 Pilot, 25 June 1845

131 Report on the State of the Franchise in Ireland, in First Series of Reports, with a Dedication to the People of Ireland, by Daniel O'Connell, Dublin, 1840. See also Reports of the Parliamentary Committee, Vol. I, Dublin, 1844, which includes a report on the Borough Franchise, one on the County Franchise, and a petition against Lord Eliot's Franchise Bill.

Irelanders, with their stress on the importance of the restoration of a native parliament, also implied that Repeal would be the panacea for Ireland's problems.

Why then did people outside the towns support the movement for Repeal? Here we must note that if the two wings of the national movement failed to put the land question at the head of their national programmes, they both nevertheless stood for a considerable modification of the land system, whereas British governments had shown themselves most reluctant to introduce changes into the system. The prevalence of agrarian 'outrages' in Ireland reflected the strength of feeling among the Irish peasantry against the existing land system. It is noticeable that when the Repeal movement was strong, in the early forties, the number of outrages declined¹³² yet remained high enough to cause O'Connell, among others, serious concern. He claimed in 1845 that 'it is the Repeal Association and the hopes it excites which prevent a rebellion'.¹³³ Agrarian violence, then, was an expression of nationalism, which indicates why Repeal won support in the countryside. From 1842, sympathy for the national movement was widespread in Ireland, outside the north-east; when John B. Dillon, staying in a remote village, wrote to Thomas Davis that as many copies of the Nation were taken as there were houses in the village,¹³⁴ he was simply noting a phenomenon occurring throughout the country. Moreover, associate membership of the Association was cheap (it cost one shilling per year) and encouraged by the local clergy; it involved a sense of participation in wider events than those of the village or rural area, and it provided plenty of distractions by means of processions, bands and meetings.¹³⁵ The

132 Robert Kee, The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism, London, 1972, p. 246.

133 O'Connell to Pierce Mahony, 26 April 1845 (Rathcon Papers: from typescript copies in the possession of Professor Maurice R. O'Connell).

134 Duffy, Young Ireland, Vol. I, p. 71.

135 See also Minogue, Nationalism, p. 32.

monster meetings of 1843, which drew such large numbers to listen to the national leaders, proved particularly attractive in this respect.

The capital also enjoyed a special relationship with many of the small towns and rural districts of Ireland. In a country where large towns were few, a city the size of Dublin was bound to have influence on the rest of the country, and the capital possessed resources which could be employed to enlist support for a national campaign. One of the most important of these was the press. A detailed examination of the teachings of the Repeal press during this period would be outside the scope of this study,¹³⁶ but attention will be paid to the role of the press in winning local support in certain practical ways. Although Ireland abounded with local newspapers at this time, few could afford to keep a reporter, and consequently the Dublin papers were heavily relied upon. The Dublin papers printed the details of remittances sent in by the different localities, no matter how remote, and there is evidence that such publication of names and localities was eagerly awaited in the provinces.¹³⁷ The Repeal Association, thanks to its impressive support from professional men, could send out lawyers, doctors, anyone who had the necessary education and experience to assist at local registration sessions, defend local Repealers in court, or report the proceedings of a local Repeal meeting. Naturally, these services were not so important for the larger towns; but for many rural areas such agencies helped to win support and admiration for a body which often appeared more sympathetic to popular

¹³⁶ For studies of the press in Ireland during this period, see S. J. Brown, 'The Dublin Newspaper Press, 1659-1916', Studies, XXV No. 97, March 1936, pp. 109-22, and a less critical study, T. F. O'Sullivan, The Young Irelanders, Tralee, 1944, pp. 1-96. Brian Inglis's book, The Freedom of the Press in Ireland, 1784-1841, London, 1954, unfortunately ends at the beginning of this period.

¹³⁷ See Chapter 8 below.

needs and grievances than the official institutions of the country.¹³⁸

To sum up the aims of this study briefly: it sets out to examine and compare the background of these two sections of the national movement in Dublin during the eighteen forties. Beginning with an analysis of the religion and social background of the more substantial Repeal Association members in the city, we shall consider the motives behind their support for the Association, and their role in the movement. In Chapter Three we shall look at the reaction of the lower-middle and working classes in the capital, and then go on to consider the Repeal organisation in the city, with special reference to the role of the Repeal Wardens, who took the place of the clergy as local organisers. Turning to the question of leadership in the Association, in Chapter Four, we shall note the different groups contending for influence there. Chapter Five will assess the Dublin Corporation's role in the Repeal agitation.

Moving on to the Young Irelanders, Chapter Six will examine the way in which discontent with the Repeal Association among certain classes in Dublin provided the setting for Young Ireland to establish an organisation of its own, the Irish Confederation. For this body, Dublin Clubmen provided the strongest source of support. The same chapter will consider the uneasy relationship between the leaders and the Clubmen up to the summer of 1848, when certain Young Irelanders found themselves leading a rebellion which they had taught must come, yet for which they had largely failed to prepare. Chapter Seven analyses the social background of the leaders, and of the Club members, and considers the attitudes of Protestants to the movement. The final chapter will attempt to assess Dublin's influence on the agitation outside the capital.

138 For example, a group of Limerick labourers wrote to Smith O'Brien, asking the 'Gentlemen of the Conciliation Hall' (Repeal Association Headquarters) to take their case, involving non-payment of wages, into consideration: Pilot, 5 March 1845.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE LEADING DUBLIN REPEALERS

The basis of this chapter is a survey made of men who lived in Dublin city and county, and who attended at least one of the weekly public meetings of the Repeal Association, as reported in the newspapers, the Nation, the Pilot, and the Freeman's Journal.

It should be stated at the outset that the five hundred-plus names included in the survey do not represent the entire strength of Repeal in Dublin. On the one hand, there were many who sympathised with Repeal, yet did not go to the public meetings; on the other, there were many who went but whose names were not recorded. Those whose names were noted in the newspapers tended to be members of the upper or middle classes,¹ whose presence added the weight of their social position to the cause.

The meetings of the Repeal Association studied were held between April 1840, when O'Connell moved the formation of the 'National Association of Ireland for Full and Prompt Justice, or Repeal',² to the end of 1849, with a gap in 1848, when the Association was temporarily in abeyance. The aim of the survey was to ascertain, as far as possible, the occupations, religion, and frequency of attendance at the meetings of these Dublin Repealers, who were residents of the city or county. The study was confined to Repealers within this area, since the aim was to gain a picture of Repeal support in the capital and its suburbs. In fact, the numbers of non-Dubliners attending these meetings were small in comparison with those of Dubliners, and were almost entirely confined to men of

1 Tables accompanying this chapter are to be found on pp. 86-9. As Table 2.1 shows, the names of only sixteen operatives were included. Since the great majority of the audiences, which usually ran to several hundreds, probably consisted of lower-middle and working-classmen, this low number reveals the bias of the press against the lower classes.

2 Pilot, 15 April 1840.

property and the professional classes. Used in conjunction with other evidence, it is hoped that the survey sheds some light on the kind of people who supported Repeal in the capital, the role that they played in the movement, and their reasons for being Repealers.

Certain difficulties arose while undertaking the survey. Some of the persons proved hard to identify in the Dublin Directories,³ especially those who went to only one meeting. In certain cases, it was difficult to decide whether members should be included at all, since they spent only part of their time in Dublin. This applied almost exclusively to men of property and to those drawn from the professional classes: such persons were omitted if they spent most of their time away from the capital, or clearly had a permanent base outside the city. Thus many members of the O'Connell family, Smith O'Brien, W. J. O'Neill Daunt, and other gentlemen were not included in the survey, although they were frequently in Dublin, and had influence in the Repeal Association.

One problem which did not arise, contrary to expectations, was that of Dubliners attending meetings out of interest, without subscribing to the Repeal cause. This was because attendance at the Corn Exchange, where the weekly public meetings were held, at once branded a person as a 'Repealer' in the eyes of public opinion. The exception to this rule, apart from occasional foreign visitors, was the Reverend Tresham Gregg, the fiery leader of the Protestant operatives, who believed that Popery was antichrist, and attended a meeting on one occasion to protest against the claims of the Association to speak on behalf of all Irishmen.⁴ There is no evidence to suggest that other people, clerics or laymen, attended these meetings without a sympathetic outlook on Repeal.

³ The Dublin Directories used were Thom's Irish Almanac and Official Directory, Dublin, 1844-51; The Dublin Almanac and General Register of Ireland, for the year 1841, Dublin, 1841 (Pettigrew and Oulton), and The Post Office Dublin Directory for 1840, Dublin, 1840.

⁴ F.J., 25 October 1843.

Besides looking at the support for Repeal given by the various occupational groups, this chapter will also study the social status, economic situation and any other special circumstances of these Repealers. It is hoped that this will shed some light on the reasons for their support for the national movement. For instance, the Dublin clergy were clearly in an unusual position, being directly under the authority of Archbishop Murray, who was one of the few Catholic bishops hostile to Repeal. Some tradesmen believed that the Union was having an adverse effect on trade. Perhaps more important, few Catholics escaped a sense of frustration on seeing that, in spite of the removal of many legal barriers to their equality with Protestants, they were still distrusted by the Irish government in Dublin Castle and by many Protestants, so that they were unable to take full advantage of the removal of those legal barriers to their advancement.

The question of support for Repeal among the two main religious groups is a very important one, and it is unfortunate that the amount of evidence available on the subject is limited. The census of 1841 (which was not as reliable as later ones) suggests a ratio of roughly three Protestants to every eight Catholics in Dublin city.⁵ Among the group of leading Repealers under consideration, the religion of 139 of the 388 known city residents was identified, yielding a ratio of roughly one Protestant to every ten Catholics.⁶ Acknowledging the limitations of the census, and the incompleteness of the information on religious affiliation, it does seem that Catholics were more highly concentrated among the leading Repealers than in the city as a whole. It is noticeable, too, that the members of the Association who were identified as Protestants in the survey were propertied or professional men rather than tradesmen. Only

⁵ These figures are taken from the 1841 census, reprinted in Dublin Almanac and General Register of Ireland for the Year 1841, p. 575.

⁶ See Table 2.2.

two of the eleven identified Protestants were engaged in trade, as opposed to fifty-nine of the 128 identified Catholics. Further down the social scale, it is difficult to estimate the support for Repeal among the different religious groups. In contrast to Catholics, the Protestants tended to be more highly concentrated in the upper classes, but there was a small Protestant working class in the city. The views of this class are difficult to discover, but the limited evidence available indicates a predominant suspicion of Catholicism.

I. Landed Gentry, Army Officers, and Men of Property

Members of these classes may be treated in one section for the purposes of this study. All the forty-five men in these three groups had some property, and did not need to work, the army officers being retired. In the weekly reports of the public meetings of the Repeal Association, these men were generally designated 'Esquire', although only three of them appear to have been members of landed families.

The very small number of landed gentry (three) attending the meetings is partly a reflection of the fact that we are only concerned here with Repealers living in Dublin city and county. Several more landed gentry did attend the Association's meetings occasionally, but they had bases outside the Dublin area.⁷ On the whole, however, relatively few of the landed gentry of either religious persuasion joined the Association. Only one or two members of the aristocracy, including the Earl of Milltown, belonged to the Association. The Catholic gentry and aristocracy had helped in the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, but showed little interest in Repeal.⁸ The four army officers did not play a very important part in the agitation, although Captain Bryan of Raheny, a Protestant, became a prominent member of the Irish Confederation in 1847.

⁷ For example, Lord ffrench attended meetings in 1844.

⁸ Members of the gentry and aristocracy frequently chaired meetings of the Catholic Association: see F.J., 30 January 1826.

The lack of interest in Repeal among the gentry was made up for by the men of property, nearly all Catholics, who joined the Association in large numbers and attended meetings fairly often. Of the forty-five men in these three categories of Repealers, thirty-eight were men of property, who, as far as can be ascertained, were not landed men. Dublin contained many men who had either personally or in a previous generation made money through trade, and risen to a position of near gentility, often with a house in the suburbs. There were one or two Protestants among these Repealers, such as John L. Arabin, Lord Mayor of Dublin from 1844 to 1845, and Robert McClelland, Town Councillor, who had been a Volunteer in 1782. In general, however, Protestants from this class did not give much support to the movement, bearing in mind the large numbers of Protestant gentlemen in Dublin. The Catholic men of property included Jeremiah Dunne, whose lack of taste as Lord Mayor was condemned by the Tories, and Thomas Reynolds, who gained a position as City Marshal under the reformed Corporation during the forties.⁹ His brother, John Reynolds, became one of the M.P.s for the city in 1847. Catholics from this social background were usually eager to enter fully into the positions which had become open to them through the passing of the Emancipation Act, and municipal reform. They might also expect to benefit from the attempts which the government had been making since the early thirties, to identify the administration of the country with both sections of the community, not merely with the Protestants.¹⁰

If these Catholics showed themselves willing to cooperate with the government by entering the jobs and positions which were being opened to them, how can we explain their support for Repeal? When considering the reasons for the conjunction of Catholicism and nationalism, it should first be noted that Irish Catholics were conscious of a separate identity from

9 Reynolds, a radical, had criticised O'Connell for dropping Repeal in the late thirties.

10 R. B. McDowell, Public Opinion and Government Policy in Ireland, 1801-46, London, 1952, p. 179.

the British and from Irish Protestants, because of their historical experiences. They shared memories of humiliation and dispossession under the Penal Laws. Secondly, the government was only beginning to bring Catholics into the running of the country. There were constant reminders that Catholics could not be completely trusted. When O'Connell was prosecuted for conspiracy in 1844 no Catholic was included on the jury that tried him.¹¹ As Lord Mayor, a Catholic was not entitled to wear his robes to Mass.¹² An abnormal share of responsible posts still went to Protestants.¹³ Such factors led many to feel that Catholics were still very much second-class citizens. The discontent engendered by this belief led them to cooperate with O'Connell in order to secure a Repeal of the Union, in the hope that an Irish parliament would restore Catholics to their rightful position in the community.

The role of these 'gentlemen' in the Association was fairly important, since members of this class had the education and time to serve on the committees, and contribute to the reports issued from time to time. Men of property and professional men were automatically voted on to the general committee in the early years of the agitation,¹⁴ although not all of them attended regularly. O'Connell claimed to be anxious to have as many gentlemen as possible in the Association, especially Protestants. He wrote to Captain Seaver, an Orange convert, 'I am anxious to regulate the progress of repeal by their counsel and assistance'.¹⁵ But in spite of these words, some of the leading Protestant members of the Association complained that insufficient notice was taken of their views. Thus Davis

11 Nation, 13 January 1844.

12 'Peel's Government', Dublin Review, Vol. XII No. xxiii, February 1842, pp. 250-78 (p. 260).

13 For example, when the Lord Lieutenant, Earl de Grey, appointed twenty-eight J.P.s for Dublin city in 1841, the F.J. claimed that not more than seven were Liberals; probably less than six were Catholics: F.J., 1 December 1841.

14 See Chapter 4 below.

15 O'Connell to Captain Seaver, 14 April 1843, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 423.

complained to Smith O'Brien that his stand for 'free opinion' in the Association had met with much hostility, at the time of the debate over the Charitable Bequests Bill.¹⁶ It is only fair to add, however, that Davis was himself told by Smith O'Brien, also a Protestant, that Catholics had just grounds for fearing the effects of the Bill if it became law.¹⁷ Although this group of propertied men attending Repeal Association meetings was not a large one in terms of the overall numbers of Repealers, their social status meant that they played a prominent part in the movement. Their attendance at meetings was good, with a fairly high percentage attending over twenty meetings.¹⁸ They also frequently took the chair at the public meetings. In 1840, for instance, Dublin 'gentlemen' took the chair at more than one-sixth of the meetings, although their participation was never so great again.

II. The Clergy

The role of the clergy in the Repeal movement in Dublin is rather difficult to assess, mainly because personal or public comments by them on political issues were fairly rare. This in itself is an indication of the minor part played by the clergy in the Repeal organisation in the capital. It is important to differentiate between the role of a priest in a country area, the setting for the bulk of the Irish parishes, and his role in a large city like Dublin. In the former, the priest would of necessity be called upon to express his political opinions, because of the scarcity of any other Catholic leaders. In the Repeal movement, the rural clergy did play an important part.¹⁹ In Dublin, however, where there were plenty of men of property, professional and business men, many of whom were extremely

16 Davis to Smith O'Brien, 30 October 1844, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I., MS 434.

17 Smith O'Brien to Davis, 29 August 1844, Davis Papers, N.L.I., MS 2644.

18 See Table 2.3.

19 Oliver MacDonagh, Ireland, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968, p.46.

politically aware, the priest's role in politics was likely to be less prominent.

However, there is another factor to be considered when assessing the role of clergy in the diocese of Dublin, for the Archbishop of the diocese was Dr Daniel Murray, the prelate who was the most favourable of all the Irish bishops to the British connection.²⁰ During the forties, he cooperated with the British government over the Charitable Bequests Act and the Queen's Colleges, which were both denounced by the main section of the Repeal Association, and particularly by O'Connell²¹ and his son John, and the Catholic clergy. To understand the attitude of Archbishop Murray on the question of the political activities of the clergy, it will be necessary to look at the background of Papal and hierarchical rulings on this subject in the early nineteenth century.

It is well known that British governments in the nineteenth century attempted to persuade the Holy See to influence the Irish clergy to adopt a friendly attitude towards England and the Union. This policy achieved little success, for although the Papacy was generally willing to cooperate with the British government, the Irish clergy usually took the line that in political matters a national church should be allowed a degree of independence. In 1834, pressure from the British government failed to prevent the appointment of John MacHale, who had well-known nationalist sentiments, to the See of Tuam,²² although in 1839 the Holy See did request MacHale to desist from political activities, and restrain his conduct at public meetings. In the thirties, however, the Irish hierarchy took steps of their own to reduce clerical participation in politics. In 1834 the hierarchy agreed upon a resolution forbidding the clergy to allow churches

20 J. H. Whyte, The Independent Irish Party, 1850-9, London, 1958, p. 27.

21 Pilot, 22 January 1845.

22 John F. Broderick, The Holy See and the Irish Movement for the Repeal of the Union with England, 1829-47, Rome, 1951, p. 84.

to be used for public meetings of the laity, and the reading of proclamations from the altar or in church was banned.²³ However, it is important to note the limitations of this policy; the collection of the O'Connell Tribute seems to have gone on as before (this was usually collected at the church doors after Mass on a certain Sunday each year). Also, since the clergy became so deeply involved in the Repeal movement in the forties, it is hard to see that these efforts by the hierarchy had much effect beyond perhaps curbing the most blatant abuses of previous years.

Dr Murray's personal views on the question were expressed in a letter printed in the Nation in May 1843. He was answering the claim of Bishop Higgins of Ardagh that all the Catholic bishops were Repealers. Dr Murray claimed that whatever Dr Higgins might say, he would stand by the resolutions of 1834, calling on clergy to abstain from taking a prominent part in politics.²⁴ This meant that the clergy in Dublin were in a difficult position if they felt strongly about politics, although Dr Murray did not discourage them from supporting the Charitable Requests Act, or Queen's Colleges, which were 'political' subjects, just like Repeal. Fear of incurring Dr Murray's displeasure is probably one reason why such a small number of secular clergy became deeply involved with the Repeal movement in the capital.

Of the thirty-eight clergymen from the Dublin diocese who attended some weekly meetings of the Repeal Association, four were Parish Priests, seventeen were Curates, two were Prebendaries, twelve were in religious orders, and three held other positions.²⁵ Two of the Parish Priests lived outside Dublin, at Skerries and Swords. Inside the city, one of the

²³ Broderick, The Holy See and the Irish Movement for the Repeal, pp. 59-60.

²⁴ Nation, 27 May 1843.

²⁵ See Table 2.4, which includes the names of 33 of these clergymen who were resident in Dublin city.

Parish Priests was Father Matthew Flanagan, of St Nicholas, the leader of the 'Irish Manufacture' movement from 1840 to 1842.²⁶ Fr Flanagan only attended one meeting, although he did encourage Repeal at a local level in the wards. He was a very able organiser, and might have done more for Repeal, had not his time been taken up so much with the poor of the parish, which was badly affected by the depressions of 1839-42. Two Curates from this large parish also attended the Association meetings, which indicates the strength of national feeling in that part of the city. The other Parish Priest from the city was Father George Canavan, of St James's, another large parish. He attended eight of the weekly meetings at the Corn Exchange. His attitude, and an insight into the part which a few clergymen played, are indicated in a letter from T.M. Ray, the secretary of the Association, to O'Connell:

We are working the Wards well. I had an admirable meeting in James Ward on Friday night; the Rev. Mr. Canavan P.P. in the chair. Rev. Mr. Gilligan [Curate, St James's] and T.C.s [town councillors] Shannon and Gavan [sic] attended, first time Rev. Canavan appeared; and he made an out and out Repeal speech and said he would be constantly with them.²⁷

However, it was rare even at parish or ward level for Parish Priests to take this sort of leading position in the Repeal movement. And at the regular weekly meetings of the Association, the role of the clergy seems to have been mainly that of onlookers, with few exceptions. Even at the time of the secession (when the Young Ireland party withdrew from the Association, following debates on the morality of the use of physical force), there was very little comment on this development from the Dublin clergy within the Association, although they may have commented upon it in their sermons. But it is noticeable that after the secession, the number

²⁶ See the reports of this movement, F.J., 1840-2, and Chapters 3 and 4 below.

²⁷ T.M. Ray to O'Connell, 25 August 1845, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13646.

of clergymen attending the weekly meetings increased sharply, which indicated their support for O'Connell in the controversy. Indeed, the week after the secession, almost all the letters read at the meeting were from clergymen, supporting O'Connell and the Association.²⁸ The secession occurred at the end of July 1846. At one meeting in August, no less than ten clergymen were present, about half of them from Dublin.²⁹ In November, the first Catholic bishop made his appearance at one of the regular weekly meetings: Dr Browne, Bishop of Elphin.³⁰ The effect of this great show of support for O'Connell on the part of the clergy must have been to deter the former from seeking a speedy reconciliation with the Young Ireland group. It is only fair to say, however, that O'Connell and his son John did not seem anxious to seek an early reconciliation, nor did the majority of the leading Old Ireland Repealers. It is interesting to note that when the Association did consider negotiations with the Young Irelanders, some of the clergy played a part in the conferences, notably the Reverend Dr Miley, O'Connell's chaplain, Father McHugh, Curate of Howth parish, and the Very Reverend Dr John Spratt, a Carmelite friar.³¹ Yet, on close examination of the clerical attitudes to reconciliation, it becomes clear that most of the clergy wanted the Young Ireland group to submit to rejoining the Association, and to accept the existing leadership of that body, an unpalatable prospect for the Young Irelanders, who by the early months of 1847 were presiding over the Irish Confederation.³² The widespread support of the clergy for O'Connell led Thomas Francis Meagher to claim that when a priest descended to the level of politics, 'I owe his opinions no allegiance, save what reason and justice demand'.³³ This

²⁸ See the report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, Pilot, 5 August 1846.

²⁹ Pilot, 26 August 1846.

³⁰ Pilot, 18 November 1846.

³¹ See Pilot, 16 December 1846 and 12 May 1847.

³² See Chapter 6 below.

³³ At a meeting of the Irish Confederation: see Nation, 31 July 1847.

attitude is a forerunner of that of the Fenians, twenty years later. It is also very similar to O'Connell's own attitude towards Papal authority in temporal affairs.³⁴

Dr Murray's authority in the Dublin diocese was confined principally to the secular clergy, while the religious orders were generally subject to direct Papal authority. This probably explains why almost one-third of the Dublin clergy who came to Repeal meetings were members of the religious orders. These included three Carmelites, three Augustinians, two Capuchins, one Franciscan, a Dominican Prior, a Jesuit, and a chaplain to a convent. If we compare the figures for attendance at meetings for the secular clergy of Dublin city with those for the religious clergy, we see that among the former, the average number of meetings attended was 7.9, while among the latter the figure was 10.0.³⁵ We should perhaps not place too much emphasis on these figures, since in the case of the regular clergy in particular, the very high number of meetings attended by one or two clergymen raises the figure for average attendance considerably. The important point to note, however, is that like the secular clergy, the members of the religious orders did not take a very active part in the meetings. Their names are recorded as being present, but it was rare for any of them to speak. At the ward level, individuals did make significant contributions, such as Dr Spratt, the founder of the Carmelite church in Whitefriar Street, who, although perhaps best remembered for his Temperance campaign in Dublin, was also a consistent supporter of O'Connell.³⁶ He was active in the movement for Catholic Emancipation, and also worked for the Repeal Association. For the Young Irelanders, he

³⁴ Pilot, 22 January 1845.

³⁵ See Table 2.4. According to Thom's Irish Almanac for 1845, pp. 345-8, there were sixty-three secular and forty-five regular clergy in Dublin city. The figures altered very little in the remainder of the decade.

³⁶ A. E. Farrington (D.D.), Rev. Dr Spratt, O.C.C., His Life and Times, Dublin, 1893, p. 129.

organised petitions when Charles Gavan Duffy was in prison, and collected 70,000 signatures, seeking mercy for the prisoner.³⁷

One clergyman who became deeply involved with the Repeal Association, both as a committee member and at a ward level, was the Reverend Edward Groves, a Protestant. At first it seems strange to find a Protestant clergyman among O'Connell's supporters, and working for Repeal. Dr Groves was working as a Repeal Warden for St Peter's parish as early as January 1841.³⁸ He had been connected with Dublin for some time, had attended Trinity College, and was the author of the contribution on Ireland (history and statistics) in the 1836 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.³⁹ For a man of his persuasion and calling, this contribution reveals considerable sympathy for the Irish Catholics. His comment on the Act of Union was that it 'had been carried by an unprecedented combination of corruption and intimidation',⁴⁰ a view that became a commonplace among Repealers. His comments on O'Connell also showed admiration for the leader of the Catholics.⁴¹ Clearly Dr Groves was a Liberal Protestant, became converted to Repeal, and joined the Association soon after it was founded in 1840. During the early years of the movement, he acted as Repeal Warden for St Peter's parish, and also occasionally spoke in the weekly meetings to back up O'Connell, or made suggestions of his own.⁴² He was a member of the general committee of the Association, like all the clergy who joined the movement, but in addition he also served on sub-committees, such as the one in 1842 which was set up to prepare details of the financial injustice caused to Ireland by

37 Farrington, Rev. Dr Spratt, p. 179.

38 Pilot, 27 January 1841.

39 Reverend Edward Groves, Summary of the History and Statistics of Ireland; Drawn up for the Seventh Edition, 'Encyclopedia Britannica', published as a separate pamphlet, 1836. Page references as in original.

40 Ibid., p. 387.

41 Ibid., p. 388.

42 His particular interest was Reform: see F.J., 30 November 1841.

the Act of Union.⁴³ The other members of this committee were Dr Gray, Michael Staunton, Thomas Davis, John O'Connell, Dr Murphy, W. J. O'Neill Daunt, and Edward Clements, a distinguished group of Repealers. Clearly Dr Groves played a useful role in the Association. Why did O'Connell not make more of the fact that he had the cooperation of a Protestant clergyman? One reason might have been that Dr Groves asked for his adherence to be kept fairly quiet, perhaps for fear of offending Protestant friends. Against this can be set the fact that his religion was clearly well known to the audience at the Corn Exchange. Whatever the reason, Dr Groves continued to support the Repeal Association, attending meetings in 1841, 1842, and 1844 to 1848, although after 1842 he never took such a prominent part in the work, perhaps because he was busy with his book on a universal system of language, published in 1846.⁴⁴

In general, then, Repeal had the warm support of Catholic clergy in Dublin, as testified by their attendance at the meetings of the Repeal Association. But they took no very prominent part in the organization of the movement. Their general hesitancy to play an active role at the public meetings is well expressed by the case of Father Wynne, a curate from Dundrum. He was to attend no less than forty-nine meetings, and having already been to several, made no spoken contribution until one day when John O'Connell was speaking on the famine. Only then, and on this subject, not directly connected with Repeal, did he rise to speak: 'I beg leave to state that when I came into this Hall it was not my intention to take any part in your proceedings. But, Sir, the startling facts which have been just communicated, make me feel bound by conscience to raise my humble voice for food for starving millions...'.⁴⁵

43 Pilot, 27 July 1842.

44 Reverend Edward Groves, Pasilogia: An Essay Towards the Formation of a System of Universal Language, Dublin, 1846.

45 Pilot, 7 October 1846.

We may ask, why did the clergy support Repeal? One contemporary interpretation was that the Catholic priests were motivated primarily by hatred of the Protestant religion and the established church.⁴⁶ Certainly the priests tended to make their speeches when the government was legislating on matters which involved religious questions, such as university education or Charitable Bequests. Yet in the Association it was the O'Connell family and other lay members who were the most prominent supporters of Catholic policies on these subjects. It should be remembered that the clergy were Irishmen, who naturally shared the nationalism of their flocks. They were probably more aware than other Catholics of the humiliations involved in practising the Catholic faith, until a very recent date. They saw O'Connell as the man who had gained Catholic Emancipation, and trusted him to uphold Catholic traditions. Their approval of the 'wisdom and integrity of Ireland's illustrious Liberator'⁴⁷ became more marked at the time of the split with Young Ireland and in subsequent months, when the clergy came more frequently to meetings. Their trust in O'Connell as a leader helps to explain not only why they supported his movement for Repeal, but why they failed to support the Young Irelanders, who had rejected his leadership and refused to be bound by his peaceful methods for winning Repeal.

The attitude which lay behind the Catholic clergy's support for O'Connell is well brought out in a letter to the editor of the Nation in 1849.⁴⁸ The writer was Dr Grattan, J.P., a Protestant who had recently chaired a meeting of the newly-formed Irish Alliance,⁴⁹ under which name certain Repealers had come together to revive the national movement.

46 See 'Repeal Movement - The Prosecution', Dublin University Magazine, Vol. XXIII No. cxxxiii, January 1844, pp. 119-42 (p. 120).

47 Report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, Pilot, 7 October 1846.

48 The letter was dated 12 December 1849: see Nation, 15 December 1849.

49 F.J., 21 November 1849.

He wrote:

One of the best men with whom I am acquainted - a Catholic priest - one whose good opinion I would wish to possess beyond the opinion of most other men - said to me, when I was disapproving of some of the proceedings of O'Connell, and told him I thought he ought to withdraw from the Conciliation Hall. "You, said he, speak as a Protestant - I feel as a Catholic. You were born free - I was born a slave. I never can forget that to O'Connell I am indebted for the place I now hold, and that I can now walk as proudly and as free as you. I will not desert him; nor will I unlearn the lessons he has taught me."

III. The Professional Classes

For the purposes of this study, professional men who attended meetings of the Repeal Association were divided into three groups.⁵⁰ Two of these represent the legal profession: the first comprised barristers, the second was made up of attorneys, solicitors and proctors. The medical profession is represented by the third group, made up of doctors, surgeons and a small number of apothecaries. Army officers have been included in the section on the gentry and propertied men, since they were retired officers, whereas the majority of men in this section were actually practising their profession. Together, the representatives of these two professions make up more than twenty-one per cent of the total number of prominent Repealers included in this survey. Only three per cent were medical men, which means that eighteen per cent of these Repealers were engaged in the legal profession. The only group of men to form a higher proportion was that concerned with the provision trade, which included grocers, brewers, millers, bakers, and so forth.

The 1841 census of Ireland analyses the occupations of the Dublin population within the municipal boundaries. It shows that 3,001, or

⁵⁰ See Table 2.1.

4.3 per cent of the adult male population were involved in the administration of justice in some capacity.⁵¹ In the case of barristers alone, close on seven per cent of Dublin barristers were involved in the movement, and this takes no account of those who may have been friendly to Repeal, without actually attending the regular weekly meetings.⁵² Although the majority of these lawyers who supported Repeal were Catholics, there were also several Protestants, including Thomas Davis and Wilson Gray.

Why did the Repeal movement attract so many members of the legal profession in Ireland? There are several factors to be taken into account here. In social terms, professional men were members of the small educated minority: for that reason alone they might be expected to take a prominent part in politics. In Ireland, moreover, there were other factors which linked the professions with politics. Professional men enjoyed a high social status, but apparently received only low remuneration and had poor prospects of promotion when compared with their English counterparts. From the time of the relaxation of the Penal Laws, the professions had been the resort of many Catholics who wished to rise in the world, but Irish incomes at the Bar were lower than at the English Bar, so that Irishmen sought judicial appointments and patronage of all kinds, to a degree not found in England.⁵³ Promotion in the legal profession was often associated with political rewards.⁵⁴ At the same time, in the second and third decades after the Act of Union, a trend towards centralisation grew in England, and Irish institutions such as the Irish Bar suffered in comparison with English ones. The Irish law student was

51 Report of the Commissioners appointed to take the Census of Ireland, for the Year 1841, P.P. 1843, XXIV, pp. 15-22 (Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers, Shannon, 1968): Tables for the City of Dublin, pp. 18-19.

52 The census, p. 22, identified 437 barristers in the city, a number which was probably rising during the forties; Venedey, Ireland and the Irish, put the figure at 891, based on the Dublin Directories (Venedey, p. 76).

53 B. Barry O'Brien, Dublin Castle and the Irish People, London, 1909, p. 162, quoting the view of Lord Russell of Killowen.

54 R. B. McDowell, The Irish Administration, 1801-1914, London, 1964, p. 107.

compelled to pass two terms at an English Inn of Court, as part of his degree course. After Catholic Emancipation had been won, several Irish Catholic lawyers entered the House of Commons, but were unable to continue practising their profession, since they were so frequently absent from Ireland, yet were not permitted to practise in England.⁵⁵ Eight terms had to be passed in attendance at an English Inn of Court before the Irish barrister could qualify as a humble 'Special Pleader' in England.⁵⁶ These and similar disadvantages were grievances for Irish lawyers throughout the forties, although they were not so severe as to prevent a reasonable living being made by a competent lawyer. They were constantly the subject of agitation by barristers and attorneys; the latter also complained of lower fees than their English counterparts.⁵⁷ Bills were periodically laid before parliament to improve conditions for Irish lawyers.⁵⁸

In such a situation, it was perhaps to be expected that members of the legal profession should display a strong sense of the importance of national institutions. The appointment of non-Irishmen to the top Irish judicial positions came in for particular criticism. The views of a meeting of barristers in the capital were represented in a letter from a barrister, Hercules Ellis, to Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, in 1841. This letter described the appointment of non-Irishmen to these positions

55 The O'Connell Tribute, collected yearly in most Catholic parishes in Ireland, originated in attempts to make up for O'Connell's financial losses incurred through giving up his career in order to devote himself to the national movement.

56 See H. Ellis's letter to Peel, 5 September 1841, P.R.O. H.O. 100/257.

57 For accounts of their meetings, see Pilot, 4 December 1840 (attorneys), F.J., 23 June 1841 (barristers), F.J., 27 October 1843 (law clerks), and Nation, 11 May 1844 (attorneys).

58 In 1841, a Bill was sent to an Irish M.P. by J. L. Doran, barrister, to amend the law concerning the admission of Irish barristers to act as Special Pleaders in England, thus 'cementing the Union between the two countries': S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1841/2 15974.

as 'insulting', not because this represented a financial loss to Irishmen, but 'because this system lowers them [Irish barristers] in the eyes of their country, and their country in the eyes of the world... and treats their ancient nation as an unlettered and barbarous colony'.⁵⁹ This comment, coming from barristers who were by no means all Repealers (Ellis was not a member of the Repeal Association), is extremely revealing of attitudes among Irish barristers. It suggests a consciousness of Ireland as a country with her own historic traditions; her own institutions, which were seen as being debased and undermined by the British government's system of appointments. For Ellis personally, the solution lay not in a Repeal of the Union, but in a fairer system of appointments which would not exclude Irishmen and Catholics from the highest positions. But for many of his fellow lawyers, it was a short step from this consciousness of nationality, and feelings of insult over the appointments system and other matters, to the conclusion that a Repeal of the Union would solve their problems. Both O'Connell and the Young Irelanders played on these feelings and argued that the only solution lay in a Repeal of the Union.⁶⁰ But in fact, it lay within the power of any British government, Tory or Whig, to remove these grievances. However, only tentative moves in this direction were made by British ministries, which met with considerable opposition from the entrenched Protestant interests.⁶¹ The situation thus remained much the same, and the Repeal Association continued to exploit it,⁶² and to recruit members from the professional classes. Lawyers carried out much of the electoral work of the Association, and

⁵⁹ H. Ellis to Sir James Graham, 19 September 1841, P.R.O. H.O. 100/257.

⁶⁰ At a meeting of the law clerks, O'Connell said, 'if the present state of things be in being, or long continue - you will have all the offices or places filled with English and Scotch; there will be no business or opening for you to obtain employment... In fact they will bring all law business over to England... unless the Repeal comes.' Nation, 4 November 1843.

⁶¹ Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, especially pp. 62-90.

⁶² Nation, 29 November 1845.

also made an important contribution to the committee reports. Young Ireland owed even more to the professional men: most of the leading Young Irelanders were qualified lawyers or were studying for the Bar.

The national movement also provided opportunities for lawyers who sought an official appointment, or who wished to display their professional skills, and become well-known through national activities. In the opinion of Maurice O'Connell, certain barristers aspired to high-sounding positions in the Association without being willing to do very much work. This was one of his reasons for proposing that Martin Crean, who was not a qualified barrister, but who was a most efficient worker, should be placed in charge of the Association's registration department.⁶³ It was well known that O'Connell could not only provide jobs in the Repeal Association, but also had influence with governments. Indeed, the question of patronage and appointments was of great importance at this period. The O'Connell Papers contain many letters, some addressed to T.M. Ray, the Association's secretary, but most addressed to the leader himself, requesting jobs for the writers or for the writers' friends or relations.⁶⁴ The bulk of such requests apparently came from Catholics who were Repealers, which reflects the very close link between the policies of Repeal and the advancement of Catholics in Irish society. It is important to stress that men who made such requests saw no contradiction between the two aims: on the contrary, in their minds the two aims were closely linked. It was the Young Irelanders who, following the Tories, claimed that the two aims were incompatible, or at least, that seeking places seriously compromised Repeal.⁶⁵ It is difficult to judge the truth of this claim. On the one hand, there is the example of J.C. Fitzpatrick, a barrister, who was

⁶³ Maurice O'Connell to S. O'Brien, 7 October 1844, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

⁶⁴ See O'Connell Papers, N.L.I., especially MSS 13622 and 13623.

⁶⁵ See also Chapter 6 below.

a frequent attender at Repeal meetings until his appointment early in 1847 to the post of Solicitor General at the Cape of Good Hope;⁶⁶ on the other, we may point to J. K. O'Dowd, barrister, who was appointed a Magistrate of Police at the end of 1846,⁶⁷ yet continued to attend Repeal meetings after his appointment, though not so frequently. It appears that the places offered to Repealers by the Whig government from 1846 onwards did draw off some supporters, but mainly among M.P.s.

There are other cases which illustrate the complexity of this question. From time to time, governments made it clear that Repealers would not be selected for public office.⁶⁸ On one occasion, employees in quite humble public departments were informed that they would be sacked if they subscribed to the Repeal cause.⁶⁹ The policy of the Peel ministry from 1841 to 1846 was to encourage the appointment of non-political Catholics, although this was never very successful.⁷⁰ The declarations against places for Repealers may have deterred some men from joining the Association, but on others they had a contrary effect. The most striking instance of this occurred in 1843, when the government began to dismiss Irish magistrates for attending Repeal meetings, or subscribing to the Repeal funds. When this became known, thirteen barristers and three solicitors joined the Association in one week.⁷¹ It was often professional men who aspired to the magistracy when they retired, and anger was expressed at the suspicions cast on their loyalty by the dismissals. Among these sixteen lawyers who joined the Association at that time, several

66 Nation, 1 May 1847.

67 Nation, 21 November 1846.

68 Lord Ebrington, Lord Lieutenant in 1840, made such a declaration: it was mentioned by John O'Connell in the Association: Pilot, 5 October 1840.

69 F.J., 5 August 1843.

70 Peel to Lord de Grey, 22 August (1843), Peel Papers, B.M. Add. MS 40478, and Peel to Lord Heytesbury, 18 July (1845), ibid., Add. MS 40479.

71 F.J., 30 May 1843.

Denny Lane. But several were also to remain in the Repeal Association after the secession, including J. K. O'Dowd and J. M. Loughnan. The issue is further complicated by the fact that O'Dowd, as we have seen, was one of the barristers who took up an official post late in 1846. It is possible that those who joined the Association following the dismissal of magistrates felt that their prospects would be improved under an Irish parliament, if all but firm supporters of the government were to be deprived of offices.

In view of the complexity of the question, why did the Young Irelanders so strongly condemn 'Old Ireland' Repealers for place-hunting? A great deal more work is needed on the aims and motives of that party before this question can be answered satisfactorily. However, we may note here that 'place-hunting' was closely linked with the policy of the Whig alliance. As a general rule, Repealers did not seek places from Tory governments. For O'Connell and for many of his followers, cooperation with the Whigs was natural because they supported many of the same reforming policies. The Young Irelanders, on the other hand, disliked the Whig alliance and, unlike O'Connell, did not support the policies of the radical wing of the Whig party.⁷² As we saw in the Introduction, they did not see 'Reform', or the trend towards democracy, as the answer to modern problems. These factors should be taken into consideration when analysing the reasons for the bitter quarrels which arose between Old and Young Irelanders over the question of place-hunting.

In purely practical terms, there was much work for lawyers to do in the national movement. The Repeal Association, like O'Connell's

⁷² See the report of T. F. Meagher's speech at the Irish Confederation meeting in Belfast. He made it clear that Young Ireland's demand for Repeal was not based on the desire for 'Reform'; and he claimed that many believed that political reform would merely confirm England's hold over Ireland: Proceedings of the Young Ireland Party, at the Great Meeting in the Music Hall, Belfast, on the 15th November 1847, with a Correct Report of the Speeches Delivered by the Deputation from Dublin, Belfast, 1848, especially p. 6.

earlier national associations, promoted the registration of voters in the Repeal or Liberal interest.⁷³ Legal knowledge was of great value in securing successful registration, and also in formulating policy, and drawing up reports and petitions. Registration was one of the two main fields of work in which the Association needed the assistance of professional agents and clerks, according to a memorandum drawn up by T. M. Ray in 1846.⁷⁴ The process of registration in Ireland was not simply a matter of filling in a form correctly - the omission or misspelling of a Christian name could lead to a refusal on the part of the Revising Barrister to register a vote - but it was also necessary to tender the claim at the correct time, and to combat notices against it (often served en masse by political opponents).⁷⁵ The help of lawyers was therefore essential for successful registration. The Repeal Association is not best known as a registration society, yet it had a committee devoted to this purpose, and several of its earliest members were lawyers who had served on previous such committees. In particular, registration of voters in Dublin city and county had always been a major concern of O'Connell's associations, which, as Macintyre has shown, also acted as local electoral clubs.⁷⁶ The Repeal Association continued to carry out these functions, exhorting Repealers to register their votes, as each registration session drew near. Barristers and attorneys who were members of the Association frequently gave their services free of charge

73 The Repeal Association itself gradually incorporated several bodies which had been concerned with electoral matters, such as the Loyal Registry Association.

74 This report (on the expenditure of the Association and the possibility of reducing it) was read to the general and finance committee, 17 September 1846: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13639.

75 For the difficulties involved in registering a vote in Ireland, see Five Reports of the Committee of the Precursor Association... upon the Relative State and Nature of the Parliamentary Franchises in the United Kingdom..., edited by Edward Bullen, Dublin, 1839, especially No. 5: 'Report on the Registry of Voters in England and Ireland', pp. 42-50.

76 Macintyre, The Liberator, pp. 81-2.

to promote the claims of Repealers. During the forties such men were often the subject of votes of thanks given by Ray, O'Connell or Smith O'Brien, for the electoral work they had done.⁷⁷

To sum up, members of the legal profession formed an important element among these predominantly middle and upper-class Repealers under consideration. Within the Repeal Association, they were prominent among those who drew up reports and carried out electoral work: for Young Ireland, lawyers were even more prominent among the leaders. Several of the editors and writers connected with the Repeal press were also professional men. It is clear that some of these lawyers had been working with O'Connell for many years, in his earlier national associations. These men were probably mainly Catholics, and they shared Catholic aspirations to positions of responsibility and prestige. They were Repealers, but found O'Connell's policy of intermittent cooperation with the Whigs satisfactory, because the Whigs' reforming policies implied a certain degree of transference of power and privilege from the Protestant minority to the Catholic majority.

Lawyers of both creeds appear to have had a strong sense of nationality; they were aware of Irish institutions and traditions as things to be valued, and did not wish them to be abandoned in a general swing to English practices. Their concern was increased by the fact that the Whig government of 1835 to 1841 had adopted policies of reform and growing centralisation, which posed a threat to certain Irish institutions. Repeal of the Union might provide an answer to these fears. Yet the Repeal Association - the only form of the national movement in existence in the early forties - had a strong Whig and reforming flavour. For men who placed more value on Irish institutions than on 'Reform', O'Connell's Repeal Association was unsatisfactory in several ways. Young Ireland's brand of nationalism,

⁷⁷ Pilot, 18 October 1844 and 1 January 1845.

which had been created by Thomas Davis, himself a barrister, might seem more attractive to these men, since it stressed the uniqueness of Irish institutions and customs.

The legal profession thus played a central role in the Repeal movement: in comparison with them, doctors, surgeons and apothecaries became active Repealers in much smaller numbers. Only sixteen medical men attended any of the regular weekly meetings at the Corn Exchange, as opposed to ninety-two lawyers.⁷⁸ Less than one-fifth attended more than twenty meetings, compared with almost one-third of the barristers.⁷⁹ But individual medical men did become important members of the Association. Dr Stephen Murphy attended 140 meetings, and was chairman nineteen times. He frequently assisted with registration work. Dr James Nagle was appointed editor of the Association in 1844, with responsibility for any errors in the reports and other publications. He was also put in charge of the large library. His appointment, at a salary of two guineas a week, was designated 'an atrocious job' by Michael Barry,⁸⁰ and was criticised by other Young Irelanders. When Smith O'Brien questioned Maurice O'Connell about the appointment, however, the latter defended it, claiming that there was much work for him to do, and that his appointment had been passed in the presence of forty members of the general committee.⁸¹ This appointment was probably one of the stages in the attempts to provide a check on the Young Ireland views being represented in the reports as the views of the Association as a whole.

Compared with lawyers, doctors and surgeons appear to have had fewer causes of complaint as regards their terms of training and prospects of advancement. At any rate, the eighteen forties saw no series of meetings to air grievances, such as those held by barristers. The

⁷⁸ See Table 2.1.

⁷⁹ See Table 2.3.

⁸⁰ M. J. Barry to O'Brien, 27 October 1844, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

⁸¹ M. O'Connell to O'Brien, 31 October 1844, ibid.

medical profession in Ireland had enjoyed a boom period since the Union; new buildings had been erected for them at Trinity College. In 1841, there was a meeting of the profession in Dublin, to advocate the interests of the profession by sending a representative to parliament, but no impassioned nationalist speeches were made.⁸² The prospect of jobs in the Association, or of appointment gained through O'Connell's offices, could be attractive to doctors as well as to lawyers. Two doctors became Repeal town councillors on the reformed Corporation.⁸³ But although the element of desire for place and advancement must be taken into account, as with the members of the legal profession, it is also true that medical men, even without the many professional grievances of the lawyers, were aware of Ireland as a country with her own institutions and traditions. A meeting of the medical students of Dublin in 1848 proclaimed the right of the Irish people to make laws for Ireland,⁸⁴ and perhaps more important, in 1850 a petition emanated from the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland against the proposal to abolish the office of Lord Lieutenant.⁸⁵ This last document was not very radical; but it reveals the sense of pride in Irish institutions which existed among most professional men, and which was a most important element in determining their political views. Few doctors joined the Repeal Association, but among many more could be found this sense of pride, which was so constantly overlooked by British governments when dealing with Irish problems.

IV. Merchants, Manufacturers and Tradesmen

The total number of men from these classes among the leading Repealers was 231, or 45.4 per cent of the whole. Of this number,

82 F.J., 14 June 1841.

83 These doctors were Atkinson and M'Keon.

84 United Irishman, 25 March 1848.

85 Petition from King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland, P.R.O. H.O. 54/35.

sixty-six were grocers or spirit and wine dealers (these two trades usually went together), thirty were in the provision trade, such as bakers, millers or butchers, four were brewers, forty were in the clothing trade, and ninety-one in other trades.⁸⁶ From these figures, we can see that almost half the men who attended the weekly Repeal meetings were in trade, always remembering that this survey only takes account of those who were of sufficient status to have their names recorded. This is a very large proportion, probably made up almost entirely of Catholics. The number of Protestants among the tradesmen who came to the meetings was apparently very small. Among the Dublin city residents, only two of these tradesmen could be positively identified as Protestants, compared with fifty-nine identified Catholics (see Table 2.2). Why did tradesmen turn up in such numbers, and what was the significance of their support for the movement as a whole?

It has already been suggested that the working conditions and prospects of lawyers had some effect on their support for the cause. It may be well to look at some of the economic conditions which were peculiar to Ireland, to see whether these were likely to have affected the attitudes of tradesmen. In Ireland as in England, trade and industry were badly hit by the slump of 1839-42. However, in Ireland, there were special conditions which were the subject of complaint throughout this period. One general complaint was that the banking system did not allow for the provision of such widespread credit facilities as was the case in England.⁸⁷ Another grievance was the law regarding bankruptcy, which also hindered the tradesmen, since the bankrupt was given a much longer period before he was declared bankrupt than under English law, and it was also more

⁸⁶ See Table 2.1.

⁸⁷ See the editorial in the F.J., 6 May 1841, and Turgot (pseud.), The Impediments to the Manufacturing Prosperity of Dublin Considered, with Suggestions for their Removal, London, 1845, pp. 11 and 21-2.

difficult for creditors to buy a bankrupt's lands.⁸⁸ Individual trades also complained of laws which were prejudicial to business, and which only applied to Ireland. The most striking case of this was the so-called 'Perrins Act', which was passed in the reign of William IV.⁸⁹ This Act prohibited the sale of spirits on the same premises as groceries, notably tea, coffee and cocoa. It was passed apparently with a view to preventing servant girls consuming spirits while they did the shopping. However, its main effect, according to James Gardiner, a merchant, had been to make grocers suffer, for the selling of groceries and the retail of spirits had traditionally been carried on in the same shop.⁹⁰ Following agitation by the grocers, the Act was repealed in 1845, but ill feeling remained, since the Excise officers had seized considerable quantities of tea before the Repeal of the Act. One of the arguments used by the grocers in agitating their case was that they should not be subject to laws which were not the same for England, because the Union was supposed to grant equal privileges to all.⁹¹ Distillers also complained of the tax on malt, and of the barriers to the sale of Irish whiskey in England.⁹²

Some of the grocers who were most constant in their attendance at the Association were also very active in the attempts to improve trading conditions. Yet they apparently failed to press the Association to take up their case, and such matters were not the subject of debate in the Association. A possible explanation for this might have been that the

⁸⁸ For the state of the bankruptcy laws in Ireland and attempts to alter them, see the correspondence between the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants' Committee, Cork, and the government, S.P.O. O.P. 1845-6.

⁸⁹ Perrins Act, 1836, 6 & 7 William IV, c. 68. s. 3.

⁹⁰ J. Gardiner to the Under Secretary, Dublin Castle, S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1841/Z 4580.

⁹¹ Memorial to the Queen from the Licensed Victuallers and Tea Dealers of Dublin, December 1844, S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1847/Z 1005.

⁹² Pilot, 13 April 1840. These included excise regulations and a provision which made the Irish distiller pay duty on spirits before consumption. See Observations on the Resolutions of the Irish Distillers, Agreed to in London, and Presented to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, by a Deputation of Irish Distillers, in July 1840, [by W.W.], Dublin, 1841, pp. 9-10.

Association, as a national body, would not wish to concern itself with the particular grievances of just one section of the population. Leaders of the movement were sensitive to the criticisms of non-Repealers that the Association was working towards an end that would mainly benefit Dublin. O'Connell often found it necessary to stress that Repeal would benefit the whole country. But if economic questions were the dominant factor in the support for Repeal from the business classes, then it seems surprising that they did not press the Association to take up their particular grievances. Instead, they kept their efforts to improve business conditions separate from the Repeal agitation. John McKenna, Town Councillor and Repealer, led the struggle to obtain compensation for the grocers' teas.⁹³ The fact that the grocers continued their agitation in spite of O'Connell's general assurances that all would be well after Repeal had been achieved, indicates that they were practical men, who were in fact managing to carry on their business with considerable success, even while there was no Irish parliament. Indeed, some of these wealthy merchants, including James Rooney, John Keshan, and Luke Butler, all aldermen of Dublin, were shareholders in Irish railways,⁹⁴ and Butler was a director of the Dublin to Dundrum company.⁹⁵ It has been pointed out that the proportion of Irish money invested in the Dublin to Kingstown railway was far greater than that invested in other Irish railway companies.⁹⁶ It seems likely that many of the shareholders in the Dublin railways were Catholic merchants.

93 For the campaign led by McKenna, grocer and spirit dealer, to amend the law regarding the sale of tea and spirits on the same premises, see S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1844/Z 4318 and Z 10974; for details of the legal case McKenna v. Pape, O.P. 1845/208.

94 D.E.M., 7 January 1846.

95 Nation, 8 September 1849.

96 Joseph P. Lee, 'The Provision of Capital for Early Irish Railways, 1830-53', I.H.S., Vol. XVI No. 61, March 1968, pp. 33-63 (p. 41).

There is a paradox in the case of men who had clearly made a very comfortable living through trade, denouncing the Union for its ruinous effect on the Irish economy. At one of the first meetings after the foundation of the Association, John O'Neill, timber merchant, declared, 'I am willing to be evidence that every commercial treaty of the Union has been broken'.⁹⁷ Yet the newspaper report of the meeting described O'Neill as 'the first merchant of our city, a merchant of fifty years standing and experience, a man worth upwards of one hundred thousand pounds'. Clearly, trade could not have been bad enough to prevent some merchants from doing extremely well. At a more modest level, a group of Dublin jaunting car owners sent the Association a statement of their means, wishing to refute the charge that Repealers were all poor men who had nothing to lose from agitation.⁹⁸ The statement showed that one hundred car owners at the Baggot Street stand owned more than ten thousand pounds' worth of property, in vehicles, horses and harnesses; between them. Although this was not a great sum when divided among one hundred men, the men all had parliamentary votes, and believed that they were comfortably off.

Turning to the textile trades, Table 2.1 shows that there were forty men connected with this trade who were of sufficient standing to have their names recorded at the Association meetings. Like the other tradesmen, the majority were Catholics; only one was certainly a Protestant. Like them, most of these men were comparatively wealthy, although they too could complain of adverse circumstances affecting their trade. Men of all political persuasions agreed that since the Union the textile industries in Ireland had not flourished. At the end of the eighteenth century, many different textiles had been made in Ireland, and Dublin had been a major centre. Cotton, silk, muslin, tabinet, linen and wool textiles had all been manufactured in the city. But competition from England proved

⁹⁷ See Pilot, 20 April 1840.

⁹⁸ Undated document, probably 1842, in O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13624.

disastrous to most of these trades. Cotton production declined sharply after 1825,⁹⁹ when a slump in England led to dumping on the Irish market. The manufacture of muslin was declining in the forties.¹⁰⁰ Silk weaving was greatly reduced, and became confined to the capital, with silk workers suffering particular hardships in the depression of 1839-42. A small amount of tabinet (poplin) was still made in the city, and the woollen industry continued, although in a diminished degree. In the Liberties, the areas where the textile industry had formerly flourished, there was considerable poverty and overcrowding in the early forties. Dublin suffered in much the same way as the West Country textile areas of England and other districts where small scale, mainly domestic industry failed to compete with the more efficient production of the north of England. Manufacturers in general claimed that they were hampered by the poor credit facilities provided by the banks, and found it hard to compete with English firms which advanced goods on credit to Irish traders.¹⁰¹ Skilled labour, required at certain levels in the textile industries, was dearer than in England, mainly because it was scarcer. These were the main problems facing the textile industries in Dublin. They were caused not so much by legislative barriers as by weaknesses in the Irish market: for example, consumption of wool per head in Ireland was only one-fifth of similar consumption in England.¹⁰²

In 1840, several of the leading manufacturers in Dublin joined the movement for the exclusive sale of Irish-manufactured goods, in an attempt to give work to the starving textile workers, and of course, to help their

99 Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland, pp. 85-6.

100 Ibid., p. 86.

101 Turgot, The Impediments, pp. 19-20.

102 Letter from William Willans to the Drummond Commission, 24 May 1838, in P.P. 1837-8, XXXV, 469-863 (Second Report of the Commissioners appointed to consider and recommend a General System of Railways for Ireland), Appendix A, No. 8, pp. 725-6.

own businesses. This movement evoked great interest in Dublin. Prominent among those manufacturers involved was Luke Dillon, junior, of the firm which produced Irish woollen cloth, who also became an active supporter of O'Connell and the Repeal Association. O'Connell realised the great support which existed for the 'Irish Manufacture' movement, and began to attend the meetings of the Board of Trade himself, and a promise was made of funds from the Repeal Association.¹⁰³ He won the temporary gratitude of the artisans, and also of some manufacturers, although it is difficult to see that anything he did was of much value to the movement. The promised funds, for instance, never materialised. But his support for the movement was another source of gratitude for these men, whose religion and position in society would provide good reasons for supporting him in any case. The leading members of the Association frequently exhorted their followers to buy only Irish goods, and O'Connell himself boasted that he wore none but Irish cloth.¹⁰⁴ Several men benefited directly from the link with Repeal, notably Thomas Arkins, a merchant tailor, one of the most ardent supporters of O'Connell. He made the robes which O'Connell wore as Lord Mayor of Dublin, and almost certainly had more business put in his way because of his connection with Repeal. It is notable that all the cloth merchants and manufacturers who joined the Repeal movement dealt in Irish cloth of some type, even though some also dealt in imported English materials.¹⁰⁵

In attempting to assess the importance of economic grievances in leading these middle class Dublin tradesmen to support Repeal, there are several factors to be borne in mind. Most of the trades we have discussed did have certain practical grievances. Many tradesmen claimed that the

103 F.J., 15 March 1842. Loans were promised by Ray, the Association's secretary.

104 At a meeting of the Repeal Board of Trade, O'Connell spoke of his determination to see that no newly elected town councillor should take his seat on the Corporation unless he supported Irish manufactures: F.J., 24 September 1841.

105 It is clear from some of the reports of the debates at the Board of Trade that some merchants were not very scrupulous about selling only Irish cloth. See Fr Flanagan's speech at a meeting of the Board, F.J., 11 March 1841.

Union had caused economic decline in Ireland. Yet this did not prevent many of these men from making a very comfortable living. Nor did the tradesmen attempt to push the Association into taking up their grievances. Instead, they tended to take legal steps to improve their conditions, appealing to the House of Lords, to Dublin Castle,¹⁰⁶ and other institutions, all mechanisms of the Union which they wished to see repealed. They did not seem to have felt that it was a hopeless matter to try to improve conditions under the existing political arrangements.

It can also be argued that these economic grievances must also have affected Protestant merchants, yet there is no evidence to suggest that they found them overwhelmingly burdensome. Catholics may have found them so, because they felt that they were already treated as second class citizens. This sense of inferiority was fed by such questions as the distribution of official patronage, and the reaction of the government to political trials, when Catholics were excluded, as far as possible, from the juries. This was seen by Catholics as a reflection on their loyalty, particularly by those to whom jury service was open.¹⁰⁷ At the time of the trials of O'Connell and his supporters for conspiracy in 1844, there was a great outburst of feeling when it became known that all the Catholics had been struck off the jury panel. In Dublin, where reaction came quickly, Timothy O'Brien, a Catholic merchant and Lord Mayor, was the first to put his name to a requisition for a meeting to petition the Queen on the subject of this insult to Catholics.¹⁰⁸ In 1848, the subject came up again, this time arousing still greater indignation, to judge by the very numerous

106 The grocers' correspondence with the government concerning changes in the laws regulating their trade are recorded in S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1841/Z 4580, C.S.O. R.P. 1844/Z 4318, Z 10974, O.P. 1845/ 208, C.S.O. R.P. 1846/Z 13242, and C.S.O. R.P. 1847/Z 1005.

107 The jury qualification was an income of £10 in lands or tenements, or lands and rents in Dublin city, or a £15 leasehold: see Archer & Dickinson, Town Clerks, to Dublin Castle (July 1844), S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1844/A 13894.

108 Nation, 13 January 1844.

signed petitions from Catholics protesting about the exclusion of Catholics from juries in the state trials of that year.¹⁰⁹ This was a matter which brought Catholics together, whether they were Old or Young Irelanders, nationalists or non-nationalists. Wealthy Catholics who had already acceded to positions of some status and dignity (such as Corporation posts) seemed to find this treatment particularly irksome, since their signatures appeared in many of these petitions, and they were prominent at meetings on the question.¹¹⁰ Perhaps their feelings about this treatment are best summed up by Town Councillor James Sheridan, an iron founder with a large business. At a meeting of the Dublin citizens to consider jury packing, held in May 1848, the report of his speech ran, 'He felt himself disgraced as a Catholic by the manner in which the government had acted with regard to the late state trials, and how could he support the government which had put that disgrace upon them and his co-religionists?'.¹¹¹

Apart from feeling that they were still treated as second class citizens, these Dublin merchants and tradesmen were members of the class most likely to be aware of their debt to O'Connell for winning Catholic Emancipation and for his efforts to win municipal reform. Dublin merchants had formed the core of support for O'Connell since the time of the Catholic Association,¹¹² and might therefore be expected to support his bid for Repeal. They frequently alluded to the debt which they felt they owed him. A typical reference to it was made by the Lord Mayor, Timothy O'Brien, merchant, in 1844, on the occasion of the release from prison of the leader and other Repealers found guilty of conspiracy. He said, 'Gentlemen, I will commence by congratulating you all on the liberation from captivity of the man to whom we are all indebted for our

109 See S.P.O. O.P. 1848/261 (Petitions): 1848.

110 Twelve town councillors and aldermen attended one such meeting: see Pilot, 24 May 1848.

111 Nation, 27 May 1848.

112 Wyse claims that Dublin merchants were the first members of the original Catholic Association in 1759: see Historical Sketch, Vol. I, pp. 62-5.

religious liberties (cheers), and to whom particularly I feel specially indebted for the high civic position I hold...'.¹¹³ To sum up the motives of these Catholic tradesmen for supporting Repeal, we may conclude that economic motives were only important because they had other grievances, relating to their political and social status, which made their economic difficulties harder to bear.

The role of these tradesmen in the Repeal movement was quite different from that of the professional men. While the lawyers played an important part in the committees of the Association, the tradesmen tended to be more active outside the Association. Several of them were members of the Dublin Corporation.¹¹⁴ In this capacity they were able to influence the public more directly, by attending ward meetings, and through other public duties in the capital. On the Corporation, they helped to bring Repeal to a wider audience, by the debates on the subject, and by the frequent petitions for Repeal which emanated from that body. At local meetings in Dublin, it was these tradesmen who moved resolutions calling for Repeal or for confidence in O'Connell. A much higher proportion of tradesmen than lawyers acted as Repeal Wardens: at least eighteen of the sixty-six grocers who came to the Association meetings were Repeal Wardens, but only seven of the sixty-one barristers. These tradesmen, then, came into more contact with the public, while the professional men were more prominent in the Association committees. The wealthier Dublin Catholic tradesmen thus represented a fund of support for Repeal which was of great value to the movement.

V. Newspaper Proprietors, Editors and Journalists

The number of men included in this category is small: only seven

¹¹³ Report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, Nation, 14 September 1844.

¹¹⁴ Among the grocers alone, twelve of the sixty-six included in this survey were Corporation members at some time during the years 1841-9.

were concerned with the press on a full-time basis,¹¹⁵ although many more of these Repealers combined journalism with another career (as in the case of Thomas Davis), or contributed the occasional article. Barristers in particular seemed able to combine two pursuits, probably because their professional business tended to be rather spasmodic. This group does include three reporters, members of the Association, who occasionally attended its meetings. Their role was more or less confined to reporting the Association's activities. More interesting are the four proprietors, who were also editors of their papers. They went to the public meetings of the Association, and also contributed to many of its activities, besides giving coverage and support to the movement in their papers. During the eighteen forties, between one quarter and one third of Irish newspapers were published in Dublin, and most Dublin papers enjoyed a much larger circulation than provincial ones. At the same time, the Dublin press reached high standards of reporting (particularly in the case of the Freeman's Journal), while the range of a paper like the Nation, with its articles on literature, art and history, went beyond the scope of most provincial newspapers.

Support in their papers was perhaps the most obvious way in which newspaper editors could aid the cause. Richard Barrett, a Protestant, editor of the Pilot, who had earlier been sent to prison for reporting O'Connell's speeches, continued to reproduce his letters, speeches and every communication with great devotion, although this did not prevent the circulation of the paper declining from the early thirties.¹¹⁶ Apart from these duties, Barrett attended well over seventy of the weekly public meetings of the Association, and twice took the chair. His role in the meetings, as in his paper, was confined mainly to supporting O'Connell's

115 See Table 2.1.

116 Inglis, The Freedom of the Press in Ireland, Appendix C, p. 233.

leadership and policy, whatever that might be. However, in the early years of the agitation, he took considerable interest in the 'Irish Manufacture' movement, and made some constructive suggestions as to how it could be conducted. But when the movement appeared to be drawing interest away from Repeal, he was quick to denounce this tendency. At a weekly meeting in December 1840, he denounced the 'delusion' that Ireland's ills could find relief in the mere demand for home manufactures, and asserted that he would not support the latter 'at the expense of our great political measure'.¹¹⁷ It may well be that Barrett was prompted by O'Connell to stress the primacy of Repeal and the relative unimportance of the Manufacture movement, which was at that time engrossing the attention of Repealers and some non-Repealers alike. His appeal did not make much impact on support for Repeal, but as a newspaper editor his words would carry weight, and his speech was reported at length in the Pilot. This paper, however, did not have a particularly high reputation; apart from its very faithful reproduction of O'Connell's policies, which could lead at times to inconsistencies, there were such unpleasant episodes as when Barrett reported that Archbishop Crolly, the Catholic primate, was mad.¹¹⁸

Doctor Gray, of the Freeman's Journal, another Protestant, also reported the proceedings of the Association and other Repeal activities in Dublin and in the provinces, in his newspaper. The Freeman's Journal was never quite so single-mindedly devoted to following all of O'Connell's policies as was the Pilot, but it had a higher reputation, and was frequently requested by local Repealers under the arrangement whereby any locality with a certain number of Repealers was entitled to receive a newspaper. The proprietor of the F.J. attended even more of the weekly public meetings than Barrett, over eighty in all. As a member of several of the committees, like Barrett, he made a more constructive contribution

¹¹⁷ Pilot, 16 December 1840.

¹¹⁸ See the comments on this in Nation, 4 October 1845.

to the Association. It was his idea to start a system of local courts,¹¹⁹ 'Arbitration courts', which could be used by the people as an alternative to the existing legal system which, it was claimed, was often expensive, and hostile to Catholics. The Arbitration courts, which were set up in considerable numbers, worked for several months before O'Connell decided that they were a danger to the Association, and broke the connection between them.¹²⁰ Before this occurred, Dr Gray was a prominent member of the Arbitration committee, read a report on the courts in October 1843,¹²¹ and personally acted as chairman of the Blackrock Arbitration court and as an Arbitrator for the Kingstown court.¹²² The other Arbitrators were mainly barristers. As late as November 1844, O'Connell wrote to Dr Gray on the subject of reopening the courts,¹²³ which had broken down when the link with the Association was cut. Nothing came of this, and the question of popular law courts was left to be taken up by later Irish nationalists. After the newspaper editors resigned from the Association in 1844, following the state trials, Dr Gray continued to support the Repeal movement, although his attempt to remain neutral in the quarrel between O'Connell and the Young Irelanders pleased neither side.¹²⁴

Michael Staunton,¹²⁵ the Catholic proprietor of the Morning Register, was another Repealer who both supported the Repeal cause in his paper (though, like Dr Gray, retaining a certain degree of independence) and took an active part in the activities of the Association. He attended fewer of the public meetings than Barrett or Dr Gray, but worked on the committees,

119 Nation, 22 July 1843.

120 Nation, 24 February 1844.

121 Nation, 7 October 1843.

122 Nation, 14 October 1843.

123 Nation, 16 November 1844.

124 For failing to adopt a partisan attitude, the F.J. was abused by both sides in the Old/Young Ireland controversy: see the editorial in Pilot, 12 July 1847; also Nation, 24 July 1847.

125 Inglis credits Staunton with pioneering a new stage in the growth of press freedom in Ireland: see The Freedom of the Press in Ireland, p. 227.

where his statistical knowledge was very useful when reports were to be drawn up concerning Ireland's economic condition.

The editor best known for his contribution to the Repeal cause at this time is Charles Gavan Duffy, who edited the Nation, aided by Thomas Davis and John Blake Dillon. Apart from his writings in the Nation, Duffy also played a practical role in the Repeal activities in the Dublin area. He acted as an Arbitrator for Rathmines,¹²⁶ the Dublin suburb where he lived, and also acted on several committees of the Association, attending nearly forty of the weekly public meetings. Through him and Dr Gray, large sums of money were remitted to the Association, and lesser amounts through Barrett. Repeal Rent was still sent through these channels even when the editors resigned from the Association in 1844.

All these editors save Barrett gained seats on the reformed Dublin Corporation, where they also helped further the Repeal cause, although Duffy attended the Corporation meetings only rarely.

What motives did newspaper editors have for supporting Repeal? In this connection it is important to remember that Repeal was a popular cause. It could be profitable to report Repeal activities. Barrett, for instance, displayed considerable jealousy when the circulation of the Nation soared above that of the Pilot.¹²⁷ However, the Nation adopted an independent line from the first, and it is difficult to believe that Duffy was more concerned with financial remuneration than with spreading the new nationalism. In view of the independent stands taken on several issues by Dr Gray in the F.J.¹²⁸ and by Staunton in the Register, it seems likely that they too were interested in other things besides remuneration. Indeed, their active

¹²⁶ Nation, 28 October 1843.

¹²⁷ Note Barrett's attacks on Duffy in his History of the Irish Confederation. Dublin, 1849, pp. 13-14 and 19.

¹²⁸ A good example is the line taken by the F.J. over the Dungarvan election, when O'Connell refused to put up a candidate to oppose the return of R. L. Sheil. 'We do believe... that it would have been in the power of the Repeal Association to have defeated the ministerial candidate': F.J. editorial, 15 July 1846.

roles within the Repeal Association suggests that the financial motive was not predominant, except possibly for Barrett. In the cases of Duffy and Dr Gray, who both had professional qualifications, it seems more likely that they shared the awareness displayed by other professional men of Irish institutions, and wished to communicate their views.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to analyse the support for Repeal from the comfortably-situated middle classes in Dublin. Certain groups, such as professional men, made their most important contribution by working within the Association itself, acting on its committees, and contributing to the reports. They also helped by promoting the registration of voters. They appear to have been attracted to Repeal largely because of their regard for Irish institutions (such as the legal system), which some lawyers felt were being undermined by policies of reform and by the government's use of patronage. The appointment of non-Irishmen to the top judicial posts in Ireland struck at Irish lawyers' status and career prospects. Protestants and Catholics alike shared these apprehensions, although it was difficult for many Protestants to overcome their distrust and suspicion of O'Connell (who was closely identified with Whig reforming policies) and join the Repeal Association.

It is widely recognised that the Catholic clergy played a most important part in the Repeal movement.¹²⁹ While this is undoubtedly true for the rural areas, their role in Dublin was by no means prominent, either in the Association, or in terms of organisation. This may have been partly the result of Dr Murray's hostility to clerical participation in politics, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the much greater availability of laymen in Dublin to take a leading part in politics meant that the clergy had little need to play a prominent role. Their increased attendance at

129 Broderick, The Holy See, pp. 157-9, 211-13.

Association meetings just after the Young Ireland secession, revealed their strong support for O'Connell and his methods, and their hostility to the Young Irelanders.

Nearly half the men dealt with in this survey were tradesmen and and merchants, and if we include men of property (many of whom had risen through trade), then a very important proportion of these substantial middle-class Repealers had some connection with trade.¹³⁰ We noted that there was a widespread belief in Dublin that the Union had harmed Irish trade and industry. Clearly, Dublin had some cause to regret the passing of an Irish parliament, which had been situated in the capital and had provided many trades with business. Certain trades faced particular difficulties. Yet we have seen that Repealers could and did carry on their businesses with success, despite the lack of an Irish parliament. The fact that some of the most steadfast Repealers were negotiating with the government for an improvement in the conditions of their trade suggests that these men did not feel that their business prospects were hopeless under the Union. Indeed, the considerable wealth and property of many middle-class Dublin Repealers suggests that they may have had more in common, in economic terms, with the rest of the United Kingdom than with impoverished rural Ireland. It also seems significant that very few Protestant merchants were Repealers, which suggests that they did not find the Union a grave obstacle to successful trade.

We may draw the conclusion, therefore, that these tradesmen's support for Repeal was not based primarily on economic factors. Their nationalism was closely bound up with their religion. They had cooperated with O'Connell to win Catholic Emancipation and municipal reform, and they had benefited from those reforms. But they were aware that for all the tentative efforts of the government, much power and status remained with

¹³⁰ The figure is 269 out of 509.

the Protestant minority. To a considerable extent, the campaign for Repeal can be seen as one more step in the advance of Catholics to a fuller share in the running of the country.

O'Connell's associations had always received steadfast support from Dubliners, probably because the capital contained many men who were well educated and politically aware. Repeal was not a new cause for Dubliners in 1840. They had supported O'Connell's attempts to raise the question in the early thirties, and it seems that some had regretted the fact that after 1834 Repeal was temporarily dropped. To illustrate the strength of this support for Repeal, we can quote from the letter of Miles Tobyn, grocer, Repealer, and town councillor.¹³¹ He was to attend over thirty of the Association's regular weekly meetings during the decade. His letter was written in August 1840, a few months after the Association was founded. He enclosed his subscription and those of twenty associate members, indicating that he was already working for the cause. He wrote that the proof of Dubliners' 'unbounded and implicit confidence' in O'Connell lay in 'our late acquiescence in the temporary abandonment of a measure which we have always identified with the best and dearest interests of our country... we utterly deny that anything short of Repeal can ever do justice to Ireland'.

It is apparent, therefore, that there were several different motives leading these Dubliners to support Repeal, even though we are concerned here only with the substantial middle classes. Some lawyers were likely to join the Association for quite different reasons from merchants and men of property. They were able to agree on the principal aim, Repeal, but beyond that it should not seem surprising that there were many disagreements in the Association over particular policies. More remarkable, perhaps, is the fact that men with such different outlooks were able to cooperate at all.

¹³¹ Pilot, 14 August 1840.

TABLE 2.1* ATTENDERS AT REPEAL ASSOCIATION PUBLIC MEETINGS, 1840-49:
BY RESIDENCE AND OCCUPATION

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Place of residence</u>			
	<u>Dublin City & County</u>		<u>Dublin City only</u>	
	(n)	%	(n)	%
Landed gentry	3	0.6	1	0.3
Men of property	38	7.5	23	5.9
Retired army officers	4	0.8	0	-
Clergymen	38	7.5	33	8.5
Barristers	61	11.9	48	12.4
Solicitors, Attorneys	31	6.1	31	7.9
Medical profession	16	3.1	15	3.9
Students	5	0.9	4	1.0
Grocers	66	12.9	63	16.2
Provision trade	30	5.9	24	6.2
Brewers	4	0.8	4	1.0
Clothing trade	40	7.9	37	9.5
Other trades	91	17.9	85	21.9
Newspaper proprietors, editors and publishers	7	1.4	4	1.0
Clerks, schoolteachers	7	1.4	6	1.5
Agents	6	1.2	5	1.3
Operatives	16	3.1	1	0.5
Unknown	46	9.0	4	1.0
Totals	509	99.9	388	99.8

Identified City residents: 388

Identified County residents: 48

Precise residence (within
City & County) unidentified 73

* Tables 2.1-2.4 were compiled from information published in the Pilot, the Nation, and the Freeman's Journal, in conjunction with Thom's Irish Almanac (1844-50) and The Dublin Almanac and General Register (1841).

TABLE 2.2 ATTENDERS AT REPEAL ASSOCIATION PUBLIC MEETINGS, 1840-49:
BY RELIGION AND OCCUPATION (DUBLIN CITY RESIDENTS)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Religion</u>					
	<u>Catholic</u>		<u>Protestant</u>		<u>Unidentified</u>	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Landed gentry	0	-	0	-	1	100.0
Men of property	5	21.7	2	8.7	16	69.6
Retired army officers	0	-	0	-	0	-
Clergymen	32	96.9	1	3.0	0	-
Barristers	18	37.5	3	6.3	27	56.3
Solicitors, Attorneys	5	16.1	1	3.2	25	80.6
Medical profession	3	20.0	0	-	12	80.0
Students	2	50.0	0	-	2	50.0
Grocers	15	23.8	0	-	48	76.2
Provision trade	5	20.8	1	4.2	18	75.0
Brewers	2	50.0	0	-	2	50.0
Clothing trade	11	29.7	1	2.7	25	67.6
Other trades	26	30.6	0	-	59	69.4
Newspaper proprietors, editors and publishers	1	25.0	2	50.0	1	25.0
Clerks, schoolteachers	3	50.0	0	-	3	50.0
Agents	0	-	0	-	5	100.0
Operatives	0	-	0	-	1	100.0
Unknown	0	-	0	-	4	100.0
Totals	128		11		249	

TABLE 2.3 ATTENDERS AT REPEAL ASSOCIATION PUBLIC MEETINGS, 1840-49:
DUBLIN CITY AND COUNTY RESIDENTS BY OCCUPATION AND NUMBER
OF MEETINGS ATTENDED

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number of meetings attended</u>					
	<u>One only</u>		<u>2 - 20</u>		<u>Over 20</u>	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Landed gentry	0	-	0	-	3	100.0
Men of property	14	36.8	17	44.7	7	18.4
Retired army officers	1	25.0	3	75.0	0	--
Clergymen	12	31.6	19	50.0	7	18.4
Barristers	13	21.3	29	47.6	19	31.1
Solicitors, Attorneys	4	12.9	25	80.6	2	6.5
Medical profession	7	43.8	6	37.5	3	18.8
Students	1	20.0	3	60.0	1	20.0
Grocers	31	46.9	24	36.4	11	16.7
Provision trade	10	33.3	15	50.0	5	16.7
Brewers	0	-	4	100.0	0	-
Clothing trade	11	27.5	20	50.0	9	22.5
Other trades	29	31.9	50	54.9	12	13.2
Newspaper proprietors, editors and publishers	1	14.3	3	42.9	3	42.9
Clerks, schoolteachers	0	--	5	71.4	2	28.6
Agents	2	33.3	4	66.7	0	-
Operatives	9	56.3	7	43.8	0	--
Unknown	28	60.9	17	36.9	1	2.2
Totals	<u>173</u>		<u>251</u>		<u>85</u>	

TABLE 2.4* DUBLIN CITY CLERGY: ATTENDANCE AT REPEAL ASSOCIATION PUBLIC MEETINGS, 1840-49

<u>Name and Status</u>	<u>Meetings attended</u>	<u>Name and Order</u>	<u>Meetings attended</u>
Rev. G. Canavan P.P.	8	Rev. Brown Franciscan	51
Rev. M. Flanagan "	1	Rev. Duggan Capuchin	1
Rev. O'Carroll Curate	1	Rev. Hanley "	1
Rev. Burke "	1	Rev. Finnegan Carmelite	8
Rev. Doran "	3	(discalced)	
Rev. Ennis "	1	Rev. O'Hanlon " (")	6
Rev. James Gilligan "	34	V. Rev. Dr Spratt " (calced)	1
Rev. Hickey "	2	Rev. O'Connor Augustinian	6
Rev. Kelly "	10	Rev. Toomey "	1
Rev. Keogh "	1	Rev. Walsh "	36
Rev. Maher "	2	Rev. White Prior, Dominicans	2
Rev. Meehan "	1	Rev. O'Malley Convent chaplain	3
Rev. Dr Miley " (and Prebendary)	4	Rev. M'Donald Jesuit	4
		Total	120
Rev. Dr Murphy Curate	55		
Rev. O'Keefe "	2	Average attendance: 10.0	
Rev. Sheppard "	1		
Rev. Smyth "	20		
Rev. Wood "	1		
Rev. Sheridan, Prebendary	3		
Total	151		

Average attendance: 7.9

*This Table excludes two of the clergymen who lived in Dublin and attended Repeal Association meetings: the Reverend Edward Groves, a Protestant clergyman, and the Reverend Mr Hopkins, who frequently attended meetings, but apparently held no office in Dublin.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ORGANISATION OF THE REPEAL MOVEMENT IN DUBLIN

The response in most parts of Ireland to the Repeal movement before 1843 was very local. Remittances, if sent at all, were spasmodic, and depended on the efforts of one or two dedicated local supporters. By contrast, Dublin displayed strong support for the movement, only a few months after it began. Not only the substantial middle class, whose support we noted in the last chapter, but the lower classes too attended Repeal meetings, and gave considerable sums to the Association before the end of 1840.

In this chapter we shall examine the nature of the support for Repeal from the lower classes, particularly during the period 1840-41. This support was so strong that it is not surprising that O'Connell placed great emphasis on establishing a widespread and well-disciplined Repeal organisation in the capital, which he hoped would set an example to the provinces. The key figures in the organisation in Dublin were the Repeal Wardens, appointed by the Association as its local agents. In the rural parts of Ireland, much of the work of organising popular support for Repeal was undertaken by the Catholic clergy; in Dublin, the work was done almost entirely by the Repeal Wardens.

Having considered the role of the Wardens in the organisation of Dublin, from 1841 to 1846, we will look at the social background of the Wardens, and their reaction to the Young Ireland secession from the Association. Finally, the last section will examine some characteristics of Repealers in general in the capital, in particular their numbers and the question of their religion.

I. In contrast to the rest of the country, Dublin provided considerable support for Repeal, in terms of both funds and membership, during the first eighteen months of the renewed agitation for Repeal. This support was the more striking because O'Connell's own work for Repeal during this period was erratic. Until the summer of 1841 he was still cooperating with the Whigs,¹ who fell from office in July. He was often absent from Dublin, leaving his son John in control of the Association,² which he seemed to regard as taking second place to his parliamentary activities. Yet, as we shall see, by the end of 1840 alone, Dublin had contributed several hundred pounds to the Association and enrolled a substantial number of members and associate members. Most of the money came not from the upper-middle classes, but from tradesmen and artisans. A detailed study has already been made of the artisans' reaction to the Repeal agitation.³ For our purposes, it will be useful to review the artisans' attitude to Repeal, and then try to assess their role, and that of the National Trades Political Union, in the early support for Repeal.

It seems certain that from the early thirties, the Dublin trades unions, whose members were not the ordinary unskilled workers, but skilled artisans, were sincere advocates of Repeal.⁴ The trades unions saw Repeal as an extension of their activity to improve wages and their economic prospects.⁵ They looked back to the pre-Union days as a Utopia, where the economy had flourished under the care of the Irish parliament. In

1 McDowell, Public Opinion and Government Policy, p. 176.

2 O'Connell to John O'Connell, 6 September 1840, cited in John O'Connell, Recollections and Experiences During a Parliamentary Career from 1833 to 1848, 2 vols., London, 1849, Vol. I, pp. 320-21.

3 D'Arcy, 'The Artisans of Dublin'. Also, F. A. D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, Opinion and Organisation, 1820-50, unpublished M.A. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1968, pp. 67-9.

4 D'Arcy, 'The Artisans of Dublin', pp. 221-7.

5 Ibid., p. 222.

fact, it is very doubtful whether the Union in itself had had the disastrous effect on trade and industry which some of its critics claimed.⁶ Dublin bore a strong resemblance to many other towns and cities in the United Kingdom which had not profited from an industrial revolution; they faced similar problems, with a surplus of workers in uncompetitive, pre-industrial trades. But in Dublin the luxury trades which had catered for the gentry in the days before the Union could complain with some justice that the Union had harmed their trades. The belief, then, that Repeal of the Union was necessary to ensure economic prosperity was strong among the skilled tradesmen. The Trades Political Union, formed originally in 1830 in Dublin, had one particular aim: Repeal, which it was hoped would lead to an improvement in wages and conditions.⁷ The link between these two questions was to have considerable significance for the Repeal movement in the early forties.

It is unnecessary here to enter into the complex relationship between O'Connell, the T.P.U. (which became the National Trades Political Union in 1831), and the artisans, during the eighteen thirties.⁸ We should note, however, that the N.T.P.U. quickly became dominated by substantial middle-class men: lawyers, businessmen and newspaper editors.⁹ It has been claimed that it also became the mouthpiece of O'Connell.¹⁰ While this may have been true in several circumstances, it will be seen that in 1840-41 several of the prominent N.P.T.U. leaders, including Thomas Reynolds (man of property), Thomas Arkins (master tailor), and Thomas Mooney (ironmonger), all fairly wealthy men, were by no means uncritical

6 See Cullen, 'Irish Economic History: Fact and Myth', p. 113.

7 D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, pp. 38-9.

8 See D'Arcy, 'The Artisans of Dublin', pp. 227-39.

9 Ibid., p. 224.

10 Ibid.; see also D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, Appendix 5, p. xxxvii.

followers of O'Connell. Indeed, it appears that on many occasions in those years they displayed stronger sympathy for the tradesmen than for O'Connell.¹¹

In 1839, some months before the Repeal Association was formed, the N.T.P.U. was clamouring for Repeal,¹² although O'Connell was still working with the Whigs. This suggests that in spite of its middle-class leadership, that body shared the artisans' convictions that Repeal was more important than reforms. When the Association was formed in April 1840, the N.T.P.U. suspended its meetings, in view of the fact that a body pledged to seek Repeal was in existence. All its members were urged to join the Association.¹³ Several Dublin parishes began to hold meetings on the subject of Repeal in July 1840. At these meetings, men like Mooney and Arkins, connected with the N.T.P.U., were prominent among those who spoke in favour of Repeal.¹⁴ They made it clear that their support for Repeal was based on the economic and social state of Dublin. In August, at a meeting of the Association, Mooney handed in ten pounds from the poor parish of St Nicholas Without, and remarked that he had lived in the parish for twenty years. He claimed, 'it is my settled and fixed opinion, that nothing can restore the trade of this country, or of this city, but the restoration of the Irish parliament (cheers)'. He went on, 'There are upwards of four hundred pauper houses in the parish;... wherever we turn, distress and decay meet us'.¹⁵ The following week, looking

11 It might be argued that in supporting the 'Irish Manufacture' movement men like Arkins and Mooney were acting in their own interests, since they both sold Irish goods. This argument does not apply to Reynolds, however, and it is difficult to see O'Connell's influence behind their efforts for the movement.

12 F.J., 4 September 1839.

13 Pilot, 20 May 1840.

14 Ibid., 29 July 1840 (St Michan's parish meeting); F.J., 24 August 1840 (SS Luke's, Nicholas Without, and the Liberties).

15 Pilot, 19 August 1840.

round the audience at the Corn Exchange, he declared that the people he saw on the benches wanted real work, not Castle employment, and he read at great length details of the grants made to Irish manufacturers by the Irish parliament in the eighteenth century.¹⁶

The poverty and unemployment to which Mooney was referring were symptoms of the severe economic depression which affected Dublin, along with the rest of the United Kingdom, from about 1839 to 1842. Mooney's parish, St Nicholas Without, lay in the notorious Liberties, where hand-loom weavers and other textile workers lived in very overcrowded conditions.¹⁷ The distress and hardship caused by the depression induced a number of operatives to meet in October 1840, to consider remedial measures. This meeting led to the formation of a Board of Trade, which was to encourage the production and use of Irish-made goods.¹⁸ The 'Irish Manufacture' movement, as it was popularly known, represented an attempt on the part of the operatives to improve their situation by purely economic means.¹⁹ Politics were to be excluded from the Board, which did attract support from many different classes and shades of opinion, and from the press.²⁰

The Irish Manufacture movement made a great impact on Dublin, probably because it represented an immediate attempt to improve the economic situation, and not a rather remote one like Repeal. The Pilot reported that not less than three thousand people from all classes had turned up to the parish meeting to support the movement, held in St Nicholas Without in November 1840.²¹ The Catholic church wardens of

16 Pilot, 26 August 1840.

17 Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland, p. 160.

18 Pilot, 23 October 1840. An account of the origins and early work of the Board of Trade is contained in Report of the Irish Board of Trade, for the Revival and Encouragement of Irish Manufactures, Dublin, 1840.

19 D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, pp. 79-80.

20 The Dublin press kept up an interest until about the spring of 1842.

21 Pilot, 4 November 1840.

the parish, all men of substance, who later became members of the Corporation, presided over the meeting, and Father Matthew Flanagan, the President of the Board, announced that shopkeepers and operatives had agreed to furnish Irish-made goods of high quality at low prices. The audience was urged to buy Irish goods, and revive Ireland's 'ancient prosperity'. The movement attracted so much attention and became so popular that even the Pilot, which was usually the organ of O'Connell, declared that 'Irish Manufacture is the pivot on which Repeal can be worked'.²²

Although the Board of Trade was non-political, it proved an easy matter for O'Connell to channel the enthusiasm it evoked into support for Repeal, in the summer of 1841. As we have seen, supporters of the Irish Manufacture movement tended to believe that Ireland had prospered before the Union had been established. The artisans had believed in the value of Repeal for over a decade. They might welcome the moves to help the various industries of Dublin in practical ways, but the two questions of Repeal and prosperity were so clearly linked in their minds that even when the Irish Manufacture movement was at its height, they gave considerable financial support to the Repeal Association. The evidence suggests, therefore, that Repeal won support among the artisans and lower-middle class tradesmen of Dublin in 1840-41, because they believed that the return of an Irish parliament was an essential factor in the improvement of trade and industry in the capital. It is true that O'Connell and many of his influential middle-class followers stressed that only Repeal would help Irish industry, but some of these followers also played an important part in the non-political Irish Manufacture movement, and as we have seen, the tradesmen had long held the belief that Repeal was necessary to stimulate Dublin's economy.

²² Pilot, 19 October 1840.

The deep conviction held by the artisans on the question of Repeal is displayed in an address to O'Connell drawn up by the operative bakers at the time of the defeat of Stanley's Registration Bill. The address was read at a meeting of the Repeal Association in July 1840, and its words reveal a consciousness of the importance of Repeal, and also of O'Connell's vacillating policy. 'We implore you,' it ran, 'to banish from your mind all idea of seeking justice from a British parliament. We implore you to look at our decaying streets, - our declining employers our unemployed fellow tradesmen, and their starving families....' Rejecting the panacea of emigration, the bakers went on to outline the scarcity of employment, the low rate of wages, the high price of provisions, and claimed, 'We attribute this frightful state of things to the want of a local parliament; and as a means of saving us from the horrors of a bloody revolution, we call on you, in the name of the living God, to aid us in obtaining for our native country her parliament and her prosperity'.²³ These were strong words, but not untypical of other such addresses. By the end of 1840 two tradesmen had become Volunteers, and the Dublin tradesmen had contributed over three hundred pounds to the Association's funds.²⁴ Forty-eight different Dublin trades had subscribed to the funds, with amounts varying from nine shillings from the pipe makers to £37 12s 6d from the boot and shoe makers.²⁵ This indicates the early and widespread support for Repeal amongst the skilled artisans who participated in the trades unions.

Outside the narrow bounds of the trades unions, the poorer Dublin parishes displayed a similar reaction to the Repeal agitation. In July and August 1840, meetings were held in several Dublin parishes and in some

²³ Pilot, 15 July 1840.

²⁴ D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, p. 68.

²⁵ R.A. accounts, 15 April - 31 December 1840, in F.J., 12 January 1841.

suburbs such as Rathmines, to adopt measures to help bring about Repeal.²⁶ These parish meetings were in the tradition of local meetings called when any major question was in the air. At some, collectors of Repeal Rent were appointed, as at the St Catherine's meeting.²⁷ This relatively poor parish was one of the earliest to contribute to the Repeal funds, sending £27 11s 6d at the beginning of August.²⁸ Moreover, by that time, eleven associate members from that parish had become full members. The other parishes which were particularly active in these early months were St Michan's, St Paul's, St Mary's, St George's, St Anne's, and St Nicholas Without, in the Liberties.²⁹ With the exception of St Anne's, all these parishes lay in the poorer areas of the city. St Nicholas Without and the Liberties were particularly badly affected by the depression of 1839-42. The basis for the early support for Repeal from these poor areas of the city is indicated in a letter to the Association from the parishioners of St Catherine's. Alluding to the great depression in the parish, the letter went on to say that their subscription of nearly thirty pounds was evidence of their strong conviction 'that the future happiness and prosperity of Ireland depend solely on the attainment of a resident legislature for Ireland, to redress the many evils which have inevitably ensued from the miscalled Union'.³⁰ Here was another expression of the belief that the Union was at the heart of Dublin's economic problems.

In the last chapter, we saw that among the wealthier middle class Catholics, many claimed that trade was suffering under the Union. Yet, since they had managed to make a comfortable living, it was concluded that economic factors were not the most important ones leading them to support

26 F.J., 3, 13, 22 July, 17, 24, 26 August, 1840.

27 F.J., 22 July 1840.

28 Pilot, 3 August 1840.

29 Pilot, 29 July, 12, 17, 31 August, 1840; F.J., 26 August 1840.

30 Letter to the secretary of the R.A., signed Thomas Leech, St Catherine's parish, Pilot, 3 August 1840.

Repeal. Further down the social scale, it is clear that the artisans, together with many of the poorer Catholics of Dublin, held very strong convictions about the harmful impact of the Union on Irish trade. Moreover, the economic depression affecting Dublin in 1840-42 meant that their economic problems were more pressing.

Once again, however, it seems that few Protestants among these classes drew the same conclusions about the necessity for Repeal. There is evidence to show that many Protestant operatives took part in the Irish Manufacture movement,³¹ but comparatively few joined the Repeal Association.³² This suggests that the economic motive was not the only basis for the support which the Dublin artisans gave to Repeal. The Board of Trade (which from the summer of 1841 came more and more under the control of the Repeal Association) occasionally affirmed such beliefs as that Irish trade was being attacked by the 'Saxons',³³ and that the Irish had been degraded and tricked into a preference for English goods.³⁴ Such sentiments indicate a basis for nationalism which went beyond a straightforward economic motive.

II. We now come to consider Dublin's financial contribution to the Repeal movement, particularly in the early years of the agitation. While Dublin had always been the centre for the national movement, her contributions

31 At one stage, the Operative Board of Trade had a Protestant silk weaver, named Farrell, as its secretary. He was accused of reserving employment for Protestant operatives: F.J., 16 July 1841. He resigned soon afterwards, and a new secretary was appointed: F.J., 13 August 1841. Fr Flanagan praised the Irish Manufacture movement for the cooperation between men of all creeds, which had characterised it: F.J., 1 July 1841. From August 1841 onwards, however, when the Board of Trade was brought firmly into the Repeal movement, the evidence suggests that Protestant participation declined.

32 See pp. 122-3 below.

33 Nation, 22 April 1843: Meeting of the Repeal Board of Trade.

34 F.J., 8 March 1842: Meeting of the Repeal Board of Trade.

to its funds had not been particularly striking. In the period up to the suppression of the Catholic Association in 1825, County Cork (including Cork city) sent a larger amount to the Catholic Rent than did County Dublin (including Dublin city): £2,825 and £1,953 respectively; while County Tipperary, a comparatively rural county, sent in almost as much as Dublin, with £1,648.³⁵ The Repeal agitation of 1840, however, marked a new stage in Dublin's contribution to the national funds. By the end of that year, at least sixteen of the Dublin parishes had sent a contribution to the Repeal Rent,³⁶ and individual collectors were at work in ten of them. The Dublin parishes sent a total of £349 6s 3d, while the Dublin trades sent £342 12s 10d. A further £56 3s 6d was collected in one-shilling subscriptions at the door when the weekly meetings were held. The bulk of this sum probably came from Dubliners, as did most of the £649 which came in the form of members' one pound subscriptions. County Dublin too subscribed £323 18s 0d in that year.

The total Repeal Rent sent in from Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom, and the United States in 1840 amounted to £2,688 5s 10d. Of that amount, the Dublin parishes, trades and one-shilling subscribers alone had contributed £748. If we add the Dublin county contribution, and omit the one-pound members' subscriptions, this means that it was mainly lower-middle and working class people who had contributed a sum of about one thousand pounds. These figures reveal the importance of Dublin's contribution to the Repeal Rent in 1840, and the appeal which the movement had to the lower classes in the capital. We can compare their contribution with the total of £35 sent in from Cork city and county; £42 12s 0d from Waterford city and county; and £69 from Limerick city and

35 Wyse, Historical Sketch, Vol. II, Appendix, pp. colxx-colxxi. The date given by Wyse (1826) seems to be mistaken: see Reynolds, The Catholic Emancipation Crisis, p. 62.

36 Figures for 1840 are from accounts published in F.J., 12 January 1841.

county.³⁷ The Association accounts for 1840 also reveal the wide regional variations in financial support for Repeal; for instance, the province of Leinster alone provided seventy-eight per cent of the subscriptions from Ireland (again excluding members' subscriptions), while the province of Ulster sent in just two guineas.

However, in 1840, the Repeal movement had hardly had time to spread out of the capital, so it was perhaps natural that Dublin should supply such a high proportion of the funds. Certainly, as the Rent from other parts of Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom, and America increased, the proportion from Dublin became smaller. In the first three months of 1841, Dublin Repeal Wardens collected about seventy-five pounds from the Dublin wards and trades,³⁸ which amounted to about one-tenth of all the Rent sent in during that period. In 1842, the Dublin wards alone contributed over five hundred pounds to the Rent,³⁹ almost one-eleventh of the whole. In the following year, when the overall Rent rose spectacularly from £3,950 in 1842 to £49,691,⁴⁰ Dublin again contributed one-tenth of this huge sum, and in 1844 Dublin's contribution was about one-eighth of that year's total, which was £43,884.⁴¹ The figure for 1845 was again about one-tenth. After that year, the Rent began to fall considerably, and since the Repeal press stopped recording the remittances in detail, it is difficult to judge the size of Dublin's contribution. It seems likely, however, that this contribution remained important.

After the first flush of enthusiasm in 1840, then, Dublin's

³⁷ Of this sum, £67 9s 0d was contributed by the Limerick trades.

³⁸ F.J., 16 April 1841.

³⁹ F.J., 5 November 1842.

⁴⁰ Overall figures for the Repeal Rent are based partly on figures in Macintyre, The Liberator, p. 121, and partly on accounts published weekly in the F.J. and Pilot.

⁴¹ Nation, 5 October 1844. London gave the large sum of £1,830 in that year.

contribution to the Repeal Rent settled down at very roughly one-tenth of the total in most years, still a very considerable proportion. Dublin also gave generously to the O'Connell Tribute: about £1,400 in 1840, £2,000 in 1841⁴² and 1842, and over £4,000 (one-fifth of the total) in 1843.⁴³ All these figures indicate one reason why the leaders were so concerned to have Dublin well organised. It is important, too, to bear in mind that much of the money contributed to the Association from the capital came in very small sums, of one shilling or less. For instance, between April and July 1840, 1,599 persons in Dublin and its suburbs made contributions of less than one pound: only 116 made contributions of one pound and over.⁴⁴ In May 1845, a Warden collected £1 14s 0d in pence in one Dublin ward,⁴⁵ and in January of that year, Mr Nugent of Kingstown, County Dublin, handed in two guineas from five hundred penny-a-week subscribers in his district.⁴⁶ Indeed, the leaders were anxious to stress that the regular weekly collection of very small amounts was the target for Wardens to aim at, rather than erratic contributions of larger sums.⁴⁷

At the meetings held from time to time to encourage the organisation in Dublin, the leaders invariably stressed that Dublin, above all, would benefit from the restoration of an Irish parliament. The report on the weekly collection of the Repeal Rent in Dublin, issued in November 1844, claimed 'Dublin is, of course, the head-quarters of the agitation - it is the place likely to feel the beneficial effects of a Domestic legislature earliest'.⁴⁸ The report explained that the return of the Irish peers and

⁴² F.J., 22 November 1841

⁴³ F.J., 20 November 1843; Broderick, The Holy See, p. 62.

⁴⁴ Pilot, 24 July 1840.

⁴⁵ Nation, 24 May 1845.

⁴⁶ Pilot, 15 January 1845.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 8 January 1845.

⁴⁸ Report on the Weekly Collection of the Repeal Rent in the City of Dublin, read... on 26th November 1844, Dublin, 1844, p. i.

gentry would stimulate trade and industry in the capital. 'Dublin,' it declared, '... would be the centre from which life, and warmth, and motion, would radiate throughout the land - the fountain from which the waters of fertility would be distributed through a thousand channels.'⁴⁹ A few weeks earlier, Maurice O'Connell had told a Repeal Association audience that the people of Dublin ought to be particularly enthusiastic for Repeal, because it would benefit them before the rest of Ireland. He said, 'They might compare Dublin to a large reservoir that would be filled at once, but the distant part would receive the supply by streams from that reservoir... every man who was a candidate for the Irish House of Commons would most assuredly patronise Irish manufacture...'.⁵⁰ As we have seen, this economic argument had a powerful appeal for the lower-middle and working classes of Dublin, whose individual small sums made up such an important part of Dublin's contribution to the Repeal Rent.

The wealthier Dublin Repealers, men who could afford to subscribe one pound or more, were of course a much smaller group than the lower class Repealers. In 1840 there were 649 subscriptions of one pound or more,⁵¹ most of which came from Dubliners, though some were from the O'Connell family and other non-Dubliners like W. J. O'Neill Daunt. After 1840 the accounts published in the press did not always make it clear whether subscriptions from the capital included members' subscriptions or not, but it seems likely that Dublin members subscribed several hundred pounds to the Rent during most years in the decade.

III. When it came to building up a strong Repeal organisation, O'Connell frequently stressed the importance of Dublin in his plans. From Belfast, in December 1840, where he was trying to win Repeal converts in face of

⁴⁹ Report on the Weekly Collection of the Repeal Rent, p. i.

⁵⁰ Nation, 26 October 1844.

⁵¹ F.J., 12 January 1841.

considerable hostility,⁵² he wrote to his supporters in Dublin, 'I hope you will proceed in the Association to the nomination of Repeal Wardens. Begin with the city of Dublin'.⁵³ Again, at a meeting of Repeal Wardens in Dublin in 1842, he said, 'If Dublin were properly organised, the influence of that organisation would extensively spread'.⁵⁴ The role of Repeal Wardens in the national movement of the forties was not a new one. At the trial of O'Connell and his fellows in 1844, one of the defence counsel, Whiteside, pointed out that their duties in the Repeal Association were very similar to those of the local agents of the old Catholic Association.⁵⁵ Their duties in the Repeal Association are set forth in two publications, the first appearing in May 1843, prepared by a committee of which O'Connell was chairman.⁵⁶ The second, with the same name as the first (Instructions for the Appointment of Repeal Wardens, and Collectors of the Repeal Fund, their Duties, Etc.), was published a year later.⁵⁷ As Repeal Wardens were to play such a major role in organising support for Repeal, it is worth looking at these instructions fairly closely.

The duties of the Repeal Wardens as revealed by these documents were extremely wide and demanding. The earlier version of the document listed eleven duties,⁵⁸ the main ones being to divide each parish into districts, for the purpose of collecting the Repeal Rent; to appoint

52 For accounts of O'Connell's unsuccessful Repeal mission to the North, see Pilot, 14 December 1840, and a hostile account, The Repealer Repulsed: A Correct Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Repeal Invasion of Ulster, Belfast, 1841.

53 F.J., 19 January 1841.

54 Nation, 5 November 1842.

55 John S. Armstrong and Edward S. Trevor, A Report of the Proceedings on an Indictment for a Conspiracy, in the Case of the Queen v. Daniel O'Connell... in 1843, and... 1844, Dublin, 1844, p. 511. See also Wyse, Historical Sketch, Vol. I, pp. 338-9.

56 Instructions for the Appointment of Repeal Wardens, and Collectors of the Repeal Fund, their Duties, Etc., Dublin, 1843.

57 Instructions for the Appointment of Repeal Wardens..., Dublin, 1844.

58 Ibid., (1843), pp. 7-12.

collectors for this purpose; to report any ill or negligent Warden to the Association; to transmit the Rent regularly; to secure signatures to Repeal petitions; to promote the registration of voters; to ensure newspapers were provided for every two hundred members; and to promote peaceable meetings. Clearly men of zeal and ability were required to fulfil these functions. Six main qualifications were set out in the Instructions for men wishing to act as Wardens,⁵⁹ the main one being that they should be of good moral character. Also, they should enjoy the respect of their clergy (of whatever denomination), should know their district intimately, and understand the principal arguments in favour of Repeal. Thus a certain level of education was necessary if the Repeal Wardens were to carry out their duties satisfactorily.

Bearing in mind that Ireland in the 1840s was an overwhelmingly rural and agricultural country, it will be apparent that the role of a Repeal Warden in a large city like Dublin would differ from that of a Warden in a country parish. In the country areas, the Wardens were generally selected by the parish priests (without whose cooperation very little organisation could proceed), whereas in Dublin it appears that existing Wardens usually recommended new appointments to headquarters. This is indicated by a form returned to the Association, where the space for a clergyman to endorse the application of a candidate was crossed out, and a long list of Dublin Wardens inserted instead, the name of the Inspector of Wardens, William Fox, heading the list.⁶⁰ The Association also received a letter from two Repeal Wardens, of the Four Courts ward, requesting 'that master John Arkins, (son of that truly Patriotic Irishman Thos Arkins Esq.) [be] Proposed as a Repeal Warden for this ward'.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Instructions, (1843), p. 5.

⁶⁰ P. Crawley and William Smith, Repeal Wardens, to O'Connell, 21 July 1845, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13628.

⁶¹ Ibid. An example of this type of form used by the Association is given

The practice of Wardens rather than clergy recommending suitable candidates for appointment was affected by two main factors. One was the greater level of literacy and availability of lay leaders in a large city, which made men less dependent on the clergy for a leading role in politics; and the other was the hostility to Repeal of the Catholic archbishop of the Dublin diocese, Dr Murray, who discouraged his clergy from participating in the movement. In Dublin, as was noted in an earlier chapter, the number of clergymen active in the organisation was fairly small. Only three Catholic clergymen personally acted as Repeal Wardens in Dublin,⁶² although this was quite common in the country areas. In addition, the Dublin Wardens were placed in a different position, because of the close proximity of the headquarters and leaders of the movement, which meant that they could be more easily supervised in their work.

The first appointments of regular Repeal Wardens in Dublin occurred at the beginning of 1841, some eight months after the commencement of the movement. This lapse in time before such a step was taken indicates how comparatively slow the Association was to exploit its resources. Earlier, only collectors of Rent, without official positions, existed. These collectors did act to some extent like future Wardens, however, by enrolling members, transmitting the Rent, and reporting on local conditions to the weekly meeting:⁶³ many of them were later appointed Wardens. After

below; this was a printed form, in use about 1845:

'We, the undersigned, being the Parochial Clergy and Committee of Wardens in the Parish of _____ in the County of _____ hereby certify that Mr. _____ of _____ has, himself, actually collected Five Pounds Repeal Rent within the last twelve months, and that same has been remitted to the Repeal Association. We therefore request, that he may be furnished with the Warden's Diploma, agreeably to the rules of the Association. Dated this _____ day of _____ 184_.' O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13627.

62 These were Fr James Gilligan, Curate, St James's; Fr P. Murphy, Curate, St Audeon's; and Fr Ennis, Curate, St Catherine's.

63 For example, James Gilligan, reporting from St George's parish, handed in £7, and stated that 120 Repealers were already enrolled in that parish: Pilot, 2 September 1840.

his initial enthusiasm following the foundation of the Association in the summer of 1840, O'Connell's interest had tended to wane, while he was in London attending parliament. When he personally reappeared in Dublin, in January 1841, a new wave of interest was expressed by a series of parish meetings to uphold the principle of Repeal. In January and February, seventy Repeal Wardens were appointed for fifteen parishes.⁶⁴ These early Wardens included men of high standing in Dublin, among them Thomas Reynolds (of the N.T.P.U.), who became Inspector of Wardens for his parish, St Audeon's, Francis McArdle (N.T.P.U.), a prosperous woollen draper, Luke Dillon, Junior, a manufacturer in the woollen trade, and Father P. Murphy, Catholic Curate of St Audeon's. Some had been active in previous national associations, such as Hubert Maguire, of St Peter's parish,⁶⁵ who was to continue one of the most active workers up to 1849. In most parishes at least one Poor Law Guardian, or prospective town councillor took on the task. Three Wardens were appointed for the tailors' trade. By mid-April only two parishes, St Paul's and St Werburgh's, had failed to make a return to the Association or to select Wardens. Besides organising the collection of the Rent, the Wardens also convened Repeal meetings, and procured signatures for Association petitions.⁶⁶ The frequent mention at such meetings of the need to promote native manufactures⁶⁷ emphasises the close link felt to exist between the political goal, Repeal, and the revival of trade in Dublin.

In the first half of 1841, there was another factor at work stimulating support for Repeal. This was the prospect of a return to

64 F.J., 19 and 26 January, 21 and 24 February, 1841.

65 F.J., 30 March 1841.

66 See the resolutions passed at a meeting convened by the Repeal Wardens of St Peter's parish, to organise the collection of signatures to a petition for Repeal of the Union: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13632. The resolutions are dated 19 September 1841.

67 See also F.J., 1 February, 19 September, and 13 November, 1841.

office of a Tory ministry, and the fall of a Whig government which had introduced a new spirit into the Irish administration, largely as a result of the work of Thomas Drummond, as Under Secretary. O'Connell's personal reaction to the prospect of a Tory government was one of dread. Writing to Archbishop MacHale in December 1839, he claimed that the 'mainspring of Tory hostility to Ireland is hatred of the Catholic religion'.⁶⁸ Some months later, again writing to the Archbishop, he stressed that his conviction of the imminent return of the Tories to office was his reason for wishing to organise Ireland in a national movement.⁶⁹ Fear of the consequences of the Tories' return thus influenced O'Connell to renew the Repeal agitation. There is evidence that similar fears affected some Dubliners, especially those who cooperated closely with O'Connell. In public speeches made in those months, the words 'bigotry', and 'Toryism' were frequently linked. It was not simply a question of fearing that reforms which had been initiated by the Whigs would be abandoned; there was a definite tendency to equate Toryism with all that was worst in the treatment of Ireland at British hands. The Tory M.P.s who were to win Dublin City in July were nicknamed 'Orange' West and 'Cromwell' Grogan.⁷⁰ At a well attended meeting of the Juvenile Repealers of St James's Parish in November, the rise of the 'determined and bigotted foes of Ireland' was put forward as a reason for supporting the Repeal campaign.⁷¹ With the benefit of hindsight, it can be seen that the two parties' attitudes to Ireland were by no means so unlike as to warrant such hysterical outbursts; but at that time it was still widely believed that the Tories were the inveterate foes of Ireland, and that Union with England under a Tory ministry was a prospect to be dreaded.

68 W. J. Fitzpatrick (ed.), Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator, 2 vols., London, 1888; O'Connell to Archbishop MacHale, 23 December 1839, in Vol. II, pp. 218-20.

69 O'Connell to MacHale, 8 April 1840, in ibid., Vol. II, pp. 235-7.

70 Meeting of St Paul's Liberal Club, F.J., 1 July 1841.

71 F.J., 13 November 1841.

The year 1842 saw concerted efforts on the part of the Repeal leaders and of the Wardens to improve their organisation. By that time, the Municipal Reform Act had come into operation, bringing important changes to bear on local politics in Dublin. The Act set up local units which were no longer based on the Protestant parish divisions. Whereas local meetings had tended to be sponsored by the Protestant church wardens,⁷² under the Reform Act the town councillors and aldermen became more important as local leaders. Since in all but two or three wards, the Catholics were in possession of the Corporation seats, and a large proportion of town councillors were Repealers, it can be seen that the Act made a significant difference to local politics in Dublin, and indeed in other Corporation boroughs such as Cork and Waterford, where the same kind of change took place.⁷³

At a meeting of St Catherine's Ward (this ward included the parish of St Catherine, which had taken a leading part in the movement hitherto), O'Connell announced a new plan to collect funds in Dublin.⁷⁴ He wanted each ward divided into districts of about five hundred inhabitants, each to have a Repeal Warden, who would encourage the promotion of Irish-made goods, as well as Repeal.⁷⁵ Each street would have its own collector. This would involve the creation of about four hundred new Wardens, and many

72 For example, at the parish meetings where 'Irish Manufacture' was discussed, and in which Liberals, Tories and Repealers took part, it was the Protestant church wardens who tended to preside: see Pilot, 4 November 1840 (St Nicholas Without and the Bishop's and Dean's Liberties); F.J., 2 December 1840 (St James's); Pilot, 11 December 1840 (St Mary's); and Pilot, 24 December 1840 (St Andrew's). A requisition to the Protestant church wardens of St Peter's parish, requesting them to call a meeting to promote native manufactures, was signed by Daniel and John O'Connell: see F.J., 2 January 1841.

73 The Act did lead to some confusion, for an undated return of the names of Repeal Wardens among the R.A.'s documents is headed 'St Thomas's Ward', when no such ward existed, only a parish: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13628.

74 F.J., 17 May 1842. O'Connell said that if the Repeal Rent was increased, more funds would be available to encourage the Irish Manufacture movement.

75 F.J., 19 May 1842.

more collectors. In spite of the strenuous efforts which such a development would involve, most of the wards met in May to put the plan into operation.⁷⁶ Many new Wardens were appointed, although some names put forward were those of men appointed in the previous year, which suggests that there had been some lapses in the organisation.⁷⁷ Among the trades, the brogue-makers, silk weavers and sawyers also appointed more Wardens.⁷⁸ The result was a considerable improvement in the quantity of Repeal Rent from Dublin, as Peter Slevin reported to the weekly meeting in June.⁷⁹ But the contributions from other places were not so great as in the previous year,⁸⁰ so that once again, Dublin was contributing a high proportion of the total Rent. For the week ending 21 June 1842, the total Rent was only £72 5s 6d, of which St Catherine's ward alone contributed £11 12s 0d.⁸¹ At the end of July, the remaining wards were reorganised.⁸² In August, O'Connell was despairing of support from the gentry and the Bar (with a few exceptions), but claimed that Repeal had the support of the 'people', by which he must have meant mainly Dubliners.⁸³

A move to increase the authority and control of the Association over its local workers was made at a meeting of Repeal Wardens in November, when it was decided to record the names not only of Wardens but also of collectors.⁸⁴ Moreover, Francis Dowling, one of the first

76 F.J., 19, 20, 21 and 24 May, 1842.

77 For instance, John Levy was appointed a Warden for St Michan's parish (F.J., 19 January 1841) and again for the Custom House Ward (F.J., 21 May 1842).

78 F.J., 7 June 1842.

79 F.J., 21 June 1842.

80 The total Rent for 1842 amounted to £3,950, according to the weekly accounts given in the F.J..

81 F.J., 21 June 1842.

82 F.J., 28 July 1842.

83 F.J., 27 August 1842.

84 F.J., 4 November 1842.

Volunteers in Dublin, was appointed Inspector General of Repeal Wardens.⁸⁵ This centralising move was greeted with some suspicion among certain parties. Edward Hogg, butcher, Inspector of Wardens from the Linen Hall ward, said he hoped he was not being put aside by this appointment, and Warden Brennan denied that the Linen Hall ward needed any extra supervisor, unless it was O'Connell himself. O'Connell agreed to reframe his motion, so that Dowling would act as Inspector General in any ward which made no objection. J. P. Conran, shoemaker, always concerned primarily with his local ward,⁸⁶ also the Linen Hall, suggested allowing the Wardens to meet and decide about Dowling. However, when O'Connell offered to withdraw the motion if it was unpopular, the majority of the Wardens expressed concurrence in Dowling's appointment. He seems to have been a popular choice. Within a short time, Dowling began his weekly reports on the organisation in the Dublin wards. The plan was to visit every ward,⁸⁷ and ensure that the Wardens were meeting regularly and remitting regular sums of money, even if only small ones.⁸⁸ Within a month, the Inspector General was reporting that the organisation in Dublin was very efficient, and that in some wards, especially St James's, the Corporation members were attending the meetings to promote the organisation.⁸⁹ Indeed, aldermen and town councillors were now regarded as being the natural leaders of Repeal in the wards, as one of Dowling's reports showed. He mentioned that since St Patrick's ward had been divided into two areas for

85 F.J., 5 November 1842. A 'Volunteer' in the Repeal Association was one who had enrolled ten members or contributed £10 to the funds. Dowling was enrolled as a Volunteer in April 1841: see F.J., 14 April 1841.

86 John Patrick Conran, a shoemaker with his own business in Mary Street, was an early convert to Repeal, and attended over 80 weekly meetings, twice taking the chair, during the forties. He was one of the many Repeal Wardens with a municipal vote. For instances of his strong local feeling for the Linen Hall ward, see F.J., 4 August 1842 and 21 February 1843.

87 F.J., 16 November 1842.

88 F.J., 5 November 1842.

89 Nation, 10 December 1842.

the purpose of organising the collection of Rent, 'a requisition is in course of signature to the aldermen, to convene a meeting for the purpose of centralising the working committee'.⁹⁰

Although individual wards continued to remit substantial sums to the Association, such as £100, the contribution from St Patrick's ward in May,⁹¹ at the end of 1843 O'Connell was again calling for one efficient Wardens Club in each ward.⁹² Apparently the exertions in Dublin slackened somewhat during the latter part of 1843 and the early months of 1844. The trades unions were apparently disillusioned with the outcome of the Irish Manufacture movement, and were turning again to non-political means to improve their conditions.⁹³ Public attention was also taken up with the state trials. After sentence was passed at the end of May, however, many ward meetings were held, with the object of redoubling the Repeal Rent, and expressing confidence in O'Connell.⁹⁴ As before, the aldermen and town councillors tended to preside. The Rent from Dublin for the week ending 3 June 1844 reached over £287,⁹⁵ although contributions from outside Dublin also rose spectacularly, from a few hundred pounds to well over two thousand. However, such efforts were the result of extraordinary circumstances (the imprisonment of O'Connell and his fellow leaders) which were not likely to recur. By the autumn it was again found necessary to give a spur to the organisation, this time with Maurice O'Connell, eldest son of the Liberator, taking the lead.⁹⁶ Again the aim put forward was to

⁹⁰ Nation, 17 December 1842.

⁹¹ Nation, 20 May 1843.

⁹² Nation, 11 November 1843.

⁹³ D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, p. 126.

⁹⁴ See F.J., 1, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 9 June, 1844.

⁹⁵ Nation, 8 June 1844.

⁹⁶ Maurice O'Connell, whose participation in the Repeal movement was spasmodic, in 1843 completed a personal supervision of the Repeal organisation in Tralee, Co. Kerry (the town which he represented in Parliament): see his letters to Ray, 29 April and May 1843, in O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13625.

have one collector for each street, under the supervision of the Wardens.⁹⁷ Maurice paid testimony to the contribution of Dublin to the funds, but described it as erratic. Continuous remittances, he said, would keep public attention rivetted on the cause.⁹⁸ In the same speech, he alluded to a new duty of Wardens, which was to become especially important in 1845. This was concerned with the registration of voters, which was beginning to preoccupy the leaders, as the prospect of a General Election loomed nearer. Although O'Connell had said on various occasions since the beginning of the agitation that he would win Repeal when he had three million Repealers,⁹⁹ and that he despaired of justice from an English parliament, he continued, as usual, to work for reforms which would benefit Ireland. He also maintained an interest in his parliamentary party which still nominally supported Repeal, although it had fared badly at elections in the forties. This party was still a useful counter in O'Connell's bargaining with the Whigs. In 1845, moreover, he appears to have been seeking an alliance with the Whig party.¹⁰⁰ These factors meant that attention would have to be paid to the registration of voters if Liberal-Repealers were to be returned to parliament.

The reaction of the Wardens to the greater stress on registration duties is not recorded, but in 1845 an increasing amount of their time was taken up with this aspect of their work. In this respect the new Repeal Reading Rooms were of considerable value.¹⁰¹ These Rooms did not become widespread in Dublin until 1845, in which year they were opened in most of the wards. It was hoped by certain parties in the movement (especially the Young Irelanders) that their purpose would be mainly

97 This aim, put forward in 1842, had presumably remained unfulfilled.

98 Nation, 12 October 1844.

99 See, for example, F.J., 17 May 1842.

100 Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, p. 97; Macintyre, The Liberator, p. 285.

101 Smith O'Brien claimed that registration would be one of the functions undertaken in the Reading Rooms: F.J., 14 January 1845.

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educational, but they proved useful in many other fields. To begin with, they provided a centre where Wardens could meet together, and meet the people. By March, when most wards were equipped with a Reading Room, Francis Dowling reported the difficulty he had in finding registration workers in St Stephen's ward, 'in consequence of there being no reading room established in it until last Wednesday'.¹⁰² By February, reports were already coming in from Reading Rooms, describing their functions and uses. In the Custom House ward, the Honorary Secretary of the Rooms reported that in three months the number of staff at the Rooms had increased from five or six to thirty. The Rooms were well attended, and the library contained seventy volumes, donated mainly by the aldermen and town councillors.¹⁰³ He also mentioned that James Loughnan, Town Councillor and Inspector of Wardens, was an indefatigable attender, especially during the registration sessions. From February onwards the Inspectors of Repeal Reading Rooms sent in reports, in which the progress of registering voters was dealt with at some length.¹⁰⁴ The influence of the Wardens in helping claimants to register their votes was mentioned in an Association report in March 1845. During the first five days of the registration sessions, it claimed, the non-Repealers had had considerable majorities, but the Repealers had rallied in consequence of the appeals made by the Liberator and Smith O'Brien to the Repeal Wardens, and at the close of the sessions the Repealers registered had a majority of three over the non-Repealers.¹⁰⁵ Further appeals were made to the Wardens to exert themselves for the May sessions,¹⁰⁶ when once again there was a majority for Repealers.

¹⁰² Nation, 8 March 1845.

¹⁰³ F.J., 1 April 1845.

¹⁰⁴ F.J., 28 February 1845.

¹⁰⁵ Pilot, 5 March 1845.

¹⁰⁶ Loyal National Repeal Association of Ireland: Abstract of the Proceedings ... Conciliation Hall, Corn Exchange Rooms, from Monday, 13th May 1844 to Monday, June 16th 1845, Dublin, 1845: report for 26 May 1845.

The relationship between the Association and the Dublin Repeal Wardens was an unusual one, because Dublin Wardens had to work under the vigilant eye of the Association, whereas the provincial Wardens were removed from direct surveillance. It should always have been possible in Dublin to check on idle Wardens who were not doing as much as they should, or those who were too proud to hand in only small sums. Yet the evidence suggests that more disciplinary measures were carried out against provincial Wardens than against those in the capital.¹⁰⁷ It may be that the zeal of Dublin Wardens, and the nearness of the Association made warnings more effective, such as Maurice O'Connell's threat to inactive Dublin Wardens that they would be struck off the roll unless they mended their ways.¹⁰⁸ It may be that the local influence of Wardens in the capital made the Association more wary of acting severely. Whatever the reason, striking a Dublin Warden off the roll of Wardens was extremely rare. The only certain case occurred in 1846, after the secession, when some Wardens of the Custom House ward were dismissed for supporting Young Ireland views.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, disciplinary measures against provincial Wardens were quite common, with dismissals occurring for various reasons, including absence from meetings,¹¹⁰ causing dissension,¹¹¹ and introducing matters of religious controversy.¹¹² This is not to claim that Dublin Wardens, once appointed, carried out their duties impeccably. Undoubtedly many lapsed after early enthusiasm: nothing else explains the constant pressure from the Association for an efficient organisation. But apart from warnings, disciplinary actions were kept to a minimum.

¹⁰⁷ This evidence is from the weekly reports of R.A. public meetings, published in the Nation, Pilot and F.J., and the correspondence between the Repeal Wardens and T. M. Ray, in O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MSS 13622-13628.

¹⁰⁸ Pilot, 9 July 1845.

¹⁰⁹ Pilot, 30 September 1846.

¹¹⁰ See T. M. Ray to T. Nugent, 4 October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623.

¹¹¹ Pilot, 22 January 1845.

¹¹² Nation, 23 March 1844 and 7 June 1845.

By the middle of 1846, Repeal activity in the wards had again slackened, and Tom Steele had cause to complain in the Association that only one of the thirty-six Wardens of the Post Office ward was active.¹¹³ Some efforts were made in June and July to increase the number of contributions to the Association.¹¹⁴ At one meeting in the Custom House ward, where he was the alderman, O'Connell referred to the Young Ireland party, claiming that it would ruin the Repeal cause if it was not checked.¹¹⁵ As usual, he stressed the benefits which would flow to Dublin tradesmen if Repeal were achieved.¹¹⁶

IV. Having studied the development of the Repeal organisation in Dublin up to 1846, and noted the importance of the Repeal Wardens in that development, several questions arise as to the nature and background of these men who undertook, at the cost of considerable effort, to act as agents between the Repeal Association and the people of Dublin. The most complete list of Repeal Wardens still extant is apparently the one contained in an Association publication dealing with the collection of the Repeal Rent, drawn up about the time of the reorganisation of the Dublin Wardens and collectors which took place under the supervision of Maurice O'Connell in late 1844.¹¹⁷ This list indicated that there were 324 Wardens acting at that time, but since some of them acted for more than one ward, or district, there were in fact only 313. This figure probably represents the highest number of Wardens acting at any one time, since comparatively few were appointed in 1845 and 1846, and in the previous

113 F.J., 26 May 1846.

114 F.J., 16 June 1845, Pilot, 13 July 1846.

115 In the Repeal/Liberal press, references to a Young Ireland party were rare before the secession.

116 F.J., 14 July 1846.

117 See Report on the Weekly Collection of the Repeal Rent.

years, notwithstanding the calls for five hundred Repeal Wardens, the organisation was only in its early stages. This list, then, although by no means an exclusive one, can be used as a guide on the questions of the numbers and background of Repeal Wardens.

It proved possible to identify the occupations of 214 of these Wardens. Of these, 180 were householders, either owning, renting or leasing a dwelling in the city. Their occupations can be broken down into eight groups.¹¹⁸ It appears from this analysis that the Repeal Wardens were drawn almost exclusively from tradespeople, especially from the food and service trades, in which we may include the clothing trade. The luxury trades do not seem to figure particularly highly amongst these occupations, although people engaged in those branches would seem to have more reason than others to hope that the return of an Irish parliament would benefit them. Apart from the 180 householders, a further thirty-four Wardens appeared to be related to householders,¹¹⁹ whose occupation it was also possible to ascertain. A breakdown of these occupations reveals that almost all were in trade.¹²⁰ The figure of ninety-nine Wardens who were not identified may seem large, in view of the fact that addresses were supplied with the Warden's name in almost every case. It appears, however, that the majority of the men who were not identified were neither householders nor ratepayers, in which case it would be unusual for their names to be recorded in the Directories of the day.¹²¹

118 See p. 126, Table 3.1. For identification purposes, Thom's directories were used.

119 These 34 Wardens had the same surnames as householders at the address which they gave (but different Christian names). It was therefore presumed that they were related to the householder. However, it should be noted that the list contained inaccuracies of both name spelling (variations were common in the 1840s) and of house numbers in the streets, making identification difficult in certain cases.

120 See p. 126, Table 3.2.

121 Directories of the time contained an alphabetical index of Dublin 'Nobility, Gentry, Merchants and Traders', but excluded the poorer working classes.

In at least twenty-three cases, the address given was that of a tenement building, and this is probably an under-estimate. Other unidentified Wardens, who gave their address as Baggot Street, or some other wealthy area, were probably servants or shop boys. A number apparently worked for some of the more prosperous Repealers, such as Robert Annett, for James Fallon, T.C., grocer, in Stoney batter; Joseph Daly, for Philip Taggart, T.C., grocer, in Stephen Street; or Daniel Pegan, for Alderman Gardiner, tobacconist, in Queen Street.

One guide to the relative wealth and position in society of some of the Wardens can be found in the amounts of Poor Rate they paid, or did not pay. 146 of the 214 identified Wardens were ratepayers in their own right, of whom only six paid a rate of less than ten pounds, the minimum requirement for a municipal vote. 140, therefore, were technically qualified for the municipal franchise, and it is highly likely that those who were so qualified would take the trouble to register their vote, since one of the duties of Wardens was to encourage others to register their vote. Thus, probably more than forty per cent of the Repeal Wardens had the municipal vote, compared with only six and a half per cent of adult males generally in Dublin in 1844.¹²² This suggests that nearly half the Wardens were drawn from a small, comfortably situated section of the population. On the other hand, about half were drawn from men outside this class, who were probably members of the lower-middle class, including some shop-boys and servants. The Repeal Wardens, therefore, were not drawn from a single class, but from quite a wide spectrum of society.

Among the wealthier, upper-middle class Wardens, those whose religion was known were all Catholics. Their support for Repeal was probably closely linked with the fact that men of this class had

122 The figures on the burgess roll for 1844 were 4,586: see Minutes of Dublin Corporation, Dublin City Hall, Book 15 (1849-50), pp. 9-12. Extensive searches in Dublin failed to discover any printed lists of municipal voters for the 1840s.

benefited directly from Catholic Emancipation and municipal reform, two political victories associated with the name of O'Connell. Of the Wardens in this class, sixteen were town councillors, and others had stood as candidates for that office. Their gratitude to O'Connell for his past services was frequently mentioned. A speech by John McKenna, Repeal Warden and Town Councillor, at the Linen Hall ward meeting held just after the Young Irelanders' secession, expressed this point: '... did they not see there today a Catholic merchant [Timothy O'Brien] presiding over that meeting, who was an alderman of the Dublin corporation, and member of Parliament for the oldest constituency in Ireland [Cashel] (cheers). To whom did they owe all this?... (A Voice: "To O'Connell")'.¹²³ By contrast, the Repeal Wardens who were further down the social scale probably had more in common with the trades union members whose attitudes we considered earlier. Their outlook was one of conviction that Repeal would bring back prosperity to Ireland, and to Dublin in particular. They too were probably mainly Catholics.¹²⁴

This wide difference in the social class and background of the Wardens becomes significant when we come to look at the question of their reaction to the Young Ireland secession. The secession evoked no concerted series of local ward meetings as was usual when any matter of interest to Dubliners occurred. Only six wards held meetings in the month after the secession, and at these, aldermen and town councillors took the lead in stressing their continued support for O'Connell and the Association.¹²⁵ Only in the Linen Hall ward did the Repeal Wardens take the individual step of declaring that their Repeal Reading Room would

¹²³ Pilot, 5 August 1846.

¹²⁴ This can only be an assumption, based on the premise that O'Connell and other leaders of the Repeal movement were usually eager to advertise the fact when they had the support and cooperation of Protestants.

¹²⁵ For example, see reports of such meetings in Pilot, 7 August 1846.

cease to take the Nation,¹²⁶ and even here it is not certain that the decision represented the views of a majority of the Wardens in the ward. In several meetings there was praise for Smith O'Brien's patriotism, and some reservations about the doctrine that physical force was never an admissible policy.¹²⁷ However, since the ward meetings were dominated by the aldermen and town councillors who owed most to O'Connell, it is not surprising that the general theme of the meetings was one of solidarity with the Association.

Nevertheless, in October 1846, fifty acting Wardens and fifteen ex-Wardens of Dublin (perhaps one-sixth of the existing Wardens) added their signatures to the Dublin Remonstrance.¹²⁸ This may appear to be a sign of considerable dissatisfaction with the Association on the part of the Wardens. Yet analysis of the background of those Wardens who signed the Remonstrance shows that very few indeed were members of the wealthier classes. Only five acting Wardens and six ex-Wardens were identifiable as owning a house and paying Poor Rate.¹²⁹ The rest, like the great majority of those who signed the Remonstrance, were not householders, but lived in rented rooms, or lived in with their employers. It is impossible to discover the occupations of the majority of them, but they were probably artisans and tradesmen from the lower-middle classes. We may conclude, therefore, that it was among these lower-middle class Wardens that there was dissatisfaction with the Association; not, on the whole, among the wealthier men.

126 Pilot, 24 August 1846.

127 Dr Gray (Post Office ward) expressed doubts on the subject: Pilot, 3 August 1846.

128 Nation, 10, 17, 24 and 31 October, 1846. The Nation of 24 October 1846 claimed that there were 120 Repeal Wardens in Dublin. This appears to be a serious underestimate, since there were over 300 in 1844, and there is no evidence to suggest that large numbers had resigned or been expelled. The Nation's claim that 74 Wardens had signed the Remonstrance is also incorrect.

129 Statistics concerning the Dublin Remonstrants are based on the Nation, 10, 17, 24 and 31 October, 1846, and Thom's Directories. Only 124 of the 970 people who signed the Remonstrance were householders.

V. The role of the Repeal Wardens in the Repeal movement in Dublin has now been examined in detail, and we conclude this chapter by considering some questions about Dublin Repealers in general. Can we estimate their numbers, the frequency of their attendance at Repeal meetings, and their religion?

For some reason, the very detailed accounts of the Association's weekly meetings given in some of the Dublin newspapers, such as the Freeman's Journal, do not include an estimate of the numbers who actually attended such meetings, apart from indicating whether the meeting was particularly crowded or otherwise. However, the police reporters did make estimates of the numbers.¹³⁰ These were probably fairly accurate, since more than one policeman acted as a reporter, providing independent estimates of the numbers; and their estimates are borne out by the newspapers' reporting on the crowded or empty nature of the Hall. The records for September 1844 to November 1846 are in existence.¹³¹ The highest figures they record as attending on any occasion was three thousand, which occurred in January and February 1845, and in mid-December of the same year.¹³² On all these occasions O'Connell or Smith O'Brien was present. The reports clearly indicate that when either of these two leaders was present, attendance was likely to improve. For the first five months of 1845, they were present almost every week.¹³³ During this

130 The policemen (usually in pairs) attended the Association's weekly meetings and reported to the Police Commissioners on such details as the size of attendance, the main speakers and their topics, the duration of the meeting and its 'temperature': warm, excited, languid, etc.: see S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. (First Division), 1844-6.

131 The Reports actually date from March 1844, but before September no estimate of the number attending the meeting was made.

132 C.S.O. R.P. 1845/9/1483 (20 January); C.S.O. R.P. 1845/9/1857 (27 January); C.S.O. R.P. 1845/9/3277 (17 February); C.S.O. R.P. 1845/9/28893 (15 December).

133 They were absent in the second week of January: see C.S.O. R.P. 1845/9/969 (13 January).

period, attendance (according to the police) did not drop below 1,100, but in the last four meetings in June 1845, when neither leader was present, attendance ranged from only five hundred to nine hundred.¹³⁴

Of course, even the highest figures recorded at the weekly meetings do not give a complete picture of the support for Repeal in Dublin.¹³⁵ Perhaps a truer indication of the sympathy for Repeal is recorded in a police report on the procession held on the occasion of O'Connell's 'levée' in May 1845.¹³⁶ The men who actually took part in the procession (the majority of them from Dublin) numbered ten thousand, and the spectators more than a hundred thousand. This would represent one-third of the Dublin population, although not all would have been paid-up members of the Association. In April 1845, the Freeman's Journal, not usually given to gross exaggeration, estimated that seventy thousand attended a meeting to collect Repeal Rent and observe the anniversary of O'Connell's imprisonment, in St Patrick's ward.¹³⁷ It is important to remember that the members of the working classes who might swell the numbers watching the Repeal processions, and contribute their penny a week towards the Rent, very rarely gained a leading position in the movement, unless it was via the trades unions or some other unusual method. Even the trades union members, as pointed out above, were skilled artisans, and thus only a minority of the working classes. The numerous accounts of Repeal meetings held in the wards or parishes in the early forties often specifically recorded that the meeting was called by 'burgesses, ratepayers

¹³⁴ C.S.O. R.P. 1845/9/12201 (9 June), /9/12689 (16 June), /9/13367 (23 June).

¹³⁵ It must be borne in mind that the public weekly meetings took place on Mondays, during the afternoon, a time which made it inconvenient or impossible for many working men to attend.

¹³⁶ Police report on the procession held on 30 May 1845, C.S.O. R.P. 1845/9/11561.

¹³⁷ F.J., 24 April 1845.

and inhabitants',¹³⁸ with the latter taking a subordinate position. After 1841, requisitions for Repeal meetings were commonly headed with the names of the aldermen and town councillors of the district, other wealthy inhabitants, and sometimes the names of clergymen.¹³⁹ Taking all these into consideration, it was rare for poor men of low status in society to be able to contribute much to a meeting, or indeed, to local politics in general.

It seems likely that the bulk of lower-middle and working class support for Repeal came from Catholics. While Protestants made up almost twenty-seven per cent of the population of Dublin,¹⁴⁰ the majority of them were probably upper and middle class men. Among the working class Protestants, there was stronger hostility to Catholicism than to Repeal. The Protestant Operative Association was founded in April 1841 as a counter balance to the Repeal Association,¹⁴¹ but the common bond which held this Protestant working class group together was distrust and suspicion of Catholics. Under its leader, the Reverend Tresham Gregg, an outspoken champion of Protestantism, the P.O.A. had a strong Orange tone.¹⁴² It would not be surprising if among working class Protestants, support for Protestant ascendancy was stronger than among the upper classes, some of whom were coming to realise that Catholicism was a durable phenomenon which would not be wished or legislated out of existence.

..... Nevertheless, it would be misleading to suggest that no Protestant

138 Such meetings were called for St Paul's and St Andrew's wards: F.J., 18 May 1842; for the Four Courts ward: F.J., 19 May 1842; and for St Audeon's, St Patrick's and the Linen Hall wards: F.J., 20 May 1842.

139 For instance, see the report of the meeting of the Linen Hall ward, Nation, 21 October 1843.

140 The 1841 census is not wholly reliable, but can serve as a guide.

141 The founding of the D.P.O.A. is recorded in A Voice from the Protestants of Ireland to the Rev. Tresham Dames Gregg..., Dublin, 1846, p. 32.

142 See report on the celebration of Orange victories, Nation, 5 July 1845, and A Voice from the Protestants of Ireland, p. 59.

among the lower classes supported Repeal. Although it is very difficult to determine with certainty the religious persuasions of working-class subscribers to the Repeal Rent, the press occasionally made special mention of Protestant workmen joining the Association (which in itself indicates that this was something of a rarity). Reports were published about certain workers at the (Pims) Greenmount cotton factory at Harolds Cross, who met for the purpose of having themselves enrolled as members of the Repeal Association.¹⁴³ They included several Protestants. Some Protestant tabinet weavers were also given special mention.¹⁴⁴ There were cases of Protestants acting as collectors of Rent, for instance at Kingstown, where the Rent was collected after church on Sundays, as at the Catholic chapels.¹⁴⁵ Thus we must be careful before designating the working class support for the Repeal Association as purely Catholic. Unfortunately, the lack of evidence in this field makes the question an obscure one, but it seems likely that it was rare for Protestants who were members of the working class or even the lower-middle class to participate in the Repeal movement.

Conclusion

Dublin formed a natural basis for the Repeal agitation in the eighteen forties because Repeal had the support both of substantial middle class Catholics who were influential in local politics, and also, for rather different reasons, of the lower-middle and working class Catholics. The latter had long been convinced (although their belief was probably not well-founded) that the Union had caused decay and decline in Irish trade and industry. In 1840, the economic depression affecting

143 Pilot, 19 June 1840.

144 Pilot, 10 June 1840.

145 These Protestants were paid a tribute by James Nugent, of Kingstown, in the Association: see Pilot, 15 January 1845.

Dublin in common with the rest of the United Kingdom meant that the lower classes were particularly eager to support any movement which promised to improve their condition. For a time it seemed that the non-political 'Irish Manufacture' movement would engross the attention of the lower classes in the capital. But the conviction that Repeal was also necessary to ensure Dublin's prosperity was so strong among Catholics that within a year Repeal had returned to the foreground (indeed, interest in it had never really lapsed), and the Irish Manufacture movement lost impetus. It seems clear that the large sums of money sent in to the Association in 1840, most of which came from the lower classes, were given in the belief that Repeal was an economic necessity for Dublin. An economic interpretation of the artisans' motives for supporting Repeal must, however, be qualified in two ways. First, it appears that Protestants among these classes, although affected by the economic depression, did not share the belief that the Union was at the heart of Dublin's economic problems. Secondly, the artisans who were Repealers often displayed distrust - sometimes expressed in racial terms - of British motives towards Ireland, and identified the Tory party, in particular, with old oppressors.

Following the very favourable beginning to the Repeal agitation in Dublin, the appointment of Repeal Wardens, who were to keep up and extend the organisation, began in 1841 and continued until 1846. Repeal Wardens were drawn from a wide variety of social backgrounds, from wealthy men of property to shop-boys and servants. Again, this variety of backgrounds illustrates how widespread was the support for Repeal in Dublin. The leaders' conviction that a strong organisation in the capital would stimulate the rest of the country induced them to pay considerable attention to the appointment of Wardens and the organisation there. By late 1844 there were over three hundred active Wardens in Dublin, besides many collectors and other officials.

From about 1845, the leaders of the Association began to place more stress on the Wardens' duties to register voters, and it became clear that O'Connell was once more considering a policy of cooperation with the Whigs, whose return to office seemed imminent. The 'Whig alliance' was one of the factors behind the Young Ireland secession in 1846. The Wardens' reaction to the secession and, by inference, to the Whig alliance was not a uniform one. In general, it seems that the wealthier middle class Wardens were content to follow O'Connell's lead. But further down the social scale, some Wardens displayed considerable dissatisfaction with the Association by signing the Dublin Remonstrance in October 1846.

On the subject of lower-class Repealers in general, who might support the Association with a few pence per year, it is probable that the great majority were Catholics. Their attendance at Association meetings varied, but always increased when O'Connell or Smith O'Brien was present. The frequent presence of the leaders in their midst, at the Association and occasionally at ward meetings, must have acted as a considerable stimulus to the organisation. Among the small Protestant working class, some did give money to the movement, but the evidence suggests that most remained aloof from Repeal.

TABLE 3.1* OCCUPATIONS OF 180 REPEAL WARDENS WHO OWNED, RENTED OR LEASED
A DWELLING IN DUBLIN, IN 1844

<u>Occupational group</u>	<u>Number</u>
Men of property	8
Professional men	8 : includes 1 law student, 1 clergyman, 1 barrister, 1 solicitor, 4 doctors
Superintendents	1
Courriers	1
Provision (food) trades	58
Clothing trades	25
Luxury trades	23 : coach and harness makers, house painters, upholsterers, portrait painters, hairdressers, wigmakers, watchmakers, furriers.
Other service trades	56

TABLE 3.2* OCCUPATIONS OF 34 HOUSEHOLDERS TO WHOM REPEAL WARDENS WERE
PROBABLY RELATED

<u>Occupational group</u>	<u>Number</u>
Provision (food) trades	13
Clothing trades	6
Luxury trades	2
Service trades	11
Others	2

*Source: Report on the Weekly Collection of the Repeal Rent in the City of Dublin, Dublin, 1844, and Thom's Irish Almanac and Official Directory, Dublin, 1844-50.

CHAPTER FOUR

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE REPEAL ASSOCIATION

The Repeal Association gained a large membership which ran into many thousands in Dublin city alone. Yet this national body was effectively run by quite a small number of people. In this chapter we shall be considering the men who were important in shaping the main trends and interests of the national movement, and their different views of the nature of the Association. When members holding particular beliefs on this question gained important or predominant influence, they tended to change the Association's course and direct its activities into different channels.

The most numerous of these groups we may call the 'O'Connellites'. Headed by the veteran Daniel O'Connell, this group ranged down through his sons, John, Maurice and Daniel junior,¹ to relatives such as Martin Crean,² Edward Brodrick,³ and M. R. Leyne,⁴ and finally to several of the paid Association officials who upheld O'Connell's position as leader and chief authority in the movement. After his death in May 1847, allegiance was transferred to his favourite son John. Young Irishmen and others accused such men, especially relatives, of selfish motives in supporting O'Connell's views and leadership against any opposition, but it should be borne in mind that O'Connell was the popular leader of the Irish people and had been such for many years; he had won many notable achievements, mainly in the field of civil rights for Catholics, and a blind faith in his leadership was hardly surprising in the circumstances. His own

1 His son Morgan did not join the agitation for Repeal.

2 Crean was a relation by marriage.

3 Brodrick's relationship to O'Connell is mentioned in F.J., 19 August 1845.

4 Leyne was a young cousin of O'Connell; he joined the Irish League in 1848.

personality also encouraged such attitudes. Briefly, O'Connell's view of the Repeal Association was of a body with a limited role,⁵ holding together local support from the provinces. The means employed to win national support would be through an efficient staff, engaged in collecting and publishing the leaders' speeches, and circulating them via the press; the Association would also provide a forum for supporters to express their ideas on the question of Repeal. O'Connell did not share the Young Irelanders' desire to use the Association to foster a love of Irish culture and history. He did intend to stress the importance of the political measure, Repeal of the Union, which he claimed would bring political, social and economic improvement in its wake. For O'Connell and many of his followers, the questions of 'Reform' and 'Repeal' were closely linked.⁶ However, O'Connell consistently stressed the importance of Repeal from mid-1840 until his death, save for his brief support for Federalism in 1844. From a practical point of view, the concept of a body with a limited aim (Repeal), from which might be excluded divisive economic, religious and social questions, would seem to have had most chance of success.⁷ On the other hand, O'Connell's reliance on the Catholic clergy to organise the movement locally, and on the Catholic middle classes in the towns, made it natural that the Association should take on some Catholic characteristics.

A small but influential group within the Association was concerned at one time to turn it into a body to deal primarily with the economic grievances of the urban population, and of Dublin in particular.

5 See especially O'Connell's letters to his son John, in September 1840, published in J. O'Connell, Recollections and Experiences, Vol. I, pp. 320-30.

6 Denis Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell (revised Centenary edition), Cork, 1947, p. 219.

7 Concentration on one object was an important factor in the success of the Anti-Corn Law League's campaign: see Norman McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League, 1838-1846 (second edition), London, 1968, pp. 77-90. However, parliament's attitude to Repeal of the Corn Laws was not one of almost complete hostility, as it was towards Repeal of the Union.

This group was strong at the beginning of the decade, when there was little support from the rest of the country, and Dubliners were almost the only people to attend the weekly meetings of the Association. The danger was that, when men with this outlook were influential in the movement, it would turn into a predominantly local body, with few claims to speak for the rest of the country. But by stressing the need for practical support for the tradesmen's efforts to improve their economic condition, this group drew attention to economic problems about which the majority of the leadership showed little concern. Later in the decade, an influential Dubliner, the M.P. John Reynolds,⁸ also tended to look on the Association as a vehicle for the agitation of Dublin interests. These were not necessarily economic interests, but included financial and civic matters. In this case, the danger was even greater that the Association would turn into a local body, without even the claim to speak for other urban areas which the earlier group could make.

The third view was held by the Young Ireland party. Like O'Connell, they too wished to see the Association as a national body, but they hoped to see Protestants, and particularly the gentry, coming forward to join and take a much greater part in the national movement. They disapproved of the predominantly Catholic nature of the Association,⁹ and hoped to stimulate interest in a native Irish culture as the basis for an all-embracing nationalism. They also favoured the type of 'secular' education proposed in the Queen's Colleges Bill. While they undoubtedly had a following in the country, popular opinion was in general with O'Connell, and his concept of the national movement. But on the committees of the Association, the Young Ireland views were occasionally in the majority.

⁸ He was elected M.P. for Dublin in 1847: see below.

⁹ Gwynn, O'Connell, Davis, and the Colleges Bill, p. 16.

O'Connell, therefore, was placed in a very difficult position. The committees might recommend one course of action, which he knew to be unpopular (particularly with the clergy and his Catholic middle-class supporters). He might personally oppose their views,¹⁰ or allow other elements - Association officials, the chairmen at the weekly meetings - to override the wishes of the committee. This led to the charge made by Young Irelanders that their views were stifled or overruled.¹¹ Certainly, outside the committee system, it appears that the Young Irelanders had little chance to win acceptance for their views in the Association.

In this chapter, we shall be considering not only these different views of the national movement, and the groups or factions which held them, but also at the way in which they made their influence felt within the Association. O'Connell clearly derived much of his prestige there from his great popularity throughout the country, and the widespread support for his policies; other important men, like Thomas Arkins and John Reynolds, owed their influence to local support in Dublin. The Young Irelanders rose to prominence in the Association through the committee system, which they penetrated and extended in 1844.

It is unfortunately impossible to point to any one set of records which clearly reveal which were the most influential members in the Association. There is no unbroken set of records of the committee meetings, such as exists for the Irish Confederation.¹² For the Repeal Association, it is necessary to rely on an incomplete series of committee minutes,¹³ collections of letters,¹⁴ and the use of other guides, such as

10 See F.J., 27 July 1845. O'Connell opposed the Colleges Bill in the weekly public meeting of the Repeal Association.

11 (Sir) Charles Gavan Duffy, Four Years of Irish History, 1845-1849: a Sequel to 'Young Ireland', London, 1883, p. 159, note.

12 Irish Confederation MSS, Minute Books, R.I.A. MS 23 H 43 and MS 23 H 44.

13 See O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13639 and 13646.

14 The most useful are the Smith O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434, and the Gavan Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MSS 5756 and 5757.

the identity of the men chosen to take the chair at the weekly meetings,¹⁵ occasional comments in the press as to which committee members were 'active', and the names appended to the committee reports.

I. Before turning to the different groups contending for influence in the Association, it may be helpful to look more closely at the way in which that body worked. As a national organisation, linking Repealers throughout Ireland, the United Kingdom and America, it had to cope with a great deal of business, correspondence, and distribution of information. Dealing with the correspondence involved employing a substantial staff. In the early years, the secretary, T. M. Ray, appears to have read all the letters personally, and given instructions for answering them.¹⁶ As time went on, and the membership and correspondence grew (at one time over one hundred letters a day were received), such tasks had to be shared with other officials, especially Martin Crean. Crean had joined the Association to help with the electoral work, especially the registration of voters in Dublin city and county. A large minority of the clerks and other employees were also engaged to attend to this aspect of the Association's work.¹⁷ Ray apparently was in charge of appointing the clerks; and while his use of patronage aroused some criticism, it seems likely that this came from disappointed applicants.¹⁸

The number of clerks and other staff employed by the Association varied. In 1843 the number rose to about fifty,¹⁹ and there were still

¹⁵ See p. 169, Table 4.1

¹⁶ O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13632.

¹⁷ Any political movement which attempted to build up a parliamentary party at this time had to pay attention to electoral matters. For comparable activity in the Anti-Corn Law League, see McCord, The Anti-Corn Law League, pp. 153-4.

¹⁸ Smith O'Brien received such a complaint after the Young Irelanders had left the Association: see J. Walsh and others to S. O'Brien, 21 December 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 437.

¹⁹ Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell, p. 228. This figure does not seem excessive

large numbers in September 1846, when efforts were made to cut the number down to suit the reduced means coming in via the Repeal Rent.²⁰ As many as one-third were responsible for electoral business,²¹ the rest dealing with correspondence, sending out members' cards, and similar duties.

Apart from clerks, the Association also employed a librarian, messengers, a housekeeper, bookkeeper, medical officer and cashier. The fund of employment it provided is reflected in the large number of letters received by O'Connell and Ray, asking for jobs at the Corn Exchange.²²

Gavan Duffy was to claim later that O'Connell employed a number of old supporters at the Association headquarters, in positions which were more or less sinecures.²³ The evidence available, which is limited, does not suggest that men got paid for doing nothing, although one or two older clerks had merely nominal duties. Each clerk had to fill in cards with details of how he had passed his day.²⁴ Even the more important officials, such as the Registry Inspectors, filled in such cards. At about half past ten, a check would be made for absentees, and their names noted. One or two clerks gave their occupations as superintending correspondence, which might involve little or no effort on their part, but the figure of about sixty employees does not seem excessive at a time when correspondence had to be dealt with without the aid of typewriters.

The routine work of the Association was carried out by these paid

for a national organisation, bearing in mind electoral duties. The Anti-Corn Law League at one time employed thirty solicitors on electoral work alone: see McCord, p. 153. T. M. Ray drew up a memorandum on the staff at the Association for John O'Connell; this shows that there were fifty to sixty employees between 1844 and 1845: see J. O'Connell, Recollections and Experiences, Vol. II, pp. 159-60.

20 This is revealed by the reports drawn up by Ray and Crean in 1846, on the R.A.'s expenditure: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13639, 17 September 1846.

21 Ibid.

22 O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MSS 13622 and 13623.

23 Duffy, Young Ireland, Vol. I, p. 67.

24 O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13628.

employees, but the main decisions, concerning matters of policy, were usually taken in the general committee.²⁵ This committee also chose the chairmen for the weekly public meetings. Provision for such a committee, and a committee of barristers to ensure that all proceedings remained within the law, was made in the rules of the Association, in April 1840.²⁶ Within a month of that date, O'Connell had set up five ad hoc committees for specific purposes,²⁷ and the practice of forming more and more committees and sub-committees continued. Unfortunately, while the reports of the public meetings frequently mention the setting up of such committees,²⁸ they rarely mention whether they were wound up, or continued to sit after they had reported. The Association rules suggested that the general committee should consist of twenty-one members, expanding to forty-one. This principle was kept to throughout 1840, with the numbers standing at forty-one in December when the young barrister, A. R. Stritch, was appointed to it following the death of John Redmond.²⁹ But in May 1841, three more members were added, and Stritch moved that all members who had absented themselves from the committee for more than three months be regarded as having resigned.³⁰ By December 1843, John O'Connell was complaining that there were nearly two hundred members of the committee, and he suggested that no new members should be admitted for a while, and that a ballot be taken for those to attend in future.³¹ It seems unlikely that a very large proportion of the two hundred could have attended the meetings, since the functions of a committee would have been impossible

25 Denis Gwynn, Young Ireland and 1848, Cork, 1949, p. 10.

26 Rules of the National Association of Ireland, Nos. 5 and 6, Pilot, 20 April 1840.

27 Pilot, 29 April 1840.

28 See, for example, F.J., 26 July 1842, 12 November 1844 and 17 February 1846.

29 F.J., 13 October 1840.

30 F.J., 13 May 1841.

31 F.J., 5 December 1843.

to carry out. The large numbers arose in consequence of a practice which developed in the Association, of appointing any new member from the professional classes, or the gentry, to the general committee, even when it was likely that they would not be able to attend its meetings often, because they lived a long way from Dublin.³² As a means of honouring new members,³³ the practice may have been unexceptional, but it renders the task of the historian considerably more difficult, since there is only occasional evidence to indicate which of the members attended meetings with any regularity.

In order to assess which men were most influential in the Association it is therefore necessary to look at other factors. The chairmen of the weekly meetings afford some guide to the influential men, although occasionally a Repealer from the provinces who might never visit the Association again would be offered the chair, if he was a gentleman. It is possible, however, to trace the provincial element among those who took the chair. In only two years, 1844 and 1846, did members from the provinces occupy the chair for more than one-quarter of the meetings, and it was usually much less.³⁴ In general, the chairmen were members living in the Dublin area. Many of them also worked on the committees and helped in the compiling of reports.

II. Writing some years after the events of the eighteen forties, Gavan Duffy claimed that O'Connell had 'undertaken to think for the whole nation...'.³⁵ He also claimed that John O'Connell attempted to bully

³² Francis Gunning, ex-J.P. from Galway, was moved to the general committee: F.J., 31 October 1843. Several non-Dubliners were moved to the committee: F.J., 2 July 1844.

³³ T. W. Moody suggests that it was a particular mark of respect to appoint John B. Dillon and Thomas Davis to the committee when they joined the Association in 1841: see Thomas Davis, 1814-45, Dublin, 1945, pp. 25-6. But in fact, as barristers, it would have been surprising if they had not been appointed.

³⁴ See Table 4.1.

³⁵ Duffy, Young Ireland, Vol. I, p. 15.

other members of the Association.³⁶ What was the position of the O'Connells? Were they as dictatorial as Duffy and other Young Irelanders implied, and if so, how was their authority enforced and maintained?

To answer these questions, it will be necessary to look briefly at the earlier movements with which O'Connell was associated. In the days of the Catholic Association, in the late twenties, O'Connell was already taking a leading role in the public meetings, and also behind the scenes. He frequently moved resolutions appointing the chairman or secretary, and generally acted as spokesman for the committee.³⁷ Other prominent men, such as R. L. Sheil, were of course associated with the work of that body, but O'Connell seems to have held the dominant position, probably because of his great energy and devotion to the cause. As a result of the Clare election and the Emancipation Act, his prestige grew much greater in Ireland, and helps to explain why he was able to dominate all the national movements he founded for the rest of his life.

The case of the Precursor Society, a short-lived body formed in 1838, provides an insight into O'Connell's conduct of national bodies in the late thirties. The Society was intended to be the 'precursor' of a Repeal movement, should England fail to provide justice for Ireland. O'Connell personally drew up the rules for the Society.³⁸ One of its main objectives, which O'Connell confided to his friend D. R. Pigot, the Attorney General, was to organise a display of popular Irish opinion to show the Tories that they would not be tolerated in office.³⁹ O'Connell's

³⁶ Duffy, Four Years of Irish History, p. 272.

³⁷ F.J., 14, 18 and 30 January, 1826; also D. Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell, pp. 193-4.

³⁸ 'Draft of the revised Constitution of the Precursor Society', with O'Connell's alterations: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 3191. Although its own reports refer to the Precursor Association, it was usually called the Precursor Society, by O'Connell and others.

³⁹ O'Connell to D. R. Pigot, 30 September 1838: Papers of the Seventh Earl of Carlisle, Castle Howard Papers, Book 30 (from typescript copy in the possession of Professor M. R. O'Connell).

fear at the prospect of a Tory ministry at this time has already been referred to. In spite of his anxiety to win nation-wide support, however, little popular enthusiasm was displayed for the Society, although several clergymen were enrolled. Procedure at the public meetings (held in Dublin) and in the general committee followed that of the old Catholic Association. In Dublin, O'Connell recruited a number of influential supporters, among them men working for the National Trades Political Union, which had by then already lost much of its working-class character. Some respectable Dublin businessmen also joined.⁴⁰ They formed the nucleus of the general committee. Since the Society did not win much popular support, we may perhaps attach rather less significance to the way in which its business was conducted than to such conduct in the more popular movements: the Catholic Association and the Repeal Association. But the Precursor Society was intended to be a national movement, and did indeed have some local branches, in England as well as Ireland. It may be useful to note some charges levied against O'Connell's role in it.

Within a few months of its formation, this Society was shaken by a quarrel between one of its adherents, Peter Purcell, a Catholic coach-maker of Dublin, and O'Connell. The subject was the management of the funds.⁴¹ A series of letters written by an 'Independent Radical'⁴² made the whole affair public. Purcell's main charge was that O'Connell had lodged the funds in the National Bank at Tralee, a bank in which he had a considerable personal interest.⁴³ He had, moreover, placed them there in his own account. Purcell strengthened his case by not impugning the accounts of

40 Reports of meetings of the Precursor Society, F.J., January and February 1839.

41 The funds amounted to some £2,000 in 1838 and 1839.

42 Letters to a Parish Priest, on Peter Purcell & Precursorism. By an Independent Radical, Dublin, 1839.

43 Ibid., pp. 4-5.

the Society, but simply O'Connell's behaviour in lodging the funds in his own account. It was pointed out that if O'Connell died suddenly, all the public funds would be lost, and that O'Connell could draw cheques without reference to the committee.⁴⁴ Allowing for the exaggeration which may arise when any quarrel between public figures occurs, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the committee was little more than a rubber stamp for O'Connell's decisions. The letters claimed that three public treasurers had been appointed, but O'Connell had privately got himself nominated treasurer.⁴⁵ Members of the mercantile community, it was said, had allowed themselves to be made puppet treasurers to suit O'Connell's convenience.

This case is interesting because it shows that there was a feeling among a minority that national bodies should observe certain rules of conduct, even when the leader was of O'Connell's standing in the country. There was no attempt to accuse the leader of misusing any part of the funds; only his conduct in crediting the funds to an account in his own name was called into question. The 'Independent Radical' asked whether it was wise 'to have the leader of a party elevated into the station of a Dictator, whose opinions and acts were to pass unquestioned and uncontrouled [sic]'.⁴⁶ How was O'Connell able to act in such a way? The writer (it proved impossible to discover his identity) suggested that the men surrounding O'Connell in Dublin were deficient in talent and patriotism;⁴⁷ other contemporaries made similar charges.⁴⁸ There may be some truth in them. But at a time when O'Connell's standing with the

44 Ibid., p. 14.

45 Ibid., p. 16.

46 Ibid., p. 24.

47 Ibid.

48 Notably Edward Dawson, in First Letter to the Tradesmen and Labourers of Ireland, on the Repeal of the Union, etc., Containing an Account of the Rise and Decline of the Trade and Manufactures of this Country, Dublin, 1845, pp. 4-5.

people of Ireland was high, it is difficult to condemn these men out of hand for upholding the Liberator's policies. But if O'Connell tended to assume such personal responsibility for his national associations, then there may be some substance in the later charges of the Young Irelanders.

Turning to the Repeal Association, O'Connell's initial attitude to that body seems to have been very much the same as towards previous movements. In the first public meeting of the 'National Association of Ireland for Full and Prompt Justice, or Repeal', he introduced the rules for the Association, and there is no reason to think that he did not draw them up himself.⁴⁹ Of the first nine official reports issued by the Association, eight were signed, 'Daniel O'Connell, Chairman of Committee'.⁵⁰ It is possible that the rest of the committee contributed to these reports; but some of the Precursor Society reports were personally dictated to Ray by the leader.⁵¹ It is likely that the early committee members of the Repeal Association also played a limited role. These included some well known men, such as Tom Steele,⁵² and O'Neill Daunt,⁵³ but most were men who had been associated with O'Connell's previous movements, without distinguishing themselves for talent and energy. At the weekly meetings, O'Connell enjoyed a similar dominant position. This was noticed by the German visitor Herr Venedey, attending such a meeting in 1843:

'For six hours long was he [O'Connell] not only the person who conducted the business of the meeting, but almost the only person who did anything. He spoke, he read letters, and then spoke again upon these letters, he then counted the contributions that had been received....'⁵⁴

49 The draft rules contain alterations in O'Connell's hand: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 3191 (15 April 1840).

50 First Series of Reports.

51 O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 3191 (1 January 1839).

52 Steele was an eccentric Protestant landlord from County Clare.

53 Daunt, a Catholic convert, was secretary to O'Connell as Lord Mayor of Dublin.

54 Venedey, Ireland and the Irish, pp. 116-7.

This picture of O'Connell's role at the meetings is somewhat exaggerated. He was never the only member to contribute to meetings; men such as Tom Steele, Daunt, and John O'Connell, among others, usually took a vocal part when they were present. But this comment does draw attention to O'Connell's considerable energy and influence.

Even in the later years, when there was substantially more talent available in the Association, O'Connell continued to wield authority over other members, though he took part less often in the committee discussions, and prepared fewer reports. In October 1844, a message from him was sufficient to hold up the publication of a report agreed upon by the parliamentary committee.⁵⁵ Even when he was away from Dublin, he sent instructions and exhortations by letter to be read at the public meeting. He also received from Ray detailed accounts⁵⁶ of what had taken place at the committee, and sometimes an analysis of the public meeting, although an account of these proceedings was also available in the Repeal press. But the proceedings of the committee were not published, so Ray's reports kept O'Connell informed of the internal state of affairs in the Association. His less active role in preparing reports, from about mid-1844, opened the way for the rise of the Young Ireland element.⁵⁷ Much of O'Connell's authority rubbed off on his three sons who became involved in the national movement. In 1840 he groomed his son John to manage the Association in his absence, sending him a series of letters with detailed instructions for his conduct.⁵⁸ These letters are revealing of O'Connell's attitude to the Association: his conception of its essentially limited role. He seems to have regarded its proceedings as mainly a routine matter, which would be carried out well by the paid officials, as

55 J. O'Connell to Smith O'Brien, 25 October 1844, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

56 O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13646.

57 Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell, pp. 224-5.

58 J. O'Connell, Recollections and Experiences, Vol. I, pp. 320-30.

long as there was some adequate supervision in the person of his son.⁵⁹
The routine business consisted mainly of conducting the public meetings, the committees, and the correspondence.

In the early years it appears that it was necessary for a man with some prestige and influence to preside over the affairs of the Association. In a letter to his son John, O'Connell mentioned attempts to annoy Ray and hinder his work. Ray acknowledged his difficulties in the O'Connells' absence when he wrote to O'Connell in May 1841 that John's return to Dublin 'will relieve us from a sea of difficulty', and mentioned 'much mischievous opposition'.⁶⁰ It has not been possible to discover the exact nature of this opposition. It may have been connected with Thomas Reynolds, a supporter both of Repeal and of the Irish Manufacture movement. He was a headstrong and obstinate man, and was involved in an embarrassing quarrel with Father Matthew Flanagan, the president of the Board of Trade for Irish Manufacture.⁶¹ O'Connell and Ray were anxious not to antagonise Fr Flanagan, but Reynolds was an influential and popular man in Dublin⁶² and had to be handled carefully. It appears that the presence of an O'Connell could generally limit personal quarrels between supporters. The young and relatively inexperienced John was thus thrown into a situation where by virtue of his relationship with the leader, he was able, and was expected, to use his authority to override differences between supporters. This early experience of the national movement probably had considerable influence on his attitude to the Young Irelanders later in the decade, when he appears to have seen them as a troublesome set of men

59 O'Connell to J. O'Connell, 6 and 9 September, 1840, in J. O'Connell, Recollections and Experiences, Vol. I, pp. 320-23.

60 Ray to O'Connell, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13646 (21 May 1841).

61 See report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, F.J., 25 May 1841, and J. O'Connell to O'Connell, 9 December 1840, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13645.

62 F.J., 16 March 1841.

out to upset the Association and the O'Connellite influence.⁶³

John quickly gained the confidence of Ray, and came to manage the public meetings with almost the same authority as his father. O'Connell treated John as the leader in his absence, and was apparently satisfied with his son's conduct.⁶⁴ Whenever O'Connell was present at the public meeting, however, there was no question of John's leadership. His father always dominated the proceedings, pushing his sons into the background, which they do not seem to have resented. It has been pointed out that from 1844 onwards, John had considerable influence on his father, and probably imposed his own views on him in certain cases, particularly where educational policy was concerned.⁶⁵ That something like this should have occurred would not be surprising, in view of John's prominent position in the movement. The important thing in this respect is that O'Connell publicly adopted these views, whether his own or John's, preventing any split in the O'Connellite front.

Maurice O'Connell, eldest son of the Liberator, attended no public meetings of the Association until 1844, and seems to have taken little interest in the movement. In that year, however, he attended eighteen of the fifty-five meetings, and threw himself into the Association's work.⁶⁶ Unlike John, he appears to have been content to work for the Association without identifying himself closely with the O'Connellites against the Young Ireland party. This was a considerable achievement, in view of the fact that for a substantial part of 1844, while his father and brother were in prison, he and Smith O'Brien were in charge of the day-to-day

63 For John O'Connell's attitude to the Young Irelanders in November 1844, see J. O'Connell to Maurice O'Connell, 21 November 1844, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13645.

64 O'Connell to J. O'Connell, 9 September 1840, in J. O'Connell, Recollections and Experiences, Vol. I, pp. 321-3, and 11 September 1840, ibid., pp. 323-4.

65 Gwynn, O'Connell, Davis and the Colleges Bill, pp. 38-9.

66 He had earlier organised the Repeal movement in Tralee, for which he was M.P.

running of the movement. A less prominent part was played by Daniel junior, who attended a considerable number of the public meetings from 1843 to 1848, but never won such prestige as his brothers. He was rather overshadowed by them, although he was active on the general committee, and identified with the O'Connellite side.⁶⁷

Among O'Connell's other relatives who rose to prominence in the Association was Edward Brodrick, from Cork. He had been a captain in the army, and began to attend Repeal meetings in 1844. From that time he took an active part in the committee work, where he became a staunch supporter of the O'Connellite views.⁶⁸ Later he proved himself one of the most stern opponents of the Young Irelanders, opposing the adoption of the address of the '82 Club congratulating Smith O'Brien in May 1846,⁶⁹ and opposing the publication of Thomas MacNevin's pamphlet in June of that year.⁷⁰ His ruthless methods with any members opposing the authority of the Association earned him the dislike of the Young Irelanders. To J.E. Pigot he was 'that bully Brodrick',⁷¹ and it seems likely that he used his connection with the family to advance his own position in the Association. His appointment as Head Inspector of the Repeal Reading Rooms⁷² must have come as a blow to the Young Ireland party, whose special interest the rooms had been. Brodrick would be likely to support the view that the Rooms should be brought more closely under the Association's control, while the Young Irelanders hoped that they would retain their independence and close links with their own party.⁷³ The appointment of

67 See Brodrick to O'Connell, 15 May 1846, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13649.

68 In December 1844 he was sent to Liverpool to settle differences between local Repealers.

69 See Brodrick to O'Connell, 15 May 1846, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13649.

70 Martin Crean to O'Connell, 11 June 1846, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13649.

71 Pigot to C. G. Duffy, 4(?) August 1846, Gavan Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5756.

72 Nation, 13 December 1845.

73 Davis to Smith O'Brien, undated (1844), quoted in Gwynn, O'Connell, Davis and the Colleges Bill, p. 16.

such a man was another barrier to the advancement of their views in the Association.

Apart from a great popular following in the country, the O'Connellite group was strong in the Association because it had the support of the Secretary, T. M. Ray. Ray was working for the N. T. P. U.⁷⁴ when O'Connell discovered him and his considerable talents, and transferred him to the Corn Exchange where he acted as Secretary to the Precursor Society and the Repeal Association. He also dealt with the electoral matters which were such an important feature of the national movement. He seems to have combined skill with devotion to O'Connell's interests. The leader's trust in Ray's ability is revealed in one of his letters to John, in 1840. He wrote, 'Attend as much as you can at the Committee. Give your best support to Ray, who is just the best man in his station I ever met with; beyond any comparison the best'.⁷⁵ In another letter, John was urged to mention the state of Ray's health in all his letters.⁷⁶

As the secretary to a national body, Ray carried out his duties with great efficiency, in face of many difficulties. Although there were frequent complaints that members' cards or newspapers had gone astray, or that the Association had failed in some other way, it must be borne in mind that many of the provincial correspondents were barely literate, and had constantly to be reminded to include a full postal address for replies.⁷⁷ The large number of letters which bear Ray's comments, and a brief synopsis of his reply, suggest that the secretary was zealous and hard working.⁷⁸ His interests lay above all with Dublin. He had

74 Duffy, Young Ireland, Vol. I, p. 66.

75 O'Connell to J. O'Connell, 9 September 1840, in J. O'Connell, Recollections and Experiences, Vol. I, pp. 321-3.

76 O'Connell to J. O'Connell, 14 September 1840, ibid., pp. 324-6.

77 See Ray's comments on a letter from J. Foley, P.P., 10 February 1845: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13627.

78 O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13622.

compiled figures on the state of trade, for the N.T.P.U., and in the first years of the Repeal Association he continued to develop this interest. In September 1840, he was chairman of the committee which drew up the report on the effect of the Union on the textile industry in Ireland.⁷⁹ The basis for the report was the work he had done for the N.T.P.U. in 1833-4, and it was his suggestion that a series of reports should be undertaken on the subject of industry.⁸⁰ Certain reports in this series were produced in 1840,⁸¹ and they tended to focus on the capital, reflecting the local nature of the Association at that time. However, unlike some of the members, Ray was willing to extend his interests to the whole of Ireland, although he did remain very much concerned with trade and industry. In this way he became a valuable asset to the national movement.⁸²

When O'Connell was not in Dublin, it was usually Ray who was entrusted with sending him newspapers, letters, and other information about the Association. He personally acted as the Inspector of Repeal Wardens for the province of Munster,⁸³ and it was his idea to extend the system of Inspectors of Wardens,⁸⁴ to increase control over the local Wardens. In the public meetings, of which he attended more than any other member, he read out the correspondence, which he had previously abbreviated. His constant presence at the Corn Exchange, his important

79 Second Series of Reports, Dublin, 1840.

80 Pilot, 19 August 1840.

81 Pilot, 4 November 1840.

82 When the question of a secretary for the Irish League was mooted in June 1848, the Young Ireland sympathiser, Sir Colman O'Loughlen, urged that the post be given to Ray, because of his long service in the national cause, and because of his efficiency: O'Loughlen to Smith O'Brien (June 1848: 2472), S.O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 442.

83 F.J., 2 February 1842.

84 F.J., 9 August 1842.

position as secretary, and O'Connell's trust in him made his views very important. At first, as already suggested, he appeared eager to press the interests of industry, and of Dublin in particular, but his devotion to O'Connell was stronger than any other interest. This is revealed very strikingly in his letters to O'Connell,⁸⁵ particularly when the Young Ireland party had become a vocal and cohesive group, pressing for the adoption of their own views. Ray's letters to O'Connell and John O'Connell in 1846 suggest that he did not intervene in the committee discussions to oppose the Young Ireland views, although he certainly disapproved of them. As secretary, he was usually present at the meetings of the general committee, but seems to have left the task of opposing the Young Irelanders to others. He was probably not one of the paid officials denounced by Gavan Duffy for casting their votes in committee in favour of O'Connell's policies.⁸⁶ But it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Ray tended to identify the interests of the Association with O'Connell's person and policies, and that he identified himself with the 'Guardians of the Association',⁸⁷ in face of the Young Irelanders' claims that their brand of nationalism was the 'right' one. Certainly, the correspondence of the Young Ireland members reveals no personal hostility to Ray, in contrast to that shown to Brodrick, for instance. But his support for the Old Ireland cause must have rendered the O'Connellite party considerably more secure, since he could be relied on to uphold the traditional role of the Association in all his correspondence with the provincial and foreign supporters.⁸⁸

85 See, for example, Ray to O'Connell, 30 April 1846, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13646, and Ray to J. O'Connell, 2 May 1846, *ibid.*, MS 13646.

86 Duffy, *Four Years of Irish History*, p. 159, note.

87 See Ray to J. O'Connell, 2 May 1846, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13646.

88 See Ray to P. Spillane of Limerick, 13 May 1846, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13647.

The secretary was the most important among a number of officials who upheld O'Connell's policies. Others included Martin Crean and Edward Clements, who worked mainly on the electoral aspects of the Association's activities. Duffy has given the impression that all who opposed the Young Irelanders were unpatricotic, self-seeking men who were exploiting their positions to win advancement.⁸⁹ Other evidence suggests that these men were extremely active for the national cause. Crean and Clements did a great deal of work to promote the registration of voters; Crean, in particular, was indefatigable during the periodic registration sessions.⁹⁰ Like many others, they supported O'Connell's views, and were probably influenced by his tendency to identify the interests of the national movement with the Association and his own leadership of it.⁹¹ These paid officials probably shared the aims of other middle class Catholics to advance their own position in society, but that is not to say that their motives for working in the national movement were purely self-seeking. Those members who took office under the Whig government⁹² were not, in general, the paid officials of the Association.

III. It was stated earlier that one of the challenges to O'Connell's policy in the Association came from men representing the 'urban' or 'Dublin' interest. This did not arise out of the local electoral work of the Association. Like most of O'Connell's political organisations, the

89 Duffy, Four Years of Irish History, pp. 279 and 310.

90 F.J., 15 December 1841; Nation, 8 March and 7 June, 1845.

91 See his speech at the public meeting, in F.J., 14 July 1846. In this speech he made it clear that he would not tolerate the challenge given by the Young Irelanders to remain aloof from the new Whig government, and that he expected those who disagreed with his policies to leave the Association.

92 These were mainly the M.P.s who were members of the Repeal Association, including O'Connell's nephew, Morgan John O'Connell (appointed a Poor Law Commissioner), J. J. Bodkin, M.P. for Galway, and R. D. Browne, M.P.

Association combined the functions of a national body with those of a local electoral club.⁹³ The Precursor Society had in theory been separate from the Reform Registry Association,⁹⁴ but many members had belonged to both, and the headquarters of both had been in the Corn Exchange. The electoral work was welcomed and encouraged by O'Connell, and it would have been difficult for him to maintain support from voters in the capital without the strenuous efforts of his electoral workers. Before he lost his seat as M.P. for Dublin City in 1841, he had to pay great attention to the registration of Liberal voters; but even after 1841 there was still the hope that the capital might be regained for the Repeal interest, so that the work of registering friendly voters and attacking the claims of unfriendly ones was as necessary as ever. Electoral activity, therefore, was an integral part of the work of the Repeal Association, to help maintain and build up the parliamentary party. It was not a threat to the 'national' nature of the Association.

It was a different matter when local industrial and economic interests came to the fore during the first two years of the renewed Repeal agitation. At that time, the Repeal Association's claims to be a national body had little foundation. In 1840 the Association did produce two official series of reports,⁹⁵ which dealt with questions of national interest, such as the revenues of the established church, the franchise, and municipal reform. But all but one of the first series were prepared by O'Connell himself, acting as chairman of the committee. Much more representative of the real interests of members at that time are the reports prepared by Ray and Thomas Reynolds, on the state of the textile industries in Ireland (particularly in Dublin) and a comparative study

⁹³ Macintyre, The Liberator, pp. 81-2.

⁹⁴ For meetings of this body, see F.J., September to November, 1839.

⁹⁵ First and Second Series of Reports, Dublin, 1840.

of trade in Dublin in 1800 and 1834.⁹⁶ Only the former was included in the official series of Association reports, which suggests that O'Connell was anxious not to advertise the local interests of the Association in its early days. Several other factors reflect the local nature of the movement at that time. From April 1840 to December 1842, there were 136 public meetings held in the Corn Exchange, with seventy-three different chairmen. Of these, only twelve were non-Dubliners in the sense that they were not normally resident in the Dublin area.⁹⁷ They took the chair a mere fifteen times. The remaining 121 meetings were chaired by men normally resident in Dublin. While it is true that several of the professional men who took the chair during this period also had links with the provinces, they did not act as representatives of provincial interests. Of the ten members who attended five or more of the weekly meetings between 1840 and 1843, all but three were Dublin residents. Two of these Dubliners, Thomas Arkins and Thomas Reynolds,⁹⁸ were particularly closely involved with local Dublin interests.

One of the secrets of the success of the Repeal Association in Dublin in its early years lay in the fact that it began at a time of economic depression. As we have seen, an Irish Manufacture movement was set up to combat the effects of the depression. Three of the most active men at the Association from 1840 to 1843 also took a leading part in the Irish Manufacture movement. They were Reynolds, a Catholic of some local standing, Arkins, a merchant tailor, and Thomas Mooney, an ironmonger. Both Arkins and Mooney produced Irish goods, which should be borne in mind when looking at their support for this movement. Mooney's primary

96 These are mentioned in the reports of the public meetings in Pilot, 9 September and 4 November, 1840.

97 See Table 4.1.

98 The non-Dubliners were O'Connell, J.O'Connell, and W. J. O'Neill Daunt; the Dubliners were Richard Barrett, of the Pilot, Edward Clements, Dr Stephen Murphy, A.R. Stritch, plus Ray, Arkins and Reynolds.

concern was with the effects of the economic recession. In the autumn of 1840 he addressed many public meetings on the subject.⁹⁹ At one he made the point that if all Irish people wore Irish-made cloth, this would provide work for fifty thousand heads of families in the capital.¹⁰⁰ He did not mention the need for Repeal at these meetings, although he was already attending the meetings of the Repeal Association. When the Board of Trade was set up in October 1840,¹⁰¹ he was one of the earliest members, along with Reynolds and some textile manufacturers. He wrote articles for the Pilot on ways to promote the manufacture and sale of Irish goods.¹⁰² By late October, Arkins too had joined the Board. At the same time, all three were members of the Association's general committee.

By the end of October, the Manufacture movement had won a great deal of support among the tradesmen of Dublin, both masters and operatives. Many came forward to join the Board. In the general enthusiasm for this cause, Repeal was in danger of becoming too closely identified with urban grievances. Members such as Arkins, Reynolds and Mooney attended the meetings of the Association, mainly to press the claims of the tradesmen and to praise Irish-made goods.¹⁰³ Mooney attended meetings outside Dublin, held to consider the joint questions of Repeal and Irish Manufacture, and spoke of the need to buy none but Irish cloth.¹⁰⁴ Even the Pilot, which had welcomed the renewal of the Repeal agitation most enthusiastically, as we noted above, saw Irish Manufacture as the key to winning Repeal.¹⁰⁵ In the Association, Reynolds produced his report on

99 Pilot, 2 October 1840 (meeting at Parliament Street), 19 October 1840 (Royal Exchange), and 25 November 1840 (Balbriggan).

100 Pilot, 2 October 1840.

101 See Pilot, 23 October 1840.

102 Pilot, 28 October 1840.

103 Pilot, 30 September, 26 August, and 14 October, 1840.

104 Pilot, 25 November 1840.

105 Pilot, 19 October 1840: see p. 95 above.

the state of Dublin's parishes in November, and then his comparative study on the condition of trade. Mooney took up much of one of the public meetings, reading details of the grants made by the old Irish parliament to Irish manufacturers.¹⁰⁶ All three men acted as unofficial collectors of the Repeal Rent, and brought in substantial sums from the Dublin tradesmen and parishioners. But handing in ten pounds from the poor parish of St Nicholas Without, Mooney made it quite clear that he supported Repeal because he thought only an Irish parliament could revive trade.¹⁰⁷ The audience at the Corn Exchange - many of them unemployed - must have welcomed these efforts, and certainly greeted the arrival of men like Reynolds with acclamation.¹⁰⁸

What was O'Connell's reaction to these events, which amounted to the virtual subordination of the Repeal movement to the interests of the Dublin manufacturers and tradesmen? It may seem surprising that he not only failed for several months to make a strong stand for the supremacy of Repeal as a national issue, but that he also joined the Board of Trade as an honorary member;¹⁰⁹ agreed to wear only Irish-made cloth;¹¹⁰ and talked of permitting no members to speak in the Association unless they too were dressed in Irish cloth.¹¹¹ Considerations which must have weighed with O'Connell when making up his mind on this subject were his position as one of the M.P.s for the city, and the undoubted popular support for the Manufacture movement, not only among the poorer classes, but also among some of the manufacturers too, who naturally had an interest in promoting

106 Pilot, 26 August 1840.

107 Pilot, 19 August 1840. His comments on the condition of the audience at the Association (Pilot, 26 August 1840) suggest that they were suffering from unemployment and the effects of the economic depression.

108 See the report of the weekly meeting, F.J., 16 March 1841.

109 Pilot, 4 December 1840.

110 Report of the weekly meeting, Pilot, 21 October 1840.

111 Pilot, 9 December 1840.

the sale of Irish goods. As one of the M.P.s for Dublin, O'Connell depended on the votes of Liberals, many of them master tradesmen supporting the movement. But apart from this, his status as a popular leader encouraged him to align himself behind the movement, at least in its early stages, when it was winning so much support. Moreover, in 1840 he was still cooperating with the Whig government, and not yet ready to throw himself whole-heartedly into the Repeal struggle. He wrote to John, therefore, on 21 November 1840, that as acting leader of the Association he should do everything in his power to aid the promoters of the Manufacture movement.¹¹² John had already attended some of the meetings of the Board of Trade, but had said in the Association that the questions of Repeal and Irish Manufacture should be kept separate. Yet within a year the Board of Trade had been incorporated into the Repeal movement. It is suggested here that O'Connell saw the value of the Manufacture movement because it aroused popular feeling in Dublin and other towns. However, it seems likely that he also saw the danger of linking Repeal too closely with urban grievances.

For several weeks, late in 1840, during which period O'Connell was usually absent from Dublin, Mooney, Reynolds and Arkins dominated the public meetings of the Association, speaking of Irish Manufacture and rarely of Repeal. John's influence was small compared to their popular appeal. But O'Connell won these men over more firmly to support his policies. He appointed Reynolds as the first Inspector of Repeal Wardens, in January 1841.¹¹³ Also, as the time for the Municipal Reform Act to come into force drew nearer, the temptation for such men to fall into line behind O'Connell's policies became stronger.¹¹⁴ At a meeting of the Association

112 O'Connell to J.O'Connell, 21 November 1840, in J.O'Connell, Recollections and Experiences, Vol. I, pp. 330-32.

113 F.J., 11 January 1841.

114 Reynolds and Arkins both gained positions related to the reformed Corporation.

in the summer of 1841,¹¹⁵ following his failure to win reelection as M.P. for Dublin, O'Connell took the opportunity to blacken the name of the Board of Trade, which was still attempting to remain neutral in politics. He began by admitting that the Board had done good in publishing trade statistics, which he claimed showed that the Union had harmed Irish trade. But he went on to accuse some members of the Board of holding undesirable political views, and claimed that some of them had dismissed employees who had voted for the two Liberal candidates at the recent elections. He implied that no man could serve the Manufacture movement in a proper spirit if he opposed the Repeal cause.

By such methods O'Connell began to undermine popular confidence in the Board. Under Fr Flanagan it was a body where non-Repealers could cooperate with Repealers. In forcing the Board to align itself behind the Repeal party, O'Connell harmed this inter-party cooperation; and by subordinating its main aim to Repeal, he helped reduce the Board to impotence.¹¹⁶ It should be stressed that the Board faced other problems: several of the shopkeepers were accused of selling foreign goods as Irish,¹¹⁷ and some operative members suspected the Board of desiring to control their wages.¹¹⁸ The gradual improvement of the economic situation also reduced the importance of the Board. But as the Repeal Board of Trade, it took second place to the Repeal cause. O'Connell rarely attended its meetings after he had gained his ends, and the promised Repeal funds never materialised. Tories and Liberals who had previously taken part in the Board's work lost interest. By 1843 the movement had lost

¹¹⁵ F.J., 3 August 1841.

¹¹⁶ This was recognised by a contemporary writer: see Dawson, First Letter to the Tradesmen and Labourers of Ireland, pp. 67-8.

¹¹⁷ F.J., 1 July 1841.

¹¹⁸ F.J., 28 January 1841.

ground, and Repeal no longer seemed so closely linked with the question of Dublin's prosperity.

After this period, in spite of the fact that so many of the Dublin supporters of the Repeal Association were businessmen or tradesmen, there were few attempts to make the Association concerned above all with urban economic problems. There were at least two main reasons for this. On the one hand the most influential members of the Association were in a comfortable economic position. The poorer tradesmen and unemployed classes had very little influence there. Only a few operatives received a hearing in the public meetings. Those members who had championed the interests of the lower classes gained offices under the reformed Corporation, which they owed in large measure to O'Connell. This must have deterred them from pressing these matters in face of the leader's hostility. Mooney left Dublin and went to America,¹¹⁹ where he continued to agitate on behalf of the Manufacture movement, and also for Repeal. The second reason lay in the subordination of local aims to national ones from about 1843 until 1847. In 1843 the whole country became involved in the struggle for Repeal, with the exception of parts of Ulster. M.P.s and many more professional men joined; local branches were organised, and as O'Connell threw himself vigorously into the organisation of the monster meetings, local aims and interests faced into the background. In 1844 and 1845, the Association was dominated by members of the professional classes who entered the committees and focussed attention on subjects which, if not always of burning interest to peasants and artisans, were not local ones. It was not until this prominent professional element had seceded from the Association, O'Connell was dead, and the leaders seemed to be groping for a coherent national policy, that Dublin interests could again come to the fore.

119 F.J., 21 December 1841.

In 1847, after the secession, John Reynolds, Town Councillor, and brother of Thomas Reynolds, began to use his influence in the Association to press for its support for the Dublin Corporation in its battle with the government boards to win full civic authority. As a member of the general committee, Reynolds had already contributed to the Association's work by preparing a report on joint-stock banking, in 1844.¹²⁰ In April 1847 the Association agreed to petition parliament on behalf of the Dublin Improvement Bill,¹²¹ which would have given the Corporation much more extensive powers. Following the secession of Young Ireland, the committees were manned largely by the paid staff, and by town councillors and aldermen who naturally had an interest in winning support for this issue. When Reynolds unexpectedly contested Dublin City in July 1847, and was later faced with an election petition, Maurice O'Connell asked the Association to help with his expenses.¹²² As M.P. for Dublin, Reynolds's authority and influence in the Association increased, and he was soon differing with John O'Connell over questions of policy, especially with respect to the conduct of the few remaining Repeal M.P.s.¹²³

This was not the first time that the Association had shown an interest in Corporation affairs, perhaps because O'Connell had high hopes that the reformed town councils would play an important role in the Repeal agitation. As early as 1842, O'Connell himself had moved that the standing committee form a sub-committee to investigate the books of the unreformed Corporation.¹²⁴ In 1847, in the absence of a credible national policy, the Corporation issue gained considerable importance. At a large meeting held in the Royal Exchange, many Repealers attended to hear the

120 Reports of the Parliamentary Committee, Vol. I, Dublin, 1844, pp. 25-43.

121 Pilot, 14 April 1847.

122 Pilot, 17 November 1847.

123 Pilot, 10 May 1848.

124 Pilot, 2 February 1842.

Improvement Bill discussed.¹²⁵ Among them were John O'Connell, Tom Steele, and many town councillors and Poor Law Guardians. Reynolds spoke at length in support of the Bill, and was supported by John O'Connell. Reynolds claimed that the Bill would prevent the frauds and corruption which characterised the activities of the government boards, and would promote good government in Dublin. However, the desire for good government was not the main concern for all parties in the debates about the Bill: the Nation, for instance, opposed the Corporation Bill, not because good government would not ensue, but because the Corporation was not demanding sufficient 'rights'.¹²⁶

In view of the strength of town councillors and aldermen in the committees and at the public meetings at this time, it is clear that the Association would have found it hard to avoid becoming identified with the Corporation over this question. But this identification with a local faction, and concentration on local interests, could not have helped the standing of the Association in the country as a whole at such a time. The United Irishman attacked the Association for bothering about reform for Dublin while famine was engrossing the attention of the rest of the country.¹²⁷ Had O'Connell been in charge of the conduct of affairs, he might have succeeded in overlaying these local concerns with some national plan; but John's leadership was not of the same quality.

A brief look at some figures will illuminate the 'local' and 'national' trends in the Repeal Association.¹²⁸ Dublin town councillors and aldermen frequently took the chair at the public meetings. But in certain years they took this position more often than in others. In 1840 they were chairmen at more than one-quarter of the thirty-five meetings held

¹²⁵ Pilot, 21 April 1847.

¹²⁶ Nation, 8 May 1847.

¹²⁷ United Irishman, 19 February 1848.

¹²⁸ See Table 4.1.

in the course of the year.¹²⁹ From 1841 to 1845 they were chairmen at less than one-fifth of the meetings, and in 1842 and 1844 they were particularly weak in that respect. In 1846, however, they again took the chair at more than one-fifth of the meetings; in 1847, the figure was over one-third; and in 1848 they chaired exactly one-third of the meetings. Conversely, taking provincial M.P.s who were members of the Association, and excluding the O'Connells and any Dubliners who sat for provincial seats,¹³⁰ members of this group acted as chairman on only one occasion during the years 1841 to 1843, but at more than one-quarter of the meetings in 1844, and at almost one-quarter in 1845. In 1846 they took the chair at only about one in seven meetings, and in 1847 at only one in six or seven. Thereafter, attendance by these provincial M.P.s, whether as chairmen or as ordinary members, was negligible. Clearly, these figures can be no more than a guide to the national and local trends in the Association, since it would be misleading to suggest that Dublin town councillors were always concerned with local issues, or that provincial M.P.s always drew attention to wider, national issues. But they do indicate those years when the Association was most dependent on its Dublin members, and those in which it could rely on wider support.

IV. So far, we have looked at O'Connell's conception of the Repeal Association and the factors which enabled him to exercise such authority over that body. We have also examined the aims of men who had certain local interests at heart, and seen how the nature of the Association at certain periods made it possible for these local interests to take on considerable importance there. Finally, we come to consider the case of the Young Ireland group. The aim of this study has not been primarily to

¹²⁹ It should be noted that none of these men became members of the Corporation until 1841.

¹³⁰ These included the Dublin merchant Timothy O'Brien, M.P. for Cashel.

examine questions of ideology. Rather, it has been concerned to look at the organisational structures, personnel and methods of the national movement, and these also continue to form the main interest in this chapter. However, it is hoped that by looking at these questions, some light will also be shed on the views of the different factions contending for influence in the Association.

It may be useful to begin by looking not at the individuals associated with the Young Ireland party, but at the whole professional element within the Association. Most of the leading Young Irelanders were professional men, but of course there were other members of this class working in the Association. From the figures relating to the chairmen of the public meetings,¹³¹ it is apparent that professional men usually took the chair at about one in four or five meetings during the years 1840 to 1846. The only year when there was any significant difference was 1844, when the figure was about one in eight. It is clear, therefore, that professional men were an important element before the Young Irelanders entered the Association (mainly in 1842 and 1843). What role did the early professional members play in the Association? Their electoral work has already been mentioned. In the committees, their professional knowledge was of value in preparing reports on Irish Bills in the House of Commons, and could also assist in steering the Association's course away from a clash with the law. But the early professional members (many of whom had been members of O'Connell's earlier national bodies) did not make any very original contribution to the committee reports. From 1840 to 1843, lawyers' names (excluding O'Connell) were appended to five reports;¹³² names of non-professional men to four,

¹³¹ See Table 4.1

¹³² The lawyers were John Jagoe, barrister, who reported on the Fisheries (Second Series of Reports) and another subject in 1841 (F.J., 13 May 1841); Edward Clements, barrister, who drew up three reports, including one on the Municipal Reform Act (F.J., 27 April, 4 May, and 30 August, 1841). The non-professional men were Michael Staunton, of the Morning

and O'Connell's name was appended to eleven. By contrast, between 1844 and 1846, professional men were responsible for seventeen out of thirty-four reports. Of the rest, O'Connell was responsible for five, John O'Connell for three, Smith O'Brien for three, and Maurice O'Connell for one. This suggests that the scope for non-professional members was small at this time. How did professional men become so important in the committees?

As we saw above, the early professional members tended to regard the leadership of the Association as O'Connell's prerogative, and themselves as his willing helpers. Their attitude is well expressed by a barrister, E. W. O'Mahony, who went on several Repeal missions to the provinces, besides working on the committees and attending more than eighty of the public meetings during the forties. Writing to Ray, who had sent him news that O'Connell wished him to attend the Repeal meeting at Templemore, in October 1841, he replied, 'Were O'Connell to ask me to go to Templemore or elsewhere, at any sacrifice, even at the risk of life itself, I would go with all the cheerfulness of a willing heart, my energies... are devoted to O'Connell and Repeal'.¹³³ Such sentiments now appear grossly exaggerated, but were not untypical of expressions made by others among the semi-official members of the Association. Similar language was condemned by a variety of onlookers, including the Young Irelanders. Their condemnation should not blind us to the fact that those who made such statements usually made a positive contribution to the Association's work, often by attending to the monotonous but necessary

Register, who reported on the financial effects of the Union on Ireland (First Series of Reports); W. J. O'Neill Daunt, who reported on the comparative state of crime in England and Ireland (Second Series of Reports); and Ray, who reported on the effect of the Union on Irish industry (Second Series of Reports), and (with Thomas Reynolds) the state of Dublin's trade: Pilot, 4 November 1840.

133 O'Mahony to Ray, 14 October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623.

tasks of attending local Repeal meetings and promoting the registration of voters. Such men were likely to endorse the leader's conception of the national movement, and the reports they prepared in the early years of the decade (including such subjects as the Municipal Reform Act and the state of Irish fisheries¹³⁴) showed no departure from the scope of the Association as O'Connell saw it.

Turning to the reports issued by the Association in the years 1844 to 1845, it is possible to detect a new development. This consisted of a series of reports,¹³⁵ drawn up mainly by Young Irelanders, which dealt with a far wider range of subjects than had previously been studied. The subjects included the Scinde (India) crisis; the hurrying of Bills through parliament; the opening of Post Office letters; and the establishment of museums of art in corporate towns.¹³⁶ More important was the discussion of the education question, in the second and third General Reports of the Parliamentary Committee. Previous reports had generally been confined to certain traditional grievances, such as ecclesiastical revenues, and the franchise, or had attempted to set out a case to show why Ireland deserved her own parliament. The scope of these reports drawn up by members of the Young Ireland group went far beyond this. It was as if the Young Ireland element in the Association had formed itself into the nucleus of an Irish parliament, and was already considering the wide range of topics which a native parliament might debate.

This change in the direction of the Association took place while O'Connell and John O'Connell were in prison, during the summer of 1844.¹³⁷ Ray was also among those imprisoned. From May to September they were

¹³⁴ See above, note 132.

¹³⁵ See Reports of the Parliamentary Committee of the L.N.R.A. of Ireland, Vols. I-III.

¹³⁶ See Reports of the Parliamentary Committee, Vol. I, pp. 105-30, 294-7 and 299-305; Vol. III, pp. 141-3.

¹³⁷ They were imprisoned following the State prosecutions for conspiracy.

absent from the public meetings and the committees. In February 1844, Smith O'Brien, who had joined the Association in the previous October, moved the establishment of a parliamentary committee.¹³⁸ Its functions were to watch over the progress of Bills in parliament, and to consider other questions which might become the subject of petition to parliament.¹³⁹ Apart from the general committee, it was considerably larger than most of the Association committees, and included all the Repeal M.P.s, plus three or four gentlemen from the provinces. Among the remaining members, more than half were barristers, including the leaders of the Young Ireland group, Duffy, Dillon and Davis, John O'Hagan, M.J. Barry, Michael Doherty and Denny Lane.¹⁴⁰ A few town councillors and other Dubliners completed the committee.

While O'Connell and his son John were in prison, the formal leadership of the Association was shared between Smith O'Brien and Maurice O'Connell. Maurice appears to have been an easy-going man, and more popular with the Young Irelanders than was John. As a Protestant, Smith O'Brien shared many of the views of Davis, the leader of the Young Irelanders, on the nature of the national movement. The two leaders presided over the developments in the parliamentary committee which considerably widened its scope. Davis described the work of the committee in an open letter to the Duke of Wellington:

You, doubtless, have all the publications of the Repeal Society [sic]. Turn, then, my Lord, to the labours of the Parliamentary Committee, their topographical and statistical cards, their reports on domestic and foreign finance and general policy, and on their local institutions.... Recollect, these men worked up their committee and reports while

¹³⁸ Nation, 10 February 1844.

¹³⁹ Reports of the Parliamentary Committee, Vol. I, Introduction, p. v.

¹⁴⁰ F.J., 6 February 1844.

every one seemed absorbed in State Trials; and then say gravely, is there not a regular crop of tacticians, lawyers, legislators, writers, diplomatists and orators, growing or grown up?¹⁴¹

Credit must be given to the Young Ireland group for their talent and energy in producing such reports, but it remains true that they were acting on their own initiative, and without having any representative powers. There is little doubt that had they stood for election to the council of the three hundred, a representative council which had for some time been one of O'Connell's pet schemes,¹⁴² they would have been returned. The Nation had won a considerable circulation in Ireland, and several members of the group were household names. But it is very doubtful whether the parliamentary committee, as constituted while O'Connell and his son were in prison, was representative of more than a minority of predominantly Protestant views in Ireland. As Denis Gwynn has pointed out, the Young Irelanders' views on the education question were opposed by many influential Catholics, particularly the hierarchy, but also by laymen.¹⁴³

By diverting the Association's course from the fairly limited plan envisaged by O'Connell, the Young Irelanders made it very difficult to prevent questions concerning religion and education being discussed there. Their insistence that O'Connell should keep such questions out of the Association appears quite unrealistic in this light:¹⁴⁴ it was wholly inconsistent to exclude education from the range of topics discussed, when that range was already being extended in other directions. It is not the intention here to enter into a discussion of the subjects over which O'Connellites and Young Irelanders clashed. A valuable study of one of these subjects has already been made.¹⁴⁵ Our concern is with the structures

141 Letter to the Duke of Wellington, No. IV, from a Federalist: Nation, 22 June 1844.

142 Venedey, Ireland and the Irish, pp. 94-5; see also Nation, 21 September 1844.

143 Gwynn, O'Connell, Davis and the Colleges Bill, pp. 37-8 and 60-61.

144 Ibid., p. 44.

145 Ibid.

within which clashes occurred. Apparently, the Young Irelanders were able to muster a majority in support of their views on the parliamentary committee,¹⁴⁶ and possibly even on the general committee. During the summer of 1844 their main opponents were R. D. Browne, M.P., Martin Crean, and Dr Nagle,¹⁴⁷ who was appointed editor of the Association reports in October.¹⁴⁸ There had been no similar post in the Association previously, and its creation at this time reflects the anxiety of the O'Connellites at the new developments. O'Connell also used his personal authority to send for the authors of reports, while he was in prison, and discuss their views,¹⁴⁹ which were being presented as the official views of the Association. O'Connell's 'autocratic' conduct thus appears in a more favourable light; for if he did in general undertake to 'think for the whole nation', then it must also be conceded that the Young Irelanders too usurped some of these representative powers. Nor were the Young Irelanders concerned merely to express their views on such subjects as education and religion. To Davis, the practical aspects of his educational policy, for instance, were as important as the theoretical ones. He hoped that the Repeal Reading Rooms would foster the kind of secular, national education which he believed would be a guarantee against a 'Browne and M'Hale government' in Ireland:¹⁵⁰ that is, against excessive interference by the Catholic church in the affairs of the state. Yet many Repealers, besides Archbishop MacHale and John O'Connell, disapproved of this kind of education.¹⁵¹ Duffy's report on the subject was considerably amended

146 See, for example, Davis's letter to Smith O'Brien, 20 August 1844, quoted in Gwynn, O'Connell, Davis and the Colleges Bill, p. 15.

147 This is revealed by the Young Irelanders' letters: see S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434, especially the report of the general committee meeting, 22 August 1844, which gives an indication of the active committee members.

148 M. O'Connell to Smith O'Brien, 7 October 1844: S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I., MS 434.

149 Crean to Smith O'Brien, 29 August 1844: S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

150 Davis to Smith O'Brien, n.d. (1844): S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434 (1293); Same to same, Sat. Evng.: S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 432 (896).

151 O'Connell personally may have been in favour of 'mixed' education: see Gwynn, O'Connell, Davis and the Colleges Bill, pp. 38-9.

by Dr Nagle,¹⁵² since it had recommended the establishment of a separate collection (apart from the Repeal Rent) to promote these Rooms. The O'Connellites feared the loss of control over the Rooms. A deputation visited O'Connell in prison and some agreement must have been reached, for Davis later wrote to Duffy that O'Connell was at least voting money liberally for the Rooms.¹⁵³

The question of education reveals the wide differences in outlook on the nature of the national movement between these two groups. Because the question was so important, it was inevitable that a clash should occur, once the Young Irelanders had gained a position of influence in the Association. They were attempting a new initiative, but there is nothing to suggest that their views were any more representative than O'Connell's; in fact, the reverse is more likely. As a minority group, they achieved a considerable amount. The scope and nature of their reports are evidence of this. There was, however, a limit to the extent of their influence in the Association. We saw earlier that professional men tended to take the chair at about one in every four or five meetings during 1840 to 1846. There was no rise in this figure in the years when the Young Irelanders were an influential force in the Association. They were powerful in the committees but rarely controlled the public meetings. 1845 was the year when they took the chair most often: at five of the fifty meetings, which represents very meagre participation in this influential role.¹⁵⁴ Members of this group did speak more and more frequently at the public meetings, but the 'Guardians of the Association' tended to control the chair. In 1846, O'Connell's relatives took the chair six times, and paid officers three times. Dublin town councillors,

152 Crean to S. O'Brien, 28 August 1844: S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

153 Davis to Duffy, 21 September 1844: Gavan Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5756.

154 See Table 4.1.

approving of O'Connell's policies, took the chair eleven times.¹⁵⁵ But the Young Irelanders chaired a mere four meetings. Of course, they still had a wide audience through the Nation, but by 1846 it was becoming increasingly difficult for them to gain support for their views in the Association. It is hardly surprising that they turned to other institutions such as the '82 Club,¹⁵⁶ in which they could hope to sway the predominantly professional membership. The secession was the necessary outcome of the limitation placed on the extension of their views in the Repeal Association.

V. With the secession of the Young Irelanders, the Association lost much of its talent and originality. That group had at least the virtue of a sense of direction and purpose, which seemed to be lacking in the Association in 1847 and 1848. (It should be pointed out also that once they had left the national body, it took the Young Irelanders themselves some months to decide what their future policy should be). The Association became characterised again by local interests, as we saw above. Apart from the efforts of John Reynolds to win its support for the Corporation interests, Ray produced reports on the religious persuasions of government officials in Dublin, and on the saddlers' trade in the capital.¹⁵⁷ But this time the Association evoked no popular response in Dublin. The falling amounts of Repeal Rent, not only from Dublin but from the whole country, meant that activities had to be curtailed. A further loss of members occurred when two barristers accepted places from the Whig government in 1847.¹⁵⁸ But several of the barristers had been using the

155 See Table 4.1.

156 See Chapter 6 below.

157 Pilot, 23 April and 13 October, 1847.

158 Of these, O'Dowd gained a place as Magistrate of Police in November 1846 (Nation, 21 November 1846); after his appointment, however, he did not cease entirely to come to Repeal meetings.

national movement to indulge their purely professional interests. The third volume of Reports of the Parliamentary Committee, drawn up in February 1846, revealed that subjects such as the Law Circuits, the Law of Mortmain, and the Service of Process Bill had all formed the basis for reports, and they were drawn up by those barristers who remained in the Association after the secession.¹⁵⁹

In July 1848, the Association agreed to suspend its meetings,¹⁶⁰ in the prospect of a reconciliation of Repealers, which in fact never fully took place. For over a year, no meetings of that body were held, until October 1849, when John O'Connell thanked the 'committee' which had kept the Association alive during the interim period.¹⁶¹ This committee almost certainly included Ray,¹⁶² and a few dedicated Dublin Repealers, who had given O'Connell strong support during the early forties, without being very active on the committees. Such men turned up promptly at the revived meetings, among them Thomas Strong, a Repeal Warden from St Thomas's parish, John Rafferty, a Warden from Williamstown, James Nugent, Town Councillor from Kingstown, and others who lived in Dublin city.

The revived meetings resembled the first meetings of the Association more than nine years previously. There was the same lack of interest from the country at large, and the same devoted support from a handful of Dublin supporters. The 1849 reports recalled those issued in 1840, with subjects including the church temporalities, the franchise, and several on the distress caused by the famine.¹⁶³ The essential difference was that in

159 These reports were drawn up by J.L.Fitzpatrick, B.A.Molloy, and J.K.O'Dowd, barristers: see Reports of the Parliamentary Committee, Vol. III, pp. 156-8.

160 The place of the Repeal Association and the Irish Confederation was to be taken by the Irish League: for its formation, see F.J., 12 July 1848.

161 F.J., 9 October 1849.

162 Ray had reluctantly taken another job by the time the Association was revived in October: see F.J., 16 March 1849.

163 These were the work of John O'Connell and other committee members: see F.J., 23 and 30 October, 20 November, and 4 December, 1849.

1849 there was apathy towards the Repeal question among the lower classes in Dublin, and therefore the Association was unable to collect the funds from the capital which had enabled it to keep going and develop a national policy in the early years of the decade. It is interesting to note that John O'Connell referred several times to the question of Irish manufactured goods, and stressed that only an Irish parliament would help Irish industry.¹⁶⁴ But in 1849 the people of Dublin did not respond to this call.

Conclusion

It is clear that the Repeal Association was the vehicle for more than one interpretation of the national movement. It began after the fashion of O'Connell's previous associations, formed with a fairly limited purpose in mind. Initially in Dublin it won the support of men from a wide variety of social classes. In the case of the lower classes, this was partly because there was a severe economic depression. For the wealthier men, O'Connell's national associations were vehicles for the advancement of their religious, political and social aims. From the autumn of 1840 until the autumn of 1841, when the Board of Trade was incorporated in the Repeal movement, the most active members of the Association stressed the question of support for Irish trade and industry, and forced national issues into second place. Because the capital formed the basis of support for Repeal when other parts of the country were apathetic, it was always possible for the Association to take on a local, rather than national character. The Association had these local tendencies in 1840-1842 and again in 1847-1848. They can be traced by looking not only at the subjects discussed in the public meetings, but also at such factors as the proportion of non-Dubliners taking the chair at the public meetings.

¹⁶⁴ F.J., 23 October 1849.

On the question of Young Ireland, it is hoped that this chapter has shown that by the end of 1845, this group had become unable to extend its influence in the Association much further. They had done much to widen the scope of the committee system, by contributing to the broad range of reports which were issued in 1844 and 1845. These reports had to some extent, as Davis recognised, changed the Association from the body with limited aims which O'Connell had founded, into something more like the movement which the Young Irelanders desired. But the Young Irelanders' views were not shared by the majority of O'Connell's most important supporters in the comfortably-situated Catholic middle classes and the clergy. It was hardly surprising that there should be a reaction when the Young Irelanders' views were put forward as the official policies of the Repeal Association.

This reaction took two forms. First, 'O'Connellites' generally controlled the chair at the public meetings. Secondly, following such appointments as that of Dr Nagle as editor of the reports, and Captain Brodrick as Inspector General of Repeal Reading Rooms, it became clear that the O'Connellites would in future be able to prevent the Young Irelanders putting their ideas into practice. From about the end of 1845, when Brodrick received his appointment,¹⁶⁵ it must have been clear to the Young Irelanders that their prospects in the Association were very poor. Thomas Davis, the man who inspired much of Young Ireland's ideology, died in the autumn of 1845. The famine began about the same time. These events tended to obscure the Young Irelanders' dilemma, and the secession was delayed for about six months. It seems likely that in the summer of 1846, O'Connell decided to force the Young Irelanders to comply with his concept of the national movement, or leave the Association, when he formulated his 'peace resolutions'. However, this should not be allowed

¹⁶⁵ Nation, 13 December 1845.

to obscure the fact that well before then, the Young Irelanders had reached the limits of their influence in the Association.

TABLE 4.1 CHAIRMEN OF THE WEEKLY PUBLIC MEETINGS OF THE REPEAL ASSOCIATION, APRIL 1840 TO DECEMBER 1849*

	1840	1841	1842	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849
No. of meetings recorded in the Press ¹	35	54	47	78	55	50	52	53	54	9
<u>Chairmen</u>										
O'Connell's ² relatives	0	1	0	6	7	1	6	5	3	0
Paid officers ³ of the R.A.	3	9	4	4	2	6	3	1	0	0
Dublin T.C.s and Aldermen	9	10	6	9	6	7	11	20	8	0
Professional men	8	12	10	17	7	11	13	2	3	0
Young Ireland ⁴	0	1	1	2	3	5	4	0	0	0
Non-Dubliners ⁵	3	9	3	15	23	15	15	12	2	0
Provincial M.P.s ⁶	0	1	1	1	15	12	7	8	1	0

* There was a break in the meetings from July 1848 to October 1849; they were usually held weekly, but occasionally more often, as, for instance, in 1843.

- 1 Occasionally the issue of a paper with the report of the meeting was found to be missing from the files of the National Library. Where this occurred, the report was sought in other papers, where possible. The papers used were the Pilot, Freeman's Journal, and Nation.
- 2 These included John, Maurice, and Daniel O'Connell Junior (O'Connell himself did not take the chair). Also Charles O'Connell of Ennis, Captain Brodrick, and M. R. Leyne.
- 3 W. J. O'Neill Daunt, Tom Steele and Edward Clements.
- 4 Smith O'Brien, Davis, Dillon, Duffy, Captain Bryan, T. F. Meagher, T. MacNevin and Mitchel. With the exception of Smith O'Brien, members of this group are also included in the 'Professional men' group.
- 5 In some cases it proved difficult to distinguish between non-Dubliners and Dubliners. In cases of doubt, Dublin residents were listed as Dubliners.
- 6 Excludes Smith O'Brien, O'Connell, his relatives and Dublin residents holding provincial seats. These men also appear in the 'Non-Dubliners' group.

CHAPTER FIVE

DUBLIN CORPORATION AND THE REPEAL MOVEMENT, 1841-50

Defending the Dublin Corporation in 1845 against a charge of failing to balance its books, John O'Connell described it as 'a body so pure, - so intimately representing the heart, and feeling, and spirit of the Dublin Repealers'.¹ In 1849, an editorial in the Nation claimed, 'The Repeal members, the Repeal corporations,... are a visible and standing reproach to Ireland'.² What was the role of the Dublin Corporation in the national movement? What characteristics made it so valuable in an O'Connell's eyes, and so reprehensible to the Young Irelanders? These are some of the questions with which this chapter will be concerned.

We will begin by looking at the social background and religion of the Repealers on the Dublin Corporation during the period 1841-48, and then consider what lay behind the support for Repeal of so many members of the Corporation. Many had worked with O'Connell during the twenties and thirties. We will assess the significance of the Municipal Reform (Ireland) Act for the Repeal agitation, and examine the attitudes of Repeal town councillors and aldermen on such questions as religion and O'Connell's leadership.

The question of the powers given to the corporations under the 1840 Act is an important one. The lack of any extensive civic powers left the way open for Corporation members to spend their time debating political rather than municipal affairs. Reasons will be suggested for the failure of the Repealers on the Corporation to support Young Ireland, and for their general staunch support for O'Connell and the Repeal Association after the secession. Finally, we will consider the effects of the

¹ Report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, Pilot, 3 September 1845.

² Nation, 8 September 1849.

further instalment of municipal reform, passed in 1849, on the support for Repeal in the Corporation.

I. If we look at the figures for the number of Repealers on the Dublin Corporation during the forties,³ it seems clear that in terms of members who spoke and voted in favour of Repeal, the national movement found much support there. After 1841, the year in which the first elections under the Municipal Reform (Ireland) Act⁴ were held, there was never less than a two-thirds majority of Repealers over Liberals and Tories combined. This pattern hardly changed until the 1850 elections (following another measure of municipal reform) when the Repealers mustered a total of only fourteen in a body of sixty members.

What kind of men were the Repeal town councillors and aldermen? To begin with, they were comparatively wealthy men. Candidates for the Corporation had to own one thousand pounds' worth of property, and inhabit a house rated at twenty-five pounds.⁵ All the Liberal and Repeal candidates had to be prepared to subscribe fifty pounds towards their election expenses in 1841.⁶ In their first year of office, two Repealers were among the seven members who each subscribed five hundred pounds towards helping the Corporation out of its financial difficulties.⁷ Besides being wealthy, the Repealers on the Corporation were also almost entirely Catholics. In no year from 1841 to 1850 were there more than two Protestants among their ranks.⁸ This contrasted sharply with the Liberal members: in 1841, six of the eleven Liberals were Protestants.

³ See Table 5.1, on p. 206.

⁴ This Act was passed in 1840.

⁵ John J. Webb, Municipal Government in Ireland, Mediaeval and Modern, Dublin, 1918, pp. 243-8.

⁶ F.J., 25 August 1841.

⁷ F.J., 2 April 1842; the Repealers were Timothy O'Brien and Cornelius McLoughlin.

⁸ See Table 5.1.

Thereafter, the numbers of Protestant Liberals gradually fell; but so did the overall number of Liberals. Conversely, the Tory members were Protestants, with the exception of John Mackey, a Catholic barrister returned in 1841. In terms of occupation, the great majority of Liberal-Repeal members were engaged in trade. In most years, such men made up about four-fifths of the whole Liberal-Repeal group.⁹ The professional element among that group was small: less than one-ninth at the beginning of the period, although it rose to about one-fifth towards the end. By contrast, the Tory members usually included a majority of men from this background. Only from 1841 to 1843, and in 1845, were they outnumbered by men with different occupations; from 1847 to 1849, professional men outnumbered others by two to one. The Repealers, then, tended to be Catholic businessmen, in a wide variety of trades, among which the provision trade figures largely. The 1841 elections, for instance, saw the return of eight grocers, all but one on the Repeal side.¹⁰

That the Repealers on the Corporation should have formed such a homogeneous group in terms of religion and occupation requires some explanation. In dealing with this question, it may be more helpful to ask not, why did members of the Corporation support the Repeal movement, but why did Repealers enter the Corporation? To answer this, it is necessary to look again at the nature of the Repeal movement, its aims and methods, and - particularly important - the state of the Dublin Corporation before its reform in 1841.

II. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Protestant domination in almost all spheres of Irish life was practically unchallenged. But from the time of the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, a change in

⁹ See Table 5.2, on p. 207.

¹⁰ The other was a Liberal.

Catholic attitudes came about. The meetings held to consider this question brought Catholic aspirations into the open. Writing to an ex-Lord Lieutenant about one of these meetings held in Dublin in 1818 or 1819, an Under Secretary, William Gregory, expressed his shock at such a scene in this 'heretofore Protestant city'. The change appeared to Gregory 'as sudden as the shifting of the scenes in a harlequin farce, and when in a few months the glorions memory is banished from the Mayoralty house, and the Lord Mayor calls an aggregate meeting to support the Catholic claims, is it too much to expect the elevation of the host in the streets before the expiration of the year? But I trust the day of triumph is far off'.¹¹

Although the campaign for Emancipation and the emergence of Catholics as a strong political force must have seemed sudden and threatening to Protestants, the gains won by the Emancipation Act were by no means fully satisfactory to Catholics.¹² After 1829 there were few offices from which Catholics were legally excluded; but it was still rare for men of this persuasion to be appointed to the positions opened to them. Local government, too, remained a Tory stronghold. Men were returned to the unreformed Corporation by various Dublin guilds. An Act of George II's reign had provided that no person should be elected to the Common Council of Dublin who was not a member of a guild. But in practice the guilds had ceased to be representative of their trades, and they deliberately excluded Catholics. For instance, the guild of merchants excluded members of those mercantile institutions which admitted Catholics, such as the Linen Hall Committee, the Committee of the Commercial Buildings, and the Directors of the Corn Exchange.¹³ This

11 Quoted in R. B. O'Brien, Dublin Castle and the Irish People, pp. 52-3.

12 Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell, p. 195.

13 P.P., 1835, XXVII, pp. 79-198: Municipal Corporations (Ireland). Appendix to the First Report of the Commissioners. Report on the City of Dublin, Part 1 (p. 96).

meant that such institutions were without representatives on the Corporation, in spite of the fact that the prohibition against Catholic participation in the Corporation had been repealed in 1793. Liberal Protestants, too, were denied a share in the government of their city.¹⁴ The unreformed Corporation was made up exclusively of Tories. Until 1842 it was also common for many public meetings in Dublin to be convened through the Protestant church wardens.

In these circumstances, it hardly seems surprising that many Catholics, aspiring to participate in the government of the city, and indeed in all the posts for which they were legally eligible,¹⁵ should have sought to put an end to Tory domination. In this campaign they had a leader in Daniel O'Connell. When we examined O'Connell's concept of the national movement in an earlier chapter, we saw that while he was prepared to organise an Association committed to Repeal of the Union, he was also greatly concerned to win 'justice for Ireland'. On more than one occasion he claimed that if justice was done, then he would give up the struggle for Repeal. Among the reforms he most wished to see were those which would give Catholics full equality with Protestants in the life of the country. His campaign for Emancipation was perhaps the best example of this preoccupation; but he also fought for Irish municipal reform, not only because he hoped it would improve the government of Irish towns, but because he believed that Catholics were entitled to participate in such institutions.¹⁶ The campaign against tithes which took up much

14 P.P., 1835, XXVII, p. 101.

15 R. B. O'Brien gives a list of the civil rights and offices for which Catholics were legally eligible by the 1830s: see Dublin Castle and the Irish People, p. 45.

16 See, for example, Five Reports of the Committee of the Precursor Association, edited by Edward Bullen: Third report, on the Parliamentary Franchise enjoyed by Freemen in Cities and Towns, pp. 24-30 (p. 30). O'Connell was the chairman of the committee which drew up these reports.

of his attention in the thirties was also designed to remove the injustice by which members of the Catholic church helped support the church of the minority.

O'Connell's desire for reform, which he shared with many English and Irish Liberals, was therefore linked with a desire to see Catholics playing their due part in the life of Ireland. Behind this desire there always lay the possibility that if justice was not done, he would press for a Repeal of the Union. In Dublin he found considerable support for such policies. This was partly because the capital contained a sizeable population of middle class Catholics who had grown wealthy through trade, and who were in just the position to feel that exclusion from positions of responsibility and honour was an intolerable slight. Men from this background rallied round O'Connell when he set up the Catholic Association, with headquarters in Dublin, in the eighteen twenties. Indeed, several of his most ardent supporters in the forties had first cooperated with him through the Catholic Association. Among these men were at least four Catholics who also became members of the reformed Corporation: John Keshan, grocer, Francis Tuite, miller and baker, Cornelius McLoghlin, gentleman, and C. P. Gavin, a corn and flour factor. Some of them had acted as local 'Wardens'¹⁷ (forerunners of the Repeal Wardens) and collected the Catholic Rent. After Emancipation was gained, political activity among men of this class did not die away. In the thirties most Dublin parishes had a Liberal club, which agitated such measures as municipal reform, extension of the franchise, and the abolition of tithes.¹⁸ The clubs usually cooperated closely with any movements led by O'Connell;¹⁹ their interests at that time were very close. The clubs

17 Tuite was one town councillor who had been a Warden in the twenties; he was also a treasurer of the St James's Liberal Club: see F.J., 20 February 1838 and 16 October 1849.

18 F.J., 1 and 2 February, 1838.

19 For examples of such cooperation, see F.J., 20 January 1838, Pilot, 20 April 1840.

also helped O'Connell by promoting the registration of voters, and their efforts became particularly useful when O'Connell stood as one of the M.P.s for Dublin City in 1832.²⁰ It is interesting to note that many of the officers and active members of these clubs were chosen to stand for the reformed Corporation in 1841.²¹

The Liberal club members also paid great attention to the personal career of O'Connell. Besides helping to register voters in his interest, they appointed men to collect funds towards his election expenses in 1838.²² Together with leaders of the National Trades Political Union, the members of the clubs were among those on whom O'Connell could always count to promote any of his movements in the capital. This element of personal support for the Liberator continued even at times when there was little enthusiasm for his movements in the country as a whole. Early in 1839, when the Precursor Society was winning little support in Ireland, and his personal status seemed to be waning, some Dublin parishes held meetings to affirm their 'confidence in O'Connell'.²³ When the leader called for meetings to address the new Lord Lieutenant (Lord Ebrington) in 1839, most parishes responded quickly.²⁴ It was in this tradition of close cooperation that many Dublin parishes held meetings in the summer of 1840 to support the newly formed Repeal Association.²⁵ In general, the same men who ran the Liberal clubs were most active at these parish meetings, and several of them were appointed as the first Repeal Wardens and

20 Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell, p. 204.

21 These included Francis Tuite, C. P. Shannon, C. P. Gavin (St James's ward), James Moran, John Power, James Fagan (St Catherine's ward), John Keshan (St Audeon's), P. Gardiner (St Paul's) and Ignatius Callaghan (St Andrew's).

22 F.J., 20 April 1838.

23 F.J., 11 and 18 January, 1839.

24 F.J., 6, 8, and 9 April, 1839.

25 Pilot, 13 and 29 July, 1840, and 12 and 28 August 1840; F.J., 22 July 1840.

collectors of Repeal Rent.²⁶ Thus the mere fact that parish meetings were held in mid-1840 to support the Association would not by itself indicate that there was widespread support for Repeal outside this group of fairly wealthy Catholics. But the considerable sums coming in to the Association from the Dublin parishes later in the year are evidence that Repeal also had wider support there.

III. O'Connell renewed the Repeal agitation in April 1840. A little over one year later the first elections were held under the Municipal Reform (Ireland) Act. The coincidence of these two factors was to have important consequences for both the nature of the reformed Corporation, and the Association. For our purposes, we must confine ourselves to the consequences for the Association and the national movement.

These first elections for the reformed Corporation took on an added significance for Repealers, because earlier in the year O'Connell had narrowly lost his seat as M.P. for Dublin City, which he had held for most of the previous decade. The Tories gained both the city seats, which was a blow to Liberals and Repealers alike. Moreover, the Whigs had gone out of office, and were replaced by the Tories for the first time for seven years. O'Connell had cooperated fairly closely with the Whigs, and had approved of much of their programme of reform. Cooperation had yielded fruit in the form of a certain amount of patronage which found its way to Catholics and Liberal Protestants.²⁷ With Thomas Drummond as Under Secretary at Dublin Castle there was a brief period when the administration was seen to be acting with impartiality between the two religious groups.

²⁶ Among such men who later became members of the Corporation, or gained positions with that body, were J. Moran, T. Leech, Thomas Arkins, and Thomas Reynolds.

²⁷ Sir Michael O'Loughlin, a Catholic barrister, was made Solicitor General in 1835: see Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell, p. 208.

All these developments seemed threatened by the return of the Tories to office; and as we have seen, the prospect of their return was greeted by O'Connell with something like horror. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that one of his reasons for setting up the Repeal Association was his hope that it would show the Tories that the Irish people would not tolerate them in office.²⁸ Throughout the early part of 1841, O'Connell's letters reveal a preoccupation with the coming parliamentary elections. In May, his friend and electoral agent P. V. Fitzpatrick suggested that 'the motive supplied by the prospective construction of patronage connected with the new Corporations will be found to act powerfully in Dublin and all the towns'.²⁹ Fitzpatrick hoped that Liberal anxieties about the way a Tory government would deal with questions of patronage would help rally them round O'Connell and shake off their prevailing apathy.³⁰

It is difficult to judge whether this fear was an important factor in the parliamentary elections held in July. Several men who later gained posts with the reformed Corporation were active in collecting funds for the Liberal candidates,³¹ and generally supported their return, but as they were all long-standing supporters of O'Connell they would probably have been active in any case. Their efforts were not sufficient to prevent the Tories winning the two city seats. However, the energy and enthusiasm among O'Connell's supporters in preparing for the first municipal elections, held in October 1841, was substantial. This was in contrast to the apathy which had greeted the first elections for Poor Law Guardians in 1839, although in these elections too, Catholics had the chance to win a

28 O'Connell to Archbishop MacHale, 8 April 1840, in Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell, Vol. II, pp. 235-7.

29 Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 12 May 1841: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13646.

30 Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 8 May 1841: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13646.

31 F.J., 5 and 6 July, 1841. The men involved were Thomas Arkins, J. L. Arabin, T. Reynolds, W. Fitzpatrick, J. A. Curran, T. L. Synott, and J. Power.

considerable share of the votes. It is difficult to account for this apathy, but the Poor Law was not popular in Ireland, and moreover there was no entrenched Protestant interest to be overcome, since the Poor Law was new to the country.³² But in 1841, preparations for the municipal elections began as soon as the parliamentary elections were over,³³ although the former were not due to be held until October. This suggests that the loss of the city to the Tories was a strong spur to the Liberal-Repealers. The resources of the Repeal Association were enlisted in the campaign; the activities of its members who were in the legal profession, and the work of Ray, the secretary, were particularly useful.³⁴ The National Trades Political Union also took part in the preparations.³⁵ Many of its leading members were strong supporters of O'Connell. At the end of July, the ward and parish Liberal clubs began to meet to prepare for the elections.³⁶

The burgesses were allowed to choose the candidates for the Corporation, but O'Connell personally presided over the arrangements. He acted as returning officer in the ballot for candidates held at the Repeal Association headquarters.³⁷ At a meeting held at the Corn Exchange, he then proposed a series of resolutions. The substance of these was that it would be considered a dereliction of duty on the part of a Liberal voter if he failed to support all four candidates for his ward. The candidates were to pay fifty pounds each towards the legal expenses of the contest,

32 Even so, the D.E.M., 15 July 1839, carried a report that the Catholics had won a majority at the elections.

33 F.J., 23 July 1841.

34 Ray answered queries about electoral procedure from many quarters in Dublin and elsewhere: see O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13622.

35 As noted above, this body was dominated by middle class men, some of whom had a personal interest in the elections.

36 F.J., 28 July 1841.

37 F.J., 21 August 1841. Those who had the municipal vote were £10 householders, who had paid the necessary local taxes liable in Dublin.

which sum not being paid, another candidate would be chosen. Each ward was urged to appoint counsel to attend the revising courts.³⁸ It is difficult to judge whether O'Connell adopted this somewhat dictatorial position because he believed that only strict discipline would secure the return of Liberal-Repealers, or whether by stressing the need to support all the candidates chosen, he hoped to prevent out-and-out Repealers among the burgesses from abandoning a Liberal candidate. He had publicly called for the return of a Repeal 'Common Council' as an instrument in his plan for winning Repeal.³⁹ But at no time did he insist on candidates taking a Repeal pledge; indeed, as the figures show, eleven Liberals who were not Repealers were elected to the Corporation in 1841.⁴⁰ Why did O'Connell fail to call for a Repeal pledge? The answer probably lies in his close cooperation with Liberals in the past, which he was clearly unwilling to abandon altogether. Thus in November 1841, when an election was due for a town councillor to represent the Linen Hall ward, O'Connell supported James Perry, a Liberal Quaker.⁴¹ This would suggest that at that time, he was influenced by a negative hostility to the Tories, as much as by a positive desire to build up a strong Repeal party.

If the leader's professed aim (to build up a strong Repeal party) and his practical actions (supporting non-Repealers as candidates for the Corporation) appeared inconsistent, the results of the first municipal elections vindicated his elaborate preparations. Of the fifty-six Liberal-Repeal candidates, forty-five⁴² were elected for the wards for

³⁸ F.J., 25 August 1841.

³⁹ D.E.M., 7 August 1840.

⁴⁰ See Table 5.1.

⁴¹ F.J., 17 November 1841.

⁴² For most of the year October 1841 to October 1842, the Liberal-Repealers held 47 seats on the Corporation (Table 5.1). O'Connell had been returned for two wards; his second seat went to a Liberal Protestant, James Perry. Sir Edward Borough, a Tory, resigned his seat in February 1842 and was replaced by a Catholic Repealer, Michael Nolan.

which they had been the official candidates, and one for another ward.⁴³ Of the defeated men, eight were beaten by Tories, and only two by other Liberals. The discipline had been very successful.

In view of the considerable feeling in favour of Repeal, it is remarkable that O'Connell was not criticised by his followers for failing to press for the introduction of a Repeal pledge. Had he set such an example, the weight of his influence must have had a considerable effect on the nature of the Repeal element on the Corporation. However, without criticising his conduct, his followers nudged the Repeal Association in the direction of a pledge. In August 1842, a meeting of the Linen Hall ward on the subject of the annual municipal election was held, with Alderman John O'Neill, a Repealer, in the chair. A Repeal Warden, Charles Brett, moved that unless it was a question of endangering the return of a Liberal as against a Tory, 'they would not vote for any candidate to represent them in the Town Council that was not a practical Repealer, and who would not pledge himself occasionally to attend the weekly Repeal meetings'.⁴⁴ The idea of a pledge was upheld by the chairman, but no mention of it was made in the Association. In November 1842, however, Town Councillor John Reilly, a barrister, introduced a resolution there which urged supporters to vote only for Repealers at elections.⁴⁵ O'Connell was clearly reluctant that this motion should pass, but he gave it his support in view of its obvious popularity. Why should he have been so reluctant? Again, the answer appears to lie in his close links with the Liberal party, for even while giving his support to the motion, he urged exclusion from the principle involved for Sir William Somerville, a Whig who was about to contest an Irish seat. O'Connell described Somerville as

43 See the lists of candidates, published in F.J., 19-28 August and 26 October, 1841, and the election results, F.J., 28 October 1841.

44 F.J., 4 August 1842.

45 F.J., 8 November 1842.

'thoroughly honest', and wanting nothing but adhesion to the Repeal cause. The audience agreed to this, with loud cheering. But the leader may also have been influenced by the desire to avoid seeming partisan, and show that the Association could generously allow members of other parties the opportunity to gain places.⁴⁶

O'Connell's attitude to the question of a pledge did not change in later years, although some of the burgesses pressed more and more strongly for the exclusion of non-Repealers from the Corporation.⁴⁷ He was particularly saddened by having to reject Richard O'Gorman,⁴⁸ a Liberal colleague of long standing, as a candidate for St Audeon's ward in 1843. The foremost Repealers of that ward passed a resolution in January of that year expressing their 'unalterable determination' not to support any candidate who did not declare himself a practical Repealer.⁴⁹ What consequences did this half-hearted policy have for the nature of the Repeal Association? The first elections saw the return of thirty-six men who were at least nominally Repealers. But in the year following the elections, few Repeal members of the Corporation came along to the Association's weekly meetings. In the Association, John Reilly, T.C., one of the few who attended regularly, complained that of the town councillors 'who sought for the honour of having seats in the council of the Corporation, and who were elected because they were steady Repealers, scarcely any of these gentlemen had, since their election, shown their face in that room'.⁵⁰

..... There was a certain amount of truth in Reilly's charge. Apart from

46 A favourite Tory charge against the Repealers was that they prevented men with different political views from gaining places, for instance, on the Corporation. Isaac Butt referred to the matter in his speech in the Corporation against Repeal: see Butt, Repeal of the Union: The Substance of a Speech, pp. 66-7.

47 F.J., 4 August 1842 (report of a meeting of the Linen Hall ward).

48 O'Gorman, a woollen merchant, remained aloof from the movement led by O'Connell, but in 1847 adhered to the Irish Confederation. His son, of the same name, was one of the leaders of the Confederation.

49 F.J., 10 January 1843.

50 F.J., 18 February 1842.

his own attendance at nineteen meetings in that year, no other member of the Corporation attended more than six meetings; only ten of the thirty-six Repeal members, including Reilly and O'Connell, attended any meetings at all that year. But it would be wrong to place too much emphasis on this. First, as we have seen, there was no Repeal pledge at work at the time of the first elections. Therefore it was not strictly true to claim that members had been returned because they were Repealers, although this may have been an influential factor for the burgesses. Secondly, if few Corporation members put in an appearance at the Repeal Association, this did not necessarily mean that they were apathetic or hostile to the movement. The reverse appears to be true, since they played a very active role in the wards, as Repeal Wardens, collectors of Repeal Rent, and leaders at local Repeal meetings. At least fourteen of the thirty-six acted as Repeal Wardens; one was among the list of the first 'Volunteers' for Dublin city.⁵¹ Several of those who gained posts under the Corporation also acted as Wardens, including Thomas Reynolds, Thomas Arkins, James Hughes and J. J. Addy. It would be incorrect, therefore, to regard these men as self-seekers who were ready to betray the national cause as soon as they had gained a position of honour or reward. This interpretation, which the Young Irelanders tended to put forward,⁵² overlooks the fact that for such men, Catholic and national aims were closely identified. During the forties, attendance by Corporation members at the Association meetings increased; and even men with salaried posts did not cease to attend. Arkins attended fifteen of the weekly meetings in 1846, thirty-three in 1847, and nineteen in 1848.⁵³ J. A. Curran, another office holder,

51 This was C. P. Gavin, of St James's ward: F.J., 14 April 1841.

52 Duffy, Four Years of Irish History, pp. 310 and 319-21.

53 Arkins remained a particularly staunch supporter of 'Old Ireland', and used his influence to hinder Young Ireland meetings: see Arkins to O'Connell, 26 September 1846, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13649.

attended more meetings at the end of the decade than at the beginning, William Ford, the Town Clerk, attended frequently in 1847 and 1848.

O'Connell fully sympathised with the aspirations of Catholics to take up posts which were open to them; if he had not, he would hardly have won such support from those Catholic middle class men who were in the position to benefit from them. Although he personally had rejected offers of government posts,⁵⁴ he attacked the Young Irelanders for their stand against soliciting places, because, he claimed, 'they prevented many men from coming amongst them who could not afford to do without office and employment'.⁵⁵ In the case of the Dublin Corporation, at any rate, it appears that civic office holders found their posts compatible with active support for Repeal.

IV. The reformed corporations thus became vehicles for the Repeal agitation. This had not been entirely unforeseen. The Whigs had been the advocates of reform: many Tories had advised the total abolition of the Irish corporations, realising that reform would probably mean Catholic domination of them. In the House of Lords, Sir Charles Wetherell claimed that the Municipal Reform Bill 'is the precursor, almost inevitably, of the ulterior measure of repeal'.⁵⁶ Isaac Butt's comments before the passing of the Act seem particularly relevant to the dilemma which faced the government in 1843, when the corporations, led by Dublin, debated the question of Repeal:

... you give them [the reformed corporations] their meetings, which no law can suppress without a violation of all constitutional principle, which may defy the government and

54 Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell, p. 208.

55 Pilot, 3 August 1846.

56 The Case of the City of Dublin. The Speeches, delivered by Counsel at the Bar of the House of Lords in Defence of the City of Dublin, on the Motion for Going into Committee on the Irish Municipal Reform Bill, Dublin, 1840, p. 69.

agitate the public mind, without the power of Parliament to interfere.... Suppose this corporation is directed by some active and unscrupulous popular leader, under whose control they direct all their energies to the repeal of the Union, or the destruction of the Irish Church. You have established this body in the metropolis, where all the discontented and ambitious spirits of the country naturally congregate....If such should be the character of a metropolitan corporation, ...holding out such temptations to ambition, is it possible to over-estimate the extent of the mischief it will do?⁵⁷

This picture does less than justice to the Repeal members of the Corporation. As we have seen, they entered that body as part of their struggle to assert the rights of Catholics to participate with Protestants in the institutions of the country. Their support for Repeal was another stage in this struggle. It is difficult to reconcile Butt's description of mischievous and discontented men with the active and energetic role played by the Repeal members, which involved giving up a considerable amount of time and occasionally money for the cause.

Before going on to examine this role, however, it will be useful to consider the Dublin Corporation debate on Repeal, which was to have some significance for the Repeal movement, both in the capital and in the provinces. In February 1843, O'Connell, as an alderman, initiated a debate in the Corporation, on Repeal. There was a very full attendance on the occasion, and O'Connell spoke for over four hours. He claimed to be speaking not merely as a member of the Corporation, but as 'the advocate of Ireland and Irishmen'.⁵⁸ He thought it impossible that there should

57 Isaac Butt, A Speech Delivered at the Bar of the House of Lords, on Friday the 15th of May 1840, in Defence of the City of Dublin; on the Order for Going into Committee on the Irish Municipal Reform Bill, London, 1840, pp. 89-90.

58 Discussion on the Repeal. The Only Impartial and Correct Report of the Important Discussion in the Corporation of Dublin, on the Motion of Alderman O'Connell, to Petition Parliament for a Repeal of the Union, Dublin, 1843, p. 3.

not be a majority on the Corporation in favour of his motion, since Dublin was 'a city which has suffered such master grievances by the Union'. He asserted nine 'propositions' - a mixture of legal and economic reasons for the restoration of the Irish parliament. At the same time, he claimed that he fully recognised the advantages of some connection with England. In order to allay the fears of Protestants, O'Connell took care to play down the claims of Catholics, and stressed that he was not simply pleading on their behalf. Repeal, he claimed, was more important than Emancipation, and he repeated the statement he had first made in 1810: 'I abandon all wish for emancipation if it delays the Repeal.' He painted a glowing picture of the prosperity which he believed had characterised Ireland when she had her own parliament, and which would return when Repeal was achieved.⁵⁹

The chief reply to O'Connell was made by Alderman Butt, still one of the most prominent defenders of the Tory position. Amongst the arguments he put forward against Repeal was the claim that Ireland would become a provincial backwater, and he pointed out that O'Connell had not referred to any proposals for a workable Irish constitution in his speech. He also showed concern for Protestant interests if Repeal was achieved. O'Connell had said that the Irish House of Lords would probably be predominantly Protestant, and could protect those interests; Butt pointed out that O'Connell had campaigned in England for the abolition of the House of Lords.⁶⁰ Butt himself was to come to the point where he believed that an Irish parliament would not necessarily be harmful to Protestant interests; but in the early forties it appears that he and many others feared for their prospects in the event of Catholics holding

59 Discussion on the Repeal, pp. 11-15.

60 Ibid.: Speech by Alderman Butt, p. 42.

a majority in an Irish parliament. Butt also claimed that the Corporation would be acting irresponsibly in adopting a motion in favour of Repeal, since there was little support for it in the country.⁶¹ This was not true, of course: the missions to the provinces of late 1842 had helped to lay the basis of a lasting system of Repeal organisation. The Repeal Rent had risen significantly at that time, although it had not approached the spectacular sums which were to come in during the summer of 1843.

Other speeches were made in the debate by Thomas Kirwan, a merchant, for the Repeal side, and by the barrister R. R. Guinness against the motion. At the end of the debate, the voting was forty-one to fifteen in favour of Repeal.⁶² Eleven Tories voted against the motion, as did four Liberals, while four more Liberals were absent. The voting indicates the strength of Repeal support among the Catholic members; only one of the forty Catholic members present voted against Repeal. This one man was Peter Purcell, the mail coach owner, who, as we have seen, had clashed with O'Connell in the Precursor Society over the handling of the funds. Of the sixteen Protestants, only two voted for Repeal: John L. Arabin, a man of property who had been one of the early members of the Repeal Association, and Robert McClelland, a Volunteer of 1782. All those absent were Catholics.

The debate on Repeal in the Dublin Corporation was of considerable significance for the national movement. There had already been advances in the organisation of supporters in the provinces in late 1842, and much sympathy for Repeal existed among the Catholic members of the provincial corporations. Following the Dublin Corporation debate, most of the provincial corporations followed suit and debated Repeal,⁶³ with

61 Discussion on the Repeal, p. 47.

62 F.J., 3 March 1843. This report contains a detailed account of the voting, but appears to omit two Repeal councillors who must have been present: Kirwan and Staunton.

63 Nation, 11 March and 10 April, 1843.

gratifying results for the national leaders. These debates publicly marked the commitment of majorities in the Irish corporations to work for Repeal.⁶⁴ This gave added weight to the movement and seriously alarmed the government.⁶⁵

V. The Dublin Corporation debate publicly committed the Repeal members to supporting Repeal. However, this marked only a stage in their work for the national movement. They had been attending the meetings of the Repeal Association since 1840. Although they attended rather infrequently in the years 1840 to 1842, from 1843 onwards they came in greater numbers and more often. As few as eight members attended any meetings in 1845, but that figure rose to thirty-three in 1846, and thirty-two and thirty-five in 1847 and 1848 respectively. At these meetings they occasionally acted as chairman, usually upholding O'Connell's authority and leadership. Secondly, while few of them contributed to the Association reports (apart from Alderman Michael Staunton of the Morning Register⁶⁶), at the ward level they played an extremely important role. As the local leaders of Catholic and Liberal society in Dublin, they were usually prominent at Repeal meetings held in the wards and parishes.

From about 1842, Catholic town councillors and aldermen arranged meetings calling for 'Confidence in O'Connell', whenever the leader or the Association was under attack. The most notable occasions were in 1843,⁶⁷ at the time of the Clontarf Proclamation, and in 1846,⁶⁸ when the Young

64 Belfast was one corporation which did not follow this general pattern.

65 Peel to Lord de Grey, 12 June 1843. Peel wrote, 'How shall we deal with Corporate Bodies? How shall we prevent them petitioning for Repeal, discussing Repeal with the public admitted, and lending whatever authority their Corporate Character can lend to an organised Corporate Agitation for Repeal to be substituted for the Agitation directed by the Repeal Association?': Peel Papers, B.M. Add. MS 40478.

66 Staunton contributed considerable statistical knowledge to the reports.

67 See reports of such meetings in F.J., 13, 16, 18, 19 and 21 October, 1843.

68 F.J., 16 June 1846; Pilot, 13 July, 3 and 5 August, 1846.

Irelanders seceded from the Association. Again, when O'Connell and some of his supporters were tried for conspiracy in 1844, the Repeal members of the Corporation, including Timothy O'Brien, the wealthy merchant, turned out in their robes to accompany him to court.⁶⁹ In June 1844, the Lord Mayor, four aldermen and nine councillors travelled to London to present an address to the Queen against the imprisonment of these Repealers.⁷⁰ In the preparations for the celebration of the release of the prisoners in September, members of the Corporation played a prominent part. In the same year, no-one could be found to second a motion in the Corporation moved by Dr Maunsell, a Tory councillor, praying the Queen to hold a session of parliament in Dublin once in three years.⁷¹ Such a compromise of their principles was rejected by the Repealers.

Perhaps most impressive in the mid-forties was the participation of forty-two members of the Corporation in the levée held by O'Connell in May 1845, to commemorate the imprisonment. Deputations came to pay their respects to the leader from thirteen Irish corporations and town commissions. At the levée, Smith O'Brien read a solemn pledge to the effect that neither intimidation nor corruption would prevent them from seeking the Repeal of the Union. This was taken by the whole assembly, raising their hands and saying, 'We are pledged - pledged for ever!'⁷² In practical terms, aldermen and town councillors aided the cause by providing bail for O'Connell and the other men charged with conspiracy in 1843 and 1844;⁷³ and men from the Corporation came forward with bail.

69 Nation, 22 June 1844.

70 Nation, 28 September 1844.

71 Nation, 20 January 1844.

72 History and Proceedings of the '82 Club (2nd Grand Commemorative Banquet), pp. 6-7.

73 Nation, 21 October 1843. Of fourteen men whose names were given as having provided securities for the prisoners, eight were Dublin Corporation members.

to help Charles Gavan Duffy at the end of the decade, in spite of their dislike of the Young Ireland movement.⁷⁴

So far, it has been suggested that support for Repeal from members of the Corporation was closely linked with their traditional support for O'Connell's political aims and achievements, and their desire to advance the position of Catholics. More light may be shed on these attitudes by looking at a statement made by John Reilly, the Catholic barrister noted above as one of the most active and radical Repeal town councillors. He paid a remarkable tribute to O'Connell in August 1846, a month after the secession of the Young Irelanders. His speech, which won loud cheers from the Association audience, began by declaring that Repeal had advanced, yet the leader was being attacked. Claiming to speak for the audience, he said:

... we are O'Connellites, and not without reason; every page of our country's history for the last fifty years affords us a reason - everything we see around us strengthens us in our faith in him (hear). If I see a Catholic or a Dissenter's church rising in beauty in our city, I recollect the time when men were obliged to worship God in back lanes, and in the improvement I see the handywork of O'Connell (loud cheers). If I see my fellow citizens enjoying the right of franchise and other popular privileges, I recollect the time when citizens of worth and wealth, who were taxed to support the government... were denied a vote in the administration of their municipal affairs, and in the improvement I see the handywork of O'Connell (cheers). When I see myself trusted by my fellow citizens and elevated to the position of a representative I call to mind the time that my father, with ten times my worth... was denied the power which I enjoy, and in this change I see the handywork of O'Connell (cheers).... To him therefore I openly proclaim my fealty, I glory in that fealty. I announce myself "John Reilly, a follower of

74 Nation, 15 July 1848.

O'Connell".... He is my leader... Call me what you will - Liberal, Reformer, Repealer - I embody in these all that an Irishman ought to be, I am an O'Connellite (loud cheers). This may be slavery - if so, the chains have been forged by reason, and I feel them light as the bonds of love.⁷⁵

This passage reveals the extent to which Reilly admired O'Connell's achievements in the various fields which he mentions. The applause and cheers his speech called forth suggest that others shared his views. It is clear that the speaker believed strongly in the right of Catholics and Dissenters to participate in government and local affairs; that is, that the Protestant 'ascendancy' should be ended. It might be argued that if such changes as Reilly mentioned had come about, there was no need for Catholics to join a Repeal movement. But in fact, although certain improvements had taken place, the ascendancy remained in force in many fields, including the police, the judiciary, and the civil service. Even where Catholics were legally entitled to participation, the spirit of government or the entrenched interests of Protestants prevented them entering fully into such positions.⁷⁶

For men like Reilly, then, Catholic and national aims were closely linked. This could lead to inner conflicts, when national aims and Catholic aims seemed to clash. At the beginning of the decade, there was little evidence of this conflict. The Tories were in office, and few Catholics had any hopes that their position would advance as a result of a Tory government. O'Connell certainly had no such hopes. The existence of a Tory government made his followers more eager to adhere to Repeal. From 1841 to 1843 the government did nothing to make Repealers think that a change was contemplated. During this period, support for Repeal among

75 Report of the weekly Repeal Association meeting, Pilot, 26 August 1846.

76 See William Smith O'Brien, Speech... on the Causes of Discontent in Ireland, delivered in the House of Commons, on the 4th July 1843 (second edition), Dublin, 1843, p. 17.

members of the Dublin Corporation grew steadily. It was not until the mid-forties, when the Tory government (uncharacteristically, according to most Repealers' theories) began to introduce reforms for Ireland, that a conflict between Catholic and national aims became apparent. The question of education was to prove one of the most divisive for Repealers. Peel's scheme for extending university education in Ireland provoked open clashes between the Young Irelanders, who welcomed the scheme as likely to provide the kind of secular education they favoured,⁷⁷ and such Repealers as John O'Connell and Archbishop MacHale, who would rather have gone without university education than subject Irish Catholic youth to the dangers to faith and morals which they felt were inherent in the provisions for the Queen's Colleges.⁷⁸ In attacking the O'Connellite policy, the Young Irelanders failed to comprehend the strength of these purely Catholic aims in the Repeal movement.

The Repeal members of the Corporation tended to side with the O'Connells on these questions affecting Catholics. At the end of 1845, Alderman Butler of St Patrick's ward presided at a meeting of the parishioners of SS Michael and John, to consider the Colleges Bill.⁷⁹ Town Councillor Taggart was also present. The Catholic Synod was praised for condemning the Bill. Members of the Corporation were even more active at the time of the Charitable Bequests Bill, which was seen by many Catholics as an attempt to place Church property under State control. Late in 1844 most of the Dublin parishes met to consider the Bill.⁸⁰ In St Michan's parish, Town Councillor Sheridan took the chair, and

77 T. Davis to Smith O'Brien, (Saturday), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 432 (896).

78 See J. O'Connell to Smith O'Brien, 30 July 1845, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 435.

79 Nation, 6 December 1845.

80 P.J., 4 December 1844.

Councillors Andrews and Murphy were also present.⁸¹ In other parishes, too, Corporation members took a prominent part in denouncing the Bill. In the Repeal Association, John Reilly suggested that the Association should have taken up the measure long ago, since the object of its framers was to divide the clergy from the people.⁸² In other ways, too, the members of the Corporation displayed their concern over religious matters. When a Protestant was appointed as principal school mistress to the North Dublin Poor Law Union, in May 1844, the Liberal clubs of the Linen Hall and Four Courts wards held meetings on the subject.⁸³ It was claimed that the principal would be in charge of 188 Catholic and only thirty-eight Protestant children. Alderman Grace, Town Councillors Andrews, Murphy, John McKenna and Tobyn were present at the meeting, as well as Thomas Arkins and some Catholic Poor Law Guardians. Later, St Paul's and the Post Office wards decided to meet on the same question.⁸⁴ These examples reflect the close links between Catholicism and nationalism among the Corporation members.

VI. From the middle of the decade, the Nation became critical of the Dublin Corporation, not only because of its political attitudes, but also because it claimed a decline in the standards of conduct and speeches had taken place.⁸⁵ Another observer blamed the Corporation for distributing patronage on party lines, although he admitted that, in doing so, the Corporation was merely following the precedent set by the unreformed Corporation.⁸⁶ How did the reformed Corporation conduct its affairs? What was the significance of this conduct for the Repeal movement?

⁸¹ F.J., 4 December 1844.

⁸² Nation, 18 January 1845

⁸³ F.J., 13 May 1844.

⁸⁴ The intention of these parishes to meet is reported in ibid.

⁸⁵ Nation, 30 August 1845.

⁸⁶ See the document drawn up by Edward O'Brien of Dublin for T. N. Redington, 21 April 1847, S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P./1847 05227.

In many ways, the reformed Corporation was in a different position from its English counterparts, particularly in respect of its civic powers. Butt had spoken with foresight when he told the House of Lords in 1840, 'You invest this new body with all the prestige of ancient authority. Is it to be expected that a corporation you have enthroned in dignity will sink down into insignificance and do nothing?... If they do not become political agitators, they have nothing to do.'⁸⁷ Members of the reformed Corporation found themselves with little authority over the boards which effectively ran the city. As Butt had suggested, this did not tend to make them content with their lot, but to start a campaign to win full rights for the Corporation. But even without the powers which might induce a public body to act in a responsible manner, the Repeal majority seem to have acted, initially at least, with a considerable sense of responsibility in many fields. To begin with, they cut by about half the salaries for the Corporation officers, including that of the Lord Mayor. Under the old Corporation he had received four thousand pounds a year, including emoluments;⁸⁸ under the new, he received just over two thousand pounds,⁸⁹ and this was cut to two thousand pounds in 1846. A proposal was made by a Repealer and a Liberal to reduce it to £1,160 in 1848.⁹⁰ Thomas Reynolds, the city marshal, received only £250 per annum, and he complained in 1849 that he had actually lost by taking the post.⁹¹ He noted that the Corporation was still paying his predecessor

⁸⁷ Butt, Speech Delivered at the Bar of the House of Lords... on the Order for Going into Committee on the Irish Municipal Reform Bill, p. 77.

⁸⁸ William B. Gannon, The New Corporator's Guide, Containing an Enumeration of the Various Offices of the Present Corporation of Dublin...and Such Parts of the Bill as Relate to Dublin..., Dublin, 1841, p. 10.

⁸⁹ The Borough Fund of the Corporation of Dublin, in Account Current with Denis Costigan, Treasurer, Commencing the First September, 1845, and Ending Thirty-First August, 1846..., Dublin, 1846, p. 6.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the Dublin Corporation, Book 14, 7 July 1848, p. 272.

⁹¹ T. Reynolds to Sir William Somerville, 15 June 1849, S.P.O. O.P. 1849/6.

of the unreformed Corporation the sum of £444 7s 6d in annual compensation for the loss of his office. Financially, then, Repealers had little inducement to seek office, and it must be concluded that the majority probably sought office because of the status involved, rather than for financial reasons.

As we saw, at the time of the first elections, there was no Repeal test imposed on candidates, and eleven Liberal members who were not Repealers were returned. During the forties, the Liberal members were gradually squeezed out of the Corporation, their numbers falling to two in the 1844 elections, and thereafter remaining negligible until the end of the decade. The fall in numbers of Liberal members was due to pressure from the burgesses rather than O'Connell, but this pressure was strong enough to induce a Protestant Liberal who had been Lord Mayor to resign.⁹² It seems likely that the men elected as Repealers in the later forties were as sincerely enthusiastic and energetic for Repeal as those elected in 1841. Myles Tobyn, grocer, who was returned in 1845, had long been a supporter of O'Connell and had welcomed the renewal of the Repeal agitation as early as 1840. The barrister J. A. Curran had a similar record. The Liberal Peter Purcell was replaced by the Repealer Dr John Gray, who had supported the Repeal Association from its foundation.⁹³ George Roe, the Liberal who resigned his seat owing to pressure from the Repealers in his ward, was replaced by the Repealer John Healy, a grocer who had been attending Repeal meetings since 1840. To this general rule there were few exceptions. It is only fair to add that one of the Repeal members, Alderman Staunton, personally claimed that standards in the Corporation had fallen by 1848. But he only charged the new members

92 This was George Roe, a distiller: see Nation, 6 July 1844.

93 The F.J., of which Dr Gray was proprietor, had welcomed the renewal of the Repeal agitation in 1840. In 1839, the paper had demanded for Ireland the right to legislate for herself: see F.J., 9 September 1839.

with a smaller sense of responsibility, not with lack of support for Repeal.⁹⁴ On the question of distribution of patronage, a frequent Tory charge against the Corporation was that this was done on party lines. This charge was answered by John Reynolds, Town Councillor and Repealer. He claimed that because the Municipal Reform Act had allowed for compensation to be paid to Protestant officers who had lost their jobs as a result of the Act, the reformed Corporation actually paid out more money to Protestants than to Catholics. Speaking at a meeting of the Corporation in 1847, he claimed that while the old Corporation had employed not a single Catholic, under the new, fifty Protestant employees and pensioners (including a number of Tories) earned £5,367, and eighteen Catholics earned £2,485.⁹⁵

Although there were predictions from several quarters that party feeling on the Corporation would be very strong, such forecasts were not completely borne out by events. There was a certain amount of wrangling between Repealers and Tories (and between Repealers and Liberals in the early years), but Isaac Butt testified to the kindness which he had in general met with while a member.⁹⁶ The poor reputation of the Corporation in the late forties was at least partly due to the increasing concentration on matters which seemed trivial, because the Corporation had so few powers. By limiting the powers of the reformed corporations, the Municipal Reform Act had ensured that they would become little more than debating chambers. After a further instalment of reform had been granted in 1849,⁹⁷ complaints about standards were heard less often. On

94 M. Staunton to Sir William Somerville, 17 January 1848, Clarendon Papers, Bodleian Library, MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 27.

95 Pilot, 27 January 1847.

96 Minutes of the Dublin Corporation, Book 14, p. 129: letter from I. Butt to the Corporation, 16 November 1847.

97 Nation, 6 October 1849.

the whole, therefore, the conduct of the reformed Dublin Corporation was not as bad as some of its critics claimed. But the absence of full civic powers ensured that political issues would continue to be debated, in the absence of more usual subjects.

VII. Turning to the reaction of the Repeal members to the Young Ireland movement, several factors suggest that Young Ireland was unlikely to win support from that quarter. We have seen that such men had traditional ties with O'Connell, and great respect for him, and also that they were eager to see Catholics coming forward to play a full role in all spheres of national life. In the eyes of the Repeal members of the Corporation, the Young Irelanders committed at least three important errors. First, by seceding from the Association, they rejected the leadership of O'Connell. This was bad enough, but they also rejected his methods, since they demanded the right to have recourse to physical force, even if only as a last measure.⁹⁸ Thirdly, they rejected the concept of Repealers seeking to gain office, whether under the government (unless it was prepared to leave Repeal an open question) or in some instances under the Association itself.⁹⁹ Since Corporation members were in many cases the very men who had been working for years to enable Catholics to participate in offices which were closed to them, it is not surprising that no member of the Corporation joined the Irish Confederation, set up by the Young Irelanders in 1847.

There was a strong reaction from the Repealers on the Corporation to the secession of the Young Irelanders in the summer of 1846. Their attendance at the weekly meetings of the Association immediately

⁹⁸ See the report of T. F. Meagher's speech in the Repeal Association, Nation, 1 August 1846.

⁹⁹ One Young Irelander called place-hunting the 'true point of difference between the two schools' [Old and Young Ireland]: T. F. Meagher to Smith O'Brien, Monday morning (1847), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 440 (2203).

increased.¹⁰⁰ In 1845, only eight members of the Corporation attended any of the weekly meetings. In 1846, up to the secession, twenty-two members attended, and twenty-six after the secession. While only the fairly devoted members had attended in 1845, at an average of about eight meetings each, in the first half of 1846 the twenty-two members attended about three meetings each, and after the secession, until the end of the year, from three to four meetings each. Like the clergy, the Corporation members did not have much to say in the Association about the secession; but at a local level they were active, convening meetings to express confidence in O'Connell, and to increase the Repeal Rent.¹⁰¹ It appears therefore that the sympathies of the Corporation members lay with O'Connell. To this general rule there were few exceptions. At a meeting in September, Town Councillor Loughnan did urge a reconciliation between the two groups of Repealers,¹⁰² but he was not speaking in terms of a capitulation by the Repeal Association.

After the secession, the Nation was less guarded in its criticism of the Corporation. Besides complaining about the conduct of debates, the newspaper found fault with what it called the 'British and Imperial' tone of the Corporation.¹⁰³ This criticism arose over a Corporation banquet attended by the Whig Lord Lieutenant, Lord Clarendon, where, according to the Nation, the Viceroy was treated with too much deference. Certainly the editor would have disapproved of the tone of the Lord Mayor's letter to Lord Clarendon after the dinner. Jeremiah Dunne, the Lord Mayor of the time, was a Catholic, a Repealer, and had been a supporter of O'Connell since the thirties. He wrote of his 'gratification at your

100 Seven Corporation members attended the meeting in the second week of August: see Pilot, 12 August 1846.

101 F.J., 16 June and 4 July, 1846; Pilot, 13 July and 3 August, 1846.

102 Nation, 26 September 1846.

103 Nation, 15 January 1848 (editorial).

flattering approval of my entertainment, which you have honoured with your presence', and claimed 'it shall be my desire during this my year of office to cooperate with your Lordship in carrying out as far as my humble abilities permit your Lordship's views for the improvement of this country.'¹⁰⁴

Lord Clarendon realised that the Catholics on the Corporation were very susceptible to flattery. In fact, he seems to have understood the strong desire of Catholics in general to be taken notice of, especially in matters of status and position. In a letter to the Duke of Bedford,¹⁰⁵ he mentioned that Catholics had been very pleased when the Charitable Bequests Act set out the social status of Catholic bishops: an archbishop ranked above an earl. This susceptibility was deeply suspect to the Young Irelanders. They feared that through renewed cooperation with the Whigs, Catholics might improve their position to such an extent that Repeal would not be felt necessary. However, this was to underrate the aims of the Catholic Repealers. They were easily flattered, but they were not likely to be satisfied simply by the outward signs of respect. Thus, members of the Corporation continued to support the Repeal Association in 1848, although they became extremely cautious when the prospect of a rebellion appeared. As Lord Clarendon noted, in July 1848 the Corporation hesitated to appoint special constables in the city, which might have had the appearance of a factious opposition to the law.¹⁰⁶

After the prospect of a rebellion had receded, the Dublin Corporation refused to include a demand for Repeal in its address to the Queen when she visited Ireland in 1849,¹⁰⁷ although the Cork Corporation did so. . . . The Repeal press gave a cynical interpretation to the knighting of

¹⁰⁴ Jeremiah Dunne to Clarendon, 15 January 1848: MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 10.

¹⁰⁵ Clarendon to Bedford, 15 January 1848, *ibid.*, Box 81(2).

¹⁰⁶ Clarendon to Lord John Russell, 22 July 1848, *ibid.*, Letterbook 3.

¹⁰⁷ *F.J.*, 2 August 1849.

Timothy O'Brien, the Lord Mayor, following the Queen's visit.¹⁰⁸ But this apparent lapse did not represent an abandonment of the national cause. In October 1848, the Corporation held a special meeting and petitioned for mercy for Smith O'Brien.¹⁰⁹ Some Repeal members protested when the Corporation thanked the Lord Lieutenant for the 'temperate, able and humane manner' in which he had used his special powers to deal with the late insurrection.¹¹⁰ When taunted by a Tory member that since the Repeal Association was now 'dead', there could be no objection to the Corporation meeting on a Monday afternoon, Alderman Keshan replied stoutly that the Association was not dead or even sleeping: only the prevailing poverty of the country prevented the renewal of agitation for Repeal.¹¹¹ When the Association was revived in the autumn of 1849, it won very little support outside Dublin, but some members of the Corporation did attend its meetings.¹¹² In July of that year, several Repeal members urged the Corporation to address the Queen asking for the immediate release of Smith O'Brien and other political prisoners.¹¹³ One member urged that the address should include a request for a local parliament. Those members most in favour of a strong stand on Repeal at this time were the relative newcomers: James Loughnan, elected in 1844, Dr Ryan, elected in 1847, and John Martin, a coal merchant, elected in 1848.

VIII. The elections of 1850 were the first since the Municipal Reform Act had come into operation, to show a significant drop in the number of

108 See the editorial, 'Where is the Repeal Party?', Nation, 23 March 1850.

109 Minutes of the Dublin Corporation, Book 15, 16 October 1848, p. 330.

110 F.J., 2 January 1849.

111 Ibid.

112 These included Francis Tuite, Alderman Moran and Alderman McLoghlin. Many other Repealers on the Corporation joined the short-lived Irish Alliance, formed in November 1849: see F.J., 21 November 1849.

113 F.J., 24 July 1849.

Repealers on the Dublin Corporation. It is doubtful whether more than fourteen members elected in that year were Repealers; save for the first elections held in 1841, that figure had not previously dropped below forty.¹¹⁴ Was this change due to the burgesses' disillusion with Repeal, with the Repeal members, or to other factors?

Before we can assess the reasons for the change, we must note the provisions of the Dublin Improvement Act, which was passed in the summer of 1849. From 1841, the Corporation had possessed little civic authority. The various boards, many of whose members were appointed by the government, continued to control the water supply, street planning, cleaning, and other civic functions.¹¹⁵ Neither ratepayers nor members of the Corporation had been satisfied with this state of affairs. As early as 1845, the Corporation had worked to get its powers extended, in a general reorganisation of the taxation and administration of the city.¹¹⁶ Certain ratepayers, including some wealthy Liberal and Tory merchants, also desired to see more efficient local government, but were opposed to the Corporation gaining more extensive control.¹¹⁷ They preferred to vest authority in two or three commissioners, to be appointed by the government. Two Bills for the improvement of local government in the capital were introduced into parliament by these different parties in Dublin, but they made slow progress. At last in 1849 the government itself produced a Bill,¹¹⁸ which vested in the Corporation most of the property formerly controlled by the boards, together with arrears of

114 See Table 5.1.

115 These boards are described in McDowell, The Irish Administration, pp. 190-92.

116 See the correspondence between the Paving Board and the government, July, 1845, in S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1845/0 7352.

117 Frederick Jackson, solicitor, to the Lord Lieutenant, 9 December 1848, in S.P.O. C.S.O. R.P. 1848/A 11623: Jackson promoted one of the Bills for improving the government of the city.

118 See F.J., 6 June 1849.

rates, and the fiscal powers of the Grand Jury. The Bill also provided for changes in the ward boundaries, in an attempt to make each ward more evenly representative of both rich and poor areas.¹¹⁹ This Bill was passed, and received the Royal Assent in August 1849.¹²⁰

The Act came into operation following the elections held in the autumn of 1850. In the period leading up to these elections, the Nation welcomed the changes to be brought in by the Act, and proclaimed, 'We believe that fully two-thirds of the new Council will be efficient and respectable citizens...'.¹²¹ The implication that earlier members had not been respectable was quite unjustified: as in Gavan Duffy's later writings on the period, men who remained faithful to O'Connell and his policies were portrayed as somehow disreputable.¹²² However, even the Freeman's Journal, whose editor, Dr John Gray, had himself been a member of the Corporation, called for the return of 'men of capacity and judgement' in view of the new powers.¹²³

While the extended powers of the Corporation encouraged voters to look for the highest qualities in candidates, during the autumn of 1850 an important political issue arose which also tended to blur the old distinction between Repealer and Tory. It was the question of the abolition of the Lord Lieutenantcy, which was being discussed by the government.¹²⁴ Not only Repealers, but many Liberals and even Tories were able to unite against the proposal.¹²⁵ This reduced the bitterness

119 F.J., 18 October 1849; Nation, 29 December 1849.

120 Nation, 6 October 1849.

121 Nation, 5 October 1850.

122 See Duffy, Four Years of Irish History, p. 310.

123 F.J., 25 November 1850.

124 Several weeks before the elections were due to take place, many letters to the F.J. urged candidates to take a pledge to support the retention of the Lord Lieutenantcy: see F.J., 4 November 1850.

125 The editorial in the F.J., 22 November 1850, claimed that all the candidates had declared for the retention of the Lord Lieutenantcy.

which had commonly characterised the municipal elections. These factors must be taken into consideration when looking at the fate of the Repealers who stood for the Corporation in 1850. Of the twenty-seven Repeal members who stood for re-election, only fourteen were returned. Among the defeated were Maurice O'Connell, the Liberator's eldest son,¹²⁶ and Alderman McLoughlin, one of O'Connell's closest friends and supporters in the Association. The Association itself, which had been meeting for about a year since its revival, had attempted to stress the importance of Repeal in the campaign, but clearly its efforts carried little weight. The public mood had turned against nationalists of any hue. Among those returned to the Corporation for the first time were several merchants, mainly Protestants, but also a few Catholics, who had remained aloof from civic government during the forties,¹²⁷ probably because of the party interests of the members of the Corporation. This change in the public mood, however, did not represent a permanent break with the traditional support for nationalism. The funeral of the Young Ireland rebel Terence Bellew MacManus in Dublin in 1861 was an occasion for a widespread display of national feeling, which, according to A.M. Sullivan,¹²⁸ greatly encouraged the Fenian leaders, both in Ireland and America. Later in the sixties men like Dr Gray were prominent among those who combined to put up a monument to O'Connell, from which movement grew the constitutional agitation of that decade.¹²⁹

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, we asked what characteristics

126 Maurice O'Connell had been a Corporation member since 1847.

127 F.J., 26 November 1850. Among the men returned for the first time in 1850 were Benjamin Guinness, Thomas Hutton, John Sweetman, Leland Crosthwaite and John D'Arcy, some of Dublin's wealthiest merchants.

128 A.M. Sullivan, New Ireland, pp. 245-6.

129 F.J., 21 July 1864.

made the Corporation of Dublin so valuable to the O'Connells, and why its members gave so little support to the Young Irelanders. It may be well here to sum up the most important of these characteristics.

First, it is important to bear in mind that a great many of these men were long-standing supporters of O'Connell, accustomed to working with, and being led by him. Under his direction they had striven, with a certain degree of success, to improve the position of Catholics in society. The fact that all but one or two Repealers on the Corporation were Catholics is significant. As a class, they were in an economic position to feel that continued exclusion from positions of honour and responsibility was intolerable. They had adhered to O'Connell when his policy had involved alliance with the Whigs, and when it had involved Repeal. As Catholics, they sympathised with Repealers such as John O'Connell and Archbishop MacHale who wished the Association to put forward a Catholic viewpoint on matters involving religion and education. On the question of Repealers taking government places, they heartily supported the O'Connellite view. When John O'Connell proclaimed publicly in 1846 that he would rather see a Repealer in office than a Whig or Tory,¹³⁰ he was echoed by Alderman John Keshan, who declared some months later that, while he had never solicited a place, he would certainly accept one if offered, and far from making him compromise his Repeal principles, it would strengthen his attachment to his country.¹³¹ The Young Irelanders' stand against place-hunting won no favour from these men.

The unquestioning support which Repeal members of the Corporation gave to O'Connell and later his son, John, and to their policies, was another characteristic which made them congenial colleagues for the

¹³⁰ Nation, 1 August 1846.

¹³¹ Nation, 16 November 1846.

O'Connells, and reduced their status in the eyes of the Young Irelanders. Writing to Smith O'Brien in May 1847, the Young Irelander J.E. Pigot mentioned six members of the Repeal Association committee with whom he felt he could not work, in the case of a reconciliation between Old and Young Ireland.¹³² Four of the six were connected with the Corporation.¹³³ For O'Connell, the fact that the Corporation members were ready to take an active part in the agitation was an added attraction, as was their comfortable social position, which could be seen as lending weight to the national movement. All these factors placed them among the most valued of his supporters, and they suggest strong reasons for the mutual hostility between them and the Young Irelanders.

132 J. E. Pigot to Smith O'Brien, 3 May 1847: S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438.

133 These were Jeremiah Dunne, Thomas Arkins, John Reilly, and John Reynolds.

TABLE 5.1 POLITICAL VIEWS AND RELIGION OF MEMBERS OF DUBLIN CORPORATION,
1841-51

Year of Office ¹	<u>Tories</u>		<u>Liberals</u>		<u>Repealers</u>	
	R.C.	Protestant	R.C.	Protestant	R.C.	Protestant
1841 (unreformed)	0	123	0	0	0	0
1842 (reformed)	1	12	5	6	34	2
1843	0	11	5	3	39	2
1844	0	11	5	3	39	2
1845	0	12	2	0	45	1
1846	0	11	2	0	46	1
1847	0	10	2	0	46	2
1848	0	10	2	1	46	1
1849	0	12	5	0	43	0
1850	0	12	7	0	41	0
1851 (after 1849 Reform Act)	0	22	14	10	14	0

1 Elections held at end of previous year.

Main sources: F.J., 26 and 28 October, 1841.

D.E.M., 1 November 1841.

D.E.M., 27 November 1850.

TABLE 5.2 OCCUPATION OF MEMBERS OF DUBLIN CORPORATION, 1841-49

Year	Men of Property		Professional Men		Food Trades		Other Trades		Newspaper Proprietors		Totals	
	L/R ¹	T ²	L/R	T	L/R	T	L/R	T	L/R	T	L/R	T
1841-42	5	2	5	6	13	0	23	5	1	0	47	13
1842-43	5	1	4	4	13	0	26	6	1	0	49	11
1843-44	6	1	4	4	15	0	23	6	1	0	49	11
1844-45	7	2	5	6	15	0	18	4	3	0	48	12
1845-46	7	3	4	4	15	0	20	4	3	0	49	11
1846-47	7	2	5	5	15	0	20	3	3	0	50	10
1847-48	4	2	10	7	16	0	19	1	1	0	50	10
1848-49	3	2	9	8	17	0	18	2	1	0	48	12
1849-50	4	2	9	8	15	0	19	2	1	0	48	12

1 L/R refers to Liberals-Repealers

2 T refers to Tories

Main sources: F.J., 28 October 1841.

Thom's Irish Almanac and Official Directory, 1844-50.

CHAPTER SIX

DUBLIN AND THE ORGANISATION OF THE YOUNG IRELAND MOVEMENT*

In any study of a movement which claims to be an uncompromisingly national one, the writer is faced with the need to examine the nationalists' rhetoric in the light of their actions. It was all very well for the Nation to pronounce, 'To Nationalists their own most mistaken or culpable countryman is dearer than the best stranger ever can be'.¹ But how far did the Young Irelanders live up to this high-flown sentiment? Did they, in fact, value the assistance of all classes and groups in Ireland equally? Did they speak of their Irish opponents with forbearance? Did they eschew the aid of foreigners, valuing even 'mistaken' aid from Irishmen more highly? Such statements, however well intentioned, are almost impossible to live up to in practice. Hence the necessity for a close examination of the actions and policies of any group of nationalists. In the case of Young Ireland, which claimed to stand for an all-embracing nationalism, in which Catholics and Protestants would sink their differences in the struggle for Repeal of the Union,² considerable light may be shed on the nature of their aims and policies by studying their private letters to each other.³ These letters considerably modify the picture given in the Nation and in Gavan Duffy's writings of the Young Irelanders' aims, and their plans for organising a national movement.

From the middle years of the decade, while the Young Irelanders were still cooperating with the Repeal movement led by O'Connell, it is

* The development of the views on Young Ireland put forward in this and the following chapter have benefited greatly from many conversations with Miss Jean Rowlands.

1 'Our Recruits', Nation, 1 January 1848.

2 Nation, 15 October 1842 (the first issue).

3 By far the most valuable collection of letters for this purpose are the Smith O'Brien Papers, N.L.I.

possible to pick out certain questions, apart from Repeal, on which they felt particularly strongly. On the question of education, for instance, Young Ireland supported the policy of 'mixed'⁴ education, favoured by Protestants and only a minority of Catholics. Had the Young Irelanders ever won power in an independent Ireland, their attitudes to education⁵ would have involved denying the aspirations of many Catholics, including the majority of the hierarchy, for separate education. This single example reveals that the Young Irelanders were not merely concerned to win Repeal and nothing else, as they sometimes claimed.⁶ Long before the secession, they had plans of their own for an independent Ireland, which were by no means always popular ones with majority support.

In this chapter, we shall be looking at the Young Irelanders' policies on organisation from the period of the secession from the Repeal Association up to the rebellion of 1848, noting particularly the importance which was placed on winning the support of the landed gentry. We will consider the institution - the Irish Confederation - which the Young Irelanders finally set up in 1847, and note the relation this bore to their original plans. The questions of funds, of policy, and of relations with the Chartists will be examined, and the chapter will conclude with two sections on the effects of the French revolution of 1848 on the Young Ireland movement.

I. In order to understand the nature of the Young Ireland movement, its organisational policies, and the role Dublin played in them, it will be

4 In the Irish context, 'mixed' means education of Catholics and Protestants together.

5 Denis Gwynn discusses the Young Ireland attitudes to education, especially in O'Connell, Davis and the Colleges Bill.

6 M'Gee to Smith O'Brien, 30 December 1847: S.O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 439. He urged that Repeal should be presented as the major question to be sought, in order to prevent divisions arising among Repealers.

useful to begin by recapitulating the aims of this group while still working within the Repeal Association. At this time, it will be recalled, the Young Irelanders were concerned to direct the Association into courses which would attract certain groups which had hitherto remained aloof. These were referred to as the 'educated Conservatives',⁷ the Federalists,⁸ the Orangemen, and the landed gentry.⁹ The great majority of the members of these groups were Protestants. Among the prominent Young Irelanders, a small but vocal minority were also Protestants, including chiefly Thomas Davis, William Smith O'Brien, and John Mitchel. These men exercised considerable influence over the rest of the group. Partly in order to conciliate these other Protestants, whom they saw as the key to a successful national movement, and partly because of their own preferences, the Young Irelanders adopted a number of policies over which they clashed with the O'Connellite majority in the Repeal Association.

The questions of education, alliance with the Whig party, and seeking government places were among those which caused most dissension. On these questions, the O'Connellites in the Association adopted a Catholic and Liberal stand. The Young Irelanders claimed to take up a neutral position, but in practice this was often very close to a Protestant and Conservative one.¹⁰ Davis's concern with Protestant opinion was expressed frequently in his letters to Smith O'Brien. On the educational policy adopted by the Association, he wrote, 'No half measures will regain the

7 T. Davis to D. Lane, n.d., quoted in Duffy, Thomas Davis, p. 251.

8 Davis to Madden, n.d., Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5758, pp. 5-8.

9 Davis to S. O'Brien, 26 July 1845, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 435. Young Ireland's desire to win over the gentry is also mentioned by E. R. R. Green: see 'The Beginnings of Fenianism', in T. W. Moody (ed.), The Fenian Movement, Cork, 1968, pp. 11-22 (p. 11).

10 In general terms, the O'Connellites in the R.A. supported the policies of the Whig-Liberal party much more than did Young Ireland. O'Connell supported Repeal of the Corn Laws, extension of the suffrage, and the liberalising of appointments. Smith O'Brien opposed Repeal of the Corn Laws, and the Young Irelanders in general opposed an extension of the suffrage.

confidence of those who value liberty of opinion even more than nationality & without them, what were Repeal?'¹¹ Davis in particular shared the fears of Tories¹² that the Association would sanction the setting up of a 'Catholic ascendancy' once Repeal had been achieved. He described the opposition in the Association to the principle of 'mixed education' as 'blind bigotry'.¹³ Davis was not the only Young Irelander to speak of those who desired separate education as bigots.¹⁴ As a group, they seemed to disregard the fact that most of the Catholic bishops, and many influential laymen, believed firmly in the principle of separate education. Smith O'Brien was able to take a more balanced view of certain Catholic aspirations. In a letter written in the summer of 1844,¹⁵ he reminded Davis that Catholics had just grounds for fearing the provisions of the Charitable Bequests Bill, then being discussed in Parliament.

On the question of alliance with the Whig party, it is well known that the Young Irelanders objected strongly to any such cooperation. It is generally accepted that this was because they disclaimed alliance with any party which did not regard Repeal as an open question. For some members of the group, however, particularly Smith O'Brien, hostility to a Whig alliance went beyond this. For instance, in July 1845, he complained to Davis¹⁶ that O'Connell, without consulting the committee, had given notice of some resolutions which would commit the Association to an opinion in favour of household suffrage, and vote by ballot: in effect,

11 Davis to S. O'Brien, 28 August (1845), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 432.

12 D.E.M., 15 September 1843.

13 Davis to S. O'Brien, Sat. eve., S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 432 (896).

14 See J. E. Pigot to Davis, 2 February 1845, Davis Papers, N.L.I. MS 2644, pp. 401-4. Pigot was among those Catholics, so common in the Young Ireland movement, who had been educated at Trinity College, Dublin.

15 S. O'Brien to Davis, 29 August 1844, Davis Papers, N.L.I. MS 2644, pp. 285-91.

16 S. O'Brien to Davis, 23 July 1845, quoted in Duffy, Thomas Davis, p. 314.

a Whig-Radical programme. He also clashed with O'Connell over the Corn Laws. O'Connell's position as leader of a popular Repeal party, his sympathy with the Whigs, and his personal concern about the effects of the famine in Ireland led him to give whole-hearted support to the campaign for the abolition of the Corn Laws, in spite of the fact that he was himself a landlord. Smith O'Brien, on the other hand, opposed the notion that the Association should come out against the Corn Laws. He wrote to O'Connell that if this should happen, there would be considerable dissension within the national movement. He did not make the source of this dissension very clear, but it is likely that once again, the thought of Conservative support for nationalism was present. 'Under all these circumstances in the formation of an Irish national party', he wrote, 'the corn laws must be left an open question.'¹⁷ To expect the Association to maintain neutrality on this question, for the sake of a gesture towards a class which had so far shown little sign of drawing nearer to the national movement, appears quite unrealistic, especially in the circumstances of famine. Yet Smith O'Brien's policy was supported by other Young Irelanders: Thomas MacNevin wrote that the Association should declare against all assistance to the Whigs, even on the Corn Law issue, unless Repeal were left an open question.¹⁸

In their suspicions that the more prominent Association members were working in the national movement mainly in the hope of winning a comfortable government appointment, the Young Irelanders were expressing sentiments dear to Tories. An editorial in the Tory Dublin Evening Mail in 1846 suggested that O'Connell had allied with the Whigs and sold Repeal for 'a mess of patronage'.¹⁹ In fact, O'Connell had turned down tempting

¹⁷ O'Brien to O'Connell, 18 December 1845, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13649 (emphasis in original).

¹⁸ MacNevin to S. O'Brien, 22(?) December 1845, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 435.

¹⁹ D.E.M., 24 June 1846. This assertion was repeated almost word for word in Nation, 28 November 1846.

offers of government appointments on more than one occasion,²⁰ but on the other hand, he did use his influence to gain places for friends and relations. As we have seen, many of his middle-class Catholic followers aspired to positions of power and responsibility from which they had been excluded for decades. Some progress had been made through O'Connell's alliance with the Whigs from 1835 to 1841, and even Peel had not completely abandoned the Whig policy in this respect.²¹ Again, it is clear that by taking their stand against 'place-hunting', the Young Irelanders were in effect demanding that these aspirations be laid aside, at least temporarily.

How did Young Ireland envisage the achievement of Repeal? They were dissatisfied in many ways with the Association's policies for at least three years before they left that body. During these years they appear to have hoped that once the Protestants, especially the gentry and professional classes, had been won over to support a movement for Ireland's independence, then Repeal would be gained quite easily. Davis wrote to Madden²² that the possibility of war over Repeal was unlikely: the Irish people were docile, and the upper classes were coming to support perhaps not Repeal, but Federalism. In two years, he thought, the national party would be in a position to impose its own terms on England.

This view of the way in which Repeal would be gained strikes the present writer as inherently unlikely and unrealistic. Davis would appear to have over-estimated the chances of Protestants in general coming to support a national movement, and in addition, he considerably under-estimated

20 Gwynn, Daniel O'Connell, p. 198.

21 Thus, the Tory D.E.M., as well as other Tory papers, blamed Peel for 'misgovernment', for carrying out such liberal policies as ending Jewish disabilities (14 February 1848), and providing places for Catholics (20 September 1843).

22 Davis to Madden, n.d., Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5758, pp. 5-8.

the hostility to Repeal in England. In fact, he wrote to Madden that he saw no signs of this hostility.²³ Moreover, this emphasis on Protestants as the key to determining the manner and timing of Repeal was not without significance for the type of society which was to have come about in Ireland once Repeal had been gained. In this society it seems very likely that Protestants were to continue to play a major role in governing the country, and many Catholic aspirations were to be unfulfilled. It was not only the Protestants in the Young Ireland group who looked forward to a continuation of privilege for the minority. One of Davis's closest friends and admirers, Thomas MacNevin, a Catholic, apparently sympathised with such a prospect. He wrote to Smith O'Brien about a report on Belgium which he was drawing up for the Repeal Association, 'I shall then prepare the draft of a Report on the Belgic institutions which appear to me to be highly useful to us to consider. It is a Catholic country with (strange to say) Protestant administrators chosen freely by a Catholic people...'.²⁴ Although MacNevin's information about the role of Protestants in Belgium was incorrect, since there were few Protestants in that country, it is difficult to see why such a report would be 'highly useful', save from the view of reassuring Protestants of a continuing role of privilege within an independent Ireland.²⁵ The question naturally arises: why did Catholics such as Dillon and MacNevin support such views? It is important to note in this respect that the Young Ireland Catholics were, almost without exception, members of the professional middle class. Such men had more opportunities than most Catholics for contact with their Protestant counterparts. This is

23 Davis to Madden, n.d., Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5758, pp. 5-8.

24 MacNevin to S. O'Brien, July 1844 (?), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 433 (1097).

25 O'Connell too had attempted to reassure Protestants that they would be able to safeguard their interests in Ireland after Repeal had been won. He usually mentioned the Irish House of Lords in this respect. This argument was not very convincing to many Protestants, since he had also campaigned for the abolition of the House of Lords in England.

illustrated by the fact that most of the Catholic Young Irelanders had attended Trinity College.²⁶ It is not altogether surprising, therefore, to find that they had a less sectarian approach to nationalist politics.

Enough has been said, it is hoped, to show that one of the main hopes of the Young Irelanders was to win over Irish Protestants to support a national movement, and, secondly, that on several questions their policies were unfavourable, at least in the short term, towards certain Catholic aspirations.

II. We now go on to consider the Young Ireland plans for organising a national movement once the group had seceded from the Repeal Association. It is often assumed that the formation of the Irish Confederation and the Clubs were the natural outcome of the Young Ireland views on organisation.²⁷ In this and the following section, it will be shown that in fact, no such plans existed until a separate, independent movement in Dublin nudged the Young Irelanders into action.

Although one member of the group had talked of secession from the Association as early as August 1844,²⁸ it appears that when the break finally came, in July 1846, the group was not prepared with any definite plans for future conduct or an alternative organisation. A letter from T. F. Meagher to Smith O'Brien,²⁹ written in the autumn of 1846, shows that he only thought in terms of making a stand for the Young Ireland principles

26 Maxwell, A History of Trinity College, Dublin, pp. 223-4, provides a list of Young Irelanders educated at Trinity. Most of the leading Catholic members of the group, with the major exception of Duffy, are included.

27 T. F. O'Sullivan, The Young Irelanders, p. 21, gives such an impression.

28 Davis to Smith O'Brien, 20 August 1844, cited in Gwynn, O'Connell, Davis and the Colleges Bill, p. 15.

29 Meagher to O'Brien, Thursday evening (1846), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 440 (2208). This letter was probably written in October or November; it mentions the Remonstrants: Gavan Duffy and Richard O'Gorman, Jr, were writing on the same subject at that time.

through the '82 Club.³⁰ This Club, formed in 1844 as a means to attract members of the upper classes to the national movement,³¹ was an exclusive body: the uniform alone cost several pounds,³² and its membership was confined to the middle and upper classes. O'Connell was the President of the club, but Smith O'Brien was the Vice-President, and the Young Irelanders turned to it as the only institution which might possibly uphold their views. Meagher wrote that he and the other Young Irelanders (then calling themselves the 'Phalanx') had met and discussed 'the propriety of calling a meeting immediately, of the '82 Club - All our friends are strongly in favour of the move'. Some step must be taken, he wrote, 'to check the inroads which the mean, provincial spirit of Whiggery is now boldly making through the National party, and this, we conceive, will be most effectively done by a reunion of the Club'. He concluded, 'the Club will be a most useful and powerful ancilliary to the Phalanx'.³³ As Meagher implied, the notion of acting through the '82 Club was popular with many Young Irelanders. Others who wrote to Smith O'Brien urging action through the Club included Duffy and Richard O'Gorman, Junior.³⁴ But O'Brien, whose opinion was clearly valued greatly, disliked the idea. He wrote to Duffy that he did not believe that more than one-fifth of the Club's membership would in fact side with the party against O'Connell.³⁵

Probably because of Smith O'Brien's attitude, the '82 Club was not used as a forum by the group. Another idea put forward by S. Bindon, again in a letter to O'Brien,³⁶ was that the Young Irelanders should form a Club

30 For a factual account of the formation and nature of the Club, see History and Proceedings of the '82 Club.

31 Duffy, Young Ireland, Vol. II, pp. 151-2.

32 Davis to O'Brien, Thursday night, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 432 (692).

33 Meagher to O'Brien, n.d. (1846), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 440 (2208).

34 Duffy to O'Brien, Wednesday, n.d., S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 440 (2215); R. O'Gorman, Jr, to S. O'Brien, 20 November 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 437.

35 O'Brien to Duffy, 15 October 1846, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642.

36 Bindon to O'Brien, 29 October 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 437.

or society of their own. Such a body would meet periodically; only members would be allowed to attend. Indeed, these suggestions for possible alternatives to the Association indicate that the kind of organisation they envisaged would have been considerably less popular and democratic than the Association.

These ideas came to nothing, but the Young Irelanders did continue to work through the Nation. Smith O'Brien, in particular, favoured this course. In October he wrote to Duffy that 'Much... may be done by the instrumentality of the Nation newspaper'.³⁷ He thought that national spirit and patriotism could be fostered through the paper, which he regarded as 'the great champion of the Principle of free discussion and the exponent of the views of those who cherish the nationality of their country without reference to the interests of English Party or to the personal advancement of individuals'. In another letter³⁸ he wrote that 'a journalist ranks with religious & secular teachers',³⁹ and urged Duffy to ensure that writers for the Nation signed their articles, so that they would become well known in the country as true Repealers. Indeed, the writers for the Nation, it was hoped, might form the basis of an intellectual 'League' of patriotic minds.⁴⁰ Such a group should meet regularly,⁴¹ at such places as the Royal Irish Academy and the Statistical Society, with a view to influencing those who frequented such bodies in the direction of nationalism. Accordingly they set about meeting regularly, and they wrote articles for the Nation. Why did they not adopt a more radical course?

37 O'Brien to Duffy, 12 October 1846, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642.

38 O'Brien to Duffy, 28 September 1846, ibid.

39 This suggests that the Young Irelanders, like many other nationalists, believed they were undervalued in society. This aspect of nationalism is mentioned by D. E. D. Beales, 'Mazzini and Revolutionary Nationalism' in D. Thomson (ed.), Political Ideas (Pelican edition), Harmondsworth, 1969, pp. 143-53 (p. 150).

40 O'Brien to Duffy, 15 October 1846, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642.

41 O'Brien to Duffy, 19 November 1846, ibid.

First, it cannot be stressed too often that those who made up the Young Ireland group were not radical men. They still wished, as in the earlier years of the decade, to encourage the landed gentry and professional classes to take part in a national movement. 'For my own part,' wrote Smith O'Brien to Duffy in October, 'I should not be at all surprised to find the landlords of Ireland placing themselves at the head of a Repeal movement....'⁴² In the following month, Duffy wrote to Smith O'Brien, 'Ferguson who has just returned from the Continent also speaks of the secession in a way that promises well for influencing the young Tory gentry and professional men'.⁴³ And in December Duffy wrote again to O'Brien, 'The Protestants and the landed gentry must be won, and you a man of property and family and a Protestant can, and will, win them'.⁴⁴ The course best suited to gain the support of these classes, it was thought, was through the Nation and educational work.

Secondly, the Young Irelanders were considerably restricted in the courses open to them, for the good reason that they had very little support in the country. Apart from the hard core of some twenty-five members of the Young Ireland group itself,⁴⁵ mainly drawn from the professional classes, they had a few sympathisers who were disorganised and scattered round the country. Some members of the group apparently over-estimated their chances of winning support in Ireland. Four months after the secession, Smith O'Brien warned Duffy against over-rating the strength of the party, and reminded him that they could not return one M.P., or one member of a corporation in the country.⁴⁶ He believed that there

42 O'Brien to Duffy, 15 October 1846, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642.

43 Duffy to O'Brien, 10 November (1846), Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5758, pp. 94-7.

44 Duffy to O'Brien, 26 December 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

45 For the names of this group, see J. E. Pigot to Duffy, 4(?) August 1846, Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5756.

46 O'Brien to Duffy, 24 November 1846, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642.

was insufficient support in the country to justify 'the formation of a Counter-organisation designed to supersede the Repeal Association'.⁴⁷ In these circumstances, it does not seem surprising that the Young Irelanders seriously considered the possibility of a reconciliation (on favourable terms) with the Repeal Association. This course was never completely ruled out, and came to the fore again in 1848; but it was particularly present in the Young Irelanders' minds from the period of the secession until the end of 1846. Thus, on the first of September, Smith O'Brien was looking for reconciliation on honourable terms, and hoped no Young Irishman would resign from the Association.⁴⁸ On the twenty-sixth, Duffy wrote, 'we all look to an ultimate reunion as essential'.⁴⁹ As late as December 1846, J. B. Dillon wrote that negotiation with the Association must be undertaken, and he made the point that feeling in the country was very strongly in favour of such a move.⁵⁰

III. During December of 1846, Smith O'Brien, the acknowledged leader of the Young Ireland group, continued to refrain from taking an active course.⁵¹ By that time, however, the Young Irelanders were being pressed to act by the strength of feeling which had shown itself in Dublin.

Less than two months after the secession, it became apparent that a section of the Dublin Repealers was dissatisfied with the conduct of the Repeal Association, especially with regard to the secession. These men⁵² desired a reunion of Repealers, so that the national movement could once more go forward. At the end of September, Duffy wrote to Smith O'Brien⁵³

47 O'Brien to Duffy, 12 October 1846, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642.

48 O'Brien to Duffy, 1 September 1846, *ibid.* He held the view that the Young Irelanders had been wrongfully expelled from the Association.

49 Duffy to O'Brien, 26 September 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 441.

50 Dillon to O'Brien, 10 December (1846), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

51 Nowlan, *The Politics of Repeal*, p. 114.

52 For an analysis of the social background of these men, see below, Chapter 7.

53 Duffy to O'Brien, 26 September 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 441.

that he had been assured that fifteen hundred Dublin tradesmen shared this dissatisfaction, which culminated in the signing of a 'Remonstrance'. This, it was hoped, would induce the Association to see the error of its ways, and readmit the Young Irelanders. On 31 October the Nation claimed that seventy-four Repeal Wardens, three hundred members and over one thousand associate members of the Association had signed the Remonstrance. This was an over-estimate: less than one thousand people signed the Dublin Remonstrance, and the great majority of them were lower-middle class men.⁵⁴ Very few of the wealthier middle class Catholics, a source of such valuable support for the Association, signed. However, the Remonstrance did show that there was some dissatisfaction with the Association, even though this was mainly confined to one class.

The Young Irelanders' reaction to the Remonstrance reveals their great caution, and their anxiety about the implications of any spontaneous political activity among the lower classes. At first, Duffy welcomed the Remonstrance as a sign that 'men are learning to think for themselves', and approved the signing of the document, because he believed that an ultimate reunion of Repealers was essential.⁵⁵ When the Remonstrance failed in its objective, and its organisers decided to carry on their agitation, by organising meetings for future discussions, the Young Irelanders showed signs of caution. S. Bindon described the preparations for one meeting, saying that they had been left in the hands of the tradesmen, 'with the exception of Mr. Meagher who was permitted by Duffy's friends to act upon the Committee with the view of keeping down anything which might tend to mar the usefulness of the demonstration'.⁵⁶ Another indication that the Young Irelanders were attempting to restrain, rather

54 The Remonstrance was primarily a Dublin demonstration; however, signatures were collected for provincial Remonstrances in other parts of Ireland.

55 Duffy to O'Brien, 26 September 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 441.

56 Bindon to O'Brien, November 1846 (?), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 437 (1669).

than urge on this movement, was given at the end of his letter. Bindon wrote, 'In fact the Nation men are trying to keep down the feeling that animates the humbler classes, fearing it may go too fast and injure the movement'. Although some Repealers in Cork and elsewhere had drawn up their own Remonstrances, the Young Irelanders' letters at this time reveal concern with Dublin activities alone.

The Young Irelanders, then, were faced with a problem which was to recur. Several of them recognised that the Remonstrants represented a fund of sympathy on which they could draw, and afforded an opportunity of making some bold move. But at the same time, they were anxious lest the feeling displayed by these men should get out of hand. The Remonstrants, wrote Richard O'Gorman, 'want to be led, and if not by us, they will go, I fear to their old masters'.⁵⁷ He claimed that the Remonstrants wished Young Ireland to make a stand for their principles in a meeting, which they pledged would be a success. O'Gorman referred to this as a 'call of the People' and said that he, for one, was disposed to act on it. As we have seen, however, the signing of the Remonstrance did not represent widespread dissatisfaction with the Association, only discontent among a fairly narrow section of the Dublin Repealers. Smith O'Brien continued to hold back, in spite of the enthusiastic descriptions he was sent of a meeting held in Dublin at which both Young Irelanders and Remonstrants were present.⁵⁸ Bindon claimed that two thousand men had attended, and two priests had spoken earnestly in favour of Young Ireland.⁵⁹ Numerous other priests, he claimed, had attended the meeting. It is difficult to discover how much sympathy there was for Young Ireland among the Dublin clergy. Only a few weeks previously, Duffy had expressed the wish that a few priests would

57 R. O'Gorman, Jr, to O'Brien, 27 November 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 437.

58 Nation, 5 December 1846.

59 Bindon to O'Brien, 3 December 1846, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 437.

join the movement because, he said, O'Connell was already trying to give Young Ireland an 'anti-Catholic character'.⁶⁰ The two priests who spoke at the meeting, Fathers Meehan and O'Carroll, had been sympathisers for some time.⁶¹

It was the support of the lower-middle classes in Dublin, therefore, which for the first time made some kind of popular organisation a practical possibility. But the Young Irelanders were determined to maintain control over any such organisation, and when the Irish Confederation was set up in January 1847, it was run by the Council of the Confederation, in which the Young Irelanders played a dominant role. Some time before there was a prospect of a Young Ireland organisation, Smith O'Brien had made suggestions for a Council, which bore a marked resemblance to the Council of the Confederation. He conceived of a body which would have the power to call public meetings and petition parliament. Accounts would be audited weekly or monthly, and the proceedings of the Council would be private.⁶² These features were present in the Council of the Confederation, save that for a time, the proceedings were published, in a very truncated form.

The meeting at which the Irish Confederation was formed was held on 13 January 1847.⁶³ There was a substantial attendance of Young Ireland sympathisers from the professional classes, but very few from the Catholic business class or the clergy. Fathers Meehan and O'Carroll attended, however, and Smith O'Brien emerged from his estate in the west of Ireland

60 Duffy to O'Brien, 10 November 1846, Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5758, pp. 94-7.

61 Fr C. P. Meehan, of SS Michael and John, Exchange Street, was a temperance advocate, and had been present at the R.A. meeting when the Young Irelanders seceded. He wrote for the Nation, and became a President of the St Patrick's Confederate Club: see O'Sullivan, The Young Irelanders, pp. 309-14. Fr O'Carroll, of Westland Row, was less prominent in the movement. Apart from Rev. T. O'Malley, other Dublin clergy do not appear to have played an active role in the Confederation, notwithstanding Duffy's claim in My Life in Two Hemispheres (2 vols), London, 1898, Vol. I, p. 188, that the Dublin clergy were sympathetic to the movement.

62 O'Brien to Duffy, 26 November 1846, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642.

63 Nation, 16 January 1847, gives a full account of the meeting.

to take a leading role. A Council to serve for one year was proposed by the Young Ireland element. Little was said about the way in which its forty members had been selected. Shortly before the meeting, the 'Irish party' committee (made up of Young Irelanders, and the Quaker merchant James Haughton) had met at the Nation office and drawn up an address to the Irish people.⁶⁴ It seems likely that this committee also selected the Council members, including themselves. The Council was left free to increase its numbers: thus, Richard O'Gorman, Junior, wrote to Smith O'Brien a few weeks later, 'I shall take steps that the persons whose names you sent me shall be on the Council...'.⁶⁵ Among the forty original members of the Council, there were only half a dozen representatives of the Remonstrant element. These included Michael Crean, a shoemaker, and James Gilligan, a publican, late an Inspector of Repeal Wardens. Professional men formed a majority on the Council; M.P.s, clergy and magistrates in the Confederation were to be ex-officio members of the Council. The Confederation, then, was not run on democratic lines.⁶⁶ Indeed, the Young Irelanders were still preoccupied with the landed classes. Smith O'Brien wrote to Duffy on the eve of the formation of the Confederation, 'If you are careful in your management it is not impossible that a large portion of the Irish landed gentry may unite with us or us with them before very long. They are thoroughly disgusted with Englands [sic] management of Irish concerns - but are afraid of the ultra-Democratic & ultra-Catholic tendencies of a portion of the Repeal party'.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Nation, 2 January 1847.

⁶⁵ R. O'Gorman, Jr, to O'Brien, 3 February 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 437.

⁶⁶ In 1848 the procedure for selecting the Council seems to have been much the same, save that the five Dublin Clubs were apparently invited to suggest three members each. This probably accounts for the presence on the Council of such Clubmen as P. J. Barry and Philip Grey, clerks. But of the 112 members of the Council in that year, not more than fifteen were Dublin Clubmen.

⁶⁷ O'Brien to Duffy, 24 December 1846, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642.

IV. Public support for Young Ireland which had manifested itself in the signing of the Remonstrance was channelled into the Confederation from January 1847. It is important to remember, however, how little this active support was, and how far it was limited to the lower-middle classes, mainly in Dublin. The National Reading Rooms, whose membership was more or less confined to this class, later turned into the Confederate Clubs, which grew only very slowly. Even in the capital, there were no more than five Clubs by October 1847,⁶⁸ and not more than twenty in the whole of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The Clubs exercised little influence on policy, and contributed very small funds, which tended to restrict the activities of the leaders.

Not only did the Young Irelanders and professional men form a large majority on the Council, but they also dominated the committees and sub-committees of the Council. Non-members of the Council were entitled to act on these committees, but with very few exceptions, they were not chosen to perform these functions.⁶⁹ The finance committee, composed of nine members and the secretaries, included only three men who were not Young Irelanders: a clerk, a shoemaker, and a publican.⁷⁰ The law committee, not surprisingly, comprised entirely lawyers, while the sub-committee for the 'diffusion of public instruction', with twenty-two members, included only two men who were not from either the gentry or professional classes.⁷¹ Even on the trade committee, non-professional men did not form a majority.⁷² Thus the Young Ireland and professional elements also maintained strong control over this aspect of the Council's work.

68 'First General Report on the progress of Confederate Clubs in England and Ireland', Nation, 23 October 1847.

69 S. Bindon, who was not a member of the Council, but was a Young Irelander, acted on some of these committees: see Minute Book of the Council of the Irish Confederation, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 19 January 1847.

70 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 19 January 1847.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

It was the Council which decided questions of policy. A 'committee of resolutions' was usually appointed to arrange subjects for discussion at the public meetings of the Confederation, held from time to time. Representatives of the Clubs rarely acted on this committee. A committee set up to consider general questions of policy and organisation in June 1847 was made up of Smith O'Brien, Dillon, M'Gee, Bindon, Mitchel, Reilly, Richard O'Gorman, Junior, and Duffy, all hard-core members of Young Ireland.⁷³

Among the Young Ireland group there was not complete accord as to the policy which should be pursued; or rather, some appeared to be more impatient than others when their policy did not yield quick results. J. E. Pigot believed that M'Gee and Reilly were being dazzled by their prominent position in the Council, and were embarking on a course of opposition to Smith O'Brien's wishes.⁷⁴ The cause of this dissension appears to have been Reilly's desire for more frequent public meetings of the Confederation, which Smith O'Brien opposed. It is difficult to ascertain the exact significance of more frequent public meetings, but in view of Pigot's anxiety that the Conservatives should not be frightened off by too hasty a policy, it may simply be that M'Gee and Reilly were becoming impatient with the Conservatives, and attempting to strengthen the links between the Confederation and its only real supporters, the Clubmen. Before going on to look at the effects of this growing impatience on the movement, it will be useful to consider the Confederation's position in 1847. What sort of funds were available to it, and what sort of policies did it pursue?

In terms of funds, it must be borne in mind that the Confederation never had the benefit of the considerable financial support which enabled

⁷³ Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 21 June 1847.

⁷⁴ Pigot to O'Brien, 29 April 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438; see also Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 18 and 20 March, 1847.

the Repeal Association to undertake so many of its projects. Over the whole period of its existence, from January 1847 to July 1848, the average weekly income of the Confederation (excluding two hundred pounds received from the United States in the last week of June 1848) was less than fifteen pounds.⁷⁵ Clearly, such an income could only cover the bare costs of running an organisation, such as clerks' wages, hiring rooms, and so forth. A large part of these meagre funds came from Dublin: about two-fifths in April and November 1847; one-quarter in March 1848.⁷⁶ Cork also supplied a proportion of the funds, with other Irish and British towns contributing spasmodically. By mid-1848, American contributions had become large,⁷⁷ but by that time they were too late to be of much value to the movement.

Apart from a number of subscriptions of one pound each from members, most donations came in small sums, one shilling or half a crown being common. This suggests that the lower-middle class, not the very rich or the very poor, provided a large part of the funds. But the most significant factor about the Confederation's income was its smallness. From time to time the Council considered methods of increasing it, but found that its only steady supporters, the Clubmen, were not prepared (or possibly not able) to increase the funds.⁷⁸ With such low funds, the Council, unlike the Repeal Association, could not afford to subsidise its local supporters in the case of newspapers and other printed matter. It was perhaps the smallness of this income which gives rise to the impression that much of the Council's time was spent on rather trifling matters. The accounts, for instance, regardless of the tiny sums dealt with, were

75 This figure was deduced from information in the Confederation's Subscription Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/62.

76 Figures based on the Subscription Book, *ibid.*

77 For instance, in June 1848, £140 was received from New Orleans, and £60 from Cincinnati: Subscription Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/62.

78 T. M. Halpin (secretary) to O'Brien, 29 June 1848, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 442.

reviewed by a sub-committee each week, and the price of coal and candles debated. In October 1847, a long discussion was held on the question of whether three members of the Council should have their expenses repaid for a mission which they undertook without first getting the Council's sanction for it.⁷⁹ The Council also spent some time and money on legal advice as to the legality of certain of their proceedings, very much in the manner of O'Connell in the Association.⁸⁰

V. We now move on to examine the policies of the Young Irelanders in 1847, and some of the problems with which they were faced in carrying them out. In the first half of the year, the Council paid considerable attention to elections, in the hope of building up a parliamentary party. Although Smith O'Brien had acknowledged in 1846 that they had little chance of winning elections, they did put up candidates on several occasions. At Galway, in February 1847, the Young Irelanders helped in the campaign to prevent the election of the Whig candidate.⁸¹ In March, it was hoped that registration committees would be set up in each Dublin ward, which would make weekly reports to the Council,⁸² but it is doubtful whether this hope was ever fulfilled. Certain members of the Clubs had the municipal vote, and a few had a parliamentary vote, but these numbers were not sufficiently large to make it likely that such committees would be set up in many Dublin wards. Already in March, there were signs of disillusionment with the policy of fighting elections. Mitchel and Smith O'Brien agreed that the formation of a Young Ireland party in parliament

79 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 19 October 1847.

80 For instance, advice was sought as to the legal implications for the Confederation of Mitchel's letter to the Nation on the land question: Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 12 January 1848. See also Duffy, Four Years of Irish History, pp. 360-61.

81 Nation, 20 February 1847.

82 W. Hamill (secretary) to O'Brien, 7 March 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438.

would be almost impossible.⁸³ Mitchel believed that it would be better to urge sympathisers to remain in Ireland, 'to resist the deep & settled design of the English government to uproot the Irish race from the soil & make them a nation of labourers...'.⁸⁴ The policy of working for Repeal through a parliamentary party, therefore, did not seem very promising. The number of M.P.s who had cooperated with O'Connell and supported Repeal was dwindling, and those who were left, such as O'Connell's sons John and Maurice, Timothy O'Brien, and J. P. Somers, remained faithful to the O'Connellites' rather than the Young Irelanders' policies.

The early months of 1847 saw the first stirrings of a movement which was later to give rise to the Tenant League, and this presented Young Ireland with a challenge. As early as March, Richard O'Gorman wrote to Smith O'Brien that the higher classes had not come forward to support their movement. In view of this, he claimed:

We are beaten back upon the People. Let us join their fortunes now and for ever. It was with this view that I wrote some time since that we should take up some subject, more closely connected with their everyday wants and wishes, and thus bind them closer to our movement - I mean Tenant Right - I believe by it, we can go far to unite the People of the North & South and in the Association formed to support the tenant Farmers [sic] claims - the 'tenant Farmer League', I believe to be the nucleus of a great movement. Our agitation so far has been a very elegant - eloquent - high-toned sort of business - I think it will have to become a more democratic style of work - and that at once too -⁸⁵

O'Gorman's reference to uniting the people of the north and south touched on a question which the Young Irelanders claimed publicly was very

83 Mitchel to O'Brien, 19 March 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438.

84 Ibid.

85 R. O'Gorman, Jr, to O'Brien, 24 March (1847), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438.

dear to them. This was a union of Catholics and Protestants in a national movement. The young Tenant Leagues might have provided the basis for such a union.⁸⁶ Yet, with the exception of Fintan Lalor,⁸⁷ Mitchel and Devin Reilly, the main body of Young Irelanders failed to make use of this opportunity. Why was this? Again, the answer probably lies in Young Ireland's persistent desire to cooperate with the landed gentry, rather than the tenant class. In April, even Mitchel still believed that it was possible that the 'aristocracy' could save Ireland by placing themselves at the head of a land reform movement.⁸⁸ Others, including J. E. Pigot, were concerned at this time to keep alive the chance of winning the support of middle and upper class Conservatives. Also, at a time when the Tenant Leagues were in their infancy, the Irish Council, representing an attempt by certain landlords and others to tackle the land question, was meeting regularly.⁸⁹ Mitchel himself attended meetings of the Irish Council's sub-committees⁹⁰ through the summer and autumn of 1847, hoping to nudge that body in a more radical direction. In July, J. E. Pigot was still convinced that the Conservatives on the Irish Council were Repealers at heart.⁹¹ The majority of the Young Irelanders therefore approached the land question from above, preferring to work with the landlord class, rather than with the tenants, in accordance with their original conception of the national movement. As late as November 1847,⁹² Mitchel was still trying to work through the Irish Council, although by that time he personally was coming to believe that the landed classes would not play the part he had hoped.

86 Such a prospect seemed likely when the Tenant League of 1850 was set up: see Whyte, The Independent Irish Party, p. 12.

87 Lalor was on the fringe of the Young Ireland movement, being mainly concerned with the land question.

88 Mitchel to O'Brien, 24 April 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438.

89 Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, pp. 125-6.

90 Mitchel to O'Brien, 8 August 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 439.

91 Pigot to O'Brien, 6 July 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438.

92 Nation, 13 November 1847.

By the middle of 1847, therefore, Young Ireland was in a weak position. They still hoped to woo the landed Conservatives, by working through the Irish Council and by denouncing the most blatant Catholic and democratic tendencies in the Repeal Association, which they were concerned to keep out of the Irish Confederation. But their success with the landed classes had been very limited. Their chances of building up a parliamentary party on Young Ireland lines were slim. The Repeal Association, if not flourishing, was still alive. In mid-1847, the alternatives seemed to many Young Irelanders to lie either in a continuation of their patient, cautious policy of influencing the landed classes, or putting an end to the whole movement. The latter course was advocated by Richard O'Gorman, Junior, who wrote to Smith O'Brien in July 1847⁹³ to suggest that the Confederation should hold one great meeting to put forward their views yet again, and if support was not forthcoming, then they would cease their efforts. 'We are an element of discord,' he wrote. 'Are we justified in keeping ourselves before the Public to continue ill feeling? I think not.'

About the same time, certain Young Irelanders began to detect developments in the Clubs, which they viewed with some anxiety. As we have seen, in spite of the fact that the Clubs provided the only steady source of support for Young Ireland, the latter did not intend to use them as their main field of activity for building up a national movement. The Clubs, after all, had little part in the Young Irelanders' original plans, and were composed not of gentry or professional men, with whom Young Ireland would have been glad to ally,⁹⁴ but of lower-middle class men. Since these men had offered their support, they had been organised into Clubs; but Young Ireland had kept a strong grip on the movement,

⁹³ R. O'Gorman, Jr, to O'Brien, 19 July 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438.

⁹⁴ The Young Irelanders did not shrink from admitting these preoccupations in a public meeting of the Confederation: see M'Gee's speech, Nation, 6 March 1847.

allowing very few of the Clubmen on to the Council of the Confederation. Apart from acting, in several cases, as Club Presidents, the Young Irelanders left most of the internal arrangements in the Clubs to their members.

Less than three months after the formation of the Confederation, Richard O'Gorman, Junior, made his fears known to Smith O'Brien, that the Confederate Clubs would withdraw allegiance from Young Ireland unless the latter adopted a more active policy.⁹⁵ He told O'Brien that the people of Dublin were looking for someone to give them a lead. He wrote:

...if we do not commence at once some more decided and marked line of action than has hitherto marked our policy, I fear the Irish Confederation will die a quick death - I saw today a sort of requisition calling on Fergus O'Connor^[96] to come over and lecture - I believe that requisition will be numerously signed, and O'Connor is quite sharp enough to take advantage to the vacancy and turn it to account.

O'Gorman was thus hinting that unless a more active policy was adopted by the Confederation, the Chartists might take advantage of the Dublin Confederates. What prospect was there of these fears being realised?

As we have seen, during the early and middle forties, Chartism had won relatively little support in Dublin. This may be ascribed to the attitude of O'Connell, and the weak nature of the movement in England at the time. However, O'Connell died in May 1847, and this may have eased the situation for Irish Chartists.⁹⁷ Also, Chartism in England took on a new lease of life in 1847, partly owing to the poor economic situation.⁹⁸ The influence of Chartism on the Dublin Clubs is difficult to measure.

95 R. O'Gorman, Jr, to O'Brien, 29 March 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438.

96 Feargus O'Connor was a Chartist leader in the North of England, and a relative of O'Connell's. His name was normally spelt as in this note.

97 This is suggested by Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867, London, 1959, p. 302.

98 Ibid., p. 311.

Individual Chartists had been present among the lower-middle class element in the movement since the time of the Remonstrance. A Chartist printer claimed that the famous Remonstrance had actually been printed in his house.⁹⁹ This man, W. H. Dyott, had joined the Confederation, but had retired from it when Young Irelanders had expressed their hostility to Chartism. Other Chartists, such as Christopher Coyne, continued to work with the Confederation.

Dyott wrote a pamphlet¹⁰⁰ in 1847, setting out his case for 'seceding' from the Confederation, which throws some interesting light on the relationship between Chartism and Young Ireland. The pamphlet revealed Dyott's complete disillusionment with Young Ireland, not only because of their attitude to Chartism, but because of the quality of their nationalism. He asserted that the Nation had called five of the Charter's six points an 'abomination';¹⁰¹ even O'Connell, he thought, had never gone so far in his condemnation of Chartism, which rested on his dislike of the physical force principle, rather than hostility to the Chartists' aims. As far as Young Ireland was concerned, Dyott questioned the Nation's claim that its hostile policy towards universal suffrage was forced upon it because of Protestant opinions.¹⁰² His implication was that Young Ireland inherently disliked the notion of universal suffrage. But perhaps more important in its implications for the relationship between Chartism and Young Ireland was Dyott's assessment of Young Ireland's nationalism. Writing of the Confederation, Dyott claimed that it had given birth to 'a spurious sort of Nationality, which expends itself in frothy abuse of England and unmeaning panegyric of ourselves - as if Young Ireland, like an overgrown Narcissus, had fallen in love with himself'.¹⁰³

99 [W. H. Dyott], Reasons for Seceding from the 'Seceders', by an Ex-Member of the Irish Confederation, Dublin, 1847, p. 8.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid., p. 14.

102 Ibid., p. 18.

103 Ibid., p. 17.

It was this brand of 'pure' nationalism which had spread to the Confederate Clubs. As a Chartist, participating in a British working class movement, Dyott might be expected to reject such a form of nationalism.

At the same time, however, Dyott's pamphlet is an indication of the slight influence which Chartism had on the Confederates in Dublin. For, in spite of this condemnation of Young Ireland (not of nationalism in general), which was available in 1847, there appears to be no evidence to suggest that Clubmen became disillusioned with Young Ireland: they continued to look to this group for a lead, rather than to the Chartists. It is true that certain Dublin Chartists remained in the Confederation; others, like Dyott, withdrew. The main conclusion to be drawn from this question is perhaps that anything approaching working-class consciousness in Dublin at this time was extremely weak. Even Dyott made little use of the concept of class in his arguments against the Young Irelanders, although he did call on them to stand down unless they were prepared to promote the cooperation of the British and Irish working classes.¹⁰⁴ He criticised Irish political movements in general for discouraging 'humble' men from taking a leading part in politics,¹⁰⁵ but failed to draw conclusions about the existence or non-existence of a class struggle in Ireland. The Young Irelanders' fears, then, about what they called 'democracy' in the Clubs were probably much exaggerated.

VI. In the middle of 1847 at least one of the Young Irelanders (Richard O'Gorman, Junior) was seriously considering the advisability of putting an end to the movement,¹⁰⁶ because the landed classes had failed to come forward to join the national movement. A year later, those classes had

104 Dyott, Reasons for Seceding, p. 20.

105 Ibid., p. 3.

106 R. O'Gorman, Jr, to O'Brien, 17 and 19 July, 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 438; see also above, p. 230.

still not come forward; yet instead of winding up the movement, some of the leaders had actually taken part in a rebellion. In this section, we shall look at the changes both in Dublin and elsewhere which made this possible, and particularly the impact of the news of the French revolution in February 1848.

From the month of August 1847 onwards, and before the differences over policy on the land question arose, the Young Irelanders became more hopeful about their movement, to judge by the tone of their letters to each other. On the one hand, the Clubs showed signs of slow growth. In that month, the first Club in London was formed.¹⁰⁷ By September, Clubs had also been formed in Limerick, Cork and Belfast, and also in Stalybridge and Liverpool.¹⁰⁸ At the beginning of October, there were five Clubs in Dublin city;¹⁰⁹ the membership probably amounted to one thousand. The Dublin Clubs were improving their libraries, and hearing lectures on a variety of topics. A wide range of newspapers was taken by the Clubs: in the Grattan Club, for instance, the following papers were taken besides the Nation: the Evening Packet (Tory), the Limerick Reporter and the Galway Vindicator (supporters of Young Ireland), the Northern Star (Chartist), and Peter Carroll's Penny Magazine (a radical national paper; which was also the nearest the Dublin press came at this time to a working class journal).¹¹⁰ This assortment reveals the Clubmen's desire to be well informed about politics.

While the Clubs were slowly increasing in number, the land question too seemed promising in the months before the quarrel between Duffy and Mitchel came to a head. The Irish Council with its membership of gentry was still meeting, and hope had not been abandoned that this class would

¹⁰⁷ Nation, 14 August 1847.

¹⁰⁸ Nation, 18 September 1847.

¹⁰⁹ Nation, 23 October 1847.

¹¹⁰ Nation, 4 September 1847.

yet come over to support a national movement. The policy of building up a parliamentary party had been given a boost by the adhesion of two English M.P.s, T. C. Anstey and David Urqhart,¹¹¹ whose support, however, was to prove of limited value to the movement. Plans were being made, too, for a Confederate mission to Belfast, as a gesture to win over the Protestants of the North.¹¹²

The quarrels over policy on the land question, however, threatened to destroy this more hopeful outlook. As early as March, Richard O'Gorman, Junior, had suggested that the Confederation should ally with the tenants' movement, since the gentry were proving so slow to act. By November, James Fintan Lalor, whose radical ideas on the land question were not shared by most Young Irelanders, was complaining bitterly that neither the Repeal Association, the Irish Council, nor the Confederation had done anything effective to help the tenants in the south of Ireland.¹¹³ Mitchel and Reilly, however, were moving closer to Lalor's radical views on the land question. The former confided to Smith O'Brien in September that he had lost faith in action from the landed classes and the Irish Council, although he still hoped that Lalor's rent strike scheme would nudge the landlords into supporting fair rents.¹¹⁴

Mitchel made his choice (to side with the tenants' movement). For other Young Irelanders the choice was more difficult. Michael Doheny, a member of the Repeal Association since the early forties, and a collaborator with Lalor over certain of his schemes, explained the position:

111 Anstey became M.P. for Youghal in 1847; Urqhart became M.P. for Stafford in 1847. Among the Young Irelanders, J. E. Pigot felt uneasy at the prospect of supporting Anstey's candidature for Youghal; he reminded O'Brien that the Young Irelanders had agreed not to support Englishmen, and said that to support Anstey would be to fall back into 'O'Connellism': J. E. Pigot to O'Brien, 24 July 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 439.

112 The details of this visit are recorded in Proceedings of the Young Ireland Party in the Music Hall, Belfast.

113 Lalor to (M. Doheny), 10 November (1847), S.P.O. O.P./1848/105.

114 Mitchel to O'Brien, 8 September 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 439.

... there is imminent danger if we take part in a struggle against the landlords (shape it how you will it will come to that) if we do that the danger is that we extinguish thereby and perhaps for ever the spirit of nationality manifesting itself in that quarter. Then on the other hand; if we keep aloof from this movement now we will miss a great opportunity of taking the nation captive.¹¹⁵

Doheny declared himself in favour not of taking a leading part in the tenants' movement, but of cooperating with it 'when it comes in our way'.¹¹⁶ In fact, only Reilly went as far as Mitchel in adopting Lalor's views, but the difference of opinion between the Young Irelanders became public.¹¹⁷ This was almost inevitable, since Mitchel was one of the writers in the Nation, which was still edited by Gavan Duffy. Duffy remained extremely cautious on the land question. Among the Clubs, Mitchel found some support, as Richard O'Gorman complained to Smith O'Brien.¹¹⁸ T. D. M'Gee suggested that since the land question was proving divisive, all other questions should be subordinated to Repeal.¹¹⁹ This was clearly impractical in view of the great suffering and hardship which the famine was causing in the country.

On the eve of the news of the French revolution, therefore, the Young Ireland movement was in the following position: a minority among the leaders had rejected the essentially moderate and cautious policy of trying to win over the gentry to nationalism. The majority were still committed to such a policy, and had gone so far as to allow Mitchel and

115 Doheny to O'Brien, 7 September 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I., MS 439

116 Ibid. Doheny claimed to have modified his views on the land question as a result of learning of O'Brien's hostility to Mitchel's schemes: see Doheny to O'Brien, 31 December 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 439.

117 The differences came into the open in the meeting of the Confederation reported in Nation, 18 December 1847.

118 R. O'Gorman, Jr, to O'Brien, 28 December 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 439.

119 M'Gee to O'Brien, 30 December 1847, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 439.

Reilly to resign from the Confederation.¹²⁰ Among the Clubs, which as we have seen, had little direct influence on Young Ireland policy, there were signs of support for the minority in the quarrel, although there do not appear to have been any resignations from the Confederation on the part of Clubmen who were anxious to show their sympathy with Mitchel.¹²¹ In the Clubs, lectures and other peaceful activities went on as usual. Certain members of the Clubs, nevertheless, displayed their independence of the leaders. Andrew English, a radical member of St Patrick's Club (of which Mitchel was President) planned the formation of a rifle club in February 1848,¹²² before the news of the rising in Paris reached Ireland.

The news of this revolution, which came to Ireland at the end of the month, had a great impact on the various groupings within the national movement. In the early stages, before the horrors of the June days led to a hardening of opinion, even moderate nationalists who abhorred the use of violence could praise the revolution. The Pilot went so far as to wonder whether republican governments might not be becoming the norm, rather than the exception, via the agency of 'moral force'.¹²³ In the Nation, it was boldly stated that 'Necessity knows no law', and 'Ireland's necessity demands the desperate remedy of revolution'. The same issue carried an article headed 'Easy Lessons on Military Matters', and contemplated the formation of a National Guard.¹²⁴

While the Young Irelanders had never ruled out the possibility of using physical force to win Repeal,¹²⁵ circumstances had never before arisen which made the use of force a question to be considered in practical terms. With the recent and apparently successful example of Paris before them, it

120 Nation, 5 and 12 February, 1848. John Martin also resigned.

121 Nation, 19 February 1848.

122 United Irishman, 26 February 1848.

123 Pilot, 5 April 1848.

124 Nation, 11 April 1848.

125 In fact, this was the immediate question which had led to the secession.

might appear from the attitudes expressed in the Nation, that the Young Irelanders had decided to support the use of force. These attitudes expressed in public, however, display more confidence than the Young Irelanders felt, as their letters to one another reveal. Duffy's reaction to the revolution was not a simple one. He believed that a revolution in Ireland was inevitable, and even desirable, but only if led by the right people. 'I see but one safety for her [Ireland],' he wrote to Smith O'Brien;¹²⁶ 'a Union of the Old and Young Ir^{ldrs.} an arraying of the middle class in the front of the millions, and a peaceful revolution, attained by watching, or seizing, our opportunity.'¹²⁷

Once again, then, the question of a reconciliation with the Repeal Association was mooted,¹²⁸ in order to unite the moderate upper-middle class elements in the national movement, and put them at the head of the people, as had been the case in Paris. There, the upper-middle classes had given the signal for revolt, by their campaign of 'political banquets', and they hoped to maintain control of the revolution once the government had fallen.¹²⁹ The events of 1848 in many European countries would prove how difficult such manoeuvres were in practice. Success depended first upon the weakness of the government; then on the willingness of the people to be led by moderates whose interests were by no means identical with their own; and finally on the confidence and credibility of the middle-class leaders. Some of the Young Irelanders recognised the dangers of the situation. J. E. Pigot wrote to Smith O'Brien that talk such as 'our time

126 Duffy to O'Brien, March(?) 1848, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 441 (2344).

127 (Emphasis in original). In view of this, T.F. O'Sullivan's claim in The Young Irelanders, pp. 77-8, that all the moderate Young Irelanders became 'apostles of armed revolt' following the rising in Paris, appears to be a considerable exaggeration.

128 In fact, O'Brien had been seriously considering reconciliation before the news of the Paris rising arrived: see his letter read at the Confederation, in Nation, 15 January 1848.

129 Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon, pp. 206-8.

is come' was dangerous and stupid, since the Irish people were so easily excited.¹³⁰ He doubted whether it was desirable that the recent events in Paris should be repeated in Ireland. Two days later, however, he declared himself in favour of the formation of a National Guard, but felt that any such move should be made with great caution.¹³¹

While some of the Young Irelanders were inclined to greet the news of the French revolution with caution, the Clubmen, with less at stake, saw the revolution as a sign that they should indulge in military preparations. As we have seen, rifle practice had been planned before the news of the outbreak in France; such activities were given a new stimulus. The radical minority among the Young Irelanders supported this policy, and Mitchel urged all Irishmen to arm.¹³² The normal Club activities, such as lectures and educational classes, did not cease,¹³³ but arming and drilling became steadily more prevalent. By the beginning of April one of the Castle spies, who had joined the Swift Club, reported that a shooting gallery was about to open in Upper Abbey Street.¹³⁴ The Swift Club had about seven hundred members by the middle of April.¹³⁵ The Clubs also began to arrange shooting competitions among themselves. In spite of the fact that the Council of the Confederation claimed to direct and control the members of the Confederation, this Council had little control over what went on in the Clubs. The spy EF No. 1 recorded that the most important men in the management of the Swift's affairs were Philip

130 Pigot to O'Brien, 14 March 1848, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 442.

131 Pigot to O'Brien, 16 March 1848, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 442. The idea of a National Guard was taken, of course, from the events of the French revolution. The Paris National Guard was a middle class body, although it had the support of some more radical elements: see Thomson, Europe Since Napoleon, p. 206.

132 United Irishman, 11 March 1848. Mitchel had given up his connection with the Nation and was writing in his own paper.

133 Report from St Patrick's Club, United Irishman, 18 March 1848.

134 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 6, 9 April 1848.

135 Ibid., 12 April 1848.

Grey, a clerk, and a man named Roche (the secretaries), with two men named Byrne and Kelly.¹³⁶ Of these, only Grey was a Council member, and he only attended two of its meetings during his spell as a member. He was not a member of the hard-core Young Ireland group. Until 13 March, the Council had no provisions for regular meetings with the officers of the Clubs.¹³⁷

Meanwhile, the Club membership began to increase, and new Clubs were formed. In October 1847 there had been only seven or eight Clubs in the Dublin area; by July 1848 this number had risen to over fifty, with a membership of several thousand.¹³⁸ Almost the whole of this increase took place after the outbreak of the French revolution. It is probable that the new recruits to the Clubs were aware of and approved the policy of arming and drilling which was being carried out, and hoped, in the light of the speeches made by leaders like Mitchel, that the Young Irelanders would lead them in a rising. But as has been suggested, the majority of the Young Irelanders were cautious when it came to arming. Most of them approved the formation of a National Guard, which had been such a feature of the events leading up to the French rising. On 20 March, however, Smith O'Brien urged the Council of the Confederation not to engage in any secret activities.¹³⁹ He may have believed that the government would turn a blind eye on any activities, however seditious, which were kept public. One week later, Mitchel, now back in the Confederation,¹⁴⁰ moved the appointment of a sub-committee on the question of organising a National Guard.¹⁴¹ At the same time, Duffy moved the appointment of a committee to

136 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 6, 12 April 1848.

137 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 13 March 1848: Resolution moved by James Doyle.

138 Details of the Clubs in existence in the summer of 1848 are given in the Confederation's Correspondence Book (R.I.A. MS 23/H/41) and Minute Book (23/H/43).

139 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 20 March 1848. O'Brien was speaking on the eve of his departure for France, bearing the congratulations of the Irish Confederation to the new French republic.

140 Mitchel, Martin and Devin Reilly were again active in the Confederation by 8 March: Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 8 March 1848.

141 Ibid., 27 March 1848.

consider methods of electing a council of three hundred. These were not particularly radical steps to take; but by endorsing the concept of a National Guard, the Council was committing itself to some form of armed preparation. In this way, the Council could hope to maintain its credibility as leader of the national movement, in face of mounting pressure from the Clubs for a more radical policy.

The Young Irelanders also displayed caution on the question of allying with the Chartists, notwithstanding the apparent similarity of their views on such questions as Repeal and the use of physical force. In April 1848, two British Chartists visited Dublin, to try to form some kind of alliance between Repealers and Chartists. The Nation of 22 April gave this move a cautious welcome, but was at pains to point out that the Charter was to be for England, while Repeal was for Ireland: there was no question of changing principles. One of the men on the fringe of the Young Ireland party, Captain Bryan, a member of the Council, was appointed by the Confederation to attend the Chartist convention in London.¹⁴² Cooperation hardly went further than this:¹⁴³ and the failure to work more closely with the Chartists at such a time is a striking indication of the social and political conservatism of the Young Irelanders.

VII. Once the news of the French revolution had reached Ireland, the complex policy pursued by Young Ireland, that of maintaining their control over the Clubs, while at the same time attracting support from the landed classes, became much more difficult.

While the Clubs still looked to the Council of the Confederation for a lead, the fact that they were now arming and drilling meant that the possibility of a rising had to be considered. There was less room for

¹⁴² Nation, 6 May 1848.

¹⁴³ Some writers have tended to exaggerate the significance of this cooperation: see Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, p. 186, and J. H. Treble, 'The Irish Agitation', in J. T. Ward (ed.), Popular Movements c. 1830-50, London, 1970, pp. 152-82 (p. 177).

the Young Irelanders from Dublin, the Clubmen were left relatively impotent, without leaders.

From the Young Ireland viewpoint, government action proved decisive in bringing them at last to condone a rebellion. The Nation had reacted with great boldness to the first government prosecutions of the year, when in March Smith O'Brien, Meagher and Mitchel were charged with making seditious speeches. The Nation had declared that 'there shall be no longer rest or peace or safety for the Foreign Government while one true man is left'.¹⁵⁰ Such language was liable to be misinterpreted by Clubmen, who might well have believed that Young Ireland was anxious to lead them in a rising. However, these early prosecutions failed in their objective, and it was not until May that the government succeeded in securing a verdict against one of the group, Mitchel. The Nation once again reacted strongly,¹⁵¹ in spite of the many differences which Duffy and Smith O'Brien had had with Mitchel over policy.¹⁵² Indeed, the Nation appeared to be outraged that the government should act to put down the increasingly seditious tone of the press.

At the beginning of June, in spite of these events, the Council of the Confederation still had not reached the point where it could recommend armed resistance to the government, although this point was seen as rapidly approaching.¹⁵³ Certain of the most cautious Young Irelanders, such as Smith O'Brien and Sir Colman O'Loughlen, drew back from this prospect. O'Loughlen threw himself into the arrangements for the new Irish League,¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Nation, 25 March 1848.

¹⁵¹ 'This is the final end of patient endurance and the time is now come to unite and arm': Nation, 27 May 1848.

¹⁵² In fact the differences between Mitchel and Smith O'Brien had become so great that on 5 May the Council of the Confederation received a letter from Mitchel and one from Reilly, tendering their resignations from the Council and the Confederation: Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 5 May 1848.

¹⁵³ Address of the Irish Confederation to the Irish People, Nation, 3 June 1848.

¹⁵⁴ O'Loughlen to O'Brien, 4 June 1848, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 442.

which was to have no formal connection with the Clubs;¹⁵⁵ nor was arming to form part of its policies. Early in June, Smith O'Brien and Duffy still put their faith in the League as the prospective forum for the national movement.¹⁵⁶ When the government acted again by arresting Duffy, in the second week of July, and suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, on 25 July, there was little alternative for the remaining leaders, by then in various parts of the country, but to make a stand of some sort, however hopeless. Smith O'Brien and Michael Doheny both claimed afterwards that the rising was unplanned, and the result of external circumstances,¹⁵⁷ rather than the conscious planning of the Young Irelanders. In the light of their previous conduct, this claim was probably correct. On the other hand, of course, their writings in the Nation and elsewhere had greatly contributed to the expectations among certain sections of society, that the Young Irelanders would lead their followers in a rising.

As for the Clubs, those in Dublin, representing the flower of the Confederate Clubs, lacked the confidence to organise and carry out a rising themselves. This was despite their growing disillusionment with the Council. On 24 July, a spy's report showed that the Clubmen were unwilling to act without the sanction of the Council.¹⁵⁸ One spy believed that 'fear alone' kept the Clubmen from attempting a rising in Dublin.¹⁵⁹ However, many Club members fled the city when the government began to use its special powers in July.¹⁶⁰ By September, the spies had less and less to report. Rumours of American help, and of a Chartist rising in England,

155 O'Loughlen to O'Brien, 4 June 1848, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 442; and O'Brien's letter to T. Halpin, Nation, 17 June 1848.

156 O'Brien to Duffy, 8 June 1848, S. O'Brien to Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 2642, and Nation, 10 June 1848.

157 O'Brien to I. Butt, 9 December 1848, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 442; Doheny to the Editor of the F.J., 4 August 1848, S.P.O. O.P./1848/105.

158 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 6, 24 July 1848.

159 Ibid., 20 August 1848.

160 Ibid., 26 July 1848.

continued to keep alive hopes that some outbreak would occur.¹⁶¹ But by the beginning of 1849 the men who retained hopes of a rising were scattered and disorganised, and were turning to secret preparations. Those involved in these secret dealings were mostly unemployed, and constantly had to move their lodgings because of police vigilance. They also continued to await directions from their former leaders, members of Young Ireland who might have escaped capture.¹⁶² Later in the year, J. F. Lalor managed to bring about some reorganisation of the scattered Club members, ensuring this time that the work went on in secret.¹⁶³ With Lalor's death, and in the absence of any other middle class leadership, this organisation declined. The significance of the Club organisation appears to lie in the failure of the Club members to build up any kind of movement which did not rely on middle class leadership. When the national movement was renewed in the sixties by the Fenians, and once again there was considerable support from the lower-middle classes, the leadership was still in the hands of upper-middle class men.

Conclusion

To sum up, in this chapter we have set out to examine the way in which the Young Irelanders organised their movement to win Repeal. In the Nation they implied that this would be achieved through the cooperation of all sections of the Irish people, to bring about the end of foreign domination and the regeneration of Ireland, very much in the tradition of romantic nationalism. An examination of their private letters, however, reveals that in practice their plans represented a considerable modification of this idealistic conception. They rightly saw the landed

161 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 6, 22 August and 14 September, 1848.

162 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 7, 3 January 1849.

163 Marcus Bourke, John O'Leary: A Study in Irish Separatism, Tralee, 1967, pp. 20-21.

classes as the key to a successful bid for Repeal. But it can also be argued that they saw this class as an ally in the face of the growing trend towards 'democracy' in the Clubs, and the aspirations of the Catholic Church.

The secession from the Repeal Association would appear to have taken the Young Irelanders by surprise, for they had no immediate plans ready to meet their new situation. When they did begin to think about their future role, their plans reveal that they did not think in terms of establishing a democratic organisation with elected leaders.¹⁶⁴ The Repeal Association, of course, was not a 'democratic' body: it was dominated by middle class men. But in view of the Nation's claim to stand for an all-embracing nationalism, this failure to think in terms of a more democratic system of organisation is striking.

When a section of the Dublin Repealers (mainly drawn from the lower-middle class) showed signs of dissatisfaction with the Repeal Association, the Young Irelanders decided after much hesitation to place themselves at the head of this movement, through the Irish Confederation. The lower-middle class elements provided the membership for the Clubs, and had little say in decisions taken by the Council of the Confederation. Policy was in fact determined by the Young Irelanders, who, with other professional men, formed a large majority on the Council.

Throughout 1847, the Young Irelanders continued to work towards winning the support of the landed classes. The Clubs grew only slowly; their members tended to manage their own internal affairs. In spite of this slow growth, the Young Irelanders showed constant anxiety lest the 'democratic' elements in the Clubs, which they probably exaggerated, should

¹⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, O'Brien thought that the 'council of three hundred' (the proposed provisional government of Ireland after Repeal) could be composed of the (non-elected) Council of the Irish League, i.e. of Young Irelanders and some members of the Repeal Association.

increase. Their attitude towards Chartism, in particular, indicates their dislike for working-class movements, not merely because Chartism might distract men from the national cause, but because of its implications for their own control of the movement. By the end of 1847, a minority among the party had grown impatient with the landlords and were seeking to work more closely with the tenants. But the majority still hoped for an alliance with the landlords.

The news of the French revolution changed the situation so drastically that Young Ireland had to adopt a more radical policy. The Clubs welcomed the news of the revolution; so did the Nation. Yet the private letters written by members of the group show that many Young Irelanders abhorred the idea of a revolution in Ireland which was not under the control of the substantial middle classes. They worked, therefore, for a reunion of Repealers, which would strengthen middle class control of the movement. At the same time they took a bold line in their journals. From March onwards, the Clubs increased rapidly in number and membership, and arming became their main preoccupation. Once deprived of their leaders, however, the Clubs lacked the confidence to act on their own initiative. Until the government intervened in July, the Young Irelanders worked for a reconciliation with the Old Irelanders, which led to the establishment of the Irish League in June. Government intervention, however, induced the Young Irelanders to take the step of heading a brief rising, which lacked the middle class and landed support which they had hoped to gain.

Young Ireland's policy could only have been successful in 1848 had the government been so weak that it was powerless to retain control of the situation. While Young Ireland may have believed this to be the case, the government was not in fact weak, only unwilling to use special powers

until absolutely necessary.¹⁶⁵ The Young Irelanders had looked in vain for cooperation from the gentry, a policy which could not have helped them when they attempted to raise the peasantry. The gentry remained loyal, as did men of property and the clergy of both religions, with very few exceptions. Young Ireland had failed to establish communications with the peasantry, whose attachment to the land gave evidence of their national sympathies. Moreover, the effect of the famine had been to rob that class of all spirit for a rising. The one section of society which was to some extent prepared for action, the lower-middle classes in the towns, lacked faith in themselves, and failed to act once the middle class leaders had withdrawn.

¹⁶⁵ Lord Clarendon, the Lord Lieutenant, had been asking for coercive measures since late 1847: see Sir G. Grey to Clarendon, 26 November 1847, MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 11. Through the spy system, he was extremely well informed of the developments in the Clubs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE YOUNG IRELAND MOVEMENT IN DUBLIN

In the last chapter, we looked at the Young Irelanders' plans for organising a national movement. We now move on to consider some social and economic factors concerning the Young Ireland party and the Irish Confederation. Beginning with a brief survey of the economic depression which affected Dublin from 1846 to 1849, we will go on to look at the social background of the Young Irelanders, and of those who gave them their support, the Remonstrants and the Clubmen. We will then consider the following questions: why did Young Ireland leadership appeal to certain members of the lower-middle classes, and why did Young Ireland win so little support outside this class? An examination of the relations between the Dublin trades unions and the Confederation sheds some light on the nature of Young Ireland's economic policies, and also on the aspirations of the tradesmen themselves. Finally, we will attempt to ascertain how far the hopes for cooperation between Catholics and Protestants in a national movement were fulfilled, and what the basis for such cooperation was.

I. In the brief survey of Dublin's social and economic condition in Chapter 3, we noted that the slump of 1839-42 had a severe effect on the city, along with others in the United Kingdom. Thereafter, things improved, but the effect of the famine, combined with a more general depression from about 1846 to 1848, led once again to widespread hardship in the capital. There was no famine as such in Dublin, for there the potato did not form the staple diet.¹ But indirectly, the effects on trade were severe.

¹ Patrick Lynch and John Vaizey, Guinness's Brewery in the Irish Economy, 1759-1876, Cambridge, 1960, p. 165.

By the eighteen forties, the industrial revolution had made only a limited impact on Dublin.² Although there were certain factories in the city and its surrounding areas, some employing comparatively large numbers, such as Messrs Pim's cotton factory at Greenmount, Harold's Cross, the dominant form of production was still pre-industrial and small-scale. The areas around the two cathedrals, particularly those known as the Liberties, were the home of hand-loom weavers, in various textile trades, whose traditional way of life was being undermined by the more efficient and larger-scale industries in England, and also, probably, by a surplus of labour.³ Industries with a greater future in an industrial age did exist, such as chemical works and gas works, but these were very much the exception. However, despite a very slow expansion of industry, Dublin's population was increasing fairly fast, from about 172,000 in 1801 to about 230,000 in 1841.⁴

How did these people earn a living? The 1841 census (which may serve as a guide, although not an infallible one) estimated that of about 40,600 families in Dublin city, about 28,000 were engaged in manufacturing, and about 7,800 in agriculture.⁵ Even in a large city like Dublin, therefore, agricultural occupations were still fairly important. Of the 'manufacturing' families, few were employed in factories. In 1839, the whole of Ireland contained only 107 textile factories (textiles were the main industry in Ireland), of which fifty were in Ulster, and which

2 Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland, pp. 78 and 164-5.

3 A surplus of labour, rather than competition from power machinery, was the cause of the distress of handloom weavers and frame-work knitters in Leicester: see J.F.C. Harrison, 'Chartism in Leicester' in Briggs, Chartist Studies, pp. 99-146 (p. 125). Dublin's population was also growing rapidly, and since handloom weaving was easy to learn, it seems likely that a labour surplus may also have been a problem in Dublin.

4 R. B. McDowell, 'Dublin and Belfast - A Comparison', in McDowell, Social Life in Ireland, pp. 13-27 (p. 15).

5 These figures were taken from P.P. 1843, XXIV: Report of the Commissioners appointed to take the Census of Ireland, for the Year 1841: Tables for the City of Dublin, pp. 18-19.

employed less than 15,000 persons.⁶ In Dublin county (which included the city), only 1,247 individuals were employed in textile factories, according to a Parliamentary Return of 1847.⁷ Since textiles formed the earliest industry to be transformed by the industrial revolution, this low number indicates the relative backwardness of Dublin, and indeed of Ireland in general outside the north-east, in industrialising. Thus, whereas in England almost 545,000 people were employed in textile factories, and over 67,000 in Scotland, the whole of Ireland had less than 23,000 so employed.⁸

Backwardness in industrialisation meant that Dublin in the eighteen forties contained large numbers of people still occupied in trades which were doomed to decline, or die out altogether, as in the case of the hand-loom weavers. In an economic depression, people engaged in this sort of trade would almost certainly be badly affected, since slumps led to the dumping of goods by British manufacturers on markets near home, such as Ireland. This took place notably in 1825,⁹ but was always a threat to Irish manufacturers who had not yet acquired the size or strength to compete with their English counterparts. Protective tariffs might have benefited early Irish attempts to industrialise, but given the prevailing economic views of governments in London, such a measure was most unlikely. However, the small proportion of factory workers and the large numbers of men engaged in traditional crafts did not necessarily mean that support for a political movement would be limited. In England a Chartist scheme of 1839 to close the factories in Manchester failed because of a lack of mass support from the factory operatives;¹⁰ and as we shall see, among the

6 Total [textile] Mills and Persons employed in 1839: Thom's Irish Almanac, 1850, p. 165.

7 Table of the Total Number of Persons, Male and Female, specifying their Ages, between stated periods, employed in the Factories in each County in Ireland (Parliamentary Paper No. 294, 1847): Thom's Irish Almanac, 1850, p. 165.

8 Ibid.

9 Emil Strauss, Irish Nationalism and British Democracy, London, 1951, p. 75.

10 Donald Read, 'Chartism in Manchester', in Briggs, Chartist Studies, pp. 29-64 (p. 48).

Clubs, members of the old skilled trades and clerks, rather than factory workers, tended to be prominent.

The recovery of the economy after 1842 lasted only a few years, and was unable to withstand the effects of the famine and the economic slump abroad. The decline in economic activity can be demonstrated by several criteria. Amounts of savings deposited in the Dublin Meath Street and Abbey Street banks fell steadily from 1845, as the amounts on deposit on 20 November in successive years indicates:¹¹

1845	£435,366
1846	£419,365
1847	£372,536
1848	£132,860

The total securities of the Bank of Ireland also declined, according to a Parliamentary Return of 1848. In 1845 they were fairly steady. In 1846 there was a rise, but after April a gradual decline began, hardly interrupted through 1847. A similar decline occurred in the circulation of specie in 1846 and 1847.¹² In 1847, the amount of tobacco imported into Ireland was just under six million pounds (weight), but this fell to a little over five million in 1848, with a slight rise in 1849.¹³ More important to the workers, perhaps, than savings or tobacco, was the price of bread. The cost of a four-pound loaf fell gradually from 9³/₄d in 1838 to 6¹/₄d in 1843, then began a gradual rise to reach 9d again in 1847, falling to 6¹/₂d in 1848 and declining further in 1849.¹⁴ The period

11 Return of the State of the Savings' Banks in Ireland on 20 November, 1845, 1846, 1847 and 1848, Thom's Irish Almanac, 1850, p. 193.

12 Account of the Notes of the Bank of Ireland in Circulation: Extract from House of Lords Paper, No. 27, Session 1848, ibid., p. 189.

13 Statement showing the Average Annual Quantities of Wine, Spirits, Foreign and Home made, Tobacco, ... retained for Home Consumption in Ireland... in each of the Years ending 5th January 1845-9, ibid., p. 182.

14 D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, Appendix 7, Table 5.

1846-7 was therefore characterised by rising prices in the staple food of the working man in Dublin.¹⁵

II. Having considered the economic situation in Dublin at the time of the Young Ireland movement, we now go on to look more closely at social factors in the movement. Since we have been concerned in this study with organisations, it will be useful to begin by looking at the membership of the Council of the Irish Confederation, set up by the Young Irelanders in January 1847.¹⁶ This Council formulated policy and prepared the agenda for the public meetings. Members of the Council were predominantly professional men, but not all were Young Irelanders in the strict sense of the term (that is, those who had been associated with Thomas Davis while working in the Repeal Association). But when we look at the Minutes of the Council meetings, and ascertain which members attended most often, and hence had a greater opportunity for influencing the direction of policy, it becomes clear that the Young Ireland group played a major role on the Council. Eight members¹⁷ attended over forty meetings during 1847-8, of whom five were Young Irelanders in the strict sense, and a sixth, Mitchel, was very closely associated with this group. All the eight members were either qualified lawyers or studying for the Bar. Thus, while Young Irelanders did not form a majority on the Council, they were clearly a most important element.

Dublin residents too, among them most of the Young Irelanders, made up an important proportion of the Council membership. As will be seen from

¹⁵ See Kevin B. Nowlan, 'The Political Background', in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (eds), The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-52, Dublin, 1956, pp. 151-206 (p. 146).

¹⁶ Nation, 16 January 1847.

¹⁷ These were Gavan Duffy, J. B. Dillon, Thomas D. M'Gee, Richard O'Gorman, Jr, Thomas P. Meagher, P. J. Smyth, Charles Taaffe and John Mitchel. The last three were not Young Irelanders in the strictest sense.

Table 7.1,¹⁸ in 1847 about fifty-eight per cent of the members were Dublin residents; in 1848 this figure was about forty-four per cent. Dublin's importance in the Council is revealed more strikingly by looking at figures for attendance at the Council meetings. Of the twenty-six members who attended more than ten meetings from 1847 to 1848, only three were not Dublin residents. More than seventy-three per cent of those who attended any Council meetings were from Dublin. It is thus not surprising that occasionally complaints were heard from the provinces that they had little influence on the Council;¹⁹ what is surprising is that there were not more.

Besides the dominance of Dublin, another striking feature revealed by these figures is the small number of men connected with trade of any kind, at any level, on the Council. Among the twenty-three from Dublin who attended more than ten meetings, only three were tradesmen: a parchment manufacturer, a master hatter, and an operative silk weaver. All the rest were property owners and professional men, plus a few students, clerks and the like. This might partly reflect the practical difficulty which tradesmen would have in finding the time to come to meetings; but in view of the small number of members of this class on the Council in the first place, it is hard to escape the conclusion that tradesmen were badly under-represented on the Council.

They were badly under-represented, that is, if tradesmen and artisans formed an important element in Young Ireland's support, which we have so far taken to be the case. Turning now from the minority which comprised the Council to their supporters in general, the problem arises of a relative scarcity of evidence, but certain pointers do exist. Some direct evidence is contained in a list appearing in a book of Minutes of the Confederation.²⁰ The list has no heading, save 23 April 1848, but

¹⁸ See below, p. 288.

¹⁹ See, for example, the Irish Tribune, 24 June 1848 and the Irish Felon, same date.

²⁰ Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/43.

from the names it contains it is clearly a list of Confederate sympathisers, if not members,²¹ resident in Dublin (all but five on the list, excluding students, were normally resident in the capital). Unfortunately, the list contains only 147 names, which certainly does not represent the full membership or support in Dublin; but it does have the advantage of including the occupations of nearly all the persons on it. Bearing in mind the limited nature of this list, Table 7.2 represents a breakdown of the 120 people on the list who were not members of the Council, and who lived in Dublin.²² In contrast to Table 7.1, which showed the occupations of members of the Council, it will be noticed that these occupations fall on the whole outside the propertied and professional classes. The presence of such occupations as civil engineers and chemists indicates support among the newer industrial trades. A large number of clerks' and students' names appear on the list, and the names of seven labourers (that is, representatives of the working class). The high number of carpenters and bricklayers seems to indicate strong support from these trades.²³ However, this list indicates a lack of support from merchants and large manufacturers, reflecting the poor attraction Young Ireland had for the wealthier business classes. Altogether, it reveals support among the lower-middle and working classes, from labourers to skilled artisans,²⁴ with the emphasis on the latter, but little support among the professional or business middle classes or men of property.

Another useful source of evidence for the social background of the Young Ireland sympathisers is the Dublin Remonstrance,²⁵ when used in

21 The list is possibly one of seceders from the Repeal Association: P. J. Smyth and P. J. Barry were asked to draw up such a list in November 1847: Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 25 November 1847.

22 See below, p. 289.

23 The building trades were among the best paid in Dublin, with an even higher rate than those in Manchester: D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, p. 117.

24 The lack of support from provision traders is striking.

25 The Remonstrance was drawn up for signature by those who disapproved of

conjunction with the Dublin Directories. As evidence of the type of people who were supporting Young Ireland, the Remonstrance is not a completely satisfactory document, because it was signed in October 1846, before the formation of the Irish Confederation. However, in the absence of other evidence on such a scale (the Remonstrance contained about 970 signatures) it is a valuable source if used as a general guide to those who felt, at the very least, that the Young Irelanders had some right on their side in their quarrel with the Repeal Association.

Taking into consideration the few cases where the same person signed twice, 970 persons signed the Dublin Remonstrance, including four or five women. They lived either in the city (about 860²⁶) or in the suburbs and in Dublin county generally (about 110²⁷). It proved possible to identify as householders (owning, renting or leasing a house) 124 of the 860 who lived in the city. Of these, all but seven were ratepayers. This figure represents 14.8 per cent of the whole, which seems a fairly high proportion of signatories with at least some property, although in most cases this was not very great, judging by the amount of rate paid. But ratepayers as a whole were in the minority in Dublin, so that these 124 householders were probably fairly comfortably situated, compared with the majority of Dubliners.

Turning to the occupations of the householders,²⁸ it will be seen

the conduct of the Repeal Association in expelling the Young Irelanders. The best source for the details of the Remonstrance is the Nation, 10, 17, 24 and 31 October 1846. The authenticity of some signatures was questioned by some at the R.A.: Nation, 31 October 1846. A Remonstrance Committee was set up by the Young Irelanders, to disprove the charges. It found, not surprisingly, that the vast majority of the names were genuine. This seems likely, as very few people denied their signatures, or produced substantial evidence to show that signatures were forged.

26 It is difficult to be precise about the numbers living within the city boundaries, owing to the failure of some signatories to indicate which part of a street they lived in.

27 It was impossible to identify more than a handful of Remonstrants living in the suburbs, because of a tendency on their part to include only 'Boosterstown' or 'Blackrock' in their addresses.

28 See Table 7.3, p.290 below.

that the great majority were engaged in trade of some description: at least 81.5 per cent. Sixteen of the householders were engaged in the boot and shoe trade, and six were tailors: in England, too, these trades provided support for political movements.²⁹ The average rate paid by these householders was just below twenty pounds, which would qualify them for the municipal vote, but only twenty-three paid thirty pounds or more, which indicates that they were tradesmen with fairly small businesses, rather than wealthy burgesses. Yet, the effect of the economic depression upon this class is indicated by studying the fortunes of these householders during a period of three years, 1845 to 1847. The Directories reveal that of the 124, twenty-six (20.9 per cent) were no longer living at the same address by 1847. In eighteen cases (14.5 per cent), the rates of the property had been reduced by 1847, and in only two cases (1.6 per cent) had there been a rise in rates. These figures suggest the effect of the economic depression in displacing persons and lowering the value of property. The small tradesman would be particularly vulnerable in such a situation, as he would have standards to try and maintain, and the pressure of the economic situation may have increased his discontent with the existing national movement.

Turning to the 736 Remonstrants living in the city who were not householders, little can be said with certainty about their social background. The addresses given by over three hundred of these men were mainly those of small tradesmen, shopkeepers, and so forth:³⁰ the signatories probably worked for such men, as assistants. A further seventy gave addresses of tenement buildings,³¹ which suggests that they

29 Asa Briggs, 'The Local Background of Chartism', in Briggs, Chartist Studies, pp. 1-28 (p. 4).

30 See Table 7.4, p. 290 below.

31 In general, the addresses given by men who signed the Remonstrance indicated that the signatories were spread fairly evenly over the city. This was also true of those whose addresses indicated that they lived in tenements, although the three city wards of St Andrew's (south side, west

were rather poor. A handful of Remonstrants identified their occupations when signing, revealing a wide range of working class activities, with an emphasis on skilled crafts.³²

Summing up the evidence which can be drawn from the Remonstrance, it appears that the majority were lower-middle and working class men, with a minority of comparatively comfortable tradesmen, and just a few wealthy ones, such as James Shields, saddler, of Dawson Street, who paid a rate of sixty-five pounds per annum, or James Barry, grocer and spirit dealer, who paid fifty-five pounds. In general, though, it seems that wealthy tradesmen did not sign the Remonstrance, and neither, on the whole, did professional men, despite their later dominance on the Council of the Confederation. Men of property, too, were conspicuous by their absence.

Two sources of evidence which throw some light on the background of the Club members, as opposed to the Remonstrants, are the reports made by spies to Colonel Phaire,³³ an Orangeman who acted as an intermediary between the Dublin Orangemen and Dublin Castle, and the spies' reports sent to the Police Commissioners.³⁴ While the actual evidence as to the activities of the Clubs is somewhat suspect, because some of the spies were clearly biased against the Clubs³⁵ - at least one was later accused of acting as an

of Patrick Street), College (south side, east of T.C.D.) and Linen Hall (north side, between the Post Office and Four Courts wards) appear to have contained a high proportion of the Remonstrants who were tenement dwellers.

32 See Table 7.5, p. 291 below.

33 MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22. The reports cover the period May 1848 - August 1849. After the rising, Dublin Orangemen claimed that Col. Phaire had promised on behalf of Dublin Castle to supply them with arms in the spring of 1848. Phaire denied this (statement of 21 November 1848, *ibid.*, Box 22) but the Orangemen went so far as to threaten Lord Clarendon with a Bill of Indictment over the question (Sir G. Grey to Clarendon, 22 November and 5 December 1849, *ibid.*, Box 13). Clarendon denied giving money, arms or encouragement to the Orangemen (Clarendon to Bedford, 29 November 1849, *ibid.*, Box 81). It seems likely that Phaire was working very much on his own initiative, so the evidence of his spies is to be treated with caution.

34 T.C.D. MSS S. 3. 5, S. 3. 6, S. 3. 7 and S. 3. 8, covering March 1848 - August 1849.

35 The spies reporting to Phaire appeared more hostile to the Clubs than those reporting direct to the police.

agent provocateur³⁶ - there is no reason to believe that the information they occasionally provided about the social background of the Club members was incorrect. Unfortunately, this evidence is limited. Only four or five spies were active at any one time, and naturally they did not have access to every Club. Nor was it their main function to report on the social background of the members. Nevertheless, Colonel Phaire's spies did mention the occupations of twenty-eight Club members, and, bearing in mind that these may not be representative of members in general, at least they may serve as a guide to the occupations of some of the more active ones.³⁷ It is noticeable that of the twenty-eight, at least seventeen were skilled tradesmen, some of them in trades which were slowly decaying, such as cabinet-making.³⁸ The tailors and shoemakers are again represented. Three of the twenty-eight are listed as 'sons', which points to the youth of some of those involved. Another spy, reporting to the police, gave the ages of several new members who joined the Garryowen Club, in St Patrick's ward, in June and July 1848. The average age of thirteen new members whose ages were given was between twenty-four and twenty-five years. In fact, several were under twenty-one, while one or two were as old as forty. The predominance of skilled tradesmen among the active members of the Clubs, which is suggested in the reports of Colonel Phaire's spies, is confirmed by the police spies' reports.³⁹

These reports also indicate that professional and propertied men rarely joined in the activities of the Clubs, although some may have been members. The main exception to this general rule is found in the case of

³⁶ This was one of Phaire's spies, 'man no. 3', alias James Dobbyn: MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22, 3 October 1848.

³⁷ See Table 7.6, p. 292 below.

³⁸ Thomas Mooney, ironmonger, testified to the decaying state of this trade in Dublin at a meeting of the Board of Trade: see Pilot, 11 December 1840.

³⁹ T.C.D. MS S. 3. 7, 25 June - 17 July 1848; the youth of Clubmen is also alluded to by Bourke: see John O'Leary, p. 17. See also Tables 7.7 and 7.8, p. 293 below.

professional men, businessmen and property owners acting as Club Presidents or Vice-Presidents. This can be seen by looking at the social background of the Club Presidents in 1848. At least thirteen of the twenty-nine Presidents were professional or propertied men, while others were students or businessmen.⁴⁰ Apparently the members liked to have men of some social standing as Presidents, to give an air of confidence to the Clubs.⁴¹ In spite of this concession to property, the Presidents were not all mere figure-heads. Several of them were members of the Council, and one spy reported that Richard O'Gorman was dismissed from the presidency of the Swift Club for non-attendance.⁴²

Further light is thrown on the background of the members themselves by some research done by the Confederation. At the beginning of 1848, the Clubs began drawing up lists of their members, mentioning such details as whether they had a parliamentary or a municipal vote. Unfortunately for historians, this work was never completed by more than two or three Clubs; or, at least, the records have not been preserved. But according to the Nation,⁴³ the Swift Club, in Queen Street, with 194 members, included thirty parliamentary electors and twenty-four burgesses. The Dr Doyle Club, D'Olier Street, with 140 members, had forty electors, although it was not made clear whether these were parliamentary or municipal voters. The Grattan Club, North Cumberland Street, had twenty to twenty-five electors. Bearing in mind that in 1847 there were only 2,996 burgesses in Dublin city, and this number fell to 2,472 in 1848,⁴⁴ it is clear that the Clubs did attract some men of property, although as it has already been

40 See Table 7. 9, p.294 below.

41 T.C.D. MS B. 3. 7, 27 June 1848.

42 Ibid., 25 June 1848. It is unclear which Richard O'Gorman was involved.

43 Nation, 15 January 1848.

44 Minutes of the Dublin Corporation, Book 15, pp. 9-12, 9 October 1849.

suggested, they were probably not the really wealthy men. While in Dublin as a whole less than five per cent of adult males had the municipal vote, the figure was over twelve per cent for the Swift Club.⁴⁵ It is difficult to compare the other Clubs, because of their failure to identify the municipal voters. Even so, and accepting that these Clubs were formed earlier and may have attracted men of means rather more than the later ones, it seems that the term 'respectable tradesmen', as used by the police reporters to describe the Club members, was a fair one.⁴⁶

III. Why did the leadership of Young Ireland, rather than the Repeal Association, appeal to this fairly narrow class among the Dublin Repealers? The questions of education and literacy, together with the Young Irelanders' uncompromising outlook on nationalism, played an important part here.

Skilled tradesmen, clerks, shop assistants and the like had certain advantages over the mass of the working classes: not only working skills, but in many cases the ability to read and write. Thirty-seven per cent of the population of Dublin city and county were illiterate, according to the census of 1841,⁴⁷ although the illiteracy rate was probably a little lower in the city itself, and a much higher rate of illiteracy existed in all but three other Irish counties at that time. With literacy and certain other skills, workers highest up the social scale had most incentive to improve their conditions and rates of pay. It is significant that a new 'Mechanics Institute' (already popular instruments of general and industrial education in England) opened in Dublin in 1838, its objects being the moral and intellectual improvement of the Dublin 'mechanics' and

⁴⁵ A notice from the Flood Confederate Club, Leeds, recorded that of about 300 members, ten were parliamentary and 250 municipal electors. This high proportion reflects the more generous franchise in England: Nation, 15 January 1848.

⁴⁶ Reports of the police on duty outside the rooms of the Swift Club, T.C.D. MS S. 3. 6.

⁴⁷ Freeman, Pre-Famine Ireland, p. 136.

the teaching of practical knowledge. The report of the opening ceremony testified to the eager support for the Institute: 280 members had already joined by the time of going to press.⁴⁸

The Repeal Reading Rooms established under the aegis of the Repeal Association provided another instrument for those who felt that through education they might improve not merely their knowledge of national affairs but their general education. The idea of Reading Rooms, although not a new one in the national movement,⁴⁹ was welcomed particularly by the Young Ireland Repealers,⁵⁰ who saw in them the means of spreading their concepts of nationalism through education. From late 1844 to 1845, when they became widespread, the Reading Rooms were used not only to promote understanding of Ireland's national status, but also to encourage the education and self-improvement of those who used them. This is revealed by some of the reports sent in to the Repeal Association or to the Nation from the local Rooms. William Deevy, Repeal Warden, in charge of the Repeal Reading Room at Naas, County Kildare, wrote to the editor of the Nation in November 1844 that the local Room had been in existence for less than two months, but already about thirty men and boys had been learning reading, writing and arithmetic. He testified to the great anxiety to learn among the people who came to the Room. Only at the end of his letter did he refer to the national role of the Room by mentioning the titles of some of the books which had been acquired for the Room, which included

48 A Full and Correct Report of the Speeches delivered on the Occasion of Opening the Dublin Mechanics' Institution, on... June 22nd, 1838... in the Royal Exchange, Dublin, 1838. It is interesting to note that when the Club organisation had largely broken up after July 1848, the Dublin Mechanics' Institute became a centre for disaffected nationalists to meet; one police spy, 'C.D.', often went there for news: see T.C.D. MS S. 3. 8, 31 March 1849.

49 There were Repeal Reading Rooms in Manchester and Rathkeale, among other places, in 1842 and 1843: see the letters from an unknown source in Manchester to W. J. O'Neill Daunt, and from M. M'Coy, Rathkeale, to T. M. Ray, 17 May 1843, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13632.

50 See Davis to Duffy, 21 September [1844], Duffy Papers, N.L.I. MS 5756.

O'Connell's Memoirs and Repeal Association tracts.⁵¹ Such a return was typical of many received, especially from the towns.

The possibilities of the Rooms for educating the people were seen most clearly by the Young Irelanders, but even the officials of the Association came to praise their educational functions, and the chances they provided for illiterate people to hear newspapers and books read aloud.⁵² The dual role of the Rooms was summed up aptly by Alderman Robert Cane of Kilkenny, later to be imprisoned for his support for the Irish Confederation in 1848. He wrote to the editor of the Nation in January 1845 that henceforth the Repeal Reading Rooms would be 'Irish Mechanics Institutes'.⁵³ Since it was well known that the Young Irelanders, in particular, were the force within the Association who most supported the Rooms,⁵⁴ we may assume that those who took advantage of their facilities felt a bond of sympathy with this group.

Occasionally, however, the Nation showed signs of uneasiness at the fact that although the Rooms had been welcomed in the towns, they had not spread to the rural districts, where the barriers to the spread of literacy were naturally harder to overcome. This uneasiness sprang from the belief which was held by the Nation's writers, that the farmers and peasants were the 'backbone' of the nation, upon whom the nation could depend, and who therefore deserved instruction quite as much as townspeople.⁵⁵ The Young Irelanders, then, did not intend to confine their educational activities to the towns, or rely mainly on an artisan class for their support.

51 See 'Answers to Correspondents', Nation, 23 November 1844.

52 See Ray's speech reported in the Pilot, 1 January 1845.

53 'Answers to Correspondents', Nation, 11 January 1845.

54 Many queries and reports concerning Repeal Reading Rooms were sent direct to the editor of the Nation, rather than to the Repeal Association: see the column 'Answers to Correspondents' during 1845.

55 See the editorial on the subject of the Rooms in the Nation, 11 October 1845.

Whatever the intentions of the Young Irelanders, however, in the months following the widespread opening of the Rooms, it became clear that their appeal was primarily to the towns.⁵⁶ Ray's report, printed in April 1845, revealed that in the libraries attached to the Rooms, works on chemistry and mechanics' magazines were kept side by side with nationalistic poetry, novels and tracts. By this time (April 1845) there were more than six Rooms open in Dublin, based on the municipal wards, with more to be established.⁵⁷

The secession caused some disruption to this activity. In view of their close link with the Rooms in the past, the Young Irelanders felt particularly aggrieved at being cut off from them by the new rule in the Association, which discontinued the practice of sending the Nation out to local supporters. An editorial in that paper reminded its readers that a trifling subscription would enable them to continue receiving the paper, notwithstanding the new rule.⁵⁸ Although the evidence is scant, it seems probable that the growing quarrels between the Old and Young Irelanders from 1846 onwards had an adverse effect on the role of the Rooms in general.⁵⁹ The volume of correspondence between the supervisors of the Rooms, the Nation, and the Association diminished from late 1845 onwards. Hampered by the new Association rule,⁶⁰ and cut off from the organisational network of the Association, the Young Irelanders had little chance of maintaining contact with their supporters through the old channels. They were forced to rely more heavily than ever on the Nation to express their message, especially as they were without any organisation of their own until the Irish Confederation was established at the beginning of 1847.

⁵⁶ Ray's report on the progress of the Rooms, Nation, 19 April 1845.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Nation, 8 and 15 August, 1846.

⁵⁹ R. B. Barry of Mallow wrote to the Pilot (10 August 1846), claiming that the conduct of the Young Irelanders had caused apathy in the local Room (which had since closed) well before the secession.

⁶⁰ See 'Answers to Correspondents', Nation, 5 September 1846.

It was the Dublin Remonstrants who first displayed en masse their dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Association, and formed the nucleus of supporters for the young Confederation. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the earliest established cells or Clubs⁶¹ of supporters were in Dublin. Nor is it surprising to find that these Clubs retained many of the features of the old Reading Rooms, particularly the dual emphasis on general and industrial education, with instruction in national matters. A timetable of the weekly events for the Doctor Doyle Club, D'Olier Street, in the College ward, set out the following programme:⁶² Monday evening - Lectures; Tuesday evening - Class on Irish industrial education; Wednesday evening - Reading; Thursday evening - Irish historical class; Friday evening - Irish language class. Saturday was set aside for receiving subscriptions, and the Club was also open on Sunday afternoons. At the St Patrick's Club, Caffe Street, in St Stephen's ward, lectures were given on such un-nationalist topics as 'Heat and the Steam Engine', by a leading Confederate, Joseph Brennan.⁶³ Even amid the excitement of the days just after the news of the French revolution, a course of lectures was being given at this Club on 'The Birth and Progress of Printing'.⁶⁴

The inclusion of general and industrial education among the activities of the Clubs, and before them, the Reading Rooms, may have been the result of pressures exerted by the supporters themselves, seeing in them a chance to improve their general education at the same time as developing their national interests. On the other hand, it may have been a conscious policy of the leaders who sponsored the Rooms, on the assumption that it

⁶¹ These early Clubs were in fact called 'National Reading Rooms': see Nation, 6 March 1847.

⁶² Nation, 28 September 1847.

⁶³ Nation, 2 October 1847.

⁶⁴ United Irishman, 18 March 1848.

would attract and hold men whose purely national interests might be rather weak. Whatever the origins of the policy, we may conclude that the general educational facilities provided by the Reading Rooms and later by the Clubs were one reason for the appeal of Young Ireland nationalism to the lower-middle classes in Dublin.

However, the Reading Rooms and Clubs did not only provide general educational facilities. One of the Young Irelanders' main aims was to extend the people's awareness of Ireland's national status and rights. This explains why the emphasis in the Club lectures was on Irish industrial education, Irish history, the Irish language. The poetry and ballads printed each week in the Nation, together with projects like the Library of Ireland,⁶⁵ were also intended to provide cheap and popular Irish national literature. The preface to the Voice of the Nation (1844), a collection of articles which had been published in that paper, declared:

Nationality... seeks a literature made by Irishmen and coloured by our scenery, manners and character. It desires to see Art applied to express Irish thoughts and belief. It would make our music sound in every parish at twilight, our pictures sprinkle the walls of every house, and our poetry and history sit by every hearth.⁶⁶

Together with an emphasis on Irish matters went rejection of English ones, a rejection which was frequently expressed in fierce and uncompromising terms. In 1845 the Nation announced a series of articles on the French, American and Belgian revolutions, claiming that, since Ireland was undergoing a revolution, she must learn from previous examples.⁶⁷ The same issue contained an editorial which stated, 'There is no hope from the Government'. The Nation often referred to the national movement in terms

⁶⁵ Works in this series were published from 1845 onwards, and dealt with various topics, including Irish history, poetry and education.

⁶⁶ Cited in O'Sullivan, The Young Irelanders, p. 73.

⁶⁷ Nation, 27 December 1845.

of a military struggle, even in the mid-forties when there was no immediate prospect of such a struggle. Thus the paper described the '82 Club (the members of which were mainly wealthy business and professional men who would have been horrified at the idea of a rebellion) as 'a new citadel, garrisoned for Ireland'.⁶⁸ The Nation stressed that Ireland must have her own army, or at least a militia.⁶⁹ This was in January 1845, before the famine had begun, and before there was any prospect of a rising. The same martial tone occurred in many of the poems published in the Nation. The fact that the Young Irelanders couched their national message in defiant and warlike terms⁷⁰ was probably a major reason for the support which they won from the lower-middle classes in Dublin and other towns. This class owned little property, and so had little to lose in the event of a revolution. At the same time, its members had a certain degree of education and political consciousness and were receptive to a national message which emphasised self-reliance, and which hinted broadly at a military struggle.

IV. How can we account for the Young Irelanders' failure to win support among other classes of the Dublin population? We know that among the leaders there were men of property, professional men, and even a few merchants' sons. But in general, members of these classes were not found among the Young Ireland supporters, although several showed sympathy by, for example, contributing to the 'Mitchel Fund'.⁷¹ In the last chapter,

68 Nation, 11 January 1845.

69 Ibid.

70 O'Connell had occasionally referred to 'physical force' in ambiguous terms, yet always publicly opposed the use of force to win his aims; after his imprisonment in 1844, he seemed especially anxious not to incur charges of illegality on this question: see Kee, The Green Flag, p. 217.

71 This fund was intended to support Mitchel's family after his transportation. Alderman James Rooney, a wealthy grocer, became a local treasurer to the fund, and certain town councillors took part in organising collections: see Nation, 24 April 1848.

we saw that Young Ireland was particularly eager to win support from the gentry. To this end, they stressed a nationalism which was divorced from the strong Catholic overtones of the Repeal Association, and were reluctant to ally with 'democratic' movements such as Chartism. Young Ireland also worked in the Irish Council to influence landlords. These policies were unsuccessful in winning over the gentry, probably because this class, although by no means fully satisfied with British government, feared the alternative more.

Among the middle classes, as we have seen, many of the wealthy Catholic businessmen gave strong support to O'Connell. They approved of his efforts to win practical reforms for Ireland, especially for Catholics, and were not likely to transfer their allegiance to the Young Irelanders, who challenged O'Connell's policies. Moreover, the Young Irelanders widely publicised their rule that a nationalist should not seek advancement for himself or others by soliciting an official appointment, unless from a government which was prepared to leave Repeal an open question.⁷² This made it unlikely that Young Ireland would win support from those Catholics who believed, with O'Connell, that members of their church were entitled to play a fuller part in the running of the country. Catholicism, the question of place, and trust in O'Connell and his organisation, therefore, were among the important factors militating against support from this class for Young Ireland.

However, there was also a vigorous Protestant middle class in Dublin, which had on the whole remained aloof from O'Connell's Repeal movement. Why did these men, too, fail to join Young Ireland? Businessmen, it should be stressed, like their Catholic counterparts, were not faring badly under the Union. Such men worked through the non-political body, the

⁷² Nation, 16 January 1847. The report of the first meeting of the Irish Confederation recorded that a resolution to this effect had been passed.

Chamber of Commerce, to improve conditions for Irish trade; it is difficult to detect signs that they were dissatisfied with the Union. There were better prospects for recruits for Young Ireland from the professional men, both Catholic and Protestant, some of whom did in fact come to sympathise with the movement. We have already noted that Irish lawyers tended to have a deep regard for Irish customs and institutions. They felt that these were being threatened by being subordinated to English ones. Moreover, the profession was overcrowded. Professional men had received a good education, but in the circumstances of the eighteen forties, they may well have felt that their talents and abilities were undervalued. The Union could be blamed for this, because it had led to a certain devaluation of Irish institutions. Professional men did provide valuable support, both for the Repeal Association and for Young Ireland,⁷³ but it may be suggested that Young Ireland's contempt for legality deterred many lawyers from participating in that movement. We should note, however, that it was not the simple religious division which determined whether a nationally-minded lawyer would support the Repeal Association or the Young Irelanders. Not only did Protestant lawyers cooperate with O'Connell in the early forties (and in fewer numbers in the later years of the decade), but Catholic lawyers were found among the most prominent Young Irelanders. Within this class, Protestants and Catholics had more chance of mixing and discovering common interests than did most Irishmen.

Of the various social classes in Dublin, this leaves the mass of the working class, men who were relatively unskilled, and often illiterate. Most were Catholics. Unfortunately, the evidence available as to the political views of this large class is very scanty. Having no property, or very little, their political views were regarded as unimportant by the

⁷³ Thus, between one-third and one-half of the Dublin-resident members of the Council of the Irish Confederation were professional men.

middle classes, and therefore rarely recorded in the press, which was of course largely dominated by the middle classes. Among the obstacles hindering them from giving mass support to the Young Irelanders was their lack of education and illiteracy, since Young Ireland relied heavily on the power of the printed word for its communications. Illiteracy made it less likely that this class would abandon its traditional support for O'Connell, because it was closed to much of Young Ireland's propaganda. Certainly, one of the spies reporting Club activities to Colonel Phaire in June 1848 claimed that the 'lowest class' of people would not join the Confederation, but remained faithful to O'Connell.⁷⁴ Of the several thousand Clubmen in Dublin,⁷⁵ probably half was made up of clerks, students, and skilled artisans, with unskilled tradesmen and labourers forming a proportionally smaller number, relative to their greater numbers in the population as a whole. It was not until mid-1848 that Young Ireland began to gain support among certain groups of working class men who had traditionally been ardent supporters of O'Connell. On 17 June, the Irish Tribune⁷⁶ reported that the coal porters, hitherto the 'inveterate opponents of the Confederation', were setting up a Club on the Coal Quay, which they would call the O'Connell Club. T. F. Meagher, whose 'sword' speech brought on the secession, was asked to be President.⁷⁷ This change of heart was probably due to the political climate, but may also have been a reflection of the attempts made by the Young Irelanders to widen their appeal, in economic terms, by posing as the supporters of industry in Dublin. They projected a movement to this effect, such as the one O'Connell had successfully incorporated in the Repeal agitation in 1840-42.⁷⁸

74 MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22, 24 June 1848.

75 For an estimate of their number, see below, p. 277, note 108.

76 This paper was established by R.D. Williams and K.I. O'Doherty as one of the successors to the United Irishman after Mitchel's transportation.

77 Irish Tribune, 17 June 1848.

78 The non-political Board of Trade became the Repeal Board of Trade, and

Throughout the forties, the Repeal leaders occasionally attempted to revive the warmth engendered by the 'Irish Manufacture' movement, by compiling reports on the state of certain trades in Dublin, and calling on the people to 'buy Irish'.⁷⁹ After 1842, this manoeuvre had only limited success, since not only had the economic situation in Dublin improved, but the trades showed a tendency to become disillusioned with political activity.⁸⁰ However, as late as 1849, John O'Connell, seeking support for the renewed Repeal agitation, made another attempt to revive the movement. A time of rising prices and economic depression such as occurred during the years 1846 to 1848 was likely to be favourable to the renewal of such a movement, and the Young Irelanders did attempt to exploit this situation. The Confederation's first move in this direction was to set up a trade committee. Like the Repeal Association before it, the committee proceeded to collect statistics on the state of trade before the Union,⁸¹ with a view to comparing them with contemporary statistics (a comparison which almost invariably showed the present state of trade to have declined). It appears that the Confederation repeated more or less completely the assumption made in the Association reports, that is, that the Union was the cause of the decline in Irish industry. Later, when the committee on organisation reported⁸² on the best means of spreading the agitation, it was stated as a matter of principle that town Clubs should support 'Irish Manufacture'. Of eight duties listed for town Clubs in the report, number five exhorted the Clubs to discover how best the trades could be supported, and number six urged the formation of Ladies' Committees

gradually declined in importance as the Irish manufacture campaign was subordinated to Repeal, and the economic situation improved. For accounts of the earlier movement, see the Pilot, September 1840 - end 1842, and Chapter 4 above.

79 See Nation, 10 May 1845.

80 D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, p. 71.

81 Nation, 24 April 1847.

82 Nation, 21 August 1847.

to encourage Irish manufacture.⁸³ Thomas D'Arcy M'Gee, who became particularly interested in this aspect of the Confederation's work, reported in December 1847 that several new looms were at work in Dublin, as a result of the efforts of the Confederation and of the Irish Council.⁸⁴ By 1848, the Nation was printing letters on the subject almost every week, in its 'Answers to Correspondents' column.

The campaign won support in some unlikely quarters. Luke Dillon and Son, woollen manufacturers, who had joined the Repeal agitation in 1840 via the earlier Irish Manufacture movement, now advertised in the United Irishman.⁸⁵ Other manufacturers took advantage of the movement: Peter Byrne, another Old Ireland Repealer, a hatter, also advertised in the United Irishman, claiming that he had kept his workmen in jobs all through the winter.⁸⁶ More important than winning the cooperation of a few middle class manufacturers, however, was the reaction of the working classes themselves. Reporting from the Swift Club, which he called the model of Dublin Clubs, M'Gee stated that since the campaign for Irish Manufacture had started, 'the prejudice against us has greatly abated'.⁸⁷ At the same meeting, a Confederate from London, Thomas Daly, claimed that manufacturers in Dublin had admitted to him that the stimulus to trade came from the Confederation.⁸⁸ Although it would not be possible to estimate precisely the influence this campaign had in winning support for the Young Irelanders, it does seem likely that the Confederation appeared to some tradesmen as sympathetic to their plight. Signs of this appeared later in January,

83 Nation, 21 August 1847.

84 Nation, 4 December 1847.

85 United Irishman, 1 April 1848. Luke Dillon, Jr, had attended several Repeal Association meetings, and had evidently been a firm supporter of O'Connell. The Dillons also advertised in the Irish Tribune, 10 June 1848.

86 United Irishman, 1 April 1848.

87 Nation, 15 January 1848.

88 Ibid.

when the operative hatters, affected by the prevailing hardship, issued a report on the state of their trade, and sent copies not only to the Corporation and the Repeal Association, but also to the Confederation.⁸⁹ By late May, a Club with ninety-five members had been formed in the Liberties,⁹⁰ where distress was most severe. Hardship made men turn to the nearest promise of action; and the Repeal Association had sunk into almost complete inactivity. But by this time, the Clubs had become preoccupied with arming, and it may be suggested that this, rather than the efforts of the Confederation to support Irish-made goods, encouraged men to join the Clubs.

V. Now that we have examined some reasons for Young Ireland's failure to attract more support from Dublin, we come to look in more detail at the relations between this group and one section of Dublin society, the trades unions. Because the Dublin trades unions were active and occasionally militant bodies,⁹¹ and Young Ireland claimed to have the tradesman's interest at heart, it might be assumed that they would cooperate closely. In fact, their cooperation was limited. Why was this?

The Dublin trades unions were strong among the traditionally skilled trades, such as the ship-builders, whose militancy drew down O'Connell's wrath upon them in the late eighteen thirties.⁹² It has been estimated that perhaps thirty-five per cent of males of working age in Dublin were skilled artisans, the class from which union membership was drawn.⁹³ The historian of the trades during the thirties and forties sees the main importance of this period in labour history as the trades' declining interest in a political solution to their problems, from about the mid-

89 Pilot, 26 January 1848.

90 United Irishman, 27 May 1848.

91 See D'Arcy, 'The Artisans of Dublin'.

92 Ibid., p. 234.

93 D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, p. 1.

forties, probably because of disillusionment with the Repeal agitation. By 1847-8, he claims, the artisans' main concern was to cope with the economic distress.⁹⁴ He cites the fact that there was no official trades' response to either the secession of the Young Irelanders, or the formation of the Irish Confederation in 1847.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, plenty of tradesmen were involved with the Confederation, and one or two even became members of the Council, such as the shoemaker Michael Crean and the silk weaver, Edward Hollywood.⁹⁶

Among the trades, there was no concerted reaction to the news of the French revolution. The 'Trades and Citizens Committee', which made the arrangements in Dublin for the St Patrick's Day demonstrations to mark the French revolution, was supposedly a spontaneous committee got up by members of the trades and certain prominent Dublin citizens; in fact, the trades were nudged into making the move by the Council of the Confederation,⁹⁷ and the committee was dominated by Confederates. Certain trades did send representatives to the committee, but they acted as delegates, and appeared unwilling to debate matters which went beyond the initial objects of the committee:⁹⁸ the preparation of an address to the French people, and preparing for the demonstrations. This suggests that the trades were suspicious of cooperating too closely with Young Ireland. The National Trades Political Union, which had taken no active part in politics recently, held a meeting to address the Queen and petition for a Repeal of the Union, thus reflecting the views of the middle class and professional men who dominated it.

94 D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, pp. 73-4.

95 Ibid., pp. 72-3.

96 Hollywood was one of the delegation appointed by the Confederation to take their address to the French people to Paris, after the revolution. Crean was selected, but could not go: see Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 9 and 13 March, 1848.

97 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 1 March 1848. For meetings of the committee, see F.J., 9 March 1848, and Nation, 11 and 18 March, 1848.

98 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 8, 21 April. 1848.

At the same time, however, one or two men connected with Young Ireland were expressing more radical views on the economic system, and particularly the tradesman's role in it. We saw above that the Nation regarded the peasant and the farmer as the backbone of the country. In March 1848, the United Irishman, which at that time had no official connection with the Confederation, was displaying a much greater sympathy for the tradesmen. The paper praised workmen's combinations, and labelled O'Connell and Dr Whately, the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, 'apostles of Mammon's Gospel' for advocating an economic system which demanded the maximum of labour for the minimum wage. The writer claimed that 'true light' had dawned in France, under the revolution, where Louis Blanc and the ouvrier Albert were collecting evidence on the trades' grievances. It was claimed, 'Trades Unions now govern France'.⁹⁹ This over-optimistic interpretation of events in Paris represented sentiments which were quite alien to the great majority of Young Irishlanders. Smith O'Brien made it clear to the Clubs at a meeting of the Council of the Confederation and Club representatives, that their object was the overthrow of British government in Ireland, not the establishment of socialism.¹⁰⁰ The views expressed in the United Irishman were probably put forward by Joseph Brennan, a Cork man who was among those who attempted to revive the national movement in Dublin in 1849. As an avowed republican,¹⁰¹ Brennan was not typical of the majority of Young Irishlanders. Yet even the United Irishman made no appeal to the artisans to resort to industrial action as a means of further embarrassing the government, or as an initial signal for rebellion.¹⁰²

99 United Irishman, 18 March 1848.

100 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 5, 15 July 1848.

101 Irish Felon, 8 July 1848.

102 Mitchel edited the United Irishman, the last issue of which came out on 27 May 1848. It is difficult to discover how far he sympathised with these views: the evidence suggests he was far more concerned with tenant farmers.

For the majority of Young Irelanders, there was no question of placing economic objectives before national ones. By the end of March, when Mitchel and the Confederation found an object on which they could agree to act together,¹⁰³ this was a political and not an economic aim: the election of a 'council of three hundred'. Economic policies were pushed into the background, and the trades and citizens committee was urged to seek a reconciliation with the Old Irelanders, prior to the election of the council.¹⁰⁴

Did the trades realise the innate conservatism of the Young Irelanders on urban economic questions? Was this the basis for their failure to cooperate more closely with that group, or had they simply become disillusioned with political activity? It is difficult to come to definite conclusions on these questions. It is possible, however, to consider the case of the many hundreds of tradesmen who did join the Clubs, and accepted Young Ireland leadership. By so doing, it would appear that these men were content to seek a political rather than an economic solution to their problems. Mitchel was certainly popular among the Clubmen; but Mitchel, with his deep concern for the tenant farmers, lacked an economic programme for the urban tradesmen. The Nation made light of the pro-Mitchel reaction in the Clubs, not surprisingly, since its editor (Duffy) had opposed Mitchel's land policies. The United Irishman, however, reported a vote of confidence in Mitchel, passed, after long discussion, by the St Patrick's Club¹⁰⁵ (of which Mitchel was President). This occurred at a time when the Council as a whole had condemned his policies.¹⁰⁶

It may be said, therefore, that the Club members did not demand

103 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 27 March 1848.

104 Ibid., 29 March 1848.

105 United Irishman, 26 February 1848.

106 See the debate in the Confederation, reported in Nation, 5 February 1848.

much in the way of an economic programme for the benefit of the urban tradesmen. There is little evidence to suggest whether this arose from nostalgia for a rural existence, such as prevailed among certain Chartists in England and Scotland,¹⁰⁷ from the belief that a political solution would in some way also solve Ireland's economic problems, or from other factors. It may seem strange that economic differences did not play a greater part in the relations between the Young Irelanders and their supporters, but it must be remembered that in the circumstances existing in the second quarter of 1848, political action seemed to be all that was necessary in order to achieve radical changes in society. Secondly, the Confederation never won mass support among the lower classes in Dublin. At the peak of their popularity, it is doubtful whether the Clubs contained more than about seven thousand members.¹⁰⁸ Thus the majority of the working class did not join the Confederation or the Clubs. This majority was preoccupied with the day-to-day struggle to make a living, and might well have favoured more emphasis on economic questions, but their views are not known.

VI. Lastly, when studying the social background of the Young Ireland movement, we cannot omit the subject of religion, although it is a notoriously difficult one, mainly because evidence on the subject is lacking. Even when attempting to discover the religious affiliations of some of the leaders, there is a problem of lack of evidence; it is even more difficult to learn anything with certainty about their supporters. The question is a significant one, however, since it is clearly of

107 Briggs, 'The Local Background of Chartism', p. 6, and J.F.C. Harrison, 'Chartism in Leeds', in Briggs, Chartist Studies, pp. 65-98 (pp. 93-4).

108 For discussion of the numbers involved, see D'Arcy, Dublin Artisan Activity, p. 77. The Secretary of the Confederation told the spy 'C.D.' that he thought over 7,000 one-shilling members' cards had been issued: see T.C.D. MS S. 3. 5, 1 July 1848. However, it is unlikely that all these members lived in Dublin city or were Club members.

importance to know whether the Young Irelanders, like the Repeal Association, managed to introduce some Protestants as well as Catholics into the national movement. Indeed, Young Ireland placed great stress on winning Protestant support.

Since Young Ireland's brand of nationalism was more uncompromising than that of the Repeal Association, it might be assumed that Protestants would be less willing to join the Confederation than the Association. On the other hand, the Repeal Association was known to be a body where purely Catholic questions were treated sympathetically, whereas Young Ireland attempted to relegate the religious question to the background.¹⁰⁹ This might prove an attraction to Protestants.

Among the leading members of the Confederation, as among the leading Association members, there were several Protestants, although these appear always to have formed a minority. Indeed, some leading Protestants in the Council of the Confederation had also been prominent members of the Association. These included, notably, William Smith O'Brien, and such men as John Mitchel and John Martin, who had not been so well known as Association members. But it would be misleading to suggest that all the leading Protestants in the Association joined the Young Irelanders. Henry Grattan, M.P., Thomas Steele, Richard Barrett, John L. Arabin, and the Reverend Dr Groves, among others, all prominent members of the Association, failed to join Young Ireland after the secession, and most remained faithful to the Association. However, it is undeniable that an influential and active group of Protestants in the Association gave Young Ireland's brand of nationalism much of its inspiration. Of the ten members who attended Council meetings most frequently during 1847-8, two at least were Protestants: Mitchel and Smith O'Brien. Protestants therefore played an important role on the Council. Smith O'Brien, indeed, was usually regarded

¹⁰⁹ Nation, 16 January 1847.

as the overall leader of the movement, although Gavan Duffy, a Catholic, attended more Council meetings and was probably more influential in the day-to-day running of the Confederation.¹¹⁰ Mitchel's role in encouraging the Clubs to arm, and to prepare for a physical struggle with the government, was also extremely important. There appears to have been no friction on the Council between Protestants and Catholics over questions of religion. This may be accounted for by the fact that the Young Irelanders had agreed not to allow religious questions a prominent place in their agitation, and partly also because early on they had displayed considerable unanimity about such divisive subjects as education.

When looking at the question of Protestant support for the Repeal Association, it was stated that although there were some Protestants among the rank and file members, who worked hard for the movement, this seemed to be fairly unusual, judging by the reaction in the press. It was also noted that certain purely Protestant bodies, such as the Dublin Protestant Operative Association and Reformation Society, were extremely hostile to the Association. The evidence available suggests that Protestant participation in the Young Ireland movement at the Club level was not uncommon, and also that some Dublin Protestants, at least in the early months of 1848, were less rigidly hostile to the concept of Repeal. Of course, this might not be due to the Young Ireland movement, but to other factors, such as the spread of radicalism on the Continent, or the attitude of the government.

The two questions of Protestant participation in the Young Ireland movement, and a softening of Protestant attitudes towards Repeal are clearly linked, and indeed, the first implies the second. Evidence that Protestant attitudes had softened in early 1848 comes from various sources,

¹¹⁰ Among other things, Duffy brought up the report on organisation (Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 30 July 1847), moved the appointment of Provincial Inspectors of Clubs (ibid., 24 August 1847), brought up his supplemental report on organisation (ibid., 14 September 1847), and moved the resolution calling for the election of the council of three hundred (ibid., 29 March 1848).

such as the Dublin University Magazine, a respectable monthly journal for educated Protestants. Generally this journal could find no good word to say about Repeal: in February 1843 it asserted that Repeal would inflict an 'irreparable evil' on the British Empire.¹¹¹ By January 1848, the Magazine, although by no means supporting Repeal, could contrast the genuine love of independence and liberty which it felt characterised Young Ireland, with the empty professions of the Repeal Association.¹¹² This Protestant journal, therefore, had come to see a distinction between the two national parties, and certain aspects, especially the sincerity, of the Young Irelanders were felt to be praiseworthy, even if national independence was still not seen as a positive good. By April 1848, the Tory Dublin Evening Mail and the Packet, although not calling for Repeal, were supporting some ideas hitherto connected with Federalism, such as the periodic residence of the Queen in Ireland, which implied that parliamentary sessions would be held there. This modified attitude was in large part due to the crisis in the Tory party, which resulted from Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. In the eyes of many Irish Tories, Peel had also erred by increasing the grant to the Catholic College of Maynooth.¹¹³ The landed class had found fault with the Whig party for its legislation of 1846, which had the effect of making Irish landlords pay many of the costs incurred by the famine relief measures.¹¹⁴ These factors, rather than a conversion to nationalism, were the basis for dissatisfaction with the government. However, these signs of a more favourable attitude towards the nationalist position were welcomed in the Nation.¹¹⁵

111 'Ireland, Repealers and Landlords', Dublin University Magazine, Vol. XXI No. cxxii, February 1843, pp. 156-67 (p. 158).

112 'Tenant Right, Repeal and the Poor Laws', Dublin University Magazine, Vol. XXXI No. clxxxi, January 1848, pp. 134-58 (p. 155).

113 D.E.M., 29 January 1845 and 19 June 1846.

114 Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, pp. 116-19.

115 Nation, 8 April 1848

Symptoms of a change of heart were also exhibited by the Dublin Protestant Association and Reformation Society, which in spite of having dropped the word 'Operative' from its title, still claimed to speak for the working class Protestants. Its meetings still failed to attract members of the middle and upper classes.¹¹⁶ At one meeting at the end of April 1848, there were signs that the members were by no means as single-minded in their opposition to Repeal. When the Reverend Mr Gregg, their leader, said that Protestants should oppose Repeal of the Union, there were confused cries of 'hear, hear, and no, no'.¹¹⁷ Some Protestants even spoke in favour of Repeal. When R. D. Ireland, barrister, a Protestant member of the Council of the Confederation, attempted to speak, there were some persons who wished to hear him, though they were driven from the Hall.¹¹⁸

More evidence of the decline of unanimity among Protestants on the national issue is the formation of the Protestant Repeal Association, in May 1848.¹¹⁹ Protestants from the professional and middle classes formed the main support for the body, according to the Pilot newspaper,¹²⁰ but one of Colonel Phaire's spies recorded that their meetings were usually filled with Clubmen.¹²¹ Certainly the report of the inaugural meeting contained the names of professional and middle class Protestants, several of them already members of the Confederation.¹²² By the end of the first meeting, there were more than five hundred new members, apparently from the upper- and lower-middle classes. The Freeman's Journal, as well as the Pilot, testified to the absence of members of the Protestant aristocracy.¹²³

116 Soirée of the Dublin Protestant Association and Reformation Society. At Whitefriars Hall, January 14, 1846, Dublin, 1846, pp. 10-15.

117 Pilot, 28 April 1848.

118 Nation, 29 April 1848.

119 Pilot, 10 May 1848.

120 Ibid.

121 MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22, 14 July 1848.

122 These included R. D. Ireland, C. H. O'Neill (barristers); G. C. Kenny, C. Ingram (solicitors); C. Ralph, G. O'Reilly, and G. Kinder.

123 Pilot, 10 May 1848; F.J., same date.

Apparently the members continued to be drawn from the middle classes, since in June the Pilot reprinted a letter written to Saunders' Newsletter by a member, claiming that in general, Protestants of the lowest class did not attend the meetings of the P.R.A., although a few Protestant operatives did attend.¹²⁴ Manly Thacker, another member, also claimed that tradesmen were not coming forward to join the Association.¹²⁵ The report produced by a committee of the P.R.A., therefore, was almost certainly overly optimistic in its belief that a majority of Protestants were favourable to a domestic legislature.¹²⁶ The membership of the P.R.A. could probably be measured in hundreds rather than thousands. Nevertheless, the very existence of that body reveals that the old unanimity against Repeal had diminished.

Turning to the question of Protestant participation in the Clubs, the available evidence is mainly in the form of spies' reports to Colonel Phaire and to the police commissioners. These must be used cautiously, since one of the purposes of Colonel Phaire's reports was to induce the government to arm the Orangemen,¹²⁷ who appear to have remained untouched by the softening of attitudes among certain other Protestants. In view of this, the spies might be tempted to exaggerate the extent of Protestant participation, in order to goad the government into giving arms to the 'loyal' Orangemen. Bearing this in mind, the reports made to Colonel Phaire and to the police indicate that Protestants were not uncommon among Clubmen. This is the implication behind one report that a meeting of the Protestant Repeal Association was 'as usual' filled with Clubmen.¹²⁸

124 Pilot, 2 June 1848.

125 Pilot, 28 June 1848.

126 Ibid.

127 See p. 258 above.

128 MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22, 14 July 1848. See also T.C.D. MS S. 3. 6, 11 June 1848 and 25 June 1848.

Although this was probably an exaggeration, it is not impossible that Clubmen did go along to the P.R.A. meetings. It does not follow from this, however, that such men were necessarily Protestants; indeed, a later report suggested that some Catholics were attending these meetings as Protestants.¹²⁹ But it is likely, if we accept that Clubmen did attend meetings of this body, that several of them were in fact Protestants. Such a theory is supported by a circular, sent by the P.R.A. to the Clubs, to be signed by Protestant members of the Clubs, in an effort to calculate the strength of Protestant support for Repeal.¹³⁰ The circular would hardly have been sent if there had been no Protestants in the Clubs, or very few. It also seems likely that the Clubs hoped for some Protestant cooperation in the event of a rising. One of Colonel Phaire's spies reported that there was a belief that the P.R.A. would turn out to help the rebels if a rebellion took place.¹³¹ Such a belief, if it existed, was almost certainly unfounded, in view of the middle class background of the leaders and many of the supporters of that body; but it is quite possible that Club members believed it, as they believed other unlikely rumours, such as the prospect of large scale aid from America.¹³²

The religion of the spies themselves is a significant factor when looking at this question. Of those reporting to Colonel Phaire, 'Man number two' was a Protestant, and did not conceal the fact, while 'Man number one' passed as a Catholic.¹³³ Among those reporting to the police, at least one, 'C.D.', was a Protestant,¹³⁴ and did not conceal it. If spies felt able to attend without disguising their religion, notwithstanding

129 MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22, 11 June 1848.

130 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 7, 4 July 1848.

131 MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22, 9 June and 27 July, 1848.

132 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 6, 1 June 1848.

133 MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22, 23 August and 6 September, 1848.

134 T.C.D. MS S. 3. 7, 11 December 1848.

the growing vigilance of the Clubs on the question of spying, then it is likely that Protestants were fairly common among Clubmen. The report from one of Colonel Phaire's spies, that all the Protestants in Dublin were marked out for murder when the rising began,¹³⁵ is so wild and extreme that it deserves little credence. However, these reports contain plenty of evidence that the Clubmen went in fear of the Orangemen;¹³⁶ and in view of the superior organisation of the Orangemen (they do not appear to have had a spy problem), this fear was probably well founded.

To sum up, the available evidence, which has to be approached with caution on such a vexed question, would seem to indicate that Protestants were more closely involved in the Young Ireland movement - both in terms of influence wielded, and numerically - than in the Repeal Association. But it would be wrong to overestimate the significance of this. The less rigid outlook among Protestants on the national question was short-lived, and probably owed more to the famine legislation, the split in the Tory party, and the temporary revolutionary excitement which spread through Europe in 1848, than to any real change of heart, or to disillusion with England caused by exasperation with the Whig administration's conciliatory policy towards Catholics. When the government put an end to the state of almost open rebellion in Dublin in July, the traditional feelings of the Protestant middle and upper classes reasserted themselves. The cooperation between men of the two persuasions in the Clubs was a more hopeful sign; but with the gradual decline in the activities of the radical nationalists after 1849, the chances for cooperation between the two religious groups in this sphere were curtailed.

¹³⁵ MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22, 6 August 1848.

¹³⁶ For example, see T.C.D. MS S. 3. 6, 25 July 1848.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have set out to examine social and economic factors in the Young Ireland movement. The development of this movement took place in unusual circumstances. In the first place, there was a severe economic depression, due partly to the effects of the famine, and partly to a more widespread slump. Secondly, from March 1848 onwards, the example of the Paris rising contributed to the belief that problems could be solved by radical political action.

The Young Irelanders were made up of men who formed a remarkably homogeneous social group, predominantly professional men, including several connected with the press. They dominated the Council of the Confederation, attending more meetings than other members. Roughly half the members of the Council were resident in Dublin, including most of the Young Irelanders. Only three of the twenty-six members who attended more than ten meetings during 1847-8 were not normally resident in the capital. Of eight members of the Council who attended more than forty meetings during this period, six were Young Irelanders in the strict sense: they had been associated with Thomas Davis, while still members of the Repeal Association. Every one of the eight was connected with the Law in some way: three were lawyers who also edited newspapers;¹³⁷ three were barristers;¹³⁸ and two were law students.¹³⁹

Among those who signed the Remonstrance and joined the Clubs, lower-middle class men were typical. Initially, it seems, it was the combination of facilities for improving general education, together with those for studying national literature, poetry, and so on, and an uncompromising national message, which proved attractive to these men.

¹³⁷ C. G. Duffy, J. Mitchell and T. D. M'Gee.

¹³⁸ J. B. Dillon, C. Taaffe, and R. O'Gorman, junior.

¹³⁹ T. F. Meagher and P. J. Smyth.

Yet it was not until the news of the French revolution reached Ireland that the Clubs became really attractive to this class. It was not until then that the Clubs increased significantly in number and membership.

To some extent, Young Ireland's failure to win support among other classes in Dublin can be attributed to the strength of 'O'Connellism'. For the wealthier Catholic middle classes, and the predominantly Catholic working classes, O'Connell's Repeal Association remained the agency to be supported. O'Connell might have been unsuccessful in winning Repeal, but he had successfully fought for the rights of the underprivileged majority of Irish Catholics. If the reforms he had helped achieve had brought little practical benefit to the Catholic workers, they could identify with the advance of Catholicism in general. Young Ireland, on the other hand, offered nothing to the Catholic who tended to identify national with Catholic aims. This party was on firmer ground when it looked to the dissatisfaction of Protestants in general with the kind of government which Britain was imposing on Ireland. But it seems certain that they overestimated the extent of this dissatisfaction.

Partly in order to win support among the lower classes, the Confederation set itself up as the supporter of Irish industry, and its campaign to support 'Irish Manufacture' probably reduced working class suspicions of them. But in no sense were the majority of the Young Irelanders 'economic radicals': certainly not in regard to the urban workers. Their ideal society was one composed of a contented peasantry and gentry: essentially a traditional agricultural society. The Clubmen apparently demanded no more radical economic programme than this. It is hard to tell whether this resulted from their own innate conservatism, or whether they believed that once Repeal was achieved, economic and urban problems would somehow be resolved.

In purely religious terms, the Young Ireland movement seems to

represent some considerable cooperation between Catholics and Protestants, and the movement has been described by Irish historians as a new and all-embracing school of Irish nationalism.¹⁴⁰ When we examine this cooperation, however, certain factors become apparent which tend to throw some doubts on its quality. First, the Catholics who were in the strict sense Young Irelanders supported the 'Protestant' policies of Davis on such questions as education. In this sense, they were hardly typical of Irish Catholics in general. Secondly, it must be remembered that the evident change of heart among some Protestants on the national question was the result of unusual and temporary circumstances, and was also more or less confined to members of the professional and lower-middle classes. It scarcely affected the businessmen or gentry. Certainly, some Protestants joined the Clubs. But the Orangemen, about whom regrettably little is known in this period, remained loyal, and fear of them was a marked feature of the Clubs.

140 Moody, Thomas Davis, p. 36; R. Dudley Edwards, 'The Contribution of Young Ireland to the Development of the Irish National Idea', p. 125.

TABLE 7.1 DUBLIN-RESIDENT MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CONFEDERATION,
BY OCCUPATION AND ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

	<u>Occupation</u>		<u>Attendance at more</u>
	<u>1847</u>	<u>1848</u>	<u>than 10 meetings</u>
<u>Total Council members</u>	60	118	<u>1847-48</u>
Men of property	2	3	2
Barristers	9	7	6
Solicitors	0	4	0
Doctors	2	3	1
Architects	0	1	0
Agents	0	1	0
Teachers	1	1	1
Students	4	4	2
Clerks	3	4	2
Newspaper editors, journalists	4	4	4
Clergymen	1	0	0
Merchants	2	2	0
Manufacturers	1	2	2
Watchmakers	0	1	0
Maltsters	0	1	0
Grocers	0	2	0
Druggists	0	1	0
Publicans	1	0	0
Carpenters	0	1	0
Silk weavers	1	1	1
Shoemakers	1	1	0
Fruit dealers	0	1	0
Unidentified	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>
Total Dublin residents	35	52	23
Percentage of total Council	58.3	44.1	88.5

Source: Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, and Nation.

TABLE 7.2 OCCUPATION OF 120 SYMPATHISERS WITH THE IRISH CONFEDERATION*

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>	
Gentry	1	
Legal profession	1	
Medical profession	1	
Teachers	1	
Architects	2	
Civil Engineers	2	
Chemists	2	
Printers	3	
Clerks	16	
Students	12	: including three with addresses outside Dublin
Artists	1	
Clothing trades	10	
Food trades	1	
Service trades	31	: including 16 carpenters and 7 bricklayers
Luxury trades	19	
Labourers	7	
Unidentified	10	

* For discussion of this list, see p. 255, note 21.

Source: Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/43.

TABLE 7.3 OCCUPATION OF 124 HOUSEHOLDERS WHO SIGNED THE DUBLIN
 REMONSTRANCE, OCTOBER 1846

Men of property	3
Professional men	1
Agents	5
Food trades	25
Clothing trades	28
Luxury trades	14
Service trades	32
Grocer / car stage	2
'Mr'	14

TABLE 7.4 OCCUPATION OF HOUSEHOLDERS WHOSE ADDRESSES WERE GIVEN
 BY 348 REMONSTRANTS

Professional men	13
Agents	8
Food trades	109
Clothing trades	61
Luxury trades	36
Service trades	109
'Mr'	12

Source of both Tables: Nation, 10, 17, 24 and 31 October, 1846, and
Thom's Irish Almanac, 1844-50.

TABLE 7.5 SELF-IDENTIFIED OCCUPATION OF 7 REMONSTRANTS

Solicitor	1
Civil engineer	1
Carpenter	1
Painter	1
Wheelwright	1
Coal dealer	1
Operative upholsterer	1

Source: Nation, 10, 17, 24 and 31 October, 1846.

TABLE 7.6 OCCUPATION OF 28 CLUBMEN MENTIONED IN COLONEL PHAIRE'S
REPORTS

Cabinet makers	3
Printers' sons	1
Chandlers' sons	1
Painters	2
Shoemakers	2
Fruit dealers	1
Slaters	1
Hairdressers' sons	1
Tailors	4
Hatters	1
Publicans	1
Messengers	1
Blind-makers	1
Locksmiths	1
Barbers	1
Sawmakers	1
Picture frame makers	1
Umbrella makers	1
Provision dealers	1
Pawnbrokers	1
Carpenters	1

Source: Clarendon Papers, MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 22.

TABLE 7.7 OCCUPATION OF NEW MEMBERS JOINING THE GARRYOWEN CLUB,
25 JUNE - 17 JULY, 1848

Shoemakers	3
Chairmakers	1
Lace weavers	1
Dealers	2
Stone cutters	1
Slaters	1
Smiths	1
Butchers	1
Labourers	1
Unidentified	2
	<hr/>
Total	14

TABLE 7.8 OCCUPATION OF PROMINENT PARTICIPANTS IN RADICAL NATIONAL
ACTIVITIES, 29 OCTOBER - 5 DECEMBER, 1848

Shoemakers	1
Tailors	4
Cabinet makers	2
Cutlers	1
Clerks	2
Cutters	1
Paper stainers	1
White smiths	1
Shop boys	1
	<hr/>
Total	14

Source of both Tables: T.C.D. MS S. 3. 7.

TABLE 7.9 OCCUPATION OF PRESIDENTS OF DUBLIN CONFEDERATE CLUBS, 1848

Men of property	2
Barristers	4
Journalists, editors	6
Architects	1
Agents	1
Foremen	1
Students	5
Merchants	4
Merchants' sons	1
Unidentified	5
Total	<u>30</u>

Source: Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/43.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE INFLUENCE OF DUBLIN ON THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN THE REST OF IRELAND

In this final chapter, we shall be examining the ways in which Dublin was able to exert influence on the rest of Ireland, in helping to build up support for the national movement. It is not intended here to make a detailed study of the course of the Repeal movement outside the capital. Such a study falls outside the scope of the present work. This chapter is concerned merely to draw attention, first, to the basis for nationalism among different sections of the population and the kind of support they gave to Repeal, and secondly, to the main ways in which Dublin could influence the course of the agitation.

O'Connell was greatly aided in extending the Repeal movement by the Catholic clergy, and also by many middle class Catholic friends and followers in the Irish towns. Young Ireland won very little support from the Catholic clergy, but did gain a certain amount of help from some provincial town councillors and aldermen. Both sections of the national movement hoped to enlist the support of the tenant farmers, who had played such an important part in the Emancipation campaign.

After noting the extent of the provincial sympathy for the national movement, we will go on to look at the ways in which the central organisation in the capital could influence the provinces. The Repeal Association sent out many of its paid members as missionaries, including T. M. Ray, the secretary, Thomas Reynolds, and W. J. O'Neill Daunt, who did valuable work in establishing links with rural areas and setting up the nucleus of a Repeal organisation. Likewise, the 'monster meetings' and other assemblies held throughout the period gave the people a chance to see the leaders and to participate in large local demonstrations. The Young Irelanders attempted similar missions, but were hampered by various factors, such as the shortage of funds, the depressed conditions of the

peasantry in the late forties, and by their lack of influence and organisation in rural districts. Members of the Repeal Association who were in the legal profession also did a great deal of work, much of it voluntary, to support the Liberal-Repeal side at the periodic registration sessions. These services could be valuable and win local gratitude and support, particularly in areas which were remote from the large towns. We shall also consider the contribution of the rank and file Dublin Repealers to the agitation outside the capital, and lastly, the role of the Dublin newspaper press in the national movement.

I. Before looking at some actual cases of support for the Repeal movement from different sections of the population, it will be useful to make some brief general observations on the basis for nationalism outside Dublin. Two main aspects will be considered: religion and the land question.

Religion was one of the most important factors linking Repealers in the capital and the rest of the country. As we have seen, most Dublin Repealers were Catholics. In Dublin, about two-thirds of the population were Catholics; in Ireland as a whole, the figure was over three-quarters. Protestants were concentrated geographically in the north-eastern corner of the island, and socially in the landed and upper-middle classes. The importance of the religious question becomes apparent when we note that in the towns, the men who took the lead in organising the Repeal movement were usually Catholic merchants, businessmen and property owners, as well as newspaper proprietors and editors, with the help of the Catholic clergy; outside the towns, organisation depended very much on the clergy. The outlook of these middle class Catholics was similar to that of their counterparts in Dublin: they recognised O'Connell's achievement in winning Catholic Emancipation and municipal reform, but they

realised that the spirit of the Emancipation Act had not been fully implemented. Their desire to see Catholics playing their full share in the life of the country, and a conviction that this would be difficult to achieve under the Union, led them to support O'Connell's Repeal movement, while on the whole they rejected the Young Irelanders. The clergy held similar sentiments, many being even more aware than laymen of the fact that until very recently the Catholic church in Ireland had suffered humiliation and oppression. It is possible to detect in the speeches of many Catholic bishops and clergymen strong suspicion of England's motives towards Ireland and the Catholic church.¹ In certain cases, such as that of Archbishop MacHale of Tuam, suspicion of England's motives was so marked that he depicted the Charitable Bequests Act and the Colleges scheme as 'penal and persecuting' measures;² he also described the Tory party as implacably hostile to Catholicism.³ Probably few clergymen shared all MacHale's fears of English intentions; but even moderate men were well aware of the wrongs done to Irish Catholics 'for three hundred years'.⁴ Like the comfortable middle class Catholic laymen, most of the clergy were prepared to support Repeal under the right conditions; and in O'Connell they found a leader they could trust to pay due respect to religious questions, and to avoid the use of force.

Observers of the agrarian situation in Ireland during the early eighteen forties were united in their fears about the possible consequences of over-population and subdivision of land.⁵ Fears of the possibility of famine were expressed, and were realised in the period 1845-8. The rural

1 Broderick, The Holy See and the Irish Movement for the Repeal, p. 118.

2 Speech at the Wexford demonstration, Pilot, 25 July 1845.

3 Letter from MacHale to Sir Robert Peel, F.J., 31 August 1845.

4 Rev. John Miley, Sermon preached...in the Metropolitan Church, on Sunday, June 28th, 1840. on Occasion of the Solemn High Mass...In Thanksgiving for the Providential Escape of Our Most Gracious Queen Victoria and...Prince Albert, Dublin, 1840, p. 6.

5 For the discussion in the Repeal Association on the Report of the Devon Commission, see Pilot, 26 February 1845.

population therefore had good reason to be concerned about economic questions.⁶ Yet, as we saw in the case of the Dublin artisans, it seems unlikely that economic circumstances alone led the tenant farmers and labourers to support Repeal. A cause and a symptom of national feeling among these classes was their persistent refusal to accept their landlords' claims to absolute ownership of the land, because they believed that these claims were based on armed conquest.⁷ This refusal was demonstrated by the widespread adherence to the custom of 'tenant-right', which meant primarily the practice whereby the outgoing tenant sold the occupation right.⁸ This custom had no basis in law, but many southern landlords were induced to accept it because of the prevalence of 'agrarian outrages'. Agrarian crime had the effect of inducing unwilling landlords to accept the custom, and also of preventing them from clearing their estates (often with the best of intentions). The lack of harmony between landlords and tenants in the south of Ireland was exacerbated by their differences in religion and race. Thus the tenants' attitude to the land question was not simply one of protest against their economic conditions, poor though these were in the forties. It was also one of determination to retain what they regarded as their rights in the land, and their attachment to those rights was an expression of nationalism, perhaps the most effective expression, because backed by violent agrarian

6 Leaders of the Repeal Association were aware that many peasants hoped that the Devon Commission would remedy their grievances. The leaders were careful to make it clear to the peasantry that the Commission would only make a report, not act on grievances. See also O'Connell to Pierce Mahony, 26 April 1845, Rathcon Papers (typescript copy in the possession of Professor M. R. O'Connell).

7 Lord Rosse told Nassau Senior in 1862 that this belief was 'at the bottom of Ribbonism': see Nassau William Senior, Journals, Conversations and Essays Relating to Ireland (second edition), 2 vols., London, 1868, Vol. II, p. 236. See also the Report from the Select Committee on Outrages, P.P. 1852, XIV, pp. 88-135 (Evidence of E. Golding, Esq.).

8 For information on the nature and extent of the custom, see the Poor Law Inspectors' Reports on the Relations between Landlord and Tenant, P.P. 1870, XIV, pp. 37-192.

outrage. Their support for the Repeal movement was natural, since both O'Connell and the Young Irelanders were committed to some kind of reform of the land system.⁹ The majority of the Young Irelanders, with O'Connell, were in favour of a measure to confirm 'fixity of tenure': the principle that a tenant should not be evicted while he continued to pay his rent.¹⁰ Even this moderate measure struck at the absolute rights of property, and it was resisted by governments on the grounds that any encroachment on the rights of property in Ireland would lead to similar attacks in England. Lord Clanricarde expressed his anxiety on this subject to the Lord Lieutenant in 1847:

I believe that a good many of the cleverest men about 'the Castle' know little of the rural life of Ireland,... & I doubt that, out of the Law Courts, they have deep respect for the security of Real property, wh^h is the basis of the entire British political, social & legal constitution. I trust you will insist, in all y^r discussions, upon their constantly bearing in mind that no principle must be admitted for Ireland, wh^h w^d not be, if it has not been applied to England.¹¹

The recognition that the agitation for Repeal implied an attack on the absolute rights of landlords was an important reason for parliament's hostility to the Repeal movement. It is clear that ministers saw the attack on property as a major element in the national movement. Lord Clarendon wrote to the Prime Minister in 1847, 'Whether the pretext be repeal of the Union, or separation from England, or Tenant Right, the purpose is always the same. The assertion of illegal rights, or, in other words, war against property, is the object both of priest and peasant'.¹² The tenants' and labourers' support for Repeal, then, lay

9 Nation, 15 and 22 March, 1845.

10 Nation, 21 August 1847. Confederate Clubs in rural areas were urged to press for the recognition of 'full' tenant right.

11 Clanricarde to Clarendon, 6 September 1847, MS Clar. dep. Irish, Box 9.

12 Clarendon to Russell, 12 November 1847, MS Clar. dep. Irish, Letterbook 1.

mainly in their hope that the end of the Union would be accompanied by changes in the land system.¹³ Neither O'Connell nor the majority of the Young Irelanders made full use of these aspirations in their campaigns, but James Fintan Lalor did recognise the importance of linking the land question more firmly with the national movement.¹⁴

Dublin and the rest of the country therefore did have certain factors in common in seeking a Repeal of the Union. The first was a common religion. Most Catholics had memories of persecution and humiliation under the Penal Laws, and a corresponding suspicion of British motives towards Ireland and Catholicism. Secondly, for the peasantry, Repeal was desirable because it would bring some alteration in the land system: some curtailment of the rights of the landlords whose claims they had never fully accepted. As in the case of the urban artisans, their support for Repeal was not based simply on their economic condition, but sprang also from a sense of continuing hostility between the two countries, which in turn derived from the persistent attitude that landlords' rights were based on conquest. The prevalence of the belief in Dublin as well as in the countryside, that Britain was unalterably hostile towards Ireland, probably owed much to the constant migration from the countryside to the towns, and particularly to the capital. In the very poor parish of St Michan, Dublin, for instance, in 1845 more than forty-five per cent of the male heads of families were not born in Dublin city or county, and nearly fifty per cent of the mothers were not born in Dublin.¹⁵ Dublin's population, therefore, was constantly being reinforced by people from the countryside, with attitudes (presumably) similar to those described.

13 Repeal 'has also caught the sympathy of many who might not otherwise have cared for it, by the question of the rights of landlord and tenant...': De Grey to Peel, 17 June 1843, Peel Papers, Add. MS 40478.

14 Letter to the Irish Felon, 24 June 1848. Lalor wrote that the aim of the national party should not be simply to repeal the Union, but 'to repeal the conquest'.

15 Dr Thomas Willis, Facts: Connected with the Social and Sanitary Conditions of the Working Classes in the City of Dublin..., Dublin, 1845, pp. 14, 36.

Thus, while Dublin was able to provide the national movement with leadership, thanks to her concentrated Catholic middle class and national press, the peasantry expressed a more primitive form of nationalism, by clinging tenaciously to what they regarded as their rights in the land, rights which they were prepared to defend with violence. O'Connell frequently condemned agrarian 'outrages'; yet he was aware of the humiliations of Catholics, and their dispossession, as his speeches testify.¹⁶ These factors must be borne in mind when we go on to look at examples of support for Repeal in the provinces, and Dublin's influence on the agitation.

II. We now come to consider some illustrations of the support for Repeal outside Dublin. From the time of the campaign to win Emancipation, O'Connell had enjoyed the support of Catholic upper-middle class merchants and tradesmen, many of whom were influential in local politics. In Kilkenny, Richard and Edmond Smithwick,¹⁷ long-standing friends of O'Connell, provided the leader with advice on electoral matters.¹⁸ They offered him and his son John hospitality when they came down to canvass for the Carlow election in 1841.¹⁹ Edmond Smithwick also acted as an electoral agent for O'Connell in the matter of the Carlow election. A similar role was played by James Delahunty²⁰ of Waterford, Thomas Lyons²¹ and Joseph Hayes²² of Cork, Charles Bianconi²³ of Clonmel, and others.

16 See his speech in the Association, Pilot, 20 April 1840.

17 The Smithwicks of Kilkenny rose to a position of gentility through the brewing trade; Richard Smithwick was a J.F. by the 1850s.

18 O'Connell to R. Smithwick, 8 May 1843: Papers of Mrs Maureen Bennett (typescript copy in the possession of Professor M. R. O'Connell).

19 F.J., 1 July 1841 and K.J., 24 July 1841.

20 Delahunty was prominent in Waterford Repeal politics in the forties. He became an alderman, and was the city coroner by the fifties.

21 The Lyons family also rose through trade, owning a textile firm; Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory of Ireland for 1856 describes Thomas Lyons as 'Esq.'.

22 Hayes too probably had the same background as Lyons and the Smithwicks.

All had cooperated with O'Connell before the forties; most were destined for a place on the reformed corporations from 1841.

These friends provided useful service when the Repeal agitation was starting again, in the form of information as to the state of local feeling on Repeal. Joseph Hayes, writing from Cork in August 1840,²⁴ some four months after the Association was established, indicated some of the difficulties which the agitation encountered in its early months. He wrote that he personally was disposed to help any anti-English movement. But he believed that in the thirties the Repeal movement had been generally regarded, even by those who professed to support it, as 'auxiliary to the carrying of the elections then in progress'. There was, he thought, 'great indisposition on the part of the people, who may be called the middle classes, to join in agitation for the Repeal'. This arose, according to Hayes, partly from the general conviction that England would not grant Repeal, and partly because the Whig ministry had made place and patronage available to Liberals, which would be denied to a Repealer. The clergy were withdrawn from Repeal; the trades lacked effective leaders, drawn off by the prospect of place. Only the humbler classes, he thought, were as ready as ever to 'hurrah for Repeal'. Hayes testified, however, to the effect of O'Connell's personal example: 'If you were here and held any meeting, a house large enough to contain your apparent adherents could not be procured. When you would have gone away, away also would go the steam of Repeal'.

The small amounts of Repeal Rent sent in during the first two years of the new Repeal agitation²⁵ suggest that Joseph Hayes's description of the apathy among the various classes on the Repeal question was not unfair,

23 Bianconi, owner of the famous coach line, was Mayor of Clonmel for several years during the forties.

24 Hayes to O'Connell, 14 August 1840, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13649.

25 From April 1840 (when the Association was founded) to December 1842, the average weekly Repeal Rent was about £121: see p. 318 below.

and probably typical of many Irish towns in 1840. As we have seen, it was Dublin which provided a large part of the Repeal Rent in the first year of the agitation. Yet by 1843, most Irish towns were participating in the movement, and Hayes and his fellow members of the reformed corporations were taking part in the Repeal debates,²⁶ following the example of Dublin. A petition, sponsored by the Association, to protest against the state trials in 1844, was signed by, among others, the Mayor and twenty-nine members of the Cork Corporation, fifteen aldermen and town councillors of Sligo, twenty-four aldermen and councillors of Kilkenny, a similar number of Corporation members from Clonmel, and town commissioners from Longford, Armagh, Dundalk, Galway, Kells, Mallow, Kinsale and New Ross.²⁷

What factors lay behind this change? It seems unlikely that it could have been brought about simply by the personal influence of O'Connell's friends, who, like Hayes, were willing to work for Repeal from the beginning. If Hayes's belief was correct, that the power of place was deterring men from actively supporting Repeal, then the replacement of the Whigs by a Tory ministry was probably an important factor. But by 1843, O'Connell had thrown himself fully into the Repeal agitation: he was conducting the monster meetings, and his personal example had much influence, as Hayes indicated. The effect of the Municipal Reform Act of 1840 was also important, in the provinces as in Dublin. It gave municipal office to those men, mainly Catholics, who had cooperated with O'Connell in the thirties. With the major exception of Belfast, this enabled the Irish corporations to enroll in the Repeal struggle. The outlook of these corporations is reflected in the 'municipal declaration', signed by 530 corporation officers in the summer

²⁶ Nation, 11 and 25 March, 1843.

²⁷ Nation, 30 March 1844.

of 1844 while O'Connell was in prison.²⁸ The declaration expressed gratitude to O'Connell for his work for Emancipation and municipal reform. It described the established Church as the 'monster grievance' of Ireland, and the government which upheld it as 'irreconcilable with the well-being of Ireland'. An Irish parliament was therefore called for.²⁹

Men who clearly set such store by religious questions were unlikely to abandon O'Connell in order to support the Young Irelanders, who insisted that purely religious questions should be relegated to the background of the national movement. On the whole there was very little support for Young Ireland from members of the provincial corporations. Alderman O'Hara of Limerick,³⁰ Edward Brady of Cork,³¹ and Dr Robert Cane of Kilkenny were among the main exceptions. Dr Cane was a well respected Catholic member of the Kilkenny Corporation who had become closely involved with the Repeal Reading Rooms scheme,³² and thus with the Young Ireland section of the movement. On the other hand, he had also advised O'Connell on electoral matters.³³ At all events, he sided with the Young Irelanders soon after the secession, and by October 1847 he was the President of the Kilkenny Confederates.³⁴ But few of the other members of the Kilkenny Corporation followed his example. The Pilot reported that the majority of the Corporation were in favour of a reconciliation of Repealers, in September 1846.³⁵ In Limerick too, in spite of close

28 See 'Answers to Correspondents', Nation, 10 August 1844.

29 Declaration of the Provincial Corporations of Ireland, Nation, 22 June 1844.

30 O'Hara was a member of the Council of the Confederation for 1848.

31 Brady, Vice-President of the People's Hall, Cork, signed the Cork Remonstrance: see Nation, 31 October 1846; his letter in the Nation, 12 September 1846, supported some Cork Repealers in their stand against the Association's rule banning the Nation from Repeal Reading Rooms.

32 See, for example, Nation, 4 and 11 January, 1845.

33 O'Connell to E. Smithwick, 23 June 1846 (Papers of Mrs Maureen Bennett), and R. Cane to O'Connell, 26 June 1846, O'Connell MSS, U.C.D. (typescript copies of both in the possession of Professor M. R. O'Connell).

34 K.J., 13 October 1847.

35 Pilot, 2 September 1846.

local links with Smith O'Brien, and a strong feeling for Young Ireland among the trades, a resolution against place-hunting was lost in the Corporation.³⁶

It was not until the end of 1847 and the beginning of 1848 that Young Ireland began to win a few more recruits among the governing bodies of the towns. Some town commissioners in Cashel joined the Confederation in November 1847,³⁷ and a 'Young Irelander', William Lyons, became Mayor of Cork.³⁸ In Galway a town commissioner helped to form a Club in 1848,³⁹ and in Navan there was some support from the commissioners. However, the Council of the Confederation for 1848 included just seven town councillors and aldermen, a very small number if we compare the assistance which that group had rendered to O'Connell.

To sum up, O'Connell had the benefit of the assistance of many of the wealthier middle class Catholics who had approved of his earlier campaigns for Emancipation and municipal reform, and who were prepared to support Repeal actively under the right circumstances. Many of these men entered the reformed corporations in 1841, which enhanced their local influence and their role in the Repeal movement. The Young Irelanders had no such comparable fund of support to draw on. They had some support from the lower-middle classes, but this was not as valuable to them as that given to O'Connell by provincial corporation members.

III. Apart from provincial businessmen and merchants, O'Connell had another valuable source of support in the form of provincial newspaper proprietors and editors. During the forties, at least sixteen⁴⁰ of the

³⁶ Nation, 17 July 1847.

³⁷ Pilot, 12 November 1847.

³⁸ Nation, 4 December 1847.

³⁹ Nation, 3 June 1848.

⁴⁰ See Table 8.1, p. 337 below.

provincial Irish newspapers were supporters of the Repeal movement, as led by O'Connell, and some four or five came to support the Young Irelanders.⁴¹

Taking first the role of newspaper men in the O'Connellite Repeal movement, about eighteen men connected with these newspapers became involved in some way with the Repeal Association. Some of them merely reported Repeal meetings which had taken place in their area, in return for payment. Others were more active. Five took the chair at weekly meetings of the Association in the capital during the decade.⁴² Gavan Duffy, while editing the Belfast Vindicator, prepared the ground for O'Connell's mission to the north in January 1841.⁴³ Newspaper men would help organise local Repeal demonstrations and dinners, and were often among the important guests at such functions.⁴⁴ Frequently they formed a channel for communications to and from the Association in Dublin. In their newspapers they rendered assistance by giving details of meetings, and general information about the progress of the cause, although they were competing with the Dublin press in this respect. Some men, including John Greene of the Wexford Independent, Kevin T. Buggy of the Kilkenny Journal, and Duffy of the Vindicator, fulfilled the functions of Repeal Wardens and remitted considerable sums to the Association.⁴⁵

The role which a really active local newspaper editor could play

41 See Table 8.1.

42 These were K. T. Buggy (Kilkenny Journal), John Greene (Wexford Independent), P. K. Browne (Limerick Reporter), J. F. Blake (Galway Vindicator), and C. Maxwell (Kilkenny Journal).

43 P. V. Fitzpatrick to O'Connell, 15 May 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13649; Duffy to O'Connell, 17 April 1841, *ibid.*; F.J., 11 January 1841.

44 Blake (Galway Vindicator) made a speech at the Galway Repeal banquet: see Nation, 1 July 1843; J. H. Doyle (Mayo Telegraph) attended the Castlebar demonstration: see Nation, 5 August 1843; Blake and R. Kelly (Tuam Herald) were present at the Loughrea banquet: see Nation, 16 September 1843.

45 Having enrolled 10 members, by April 1841 Duffy was entitled to become a 'Volunteer': Duffy to O'Connell, 17 April 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13649; he also sent £45 from Belfast Repealers to the Association at that time.

is indicated by the case of Kevin Buggy, of the Kilkenny Journal. He had been a member of the Citizens' Club in the town during the thirties,⁴⁶ and was interested in the measures for which O'Connell was working, such as municipal reform. The Kilkenny Journal was a Liberal paper, pro-O'Connell and Repeal, and it loyally supported O'Connell's organisations, including the Precursor Society in 1839.⁴⁷ Buggy acted as a channel for communications between the Precursor Society and its Kilkenny supporters,⁴⁸ and also actively supported Liberal-Repeal candidates at elections.⁴⁹ In 1840 Buggy worked in the 'Irish Manufacture' movement,⁵⁰ which had spread to the town. From the time of the setting up of the Repeal Association, he acted as an intermediary between the town and the capital. He wrote regularly to the Association, enclosing remittances. In April 1842 he informed the Association, 'The Repealers here are only awaiting the promised visit of the Liberator to recommence the agitation vigorously...'.⁵¹

What lay behind this activity for the Repeal cause? Buggy's own reasons for supporting Repeal were given at a meeting in Carlow in 1841.⁵² He began his speech by claiming that he had no hope for Ireland save in Repeal. He acknowledged that Emancipation had been a great achievement, mainly due to the efforts of O'Connell. 'But', he went on, 'after all, where did emancipation leave us, and how stood we at this moment. The Tories, the deadly and immitigable enemies of our country, were once more in power (groans for the Tories). A Catholic must stand excluded from power, because he is a Catholic... Where then are the fruits of

46 F.J., 16 May 1839.

47 K.J., 15 May 1839.

48 Report of a meeting of the Precursor Society, F.J., 5 February 1839.

49 K.J., 24 July 1841.

50 Letter from K. T. Buggy, 27 September 1840, read at the Association: Pilot, 30 September 1840.

51 F.J., 27 April 1840.

52 K.J., 9 October 1841.

Emancipation?' Such sentiments, stressing the position of Catholics as second class citizens, particularly under a Tory government, were common among middle class Catholic Repealers. Before his death in 1843,⁵³ by which time he was working for the Belfast Vindicator, Buggy had attended at least seven weekly meetings of the Association in Dublin, and twice taken the chair. His death robbed the Association of a most valuable supporter.

Signs of the importance of the local press in the Repeal movement came when Ray publicly thanked the 'Repeal press' throughout the country 'both for the space afforded to reports of their meetings, and the spirit-stirring articles that appeared in favour of the movement'.⁵⁴ When John O'Connell issued a series of 'Letters to Friends in Connaught', which argued the Repeal case, he addressed some of them to the editor of the Sligo Champion, as 'the recognised popular organ of Sligo'. Others were addressed to the editors of the 'Liberal newspapers' in Connaught.⁵⁵

While these provincial newspapers did receive some payment for their publication of Repeal news,⁵⁶ it would be misleading to suggest that financial motives were predominant in forming their attitudes. The provincial newspapers, unlike the metropolitan ones, were not circulated by the Association, because, according to Maurice O'Connell, the local press was unable to give full coverage of the Association's activities in Dublin.⁵⁷ Moreover, many communications from provincial newspapers gave evidence of genuine devotion to the cause, beyond a mere financial

53 M. G. Conway, of the Newry Examiner, expressed regret over his death: Nation, 23 August 1843.

54 Nation, 12 November 1842.

55 John O'Connell, Letters to Friends in Connaught, Respectfully Addressed to Various Parties in that Province, Dublin, 1843.

56 P. K. Browne, of the Limerick Reporter, to T. M. Ray, 25 September 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623; and William O'Brien, of the Southern Reporter, to Ray, 29 April 1843, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13625.

57 Maurice O'Connell to S. O'Brien, Monday evening (1844), S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 433.

interest.⁵⁸ When O'Connell decided that newspaper editors and proprietors in the Association constituted a legal danger to the movement, many of them responded by sending in their resignation.⁵⁹ But their letters of withdrawal from the Association contained pledges not to give up working for the cause.

By contrast, Young Ireland seems to have won comparatively little active support from newspaper men. Three papers did align themselves fairly closely with the seceders: the Galway Vindicator, the Limerick Reporter and the Limerick and Clare Examiner. The proprietor of the Galway Vindicator, J.F. Blake, sent in subscriptions to the Confederation in 1847,⁶⁰ and was a member of the Council in 1848. Apart from him, examples of men connected with the provincial press working for the Confederation are hard to find. The editor of the Cork Examiner in July 1848⁶¹ was President of the Irish Felon Club in that city.⁶² However, the circumstances of famine were not favourable to either the Association or the Confederation in the period 1846-8, and it is noticeable that the provincial press was concerned with the day-to-day events of the famine to a greater extent than was the Dublin press.⁶³

IV. The importance of the role of the Catholic clergy in the Repeal movement of the eighteen forties is now well known. J.F. Broderick has given us a picture of the clergy actively encouraging and organising the Repeal agitation.⁶⁴ Their participation, however, was by no means

⁵⁸ P. Barron to Ray, 14 May 1843, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13625, and Charles Tully to Ray, 7 May 1843, ibid.

⁵⁹ Nation, 17 February 1844; F.J., 9 July 1844. Dublin Repeal press editors acted more quickly than provincial ones in this respect.

⁶⁰ Proceedings of the Irish Confederation, Nation, 22 May 1847.

⁶¹ Probably John Francis Maguire: see Duffy, Four Years of Irish History, p.301.

⁶² Abstracts of Constabulary Reports, Cork, 834, 3 July 1848, P.R.O. H.O. 45 Q.S. 2416.

⁶³ See, for example, even the Kilkenny Journal in 1847-8, which was writing for an area not suffering the worst effects of the famine. Dublin suffered no famine as such.

⁶⁴ Broderick, The Holy See.

uniform. In the large towns, for instance, as was the case in Dublin, the availability of lay leaders in local politics reduced the necessity for clerical participation. Thus, as we saw in Kilkenny, laymen like the Smithwicks, other Corporation members, and newspaper men provided much of the local political leadership for Liberals. Nonetheless, the reception party which met O'Connell when he came to the town to canvass in 1841 included at least two clergymen, Fathers Maher and Tyrell, as well as the leading members of the Citizens' Club.⁶⁵ Thereafter it was members of the Corporation, and men like Buggy, who were most prominent in the Repeal movement in the town.⁶⁶ In February 1847 the Kilkenny clergy came out in favour of the young Tenant League,⁶⁷ probably reflecting the growing preoccupation among their flocks with the land question. It was Corporation members who were most vocal in calling for a reconciliation of Repealers in 1848.⁶⁸

Outside the towns, there were fewer lay leaders available. In the town of Sligo, for instance, the Corporation and the local newspaper, the Sligo Champion, played an active role in the movement,⁶⁹ leaving comparatively little for the clergy to do. But the clergy were of great importance for the organisation of County Sligo. In 1841, the Reverend Owen Feeny, P.P., Sligo, presided at a meeting of the clergy and other reformers of Sligo county, to prepare for the coming autumn registration session. It was decided to hold a general meeting, 'in conformity with the wishes of our august Liberator, Daniel O'Connell, who has so kindly

65 K.J., 24 July 1841.

66 This is not to deny that the clergy took part in the Repeal agitation in the towns. The availability of lay leaders meant that they did not need to take a prominent position.

67 K.J., 20 February 1847.

68 Pilot, 23 June 1848.

69 Verdon to Ray, 17 April 1843, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13624.

sent down Doctor Murphy to superintend the coming Registry'.⁷⁰ Dr Stephen Murphy, probably a retired medical man, was an official of the Repeal Association, and his first move on reaching Sligo was to send out a circular, addressed to the local clergy. This exhorted them to establish a parish or baronial registration club in their area, which would communicate with the Sligo Central Club. 'The Parish Club,' his circular ran, 'is to consist of the Parish Priest, the Curates, and Repeal Wardens, if any at present be appointed with leave to add to your numbers.'⁷¹ Dr Murphy also expressed his desire that Repeal meetings should be held in the district. His circular thus allocated an important role to the local clergy. Certainly, in the County Sligo, the clergy were willing to play their part. On 5 October, Dr Murphy wrote to Ray that he had met 'almost all the influential men of the town and Co. of Sligo yesterday at the Rev^d. Mr. Feeny's'.⁷² Among those present had been the Right Reverend Dr Burke.⁷³ Prior to this meeting, Dr Murphy called on many of the clergy in the county and gained promises of support for the formation of registration clubs.

Dr Murphy's mission was only partly successful. He managed to win the support of Fr Feeny, and a substantial number of the local clergy, yet others, such as Fr John Coughlin, Curate of Ballymote, complained to O'Connell that Dr Murphy had not handled the registration sessions well.⁷⁴ Fr Coughlin complained that the doctor had not supplied sufficient transport and funds for the Liberal claimants. Much of this complaint was levelled against the Association, which had apparently agreed to defray

70 Printed resolutions of a preparatory meeting of the Clergy, and other Reformers of Sligo County held in Sligo, 10 September 1841, Rev. Mr. Feeny, P.P., Chairman: O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13622.

71 Printed circular to the clergy of Sligo County, signed by Dr S. Murphy, 27 September 1841: ibid.

72 Dr S. Murphy to Ray, 5 October 1841, ibid.

73 Possibly the Very Reverend B. Burke, a Dean in the Archbishopric of Tuam.

74 Fr J. Coughlin to O'Connell, 15 October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623.

such expenses.⁷⁵ In fact, Fr Coughlin claimed that he and his brother clergy were so indignant over the affair that they were seriously considering sending no more Repeal Rent to Dublin. Another disappointment for the Repeal cause arose when the Very Reverend Dr Costello of Ballina called off a Repeal meeting planned for that town.⁷⁶ However, Dr Murphy retained the confidence of Fr Feeny, and wrote to Ray that the registration session was proving successful for the Liberal claimants, and that he had encouraged several clergymen to register their votes.⁷⁷

This case indicates the extent of the role which the Catholic clergy could play in political matters in rural areas. But even in the most remote rural areas, a dedicated layman could play a very important part in the Repeal agitation. One such man was Thomas McDermott, apparently a gentleman,⁷⁸ of Lakeview, Boyle, County Roscommon. McDermott acted as a Repeal Warden from 1841, and was in frequent communication with the Association. He sent in remittances, helped arrange local Repeal meetings, and generally acted as spokesman for the local Repealers.⁷⁹ Even the local clergy occasionally entrusted him to put their case to the Association.⁸⁰ In February 1846 he was offered an engraving in token of appreciation for his efforts, but he refused any mark of recognition intended to spur him on to greater efforts: because, he wrote, such a spur was not needed.⁸¹ Men

75 This bears out O'Connell's claim that the Association was short of funds in 1841: 'Tell him [Davis] the want of funds is a decisive reason for not urging the Repeal as we otherwise would. This is really the secret of our weakness': O'Connell to J.O'Connell, 29 May 1841, quoted in Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell, Vol. II, pp. 270-71.

76 Dr Murphy and Verdon (of the Sligo Champion) to Ray, 17 October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623. Verdon was apparently helping with the registration.

77 Dr Murphy to Ray, 22 October 1841, ibid.

78 McDermott was described as 'a most respectable gentleman' in a note by Ray on the letter from McDermott to Ray, 30 August 1841, ibid., MS 13622.

79 See, for example, McDermott to Ray, 18 March 1843, ibid., MS 13624.

80 McDermott to Ray, 3 October 1841, ibid.

81 McDermott to Ray, 25 February 1846, ibid., MS 13628.

like McDermott, however, were the exception in rural areas. Most of the Association's paid officers who worked in the provinces realised that the active support of the clergy was essential in maintaining a strong Repeal agitation. Piers Barron's letter to the Association⁸² on being offered the post of assistant secretary to the Waterford branch of the Association is revealing. He wrote, 'The Bishop and Clergy [of the Dungarvan area] have subscribed in a body towards your funds but paying a pound and working the cause among their flocks are quite different things'. He went on, 'The Priests can Repeal the Union if they wish and if the Bishop gives them the word in good earnest without any humbug the Rent will be collected on a grand scale'. Otherwise, Barron wrote, the provincial branch of the Association would be a failure.

Other members testified to the importance of the attitude of the local bishop. D. Molony, Repeal Warden, of Dundalk, complained to Ray in 1841⁸³ that the local Catholic clergy had not yet taken part in the movement (although they sympathised with Repeal), because Dr Crolly, the Primate, their local Bishop, was opposed to their participation. Interestingly enough, Molony thought that a visit from O'Connell would overcome their reluctance to take part. In another parish, Redcross, County Wicklow, the parish priest was said to be reluctant to take the lead in the agitation because, as a parishioner put it, 'all our chapels are on Earl Wicklow's Estate'.⁸⁴ These examples suggest that clerical participation in the Repeal movement varied considerably, for different reasons, from place to place. In general, however, it appears that the clergy played their most active role in the rural areas, where alternative leadership was generally lacking.

82 Piers Barron to (missing), 25 October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623. Emphasis in original in the passages quoted.

83 D. Molony to Ray, 13 December 1841, ibid.

84 Thomas Bourke to P. O'Connor (grocer, of Leeson St, Dublin), 11 October 1841, ibid.

Turning to Young Ireland, it appears that active clerical support for this movement was very much the exception. Since the bishops in general disapproved of Young Ireland,⁸⁵ individual clergymen who wished to support that group did so at the risk of their bishop's displeasure. Lord Clarendon believed that the majority of the clergy were hostile to the Confederation.⁸⁶ In some areas the Nation was denounced from the altar,⁸⁷ and in October 1847 the synod of Catholic bishops refused to accept a memorial from Catholic members of the Confederation.⁸⁸ The memorial stated that, contrary to certain rumours, the Young Irelanders were not infidels. In a few cases, however, clergymen such as Father John Kenyon and Fathers Bermingham, O'Flaherty and Hurley were suspended by their bishops for their participation in the affairs of the Confederation.⁸⁹ Only two clergymen, Fr Kenyon and the Reverend Dr O'Connor of Limerick, served on the Council of the Confederation for 1848. When the plans for a reunion of Repealers, in the form of the Irish League, were announced in June 1848, a majority of the clergy who sent in their opinions to the Association approved of the union.⁹⁰ But since the League was to be independent of the Clubs, this did not necessarily indicate support for the Club system.

After the rebellion, the Young Irelanders tended to cast considerable blame for its failure on the attitude of the priests.⁹¹ It

85 See the letters from certain bishops in Pilot, 5 August 1846, and from Archbishop MacHale in Pilot, 20 September 1847; MacHale continued to cooperate with the Association. The clergy too tended to disapprove of the Young Irelanders: see Broderick, The Holy See, p. 216.

86 Clarendon to Sir G. Grey, 22 July 1848, P.R.O. H.O. 45 C.S. 2416.

87 Nation, 4 September 1847.

88 Nation, 23 October 1847.

89 Pilot, 3 May 1848, and Nation, 22 July 1848.

90 Nowlan (The Politics of Repeal, p. 208) suggests that the letters coming in from the country were inconclusive on the question of the Irish League. But the letters printed in the Repeal press show that the majority of the clergy favoured the terms for reunion: see Pilot, 21 June 1848, the Irish Felon, same date, and the F.J., 7 July 1848.

91 J. B. Dillon wrote of the clergy urging people not to join Smith O'Brien

is clear that the clergy believed that a Young Ireland rising would have little chance of success, and some did attempt to deter their flocks from joining the rebels or setting up Clubs. But the state of the people, afflicted by the famine and severe economic distress, did not augur well for a successful rebellion, whatever the priests' attitudes might have been. Constabulary reports coming in to Dublin Castle from the provinces indicated that local politics were preoccupied with the famine, rather than rebellion.⁹² Such reports suggest that the casting of blame for failure on the clergy may have been a red herring, diverting attention from the considerable apathy among the poorer rural population.

v. We now come to consider the ways in which Dublin could make its influence felt in the provincial agitation. Four main fields of activity will be considered: the use of missionaries to establish or revive provincial organisations; registration agents, sent out to help local Repealers to register their votes; the activities of ordinary Dublin Repealers to spread the agitation; and lastly, the role of the Dublin press.

Missions to the provinces were undertaken by various paid officials of the Association from 1840 to 1845. The members responsible for the earliest missions included W. J. O'Neill Daunt, T. M. Ray, Tom Steele, O'Connell himself and his son, John. They all appear to have stressed O'Connell's convictions about the peaceful nature of the Repeal movement,

in the rebellion: F.J., 8 January 1849. The notion that it was the clergy who prevented the leader from gaining adequate help was supported by A.M. Sullivan (New Ireland, p. 91) Such an interpretation seems to ignore the economic condition of the people; no amount of support from the priests could have provided O'Brien with '50,000 stalwart Tipperary men, armed and equipped for a national struggle'.

⁹² Abstracts of Constabulary Reports, Cork, 6-1078, Mitchelstown district, 18 August 1848, P.R.O. H.O. 45 O.S. 2416 A. This report claimed that the Confederates were unable to establish a Club, because of the opposition of the clergy. But it also claimed that the peasantry were concerned with the question of the harvest, and that 'Politics are absorbed by the fears of an impending famine'.

and they urged submission to the local clergy. Thomas Reynolds, the Dublin man of property, and a supporter of O'Connell from the thirties, was less dependable in this respect. He toured the south of Ireland in 1841, and managed to quarrel with local supporters in Galway and Kilkenny, and with Michael Doheny in Cashel.⁹³ Other officers seemed to follow instructions more closely. E. W. O'Mahony, a barrister, made successful visits to Thurles and other parts of the south in 1841, and showed a good grasp of the importance of the Dublin press for awakening the localities. He requested copies of the Pilot to be circulated in Thurles, if that paper carried an account of the Repeal meeting there.⁹⁴

In the autumn of 1840, large numbers of peasantry attended Repeal meetings organised by Daunt in County Cork. He calculated that ten thousand attended the Macroom meeting in September.⁹⁵ O'Connell's own mission to the north in January 1841 was much less successful: there was a staunch group of Belfast Repealers, among whom Gavan Duffy was prominent, but they were small in number, and there was a hostile reaction from many Protestants.⁹⁶ Daunt did not attempt to spread the system of Repeal Wardens to any great extent in 1840, contenting himself with holding meetings so that large numbers could hear about the agitation. But Tom Reynolds appointed Wardens for Waterford, Clonmel, and Carrick-on-Suir,⁹⁷ and seems to have been a good organiser, even if his ideas did not always fall into line with the leader's. During the first two years of the

93 Ray to O'Connell, 21 May 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13646.

Ray thanked O'Connell for advice on how to handle Reynolds. See also F.J., 25 May 1841.

94 E.W.O'Mahony to Ray, 18 October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623.

95 W. J. O'Neill Daunt, Personal Recollections of the Late Daniel O'Connell, M.P., 2 vols., London, 1848, Vol. I, p. 79.

96 The reaction of many Protestants is recounted in the pamphlet, The Repealer Repulsed.

97 Reynolds's reports were read at the Association and reported in the Pilot and F.J., May 1841.

agitation, however, the local organisation always had a tendency to lapse. O'Connell himself was frequently in London in 1840 and 1841. In view of this, the missions of Ray and Daunt, and John O'Connell, in the autumn of 1842 were perhaps the most important in laying the foundations for a lasting system of organisation. At that time, O'Connell was dissatisfied with support from the provinces, and he sent out three missionaries, one to each province save Ulster.⁹⁸

In most of the rural areas, as we saw earlier in the case of Dr Murphy's visit to Sligo county, the first step of the missionaries was to get in touch with the local clergy.⁹⁹ Where the clergy were sympathetic, Repeal meetings could be convened, held in the chapels if the weather was bad. Ray and Daunt also went from house to house in many areas, urging the need for organisation.¹⁰⁰ In Connaught, John O'Connell enlisted the clergy in Archbishop MacHale's diocese as supporters.¹⁰¹ He also sent lists of Repeal Wardens for the County Roscommon to Dublin.¹⁰² Further south, Ray was impressed by the organisation he found in the towns, particularly at Limerick. Without having to suggest any of the appointments himself, Ray found at the Trades Hall,

an admirable meeting of the Repeal Wardens (about fifty in number) assembled, and making arrangements for the division of their different parishes into walks, and appointing collectors. I addressed them briefly, and have so arranged that after the city shall have been thoroughly organised this excellent body of Repeal Wardens shall distribute themselves into sections and... will visit the villages and districts adjacent within the circle of six or seven miles.¹⁰³

98 Broderick, The Holy See, p. 121.

99 Ibid.

100 See Daunt's speech in the Association, Nation, 12 October 1844.

101 F.J., 4 October 1842.

102 F.J., 11 October 1842.

103 Report from T. M. Ray, read at the Association, Nation, 15 October 1842.

Ray's report is interesting for its indication of the degree of organisation which had been reached in a large town. He and Daunt next proceeded to organise the country districts around Dunmanway, Bantry, Skibbereen, Macroom and Bandon.¹⁰⁴ Ray also took the opportunity to collect statistical evidence of the decay of Irish trade and manufactures, which was later used in Association reports. While the missionaries were made welcome in most areas, their task was a demanding one, as Daunt recorded in his journal during the winter of 1842-3: 'Left Dublin at 7 A.M. for the Queen's County, on the renewed provincial agitation of Repeal. Weather, hard frost... This agitation is less than an agreeable task in piercing weather, but grumbling and growling are useless. The business must be done, and it were sin to grudge our mother Ireland the trouble of some timely exertion'.¹⁰⁵

It is difficult to estimate accurately the impression these missions made on the provinces. Clearly, in some towns, like Limerick, there was little the missionaries could do, beyond giving their blessing to an already thriving organisation. There is evidence, however, to suggest that the missions of 1842 did have long-term effects. Towards the end of 1844, Ray reported to the Association on his recent visit to certain areas which had been visited by the missionaries in 1842.¹⁰⁶ In Mitchelstown, for example, he had found that with only one or two exceptions, the staff of Repeal Wardens were the same as those appointed on his first Repeal mission. He had found the same at Cork. Different evidence of the importance of these 1842 missions comes in the form of the Repeal Rent. The Rent fluctuated greatly in the period 1840-42, the average over the period being about £121 per week.¹⁰⁷ This may seem quite

¹⁰⁴ Nation, 12 November 1842.

¹⁰⁵ W.J.O'Neill Daunt, A Life Spent for Ireland, Being Selections from the Journals of the Late W.J.O'Neill Daunt, Edited by his Daughter (with a Preface by W.E.H. Lecky), London, 1896, p. 30.

¹⁰⁶ Nation, 16 November 1844.

¹⁰⁷ Figures for the Repeal Rent are based on the weekly reports in the

a large figure, but it should be borne in mind that in 1840, over half the contributions came from Dublin city and county, and in 1841 the American contribution was an average of at least thirty pounds a week.¹⁰⁸ In October 1844, Daunt claimed that the missions of 1842 had helped the Rent to increase fourfold in the autumn of that year.¹⁰⁹ The figures for the Rent confirm that there was an important increase at that time, not as great as Daunt claimed, but certainly one of about fifty per cent. Moreover, this increase was not a temporary phenomenon, but marked a new regular level of remittances sent in. Thus, in the four months, June to September 1842, the average weekly Rent was eighty-four pounds. In the four months, October 1842 to January 1843, this figure was £123. In fact, after the first week of November 1842, the Rent did not again fall below one hundred pounds a week until April 1846. The missions had begun in the last two weeks of September, and the rise becomes apparent from about the second week of October. It seems likely, then, that the missions helped set the pattern for larger and more regular remittances of Repeal Rent.¹¹⁰ It is hard to account for the rise in Rent in any other way, although the Nation made its first appearance on 15 October 1842. The impact of this paper, however, must have taken many weeks to affect the amount of Rent, whereas the activities of the missionaries were directly aimed at increasing the amounts and frequency of the remittances to the Association.

The monster meetings of 1843 were also extremely successful in terms of increasing the Repeal Rent. By that year, many provincial areas

F.J. and Pilot, and Macintyre, The Liberator, p. 121: Funds at O'Connell's disposal.

108 Eneas Macdonnell, 'Repealers' and 'Sympathisers': Letter to His Excellency Edward Everett, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister... of the United States of America, at the Court of Her Britannic Majesty, London, 1841.

109 Nation, 12 October 1844.

110 American contributions had virtually ceased at that time, after one of the periodic discussions on the morality of the Association receiving money from slave owners: see F.J., 11 and 23 May, 1842. The monster meetings had not yet begun, and so were not a source of income.

already had some kind of Repeal organisation, which facilitated the arrangements for the great meetings. When they were at their height, up to three thousand pounds a week¹¹¹ were being sent to the Association, most of it collected at or directly after the meetings. The main attraction at these meetings was undoubtedly O'Connell, but he was always accompanied by other Association members from Dublin, who also made speeches, attended dinners, and generally backed up the leader. Newspaper editors, like Richard Barrett and Dr John Gray, barristers like Michael Doherty and John B. Dillon, and businessmen like Patrick Gardiner and Luke Dillon¹¹² were among those members who attended some of these provincial meetings. Thus it was not merely the officials, like Ray and Tom Steele, who took the trouble to represent the capital at these meetings.

As far as the Young Irelanders were concerned, little was done to organise missions to the rural areas until the very eve of the rising. Even the large provincial towns had only the most rudimentary Confederate organisation until the autumn of 1847.¹¹³ In September of that year, T. F. Meagher and Smith O'Brien attended Confederate meetings at Limerick and Cork,¹¹⁴ and November saw many members of the Young Ireland group in Belfast,¹¹⁵ where they put their case to the northern Protestants. This last mission was apparently not a success, for support in the north remained insignificant. More missions were undertaken to Irish towns in January 1848,¹¹⁶ and Smith O'Brien visited Cork and Kilkenny in the first

111 In the last week of May 1843, the Rent totalled over £2,000. It had not previously reached £1,000 in a single week; in mid-June it reached £3,000; as late as November 1843 it still averaged £900 per week.

112 Gardiner was a tobacconist, Dillon a woollen manufacturer.

113 Nation, 25 September 1847: report of the first meeting of the Desmond Club, Cork. According to the Nation, 23 October 1847, the total number of Clubs in the U.K. was 20, of which 5 were in Dublin.

114 Nation, 18 September 1847.

115 Nation, 20 November 1847.

116 Nation, 15 January 1848. M'Gee claimed then that the Confederation had nearly 11,000 enrolled members.

half of the year. He also toured the south in July.¹¹⁷ Without the help of the clergy, however, some members of the Confederation¹¹⁸ realised, there was little prospect of enlisting the support of the peasantry in the rural areas. The lack of communication between the Confederation and the rural population meant that the former considerably over-estimated the support they might gain when they decided to resort to rebellion.¹¹⁹

VI. Both O'Connell and the Young Irelanders saw the building up of a parliamentary party as an integral part of their campaign to win Repeal. Ireland had comparatively fewer voters than the rest of the United Kingdom: in England, one in five adult males had the vote; in Scotland, one in eight; and in Ireland, one in twenty.¹²⁰ The need to encourage those qualified to register their votes was therefore strongly felt. We have already noted the presence in the Association of a considerable number of barristers and solicitors; these men often made their most important contribution to the cause by attending the provincial registration sessions and helping Repealers to register their votes.

Those who wished to register a parliamentary vote in Ireland could encounter various difficulties which were not met with in England. In Ireland, the personal attendance at the registration session on the part of the man claiming a ten-pound freehold vote was essential.¹²¹ Moreover,

117 Nation, 1 July 1848.

118 T.M. Halpin to O'Brien, 25 April 1848, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 442. Halpin (the secretary) wrote about getting signatures for the declaration on the National Guard: 'I have correspondents, on whom I can rely to exert themselves in nearly all the principle [sic] towns but how can we obtain the signatures, and explain the designs of the Confederation in this respect to the peasants in the provinces and without them the Roll will be very insignificant. I do not like to communicate to any extent with the local clergy...'

119 O'Brien's Journal (S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 449) records that having visited Cork in July, he had been led to believe that the country would sustain the Confederation in any outbreak.

120 Briggs, The Age of Improvement, p. 265.

121 Five Reports of the Committee of the Precursor Association, No. 1: First Report of the Committee upon the Franchises in Counties, pp. 1-12 (p. 4).

the notice of claim for registration was very complicated to fill in, unless the claimant had exceptional legal knowledge. Nor had the Irish elector any legal remedy against the mistakes of the Assistant Barrister, who was in charge of the sessions.¹²² In these circumstances, it was usually desirable to have professional assistance to achieve a successful registration of voters. In 1840 O'Connell drew up a memorandum on registration in Ireland, in which he expressed the hope that there would soon be 'one able, active and patriotic solicitor' to undertake registration duties for each county in Ireland.¹²³ This, however, was never achieved, and it was left to the Association in Dublin, which gradually incorporated previous registration committees, to send out men to assist at local sessions. Circulars were also sent out regularly to clergy and Repeal Wardens urging their attention to this matter.

Once again, certain parts of the country were more open than others to receiving aid and suggestions from Dublin.¹²⁴ As in other fields, Ulster was practically a closed area, and in the south, the large towns like Cork, Limerick and Waterford had their own organisations for dealing with registration. But country areas were frequently in need of whatever aid they could get. We saw above how Dr Murphy went to County Sligo in 1841 to 'superintend the coming registry'. The circular on the subject¹²⁵ which he sent out to the local clergy urged them to form parish registration clubs and to get in touch with the Sligo Central Club, and thus with the Central Registration Committee in Dublin. The doctor was clearly anxious to stir up feeling on the subject, since his circular hinted that the new Tory government might adopt the policy of 'cold-blooded

122 Five Reports, No. 5: Report of the Committee on the Registry of Voters in England and Ireland, pp. 42-50 (pp. 45-6); see also Macintyre, The Liberator, p. 35.

123 Memorandum on General Registration in Ireland (c. 1840), O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13632.

124 Macintyre, The Liberator, p. 72.

125 Printed circular to the clergy of Sligo county, signed by Dr S. Murphy, 27 September 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13622.

massacre', unless it was intimidated by a strong show of Liberal-Repeal feeling at the registration sessions. 1841 was a busy year for the paid officials of the Association, many of whom were sent out to assist at registration sessions. John Jagoe, barrister, attended the Athlone sessions.¹²⁶ Edward MacDonagh wore out a jaunting car canvassing the County Dublin,¹²⁷ and urgent requests came up from the provinces for barristers, especially Counsellors Clements and Casserly, who both had experience of registration work.¹²⁸ The Association was also frequently asked for information about the working of the Municipal Reform Act, which came into force in the autumn of 1841.¹²⁹

The question of payment for the services rendered to the Association by professional men was constantly recurring. While some were on salaries from the Association, others appeared to work in return for little or no pecuniary gain. Dr Murphy, for instance, although more or less permanently at the disposal of the Association, received little more than travelling expenses for his visit to Sligo. He wrote to Ray from that town, 'I am sorry that my present means won't enable me to live from home at my own expense'.¹³⁰ He referred to his instructions to collect funds in the county, but added that this was easier said than done before the harvest was completed. Apparently he had been given a twenty pound allowance by the Association, which had had to last a month, little enough when it had to cover his own expenses and also bed, board and transport for the claimants. The meagre funds of the Association until the end of 1842 meant that there was little money available for such matters as registration. Even when the Rent had risen, however, speakers at the

126 Jagoe to Ray, (?) October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13622.

127 E. MacDonagh to the Gentlemen of the Finance Committee, Corn Exchange Rooms, Dublin, 12 August 1841, *ibid.*

128 T. McDermott to Ray, 3 October 1841, *ibid.*

129 The secretary to the central committee for conducting the municipal elections, Cork, to Ray, 25 September 1841, *ibid.*

130 Dr S. Murphy to Ray, 4 October 1841, *ibid.*

Association continued to urge local sympathisers to give their services free and barristers to act without payment.¹³¹ Many professional men did help in this way; but in 1844 Maurice O'Connell complained that the barristers in the Association were refusing to attend the sessions without being paid.¹³² By that year, of course, the Association had become a large and prosperous body, well known throughout the country, and Maurice O'Connell suggested that some professional men were seeking 'honour and glory' without doing very much work.¹³³

The leaders regularly exhorted their supporters to attend to registration, but the years 1841 and 1844-5 were the times of greatest effort in this direction. 1841 was a General Election year, and preparation for the elections began as early as 1840, since O'Connell feared that the Tories would return to office.¹³⁴ Repeal candidates did not do well in the 1841 General Election, partly through lack of funds, and partly because the temptations of office drew off some Repealers.¹³⁵ Nor did the Association have at its disposal the large numbers of barristers and solicitors who joined in 1842-3. These men made an important contribution to the registration of 1844-5. A list dealing with registration, drawn up in 1844 or 1845, contained the names of forty-four professional men who had volunteered their services without payment.¹³⁶ Most of the men chose one particular circuit to attend, thus

131 Speech by Smith O'Brien, Pilot, 1 January 1845.

132 R. Potter to O'Brien, 21 October 1844, S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

133 M. O'Connell to O'Brien, 7 October 1844, ibid.

134 O'Connell to Archbishop MacHale, 8 April 1840, in Fitzpatrick, Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell, Vol. II, pp. 235-7. For some activities of the 'Loyal Registration Society', formed to prepare for the elections, see Pilot, 15 January 1840.

135 Macintyre, The Liberator, p. 65.

136 Report on the General Registry, n.d. but before October 1845: 'List of the professional gentlemen who have promised to aid Repeal claimants to register', S. O'Brien Papers, N.L.I. MS 434.

covering almost all the south and west of Ireland.¹³⁷ These efforts earned the gratitude of the leadership.¹³⁸

The Association also published several pamphlets and handbooks on electoral and registration subjects, including a clerk's manual, county and borough manuals, and registration memorandum books. The scale of the Association's preparation for the autumn sessions of 1844 is indicated in the general registration report, read at the Association in October 1844.¹³⁹ This recorded that the following items had been circulated to Repeal Wardens, Inspectors and the clergy: 9,200 notices (to claim the right to vote); 11,950 affidavits; thirty-eight instruction manuals and the same number of clerks' manuals. In addition to these, a letter from Smith O'Brien on the subject of registration (dated 29 August 1844) had been circulated, together with a letter to clergy and Wardens. Over four thousand copies of the letter had been sent out. By 1845 Repealers who took the trouble to register their votes were being rewarded by the presentation of cards commemorating the fact, an idea of Smith O'Brien's.¹⁴⁰ It appears that very great and successful efforts were made in the years 1844 and 1845 to induce those qualified to register their votes. These efforts, however, were largely wasted since there was no General Election until 1847, by which time the famine had had adverse effects on the local Repeal organisations.

The leaders of the Irish Confederation hoped in 1847 that they would be able to establish a similar network of supporters and build up a strong local organisation to assist at elections. In March of that year, they hoped to see an electoral club established in every county town and

¹³⁷ Only one man, E. J. O'Farrell, offered to take an Ulster circuit, the north-west, comprising Counties Cavan, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Donegal and Derry. This further indicates Ulster's independence of Dublin's influence.

¹³⁸ Nation, 4 January 1845.

¹³⁹ Nation, 26 October 1844.

¹⁴⁰ Smith O'Brien's speech at the Association, Pilot, 1 January 1845.

borough.¹⁴¹ A start was made in Dublin in that month, but elsewhere problems arose in the shape of poor local support and a lack of funds. At the local level, Confederates (who wished to support only candidates prepared to accept a Repeal pledge) had to compete with the electoral and registration clubs established during O'Connell's political campaigns. In rural areas, without the support of the clergy, such a plan was doomed to failure; only in the large towns, as the March report suggested, was there any prospect of setting up such clubs. There are no records of the Confederation issuing local supporters with notices, manuals or instructions as the Association had done. The main gesture made in this direction was an address to the electors of Ireland, which a sub-committee was instructed to draw up in June 1847.¹⁴²

This failure to build up a strong local organisation meant that the Young Irelanders were able to exert little influence in the General Election of 1847.¹⁴³ When they wished to contest elections they had to go down to the area and canvass with little help from local organisers. When T.F. Meagher stood for Waterford City in February 1848, most of the leaders went down themselves to the town to help canvass.¹⁴⁴

VII. So far, we have considered the ways in which the leaders, the paid officials and the members of the legal profession could influence the national movement in the rest of Ireland. We now come on to consider the contribution of the rank and file members of the Association and the Confederation to the agitation in other areas.

141 Minutes of the public meetings of the Irish Confederation, 3 March 1847, (report from the elections committee), William Eliot Hudson Papers, R.I.A. MS S.R. 12/0/17.

142 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 17 June 1847.

143 Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal, p. 142.

144 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44, 16 February 1848. The Young Irelanders also sent a deputation to the Galway election in February 1847, where a Young Ireland candidate was standing; he lost to the Whig candidate: Nation, 20 February 1847.

The great majority of Repealers in Dublin were not wealthy men. Many thousands of associate members of the Repeal Association could only afford a few pence per year for the cause. They were not in a position to give up time and money to devote to spreading the agitation beyond the capital. However, some members of the Corporation attended monster meetings in 1843. A few Dubliners acted as channels of communication between provincial friends in the movement and the Association.¹⁴⁵ On the whole, though, there was little need for this, since the names and addresses of the Association officials were well publicised in the press. Whenever large Repeal meetings were held within reach of the capital, Dubliners usually turned out to attend them. Eight hundred thousand people from all parts of the country were estimated to have attended the great meeting at Tara in 1843: Herr Venedey, the German observer, was told that fourteen hundred vehicles from Dublin had passed through the Cabra Toll House on their way to the meeting.¹⁴⁶ On the day in question, Dublin was said to be quite empty of traffic, although Tara was twenty-five miles distant. Dubliners were also prepared to set out in large numbers for the last monster meeting, to be held at Clontarf, when the government banned the assembly. In general, Dubliners confined their activities for the Repeal cause to the suburbs and villages which lay within easy reach. Dr Gray and John Rafferty from Dublin acted as Arbitrators at Blackrock, and other Dubliners at Kingstown.¹⁴⁷ Gavan Duffy was an Arbitrator for his district of Rathmines. These villages and suburbs, however, appear to have needed little prompting from the city to organise their own Repeal activities. Rathmines, for instance, was among the earliest areas outside the city to contribute to the Repeal Rent in 1840.¹⁴⁸ According to O'Connell, this suburb had contributed more than eight hundred pounds to

145 T. Bourke to P. O'Connor, 11 October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623.

146 Venedey, Ireland and the Irish, p. 130.

147 Nation, 14 October 1843.

148 Pilot, 13 July 1840.

the Catholic Rent in the eighteen twenties.¹⁴⁹ Clontarf, too, was holding Repeal meetings before the end of 1840.¹⁵⁰

For the Irish Confederation as well, the outlying villages and suburbs provided early support. Repealers from Booterstown, Blackrock, Blanchardstown, Chapelizod, Clontarf, Donnybrook, Harold's Cross, Irishtown, Phibsborough and Sandymount, among other places around Dublin, signed the Dublin Remonstrance,¹⁵¹ and testified to their dissatisfaction with the Association's conduct towards the Young Irelanders. In August 1847, the report of the committee on organisation expressed the desire that Confederates should first be enrolled in Dublin; each city Club should then undertake to spread the agitation to a suburban district, and so across the country.¹⁵² Something like this did in fact take place, but not until the middle of the following year. By the middle of May 1848, in the atmosphere of growing speculation about the possibility of a rising, there were Clubs in many Dublin suburbs, including Harold's Cross, Clonskeagh, Ranelagh, Sandymount and Irishtown.¹⁵³ In June, the Clubs which had been longest established in the city began to set up branches in other parts of the capital and in the surrounding areas. The Nation of 17 June reported that Dublin and its suburbs had forty Clubs, and that these were organising others in adjacent districts. Missionaries, consisting of deputations from the city Clubs, went out to Dalkey, Dundrum, Tallaght, Chapelizod, Clondalkin, Coolock, Cabinteely, Howth and Malahide.¹⁵⁴ The leaders, too, including Gavan Duffy, M'Gee, Richard O'Gorman, Junior, and John B. Dillon, visited areas in the County Dublin at this time.¹⁵⁵

149 Pilot, 15 July 1840.

150 F.J., 12 December 1840.

151 Nation, 10, 17, 24 and 31 October, 1846.

152 Nation, 21 August 1847.

153 Lists of Clubs sending representatives to accompany Smith O'Brien to trial, Nation, 20 May 1848.

154 Irish Tribune, 24 June 1848.

155 Nation, 24 June 1848.

This missionary activity was very successful, to judge from the increase in the number of Clubs and members. On 22 July, the Nation reported that there were fifty-two Clubs in Dublin and its area, with an average membership of two hundred each. However, along with other counties, Dublin was proclaimed at the end of July, which cut short the activity of the Dublin Clubs.¹⁵⁶ Had the county not been proclaimed, it seems likely that the strength of the Confederation in the areas around the city would have become substantial, although it is unlikely that there were sufficient arms for the new members. The general expectation that a rising would take place (to which expectation the Young Irelanders' press made a large contribution) undoubtedly acted as a spur to this missionary activity on the part of the rank and file Dublin Confederates.

VIII. Finally, we come to the question of the role of the Dublin newspaper press in the Repeal agitation. This role was of great importance, but we shall be able to do little more than point out its main aspects.¹⁵⁷

The press as a whole was lively in Ireland in the eighteen forties: in 1841 there were eighty-one newspapers in the country, and by 1850 there were ninety-nine. Of these, between one-quarter and one-third were Dublin papers, with a disproportionately large circulation.¹⁵⁸ The circulations of both the Dublin and provincial press were increasing, but that of the capital was the most striking, rising from under three million in 1840 to

156 By the end of July, several Dublin Clubs had been dissolved: F.J., 31 July 1848.

157 Considerable attention has been paid to the national teachings of such a paper as the Nation: see O'Sullivan, The Young Irelanders, pp. 1-97, and Sullivan, New Ireland, pp. 70-78. However, the practical role of the press in the Repeal agitation has been largely ignored.

158 These figures are based on the parliamentary returns given in Thom's Irish Almanac, 1845, p. 218: Number of Stamps issued to, and Amount of Duty paid by each of the Newspapers in Ireland, during [1841-4], and ibid., 1851, p. 250: Number of Stamps issued to Newspapers at various periods. See also P.P. 1852, XXVIII, 529-31: Number of Stamps, at one penny, issued to newspapers in Ireland.

over four million in 1848. The circulation of the provincial press did not quite reach three million in 1848. The Dublin press acted as the main organ of information for Repealers about the activities of the Repeal Association. Before the forties, the press had already been used for stimulating local feeling, but not on such a scale or with such efficiency. Its use had been mainly confined to election campaigns. In 1830, Richard Scott, a lawyer and friend of O'Connell, wrote to him from Ennis, 'Have the Weekly Register or Pilot circulate here forthwith if an Election is near and get the Priests to canvass and secure your parish agents...'.¹⁵⁹ The Repeal Association adopted a policy of sending out to groups of over two hundred Repealers a Dublin newspaper of their choice.¹⁶⁰ Many of the Association's correspondents asked for newspapers and declared that they would do much good in their locality.¹⁶¹ As the number of Repealers grew, so did the number of newspapers circulated. Repealers could ask for any metropolitan newspaper (country papers were not circulated because they were unable to give full details of the Association's activities in Dublin, owing to their poor reporting staff¹⁶²), but the correspondents tended to ask for the Freeman's Journal, less often for the Pilot or Register, and very frequently for the Nation, which appeared in the autumn of 1842.

The figures for circulation of the various Dublin newspapers¹⁶³ reflect the increase in demand for the Repeal press, compared with the Tory

159 R. Scott to O'Connell, 24 April 1830, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13648.

160 Pilot, 22 April 1840.

161 D. Molony, Repeal Warden, to John Clancy (an Association clerk), 18 April 1843, O'Connell Papers, MS 13625; Smyth to Ray, 22 November 1841, ibid., MS 13623.

162 See above, p. 308.

163 The figures for the circulation of the Dublin newspapers are taken from the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps, P.P. 1851, XVII, 600-602, Appendix 4. These figures, while useful as a guide to the circulation of the various papers, are incomplete in some cases; thus the figures for the Nation did not begin until 1845, and then appear to be much lower than other parliamentary estimates: see P.P. 1843, XXX, 535 and 568: A Return of the Number of Stamps issued to, and the Amount of Advertising Duty paid by, all Newspapers in Ireland [October 1842 to March 1843].

newspapers. On the one hand, the Dublin Tory press barely managed to maintain its circulation during the decade. The Evening Mail had dropped over 100,000 copies in 1849, compared with the 1839 figure. The Castle paper, the Evening Post, had dropped by almost half; the Packet too had declined in circulation and only the Warder and the Protestant Journal had made any significant advance in the decade.¹⁶⁴ Turning to the Repeal press, alone of the Dublin newspapers (apart from commercial ones) the Freeman's Journal had doubled its circulation in the decade 1839-49. In 1842 the paper was enlarged, in order to provide more space for reports of Repeal activities.¹⁶⁵ The Freeman was also one of the few Irish newspapers to employ its own reporting staff in the forties,¹⁶⁶ which gave it an added advantage when it came to covering provincial activities. Its counterpart, the Weekly Freeman's Journal, also increased its circulation from about 1843, and it stayed high until 1847. Sales of the Pilot were dropping from the early thirties,¹⁶⁷ although the Repeal agitation gave it a boost from 1841 to about 1845. The Morning Register had ceased publication by 1842, and its weekly counterpart was losing sales. The circulation of the Nation, however, indicated the need for a weekly newspaper devoted to national issues, and publishing extensive reports on the progress of the Repeal agitation in the provinces as well as in Dublin. It was the Nation which first incorporated a regular weekly review of provincial Repeal activities. Even the Association's rule of 1846 which denied the Nation to local Repealers, except through independent ordering,¹⁶⁸ did not seriously affect its sales.

164 The Warder increased significantly in the middle of the decade, but fell in circulation by 1849 to near the 1839 figure. The Protestant Journal had reached a figure of almost 100,000 by 1847, but then evidently ceased publication.

165 See F.J., 28 November 1842.

166 Minute Book, R.I.A. MS 23/H/44: comment by Duffy, 23 February 1847, while urging that the Confederation take the F.J. regularly.

167 Inglis, The Freedom of the Press in Ireland, p. 233.

168 When this rule was made, Barrett attempted to improve the Pilot's circulation by urging Repealers to substitute his paper for the Nation in their Reading Rooms; this in fact did not help the Pilot: see Nation, 19 September 1846.

It seems unlikely that the rise in circulation of the most important Dublin Repeal papers can be accounted for in terms of an increased demand from the capital, although this may have played some part. More important was the political activity in the provinces, and the greater demand for quick and regular information about the Association's progress. Quick and reliable reporting of provincial meetings was also often provided by Dublin reporters, since few provincial newspapers had their own reporting staff. From Thurles, E. W. O'Mahony of the Association's staff wrote to Ray in 1841,¹⁶⁹ enclosing a report of the local Repeal meeting for the purpose of having it copied 'at once' and sent to the Register. He enclosed another copy which he had promised to Dr Gray of the Freeman. Maurice O'Connell wrote to Ray from Tralee, in 1843, asking for a reporter to be sent down to the local Repeal meeting, 'as the Liberal paper here [the Limerick Reporter] is literally without a reporter'.¹⁷⁰ From Sligo in 1841, Dr Murphy requested a Dublin reporter to cover the registration sessions. He hoped that the presence of such a person would frighten the Assistant Barrister, a Tory, 'into an approach to justice by giving publicity to the proceedings of the sessions'.¹⁷¹

Apart from the simple communication of information about Repeal activity, it was found that reports of provincial efforts spurred on the different parts of the country to even greater efforts, and sometimes to local rivalry in the cause. Local Repealers began to look out for a mention of their own town, village or parish in the Dublin press. There were complaints when the press failed to publish letters from provincial Repealers, or mention their contributions to the Rent. As one correspondent wrote, 'There is nothing rouses the people more than to see their locality noticed'.¹⁷² This sentiment was echoed with regularity throughout the years

169 E. W. O'Mahony to Ray, 19 October 1841, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13623.

170 M. O'Connell to Ray, 24 April 1843, ibid., MS 13624.

171 Murphy to Ray, 19 and 29 September, 1841, ibid., MSS 13622 and 13623.

172 (Missing: Omagh) to Ray, 28 March 1843, ibid., MS 13625.

1841 to 1846. From 1844 onwards the Nation began to print reports of the activities of the more important provincial Repeal proceedings, but for most areas the main concern was with the weekly publication of the details of the Repeal Rent. Ray recognised the importance of accuracy and speed in publishing the details of the contributions. However, he had to contend with some difficulties in the case of the Pilot, whose editor, Barrett, was occasionally accused of bias in his reports of local proceedings, which did not help the cause.¹⁷³

Lastly, the Dublin newspapers, particularly the Nation, helped the national movement by publishing articles of national interest, on such topics as Irish history, art and literature. The Nation helped to spread the idea that Ireland was entitled to existence as a nation in her own right; that the Union was preventing the complete development of the Irish people; that there were important differences between the English 'Saxon' and the Irish 'Celt', and that the Celtic Irish were best fitted to control their own destiny.¹⁷⁴ Such views must have reinforced the beliefs held by the peasantry that their landlords were aliens, whose claims to absolute ownership of the land might be rightfully resisted. By emphasising these concepts, which O'Connell had not stressed, this newspaper undoubtedly helped to create a new climate of theoretical nationalism.¹⁷⁵ While O'Connell had always been linked in the popular mind with specific Catholic grievances, and drawn his most staunch support from those who tended to identify national with Catholic aims, the Young Irelanders in the Nation disassociated themselves from predominantly Catholic grievances, and concentrated on stressing the uniqueness of Irish institutions and customs.

¹⁷³ See R. B. Barry to Ray, 27 April 1843, O'Connell Papers, N.L.I. MS 13625. Barry threatened to stop sending remittances from his town, Mallow, until his area received 'fair play'.

¹⁷⁴ Nation, 23 August 1845, and Thomas Davis, Literary and Historical Essays, especially 'Our National Language', pp. 175-82.

¹⁷⁵ R. D. Edwards, 'The Contribution of Young Ireland to the Development of the Irish National Idea', especially p. 121.

Following the secession, the Nation continued to enjoy a considerable circulation, which suggests that many local Repealers took the editor's advice¹⁷⁶ and subscribed to the paper independently of the Association. In the circumstances of famine, and the general lack of support from the class of men who had aided the Repeal Association, it is not surprising that this circulation did not result in much organised support for the Confederation in the provinces, in 1847. After the outbreak of the French revolution in February 1848, the Nation was able to rouse local feeling among the lower-middle classes by writing with much more certainty and confidence than many of the leaders of the Irish Confederation felt, about the likelihood and desirability of a revolution in Ireland.¹⁷⁷ This gave rise to a general belief among these impressionable classes that a revolution would come, and spurred them on to take part in arming and drilling, and missionary activity around the large towns.

The Nation also had a long-term effect on Irish nationalism. Several leaders of the Fenian movement in the eighteen sixties, including John O'Leary, James Stephens, Thomas Clarke Luby and Charles Kickham¹⁷⁸ had been influenced by the paper's teachings, and had taken part in the national movement of 1848-9. When Stephens decided to set up a newspaper to bring in funds for the Fenian movement, the paper, the Irish People, was closely modelled on the Nation in layout, and drew much inspiration from it.¹⁷⁹

176 Nation, 8 and 15 August, 1846.

177 See above, Chapter 6. The United Irishman was even more confident about the coming revolution. The Parliamentary Returns (P.P. 1851, XVII, 600-602) gave the United Irishman's circulation as about 13,000 for 1848; however, it was only in circulation for a few months. The Irish Tribune and Irish Felon carried a similar message, but the Returns did not give figures for their circulation, which was probably very small.

178 See Bourke, John O'Leary, pp. 15 and 22; also E.R.R. Green, 'Charles Joseph Kickham and John O'Leary', pp. 77-83 (p. 77) and D. Ryan, 'James Stephens and Thomas Clarke Luby', pp. 49-61 (p. 52), both in Moody (ed.), The Fenian Movement.

179 John O'Leary claimed that the Fenian movement grew naturally out of Young Ireland: see John O'Leary, Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, 2 vols., London, 1896, Vol. I, p. 79.

Conclusion

In order to achieve a strong national organisation, the Repeal Association and the Confederation needed the help of local men who were willing to devote time and energy to the cause. The extent of this local support varied very much for the two wings of the national movement. The Association had the great advantage of support from the Catholic clergy and many of their bishops, so that O'Connell was able to gain the cooperation of the rural peasantry as well as townspeople. He also had valuable support from the Irish corporations, which, thanks to the Municipal Reform Act of 1840, could play an important part in the agitation. By 1848, the Irish Confederation had the support of sufficient townsmen - mainly of the lower-middle classes - to ensure that some kind of organisation would be established in the urban districts. The failure to build up communications with the peasantry meant that the leaders over-estimated the support they might gain from that quarter when they undertook the abortive rebellion.

Working on the basis of widespread local support, the Association managed to exert considerable influence on the Repeal agitation in Ireland, by encouraging the localities to organise the collection of Repeal Rent and the registration of voters. Until the autumn of 1842, the work of the Association was done on small funds, yet by that date, the basis of the local organisation had been laid. From 1843 to 1845, the Rent rose to an average of over seven hundred pounds a week.¹⁸⁰ Even in the early years, however, the Association was in a better financial position than the Confederation, which had a weekly income of less than twenty pounds. The Rent helped provide for the newspapers sent out to local Repealers, to pay the expenses of missionaries, and of course, the salaries of the sizeable permanent staff of the Association in Dublin. Even when the Rent was

¹⁸⁰ This figure is based on the weekly accounts of the Repeal Rent in the F.J. and Pilot.

high, it seems that the Association relied on a considerable amount of unpaid work, particularly from members in the legal profession.

In the weeks leading up to the abortive Young Ireland rebellion, there was a certain amount of missionary activity undertaken by rank and file Confederates. This phenomenon was more or less absent from O'Connell's movement; but the summer of 1848 was a time of unusual tensions and aspirations, partly fostered by the Young Ireland press, which may account for such activity. By and large, in both the Association and the Confederation, missionary work outside the capital was left to the leaders or paid officials.

Dublin's leading role in both branches of the national movement owed much to the concentration there of an educated and prosperous middle class. Even those members of the middle classes who lived outside the capital tended to look to Dublin for professional and business reasons, and for general leadership. Another important factor in Dublin's influence was the Repeal press. Its relation with the national agitation was one of mutual benefit: in return for stimulating Repealers into action by providing quick and accurate information about the progress of the cause, the more efficient Repeal papers increased their circulation.

One of the more striking features of the Association and the Confederation was the similarity of their methods in spreading the agitation. The Confederation, though hampered by lack of funds, attempted, like the Association, to establish local electoral clubs, sent out missionaries, and relied greatly on the press. Unlike the Fenians,¹⁸¹ nearly two decades later, the Confederation made no attempt to enrol members in secret, and in general, its organisation appears to have owed much to the Association.

¹⁸¹ E.R.R. Green, 'The Beginnings of Fenianism' in Moody (ed.), The Fenian Movement, pp. 11-22 (p. 17).

TABLE 8.1 IRISH PROVINCIAL NEWSPAPERS AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, 1840-48

Irish Provincial Newspapers

<u>Supporting O'Connell and the Repeal Association 1840 - July 1846¹</u>	<u>Supporting the O'Connells and the Repeal Association July 1846 - 1848</u>	<u>Supporting Young Ireland 1847 - 48²</u>
Belfast Vindicator	Belfast Vindicator	*Galway Vindicator
Drogheda Argus	Galway Mercury	*Limerick and Clare Examiner
*Galway Vindicator	Kilkenny Journal	*Limerick Reporter
Kerry Examiner	Southern Reporter (Cork)	Newry Examiner
*Kilkenny Journal	*Tipperary Vindicator	
*Limerick Reporter	Tuam Herald	
Mayo Telegraph	Waterford Chronicle	
Newry Examiner	Wexford Independent	
Roscommon Journal		
*Sligo Champion		
Southern Reporter (Cork)		
Tipperary Free Press		
Tipperary Vindicator		
Tuam Herald		
Waterford Chronicle and Munster Advertiser		
*Wexford Independent		

Notes: An asterisk (*) indicates steadfast supporters of the group.

1 This list is not exhaustive. For the papers supporting O'Connell and the Association, the sources were the reports of the Association's weekly meetings, and the correspondence read at those meetings, given in the F.J., Pilot, and Nation, and also the O'Connell Papers, N.L.I.

2 The list of newspapers inclining to the Young Ireland side was taken from the Nation, 8 August 1846, which reported on the opinions of the press on the secession. The general feeling among those newspapers appeared to be one of sympathy for the Young Irelanders, and a general desire for a reconciliation of Repealers, rather than a complete condemnation of O'Connell and the Association. The Pilot, 2 June 1848, gave the names of more newspapers (including some which normally supported the policies of the Repeal Association) which reacted strongly against the transportation of John Mitchel.

CONCLUSION

THE ROLE OF DUBLIN IN THE IRISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT, 1840-48

Compared with other parts of Ireland, Dublin provided the earliest, most constant and active support for Repeal from 1840 to 1848. The aim of this study has been to describe this support, and to consider the reasons for it. We have looked at social, economic and religious factors in Dublin's support for the Repeal Association and the Irish Confederation, and also examined questions of organisation. It is hoped that some light has been shed on the nature of these two branches of the national movement, the importance of Dublin's role in them, and the influence of the capital on the Repeal agitation in the rest of Ireland. It is now necessary to draw some general conclusions on these questions.

I. Taking first the Repeal Association, it is clear that this body won very widespread support among the various social classes in Dublin. Among the upper-middle classes, men of property, merchants, business and professional men gave considerable support to the Association. On the whole, these men were Catholics. A few Protestant Repealers were found in each of these occupational groups; but the evidence suggests that they were exceptions. Tory Protestants were strongly hostile to Repeal, and Liberal Protestants did not, in general, support the movement. In the Dublin Corporation, for instance, Liberal Protestants were under strong pressure from the burgesses to take a Repeal pledge, but in nearly every case they resigned from office or failed to stand for re-election, rather than support Repeal. Among these classes, then, it was generally the Catholics who were Repealers. Most of them came forward early in the agitation: by the end of 1840, at least eight of the future Repeal town councillors and aldermen had attended Association meetings at the Corn

Exchange, and many more had been involved in organising Repeal meetings at ward level. Gavan Duffy's claim,¹ that until the Young Irelanders joined the Association, O'Connell was without 'one associate possessing acknowledged weight of character, or solidity of judgement, or enthusiasm of conviction', is thus unfounded. Further down the social scale, the Association gained much support from the lower-middle classes, particularly from the skilled artisans who formed the membership of the trades unions. Protestant Repealers were rare among this class too. The Dublin Protestant Operative Association, founded in 1841, was a body with a strong Orange tone, and although its members were more hostile to Catholicism than to Repeal, they tended to identify the two questions. The rare references in the press to Protestant workmen joining the Association or subscribing to the Repeal Rent reinforce the theory that most Protestant members of this class remained hostile to Repeal.

Religion is therefore clearly an important factor when we come to consider the reasons for Dublin's support for the Association. In spite of the claims made by some Catholics in the upper-middle classes, that the Union had harmed trade and industry, it seems certain that their grievances were not primarily economic. Several of them had made fortunes from trade. For members of this class, such matters as the exclusion of Catholics from juries, and the continued direction of patronage towards Protestants, were of direct concern. They were aware that, as Catholics, they were still regarded with suspicion and distrust by governments. O'Connell, the leader of the Repeal Association, was popularly known as the 'Liberator', a name bestowed on him after his victorious Catholic Emancipation campaign, and which reflects his image with Catholics as a champion of their rights.² Throughout the forties, these comfortably

1 Cited in Moody, Thomas Davis, p. 18.

2 Not only in Ireland was O'Connell seen as a champion of the church. To Lacordaire, the French liberal Catholic, O'Connell's chief importance

situated followers of O'Connell displayed concern with questions concerning the rights and status of Catholics: they promoted meetings on such matters as the Charitable Bequests Bill, the Colleges scheme, and the exclusion of Catholics from juries in political trials. This concern for Catholic rights suggests that the leaders in the Repeal Association had considerable support for their policies on questions - such as education - which involved religion. It was not correct to imply, as Duffy later did, that these policies were imposed on an unwilling country by the O'Connell's and Archbishop MacHale.³

Turning to the matter of support for Repeal among the lower classes in Dublin, the religious, social and economic factors are more difficult to untangle. It seems unlikely that Catholics in these classes should have had much direct concern with questions of patronage and status. There is clear evidence that the economic depression of 1839-42 was an important factor in the enthusiastic response among these classes to the renewal of Repeal agitation in 1840, when most other parts of the country were apathetic. Yet once again, it must be pointed out that while Catholics suffering from the effects of the depression drew the conclusion that Repeal was a necessary measure to restore lasting prosperity, Protestant workers, who also suffered from the depression, very rarely drew such a conclusion. In fact, although the Union had had an adverse effect on luxury trades in Dublin, it is now acknowledged that the economic depression was not caused by the Union, nor was the Union responsible for many of Ireland's economic problems. What has to be explained is why the Catholic artisans and skilled tradesmen believed so passionately that prosperity and Repeal were so closely linked. It is tempting to ascribe

lay in his work for the Catholic church: see Père H.-D. Lacordaire, 'Eloge funèbre de Daniel O'Connell' in *Oeuvres*, Tome VIII, *Notices et Panégyriques*, Paris, 1912, pp. 163-93 (pp. 163, 178 and 191).

³ Duffy, *Thomas Davis*, pp. 302 and 310-11.

this belief to the propaganda spread by leaders like O'Connell; yet his support for Repeal from the early thirties up to about 1841 was very erratic, and in 1839 and 1840, the trades unions were calling for a Repeal campaign while O'Connell was still carrying out his policy of cooperation with the Whigs. It seems more significant that members of the trades, as well as spokesmen for the poorer citizens of Dublin, displayed suspicion of England's intentions towards Ireland, and a sense of conflict between the interests of the English, or 'Saxons', and the Irish. This attitude did not spring simply from religious grounds, but owed much to the fact that England's control over the country was based on conquest, and to the continuing expression of violent agrarian protest. It is not surprising that lower-class Protestants did not share this outlook on England, since by virtue of their religion, they were able to identify with the 'conquering' side.

Moving on to Dublin's support for Young Ireland, we have noted that while Dublin provided the most constant and enthusiastic support for this party, enthusiasm was mainly confined to members of the lower-middle classes, mainly Catholics, but with a scattering of Protestants. Some professional men were also attracted to this party. Before drawing some general conclusions about the reasons for this narrow support, let us recall one of the main concerns of the Young Ireland party: to persuade Catholics and Protestants that their interests lay not in mutual suspicion and distrust, but in union against England. Davis reached his conclusions on this matter partly as a result of his reading of history, literature, and philosophy, and partly through his reaction to the effects of industrialism in Britain, and the centralising spirit of British government. The underlying assumptions in Davis's philosophy of nationalism were likely to appeal to both Catholic and Protestant members of the professional classes, who saw in the growing subordination of Irish to English institutions not merely a threat to those institutions themselves,

but also a direct threat to their own status and prospects. It was a different matter for merchants and businessmen. Through her position on the eastern seaboard, Dublin had much in common with the rest of the United Kingdom in economic matters, and the status of Irish institutions was of less direct concern. Protestant merchants were not converted to Repeal by the arguments of either O'Connell or the Young Irelanders. The Union had not made successful trade impossible for Catholic merchants either, but for this class, as we have seen, resentment against their status as second class citizens in certain respects underlay their support for Repeal. Young Ireland had nothing to offer to these men, whose main concern in seeking Repeal was to reassert their full role, as Catholics, in Irish life.

The lower-middle classes in Dublin, however, were less concerned with questions of the status of Catholics, since their social position made them second class citizens in any case. But members of this class were imbued with traditional suspicion of English motives towards Ireland, sometimes expressed in racial terms, such as the belief that 'Saxons' were tricking the Irish into a preference for English goods. Such ideas found a close counterpart in Davis's description of the differences between English Saxons and Irish Celts. The racial theme is important in Davis's ideas on nationalism (he often signed his poems, 'The Celt').⁴ He did not simply equate 'Irish' with 'Celtic' or 'English' with 'Saxon',⁵ yet he did frequently use racial arguments when claiming that the two countries were distinct in institutions and culture.⁶ The Young Irelanders, then, provided an ideology to support the nationalism of the Catholic lower-middle classes. Since they also expressed their message in uncompromising and

4 O'Sullivan, The Young Irelanders, Appendix II, p. 657.

5 See 'Ballad Poetry of Ireland', in Thomas Davis, Literary and Historical Essays, pp. 220-31, especially p. 222.

6 'Our National Language', ibid., pp. 173-82.

often violent terms, and placed emphasis on education and self reliance, they were even more likely to appeal to members of that class.

What of the lower-class Protestant participation in the Young Ireland movement? Here it is important to remember that the period of greatest growth in Confederate Club membership occurred at a time of great political excitement, and at a time when there was a crisis among the leaders of Protestant opinion, because of the split in the Tory party, and the Whig famine legislation. These factors probably help to explain why some Protestants did join the Confederate Clubs. But in view of the fact that Clubmen showed great fear of the Dublin Orangemen, it would be incorrect to see any real and permanent change in the attitudes of most Protestant members of these classes towards the national movement.

II. We now turn to the question of organisation in the two branches of the movement. Their methods of organisation were of course limited by the conventions of the time; neither was run on democratic lines. It is interesting to note, however, that the Young Irelanders, who had complained so bitterly about the 'tyranny' which they had encountered in the Repeal Association, went no further than O'Connell in the direction of democratic leadership when they set up their own organisation.

The organisation of the Repeal Association at the local level in the capital owed a great deal to earlier bodies, such as the Liberal clubs, which had been formed to help O'Connell in his work for Emancipation and reform. The men most prominent in the Liberal clubs and Liberal registration societies were, in many cases, the same men who organised and conducted the Repeal meetings in Dublin wards and parishes from 1840 onwards, served as Repeal Wardens, Repeal town councillors and aldermen. Of major importance for the Repeal agitation was the new administrative unit, the municipal ward, which first came into being for the purposes of

the Irish Poor Law in 1839. The old unit of the parish had never been fully satisfactory for the purpose of organising a political campaign, since both Protestant and Catholic parish divisions existed, and the Protestant parish and its officers had enjoyed greater prestige than their Catholic counterparts. The ward unit was free of religious overtones, so that its 'officers' - town councillors and aldermen, the elected representatives of the burgesses - could claim to speak for men of all creeds. In all but three or four of the fifteen wards, these representatives were Catholics and Repealers. This enhanced the status of the local leaders and organisers of the Repeal movement in Dublin. In turn, the support of the great majority of the reformed Irish corporations added to the strength and prestige of the Repeal movement.

Many of the Repeal town councillors and aldermen also acted as Repeal Wardens. These officers were the most important men in the local organisation in Dublin, their main duties being to collect the Repeal Rent, arrange meetings, and later, to supervise the Repeal Reading Rooms. Only two or three were clergymen. The Dublin clergy played a small role in the Repeal organisation in the capital, not because they were hostile to Repeal, which was certainly not the case, but because of the presence of large numbers of laymen equipped in every way to take a leading part in politics. Dr Murray's hostility to his clergy participating in politics also probably played a part here. The meagre role of the clergy is significant, for it heralded the time, decades ahead, when the national movement would be organised throughout the country, without their help, by relying on the leadership of an educated middle class. Most Dublin Repeal Wardens, then, were laymen; but they were not all members of the wealthier middle class which furnished candidates for the Corporation. A fair number of them were poorer men, some apparently even servants and shop boys. In the early forties, this cooperation between social classes

in the Repeal movement is striking, and indicates how wide the appeal of that question was; but by 1846 several of the lower-class Wardens had become disillusioned with the prospect of a return to the policy of Whig alliance, just as the trades had protested about Repeal being pushed into the background in the thirties. These men turned to Young Ireland for leadership, but it is important to note that among wealthier Wardens, there was in general strong support for O'Connell and the Association over the question of the Whig alliance.

As we have already mentioned, the Repeal Association was not run on democratic lines. It was run by a series of committees, most of which evolved on a more or less ad hoc basis. The great majority of the members of these committees were upper-middle class or landed men, and for the most part, only those resident in the capital attended committee meetings with any regularity. Those who did take the trouble to attend could gain considerable influence on the Association's policies, as the case of the Young Irelanders illustrates. Thomas Davis found much to criticise about the men who served on Association committees.⁷ Certainly, some members, among them R. D. Browne, M.P., were not well fitted for a leading role in politics. Others, however, including many of the semi-official members of the Association, such as Edward Clements and Martin Crean, were hard working men, who devoted much time and energy to the Repeal cause.

We now turn once more to the Young Irelanders. In 1841 the founder of this party, Thomas Davis, decided to work for the extension of his particular brand of nationalism through the Repeal Association. This was a bold move, since the Association was dominated by O'Connell, who was identified with Catholic aspirations. The Young Irelanders hoped from the beginning to turn the Association into different channels: to break

⁷ Duffy, Thomas Davis, p. 302.

its identification with Catholic aims, and lead it towards the kind of all-embracing, cultural nationalism which they favoured. As we saw in Chapter Four, in spite of the fact that they were a minority group within the Association, they achieved several of their objectives, turning the Association into such paths as sponsoring the Repeal Reading Rooms, and setting up the parliamentary committee. What they failed to do was to prevent the Association from aligning itself, as it was almost bound to do, with the Catholic side in matters which involved religion. Their failure here was not surprising, in view of the widespread support in Dublin and elsewhere for the O'Connells in their stand on these questions. By late 1845 their prospects in the Association were poor. Yet for some months after their secession from the Association in July 1846, they did not think in terms of establishing a popular organisation at all. Some of them did consider acting through the '82 Club, an exclusive body, with a membership composed principally of business and professional men. The Irish Confederation was set up as a result of pressure from lower-middle class men in Dublin who turned to Young Ireland for leadership, and there was much hesitation before this step was taken. Not surprisingly, the popular organisation in the Confederation was based on the Clubs, which suited the needs of this lower-middle class element: like the Repeal Reading Rooms, they provided general educational facilities with instruction in national matters. The Clubmen had very little influence with the Young Irelanders, while the internal Club arrangements were probably left largely to the Clubmen.

It is fair to say that had 1848 not been a year of general revolutionary excitement, the Club element in the movement would have remained very small. At the end of 1847 there were only twenty Clubs in the whole of the United Kingdom, of which one-quarter were in Dublin city. Partly because of these small numbers, and partly because it failed to

establish an efficient fund-gathering system, the scope of the Confederation was limited. Yet it is important to bear in mind that the majority of the Young Irelanders were preoccupied, even in 1848, with winning the support of the landed classes, and of Protestants in general. They hardly seem to have been aware of the incongruity of their position: that on the one hand they were attempting to present themselves as a respectable conservative movement, such as would attract the landed classes, and that on the other they accepted the support of the Clubmen, whose respect for property was doubtful, and whose desire for an armed rising was clear from early in 1848.

We may now consider a final question: to what extent was Repeal a Dublin matter?

As we have seen, support for Repeal in Dublin was most closely associated with the Catholic middle classes. For the wealthier merchants and tradesmen who enjoyed a comfortable position in society, Repeal was linked with their aspirations to play a full part in the life of the country. The Union had so far failed to provide these opportunities. For the lower-middle classes, Repeal was the measure which they believed would restore prosperity in trade and industry. In neither case were these attitudes solely confined to the capital: they can be found in other Irish towns, and wherever a Catholic middle class had grown up. For instance, in 1840 and 1841, the Irish Manufacture movement, which was to become closely linked with Repeal, had local branches in many Irish towns,⁸ having spread out from the capital. In 1840 the Limerick trades contributed a comparatively large sum to the Repeal Association, following the example of the Dublin trades. In towns like Cork, upper-middle class

⁸ F.J., 17 April 1841 (Report on Cork Board of Trade); F.J., 10 May 1841 (Dublin Board of Trade: report on dealings with its counterpart in Limerick); F.J., 14 June 1841 (Report on Kilkenny Board of Trade).

merchants shared Dublin aspirations to play a much greater part in the life of Ireland.

If the urban middle classes were in the van of the Repeal question, this did not mean that the question was of little or no interest to country dwellers, tenant farmers and labourers. In most parts of Ireland, apart from the north-east, the bulk of the rural population (except for the landed classes) were Catholics, who shared a common experience of recent religious persecution, of which certain symbols still remained. Men who worked on the land had a sense of still recent conquest by an alien power. The rural population was inclined to regard England's intentions towards the country with suspicion, and specific grievances connected with religion and the land system existed, for which Repeal offered possible remedies.

The basis for a national movement thus existed independently of Dublin. However, because of the overwhelming concentration of educated and prosperous Catholics in the Dublin area, the capital was the natural centre of nationalism, able to articulate and organise the grievances -- religious, agrarian, and national -- of other parts of Ireland.

A NOTE ON THE SOURCES

Manuscripts formed an important class of material for this study, particularly the O'Connell Papers and the Smith O'Brien Papers in the National Library of Ireland. The former contain part of the Repeal Association correspondence, although regrettably there are large gaps in this. Many of the letters are addressed to T.M. Ray, the Association secretary, and several bear his comments, and a brief synopsis of his replies. They shed considerable light on the organisation and scope of the Association's activities, especially in the early years of the decade. The Smith O'Brien Papers are valuable for providing an insight into the thoughts of the Young Irelanders during the period 1846-8; they present a modified picture of the Young Irelanders' aims and plans compared with that which Gavan Duffy gives in his later writings. The Irish Confederation MSS in the Royal Irish Academy give a fairly complete picture of the running of the Council of the Confederation: it is most unfortunate that the majority of similar records for the Repeal Association - for example, minutes of the meetings of the general committee - have not also been preserved. However, the records of the Council of the Confederation provide comparatively little information about the Clubs. This deficiency is partly made good by the Police Reports, in the Library of Trinity College. These reports were sent in by spies, and deal with Club activities and also include comments on the social background of Club members, and their aims.

The State Paper Office in Dublin contains a great deal of correspondence between Dublin Castle and various citizens of Dublin, both Protestant and Catholic. The subjects covered in this correspondence range widely, but those concerning trade and municipal matters were of particular interest. Various memorials, notably those of the Protestant

Operative Association, are also to be found in the State Paper Office.

Among the papers of ministers consulted, those of Sir Robert Peel, Prime Minister from 1841 to 1846, in the British Museum, and those of the Fourth Earl of Clarendon, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from 1847 to 1852, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, proved most valuable. Peel's correspondence with his Lords Lieutenant and Chief Secretaries in Ireland reveals his anxiety to rule Ireland with impartiality, as far as possible. Lord Clarendon's letters display a keen knowledge of the state of Irish affairs, and of the progress of the national movement. His policy towards the two wings of the national movement emerges clearly from his correspondence; for instance, it is clear that he was very reluctant to make use of the offers of help from Protestants and Orangemen to put down the rebellious activities of the Clubs in 1848.

Parliamentary Papers were of only minor importance for this study, but the Report on the Census of Ireland taken in 1841 provided valuable information, while the Commission on the Municipal Corporations in Ireland described the state of local government before the Municipal Reform (Ireland) Act took effect in 1841. Many of the details about the circulation of Irish newspapers also came from Parliamentary Papers. The contemporary Dublin Directories, especially those published by Thom, and Pettigrew and Oulton, enabled the writer to identify many of the better-off Dublin Repealers, their occupations and addresses, and occasionally, the amount of Poor Rate they paid.

The most basic and important material, however, was found in newspapers. The Freeman's Journal and Pilot supplied most information about the activities of Catholics and Repealers in Dublin. Not only did they include detailed accounts of Dublin Repeal meetings, but they also provided a great deal of information about other local activities in the city. This made it possible to build up a picture of the social standing

of many of the Dublin Repealers, besides indicating their various fields of interest, such as the campaign to win further municipal reform, and home manufactures. For the views of Tories and Protestants, the Dublin Evening Mail and the Dublin University Magazine were particularly useful. The Nation, apart from containing the writings of the Young Irelanders, also provided an important part of the scant information on the Remonstrants and the Confederate Clubs.

Pamphlet material formed an unexpectedly important source. The National Library of Ireland houses most of the publications of the Repeal Association, with one or two important exceptions, and these may be found in the Royal Irish Academy. The Haliday Pamphlets in the Academy (arranged chronologically in bound volumes) contained much that was of interest for this study, mainly in the form of publications by various Dublin institutions and societies, ranging from the Board of Trade and the Chamber of Commerce to the Grand Orange Lodge. The collections of Tracts (unbound) also yielded useful material. In certain cases, pamphlets provided quite new insights into national politics. For instance, Letters to a Parish Priest, on Peter Purcell & Precursorism. By an Independent Radical describes O'Connell's conduct as leader of a national association in very candid terms; Edward Dawson's First Letter to the Tradesmen and Labourers of Ireland... is a contemporary assessment of the quality and background of the leaders of the National Trades Political Union and their relations with O'Connell. The Address of the Irish Universal Suffrage Association to the Most Rev. & Right Rev. the Roman Catholic Archbishops... of Ireland also contained much that was critical of O'Connell and his conduct of national affairs. In this respect, pamphlets formed a useful counterweight to the Repeal press, which tended not to publish matter which was damaging to O'Connell.

On the question of secondary sources, it is only possible here to

pick out a number of those considered by the writer to be most relevant and helpful. On economic matters, T. W. Freeman's study, Pre-Famine Ireland, provides some detailed information about trade and industry in Dublin and other parts of the country during this period, and also deals with questions of population, poverty and illiteracy. The Formation of the Irish Economy, edited by L. M. Cullen, although short, contains in its nine essays a valuable reinterpretation of the impact of political questions like the Act of Union on the Irish economy. The book suggests that the Union alone had little to do with the stagnation of the Irish economy in the nineteenth century. Fergus A. D'Arcy's unpublished thesis, and his article in Irish Historical Studies, XVII, No. 66 (September 1970), analyse the motives of Dublin's artisans in their support for the Repeal movement, and show them to have been largely economic. While this was undoubtedly the case, the question of religion also seems to have played a significant part, since as far as can be judged, Protestant workers rarely joined the Repeal Association.

For political studies, Kevin B. Nowlan's The Politics of Repeal analyses the government's approach to Irish problems during the forties, while Angus Macintyre's The Liberator contains much information on O'Connell's parliamentary party, although much of this relates mainly to the eighteen thirties. It also describes the registration work which formed such an important part of the Repeal Association's activities. John F. Broderick's The Holy See and the Irish Movement for the Repeal of the Union with England, 1829-47 gives a very detailed picture of clerical support for Repeal, and describes the attitudes of the Holy See, the British government and the Irish hierarchy towards clerical participation in the movement. The book, however, contains little information on the political role of the clergy in the larger Irish towns.

There is as yet no wholly satisfactory history of the Repeal

Association or of the Young Ireland movement. Lawrence J. McCaffrey's Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year contains many details about Repeal organisation outside the capital. For the activities and internal organisation of the Repeal Association, Denis Gwynn's biography of O'Connell is also a useful source. His short O'Connell, Davis, and the Colleges Bill is a good analysis of one case in the Young Irelanders' struggle for political advantage within the Association. Gavan Duffy's lengthy histories of the period contain much information, but they are primarily a defence and a justification of Young Ireland, and are often unfair to other groups, particularly the O'Connellites. The interpretation of events put forward is frequently misleading. T. F. O'Sullivan's The Young Irelanders, published almost thirty years ago, contains little more than an uncritical collection of short biographical studies of many of the leading Young Irelanders, and there are several inaccuracies. On the ideas of the Young Irelanders, there is more to offer the reader, in particular R. Dudley Edwards's article, 'The Contribution of Young Ireland to the Development of the Irish National Idea'. A recent book, Malcolm Brown's The Politics of Irish Literature, subjects the ideas and political aims of the Young Irelanders to a critical analysis. In spite of its journalistic style, this book does represent a new attempt to stress the political aims of Young Ireland's doctrines. Another recent book, Robert Kee's The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism, contains some useful reinterpretation of old material. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh's book, Ireland Before the Famine, 1798-1848, appeared as this study was nearing completion: it contains little new material of relevance to this work.

Finally, such works as Asa Briggs's Chartist Studies and Norman McCord's The Anti-Corn Law League, 1838-46 enabled the writer to compare certain aspects of the Irish national movement with other political movements taking place in the United Kingdom during the same period.

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