

**Lobbying and the land question: Dublin Castle pamphlets
and landlord responses to the land war**

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Research completed on the Dublin Castle pamphlet collections

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Executive summary

The accompanying article and database were produced in autumn 2012 through a bursary of the Oireachtas Library and Research Service. The material under consideration is the pamphlet collection of the Chief Secretary's Library at Dublin Castle which has been held by the Houses of the Oireachtas since independence but has remained largely untouched and under-utilised by historians. The present project has focussed in on pamphlets from the 1880s due to the fact that this decade was one in which Irish party politics as we understand them today began to take shape. It was a decade of turmoil on the land which witnessed the boiling over of tensions between landlord and tenant. Administratively, the decade was an extremely tense one with accounts of high-ranking visitors to Ireland carrying revolvers for personal protection after the murder of Chief Secretary Cavendish and his Under-Secretary Thomas Henry Burke in May 1882. In this context, Irish landlords felt increasingly marginalised. The present study argues that landlords utilised pamphlets as a means of explaining the uncertainty of their class in this troubled decade. More importantly, this work considers pamphlets as a mode by which landlords lobbied the government at a time when the Land League was dominating Irish politics. Particular focus has been given to the work and written output of a body called the Irish Land Committee. This was the first organised response by landlords to the land crisis and, as such, the Irish Land Committee has particular historical significance. In re-constructing – and de-constructing – the methods and objectives of landlords, it is argued that the committee constituted an important example of a Victorian Irish lobby group. Although its campaign was ultimately a failure, this study provides important insights into landlord tactics and the landlord mentality as well as providing a vignette into the interests and concerns of the British administration in Ireland. This latter objective has been achieved by considering what Dublin Castle's library collected and how items surviving in Dublin Castle's pamphlet collections may have had an impact on British governance of Ireland in the 1880s.

Findings

Among the key findings of the research conducted were:

- Of the 202 pamphlets from the 1880s contained within the Dublin Castle collection, 36 do not appear elsewhere in Ireland, showing that the Chief Secretary's Office

collected and preserved literature that no other Irish repository deemed worthy of preservation. The significance of this is not in the fact that researchers can now access these pamphlets – indeed many exist in British repositories – but rather that this instructs our understanding of the interests and priorities of the Castle administration in Ireland.

- Land: it was found that the land question dominated pamphlet publishing in the 1880s
- Lobbying: through a study of the Irish Land Committee, a lobby group for the landlords of Ireland, it was found that vested interests operated with a high degree of sophistication in the 1880s, organising petitions, meetings, and publicity campaigns but, most importantly, conducting fact finding missions in the manner similar to that of a modern think-tank or policy institute. In the case of the Irish Land Committee, the success of this particular lobby can be judged by the credibility with which its publications were treated by government and administrators. Furthermore, the limits of lobbying can also be studied through the failure of this group to successfully counteract the groundswell of extra-parliamentary pressure then being organised by Parnell, Davitt, and the Land League.

Database

The Dublin Castle pamphlet collection consists of 167 bound volumes containing over 1,600 individual titles ranging from the seventeenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. 202 titles can be dated to the 1880s and all of this subset have been recorded and categorised as part of this project. More than half of these (109 titles) related to the land question. This is to be expected but the scale of engagement is in itself instructive of the degree to which the land question preoccupied the British administration in Ireland at this time.

The database categorises all titles. Apart from the land question, important topics that have been identified include administration, crime and punishment, sanitation and health, and infrastructure. Pamphlets on industry are conspicuous by their rarity in the 1880s, perhaps attesting to the agricultural outlook of the British administration in Ireland before the advent of constructive unionism in the mid-1890s.

Article: *Lobbying and the land question: Dublin Castle pamphlets and landlord responses to the land war*

As discussed already, there is clear evidence – both from the content and the survival of these pamphlets – about how pamphleteers engaged with the administration of the day in what would be understood in modern terms as lobbying. The Irish Land Committee, has come in for particular focus as it co-ordinated the most concerted and best organised lobbying campaign in the period. While still accepting the findings of Norman D. Palmer (*The Irish Land League Crisis*), the present work serves to augment understandings of landlord responses to the land question, re-interpreting the driving forces behind the campaign of the Irish Land Committee as an exercise in lobbying rather than an instance of preaching to the converted. In charting the failure of landlords to counteract the Land League and to gain adequate safeguards or concessions in Gladstone's second Land Act (1881), consideration has been given to the mentality of landlords in the 1880s, at a time when this once powerful social group came under threat and was slowly marginalised in Irish life.

Lobbying and the land question: Dublin Castle pamphlets and landlord responses to the land war

For the law of the land had been substituted for the Law of the Land League
– Lord Hartington¹

The current project is based on research which was carried out through the sponsorship of the Oireachtas Library and Research Service in 2012 to work on its largely under-utilised² collections which include the libraries of the Irish Office and Dublin Castle. When initial studies were carried out into the Oireachtas Library holdings, one case study that returned interesting results was that of the 1880s, where pamphlets, news-clippings, and other material surviving from the Dublin Castle library reveal the scale and scope of the Castle's interests during this seminal decade.³ In particular, the land question dominated both the interests of the Castle and public debate generally, especially in the early years of the 1880s, when the first Land War (1879-82) saw the emergence of hitherto unknown levels of agrarian agitation, evictions, and a further intensification in the desire for legislative revision of the relationship between the owners and occupiers of the land. That pamphlets survived within the collections of the Chief Secretary's Office is evidence in itself that the government of the day took notice of the work of pamphleteers. Furthermore, that these pamphlets were retained as works of reference for many decades after their publication attests to the fact that they were not treated simply as ephemera.⁴

Using the collections of the former library of the Chief Secretary of Ireland, the present study will examine how pamphlet writing on the land question in the 1880s can be interpreted as a form of civic engagement, or what would today be interpreted as lobbying. In particular, one

¹ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. VII. Mr Gladstone and the three F's* (Dublin and London, 1881), p. 23.

² For notable examples, see E. McLysaght, 'Reports of Fenian Trials in Oireachtas Library' in *Analecta Hibernica*, 23 (1966), pp 299-301; Sheila Carden, 'The Origins of the Oireachtas Library' in *Dublin Historical Record*, 57, no. 1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 102-108; and R. C. Simington and John MacLellan, 'Oireachtas Library List of Outlaws, 1641-1647' in *Analecta Hibernica*, no. 23 (1966), pp 319-367.

³ Inquest, *Report on the historical significance of the Dublin Castle and Irish Office collections held in the Oireachtas Library, Leinster House* (December 2011), pp 23-5.

⁴ In 1903-1904, the pamphlet collection of the Chief Secretary's Library was bound into 171 individual volumes containing over 1,600 individual titles dating from the seventeenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. See *Catalogue of the Library of the Chief Secretary's Office* (Dublin, 1904), pp 209-298.

association, the Irish Land Committee, which was founded in 1879 and which produced a series of fifteen pamphlets between November 1880 and February 1882, will come under close scrutiny. As one of the most coherent and organised examples of landlord response to the land crisis after 1879, the Irish Land Committee is a particularly important case study into the tactics, outlook, and evolving fortunes of landlords in this period. Building on the work of other historians who have considered this largely forgotten group, a primary aim of this article will be to assess the efficacy of the Irish Land Committee's campaign against the Land League. In a final assessment, the question of how landlords lost the propaganda war of the 1880s will be addressed.

In examining the Irish land question, there is no more important repository of pamphlets and other printed literature than that of the Dublin Castle Library, now preserved as part of the Oireachtas Library at Leinster House.⁵ In reconstructing the attitudes and interests of the Dublin Castle administration in the 1880s, the acquisitions of the Chief Secretary's library give an important, albeit impressionistic insight into what today might be termed the 'browser history' of the Castle. That the land question dominated discourse in the 1880s is beyond doubt. Of the 202 pamphlet titles in the Dublin Castle collection, 109, or 54 percent, relate to the land question. Furthermore, as figure 1 below illustrates, over seventy percent of these 109 pamphlets were published between 1880 and 1882, indicating that the land war was a primary motivating force driving individuals on both sides to take up their pens in defence of their respective positions.

⁵ The only possible exception to this is the Oireachtas' closest neighbour. The collection of the National Library of Ireland contains an extensive collection relating to the 1880s and has many titles not contained within the Oireachtas collections. Despite this, it should be considered that part of the importance of the Oireachtas' holdings is that it can tell researchers what Dublin Castle did not hold as much as what it did. On the holdings of the National Library, see R. D. Collison Black, *A catalogue of pamphlets on economic subjects published between 1750 and 1900 and now housed in Irish libraries* (New York, 1969).

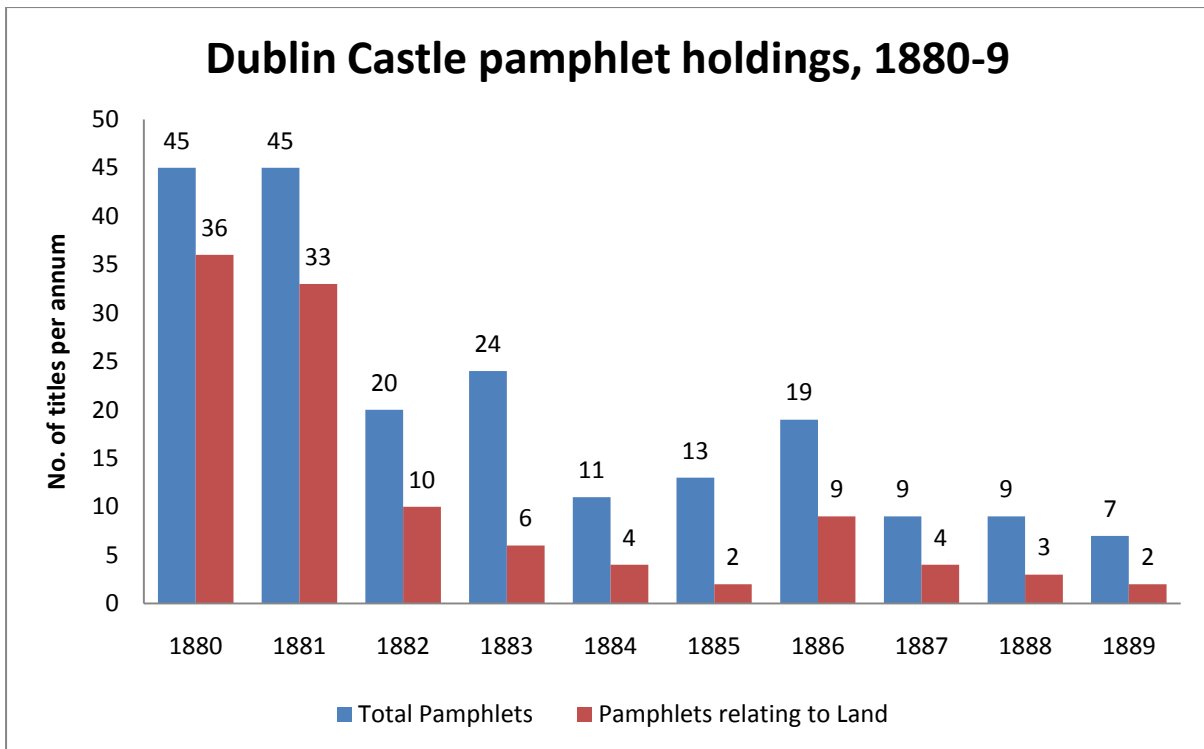


Figure 1: Holdings of the Dublin Castle pamphlet collection showing the dominance of the land question in the early 1880s.

Although pamphlets from both land leaguers and landlords exist within the collection, at a time when the floor of the House of Commons, the public platform, and the press in Ireland became dominated by advocates of tenant rights, pamphlets remained an important medium for landlords to refute these claims to an audience that was both sympathetic and influential. It is difficult to judge the extent to which pamphlets had an impact on policy; but it is clear from prefaces and other indicators that many were produced with this precise purpose in mind.⁶

It is necessary here to give a brief account of why the land question broke out when it did. However, this subject in itself has filled many pages.⁷ The combination of an economic crisis, poor harvests, and a timely alliance between Fenians and Home Rulers in nationalist politics ensured that the comparatively stable Ireland of the 1870s became a place of dislocation, agitation, and outrage after 1879. Whereas the history of the Land League during this period

⁶ In preparing this study, 202 pamphlets, the entire Dublin Castle holdings for the 1880s were analysed and it was found that twenty contained hand written dedications or postal markings sending them to members of the Irish government or administration. This will be discussed in greater detail subsequently.

⁷ In particular see Samuel Clark, *Social origins of the Irish land war* (Princeton, 1979) and R.W. Kirkpatrick, 'Origins and development of the Land War in Mid-Ulster' in F.S.L. Lyons and R.A.J. Hawkins (eds), *Ireland under the Union: varieties of tension. Essays in honour of T.W. Moody* (Oxford, 1980), pp 201-35.

is well covered, much remains to be done in reconstructing both the psychological and political reactions of landlords to the crisis. Whereas much of the work of the Land League was highly public, often extra-parliamentary, and seldom conciliatory, among landlords the will to achieve their ends through reasoned argument contrasted starkly with the tactics of the Land League. In this way, the period witnessed a flourishing of civic engagement among landowners with many petitions and pamphlets being produced in support of their case.

Re-constructing lobbying

Deputations were the most straightforward form of lobbying carried out in nineteenth century Ireland. Herbert Gladstone recounts how, on his tour of Ireland in 1882, he was approached in Cork by local groups who were mobilised by the chance arrival of an individual with an ear in the Irish Office and, perhaps more importantly, that of the Prime Minister. In a later era, the papers of Mathew Nathan record the scale of deputations coming in and out of Dublin Castle in the latter years of British Administration in Ireland.⁸ However, in pamphlets, there is evidence of more refined engagement with the Castle administration.

Before progressing it is also important to provide a clear definition of a pamphlet. R.D. Collison Black, in introducing his Irish catalogue of pamphlets on economic subjects, offers the somewhat rigid ‘librarian’s definition of a pamphlet’ as ‘a printed work containing not more than one-hundred pages.’⁹ Clearly a pamphlet is something more than this, there is a style and formula to their production. In content they are almost universally argumentative or informative works and, in both political and academic pamphleteering, they tend written in the here-and-now with an eye to pressing contemporary issues. Like Black, the present author has not been constrained by the absolutism of the 100 page rule although it has been found that the vast majority of pamphlets in the 1880s conformed to the ‘librarian’s definition’.¹⁰

⁸ Matthew Nathan, ‘Memoranda of interviews, 3 vols, 1914-1916’ (Bodleian, Oxford, Nathan papers, MS Nathan 467-9).

⁹ Black, *Pamphlets*, p. vii.

¹⁰ In surveying all Dublin Castle’s pamphlets from the 1880s, it was found that only 8 out of 202 pamphlets exceeded the 100 page barrier. The longest of these (Free Trade in Land. Edited by his widow with preface by the Rt. Hon. John Bright M.P. and a review of recent changes in the land laws of England by the Rt. Hon. G. Osborne Morgan Q.C., M.P. [eight edition], London, 1885) stretches to 180 pages.

‘With the author’s compliments’: pamphlets as a form of direct engagement

One indicator that pamphlets were used as a form of civic-engagement or lobby in this period is the fact that a number of pamphlets on the Dublin Castle collection have been found to contain manuscript notes indicating that they were sent by their authors to members of the British administration in Ireland. In total, twenty such pamphlets exist across the 202 surviving pamphlets from the 1880s. More often than not, this is simply designated by the form ‘with the author's compliments’ but, in certain cases, the intended recipient was also identified. Interestingly, four of these twenty pamphlets were sent specifically to Peter O’Brien, Q.C. between 1886 and 1887, when he was second serjeant-at-law. In 1887, O’Brien was appointed solicitor general. The pamphlets in question were: *Home Rule and Land Purchase. Their probable effect on crime; In the year one (A.D. 1888) of Home Rule de jure. A drive in the west of Ireland. Is it possible? Is it probable?; The Duty of Irish Landlords at this Imperial Crisis April 1886; and 1848 and 1887. The continuity of the Irish Revolutionary Movement.*¹¹ One of the most prominent Catholics in the Irish Victorian legal profession, O’Brien was noted for his uncompromising anti-agitation stance. Therefore, it is unclear whether these pamphlets had any effect on O’Brien or whether this was merely a case of preaching to the converted. However, in O’Brien’s *Dictionary of Irish Biography* entry, Patrick Maume, points out that, regarding the Special Commission on Crime established in 1888 to investigate the alleged links between Parnellism and crime reported in *The Times* the previous year, O’Brien would eventually look upon this failed inquiry as a positive development owing to the fact that it had done much good in publicising the links between agrarian crime and the home rule party.¹²

Three out of four of these pamphlets sent to Peter O’Brien were written anonymously. Interestingly, from an examination of the handwriting on the three anonymous dedications, it is possible to say that these more than likely came from the same source as the handwriting appears to be the same in all three cases (quite apart from any palaeographical analysis, the formula of words and the positioning of the dedication on the page is identical). Thus, it is

¹¹ The first three of these works were published anonymously and printed in both Dublin and London in 1886. The fourth pamphlet is H. Brougham Leech [LL.D. Professor of Jurisprudence and International Law in the University of Dublin], *1848 and 1887. The continuity of the Irish Revolutionary Movement.* (Dublin and London, 1887).

¹² Patrick Maume, ‘O’Brien, Peter’ in James McGuire and James Quinn (ed), *Dictionary of Irish Biography.* (Cambridge, 2009) (<http://dib.cambridge.org.eproxy.ucd.ie/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a6492>) (21 Nov. 2012).

possible to state that the same anonymous author penned all three of these pamphlets and thus engaged in a concerted effort to bring his or her views to the attention of Peter O'Brien.¹³ Regardless of the efficacy of such attempts to persuade prominent figures in the Irish administration, from this example, it is clear that the authors of various pamphlets in this period did forward copies of the work to members of the Irish administration who hoped that they would have some bearing on the conduct of officials.

The Irish Land Committee: a case study in Victorian lobbying

It is difficult to determine which aspects of the Dublin Castle and Irish Office collection now held by the Oireachtas Library are in fact unique. However, what is clear is that the Dublin Castle pamphlet collection has an exclusive importance in that it can tell the historian what titles the Irish civil service did, and did not, collect. The Oireachtas holds the only surviving full series of the pamphlets of the Irish Land Committee.¹⁴ This organisation was founded in 1879 with the object of supplying information to the Richmond commission¹⁵ and it published a series of fifteen titles between 1880 and 1882.¹⁶ Although R.D. Collison Black listed the full set of fifteen in his catalogue of pamphlets on economic subjects in 1969, historians appear to have remained unaware of the full scale of the committee's publications up to at least 1979 owing firstly to the incomplete nature of holdings in various repositories, but also to the fact that one historian, Norman Palmer, appears to only have had access to the eleven pamphlets (plus *Confiscation or Contract*) which were published in both Dublin and London. This in itself serves to illustrate a point which will be made in greater detail subsequently, that although some residual pamphlets were issued by the land committee after April 1881, with the introduction of Gladstone's second Land Bill in that month, the *raison*

¹³ Pamphlets as listed above. These three works were produced in a very short timeframe, from March to 4 May 1886. The second of these three works, *The Duty of Irish Landlords at this Imperial Crisis April 1886* notes that it was 'concluded on the morning of the 8th of April 1886', that evening, Gladstone introduced his first Home Rule Bill. See W.E. Gladstone, 'Motion for leave [first night]', *Hansard 3 (Commons)*, ccciv, col. 1036 *et seq.*

¹⁴ In total, six other repositories hold partial runs of this series. The most complete is that of the National Library, which holds all issues except for number II (The Anarchy in Ireland, Dublin and London, 1880). Trinity College and the Royal Dublin Society are missing three separate volumes from their respective collections. University College Dublin, University College Cork, and Queen's University Belfast all have individual holdings of eight or less of the full set of fifteen. For full listings of holdings, see Black, *Pamphlets*, pp 482, 486, and 489.

¹⁵ The Royal Commission on Agriculture. The final report of the commission was submitted in 1882. *Report from her Majesty's commissioners on agriculture* [c. 3309], H.C. 1882, xiv, 1-667.

¹⁶ For an account of the committee's founding motives, see *Irish Times*, 6 Dec. 1879 and 8 Dec. 1880.

d'être of the committee as a lobby group reseeded and ultimately dissolved.¹⁷ Again comparing the Irish Land Committee to a modern lobby group, it was a single issue movement and when this issue was addressed with legislation – in this instance to the dissatisfaction of the committee – the committee ceased to hold purpose.

Historiographically, the pamphlets produced by the Irish Land Committee – a landlords' representative body which existed from 1879 to 1882¹⁸ – have been considered for their content rather than the motivations behind their production.¹⁹ Having produced fifteen pamphlets between 1880 and 1882, the Irish Land Committee represent the most concerted and cohesive formal body for expressing the views of the landlord class – or more correctly a section thereof – in the decade of the 1880s. Samuel Clark explains that the Irish Land Committee, 'a propaganda organization', was 'the only noteworthy landlord combination to appear in the first year-and-a-half of the agitation'.²⁰ Landlords subsequently established two other bodies; the Ulster-based Orange Emergency Committee and the Property Defence Association.²¹ Unlike the Irish Land Committee, these later organisations were designed to provide practical responses to the land war, in particular it provided personnel who could counteract the effects of boycott; take in harvests; occupy holdings for which no tenant could be found; and offering protection to labourers who remained with their employers.²² Meanwhile, the role of the Irish Land Committee was akin to that of a modern lobby group. Its work revolved around meetings, the organisation of petitions, and – most importantly – the production of pamphlets.

In their content, these pamphlets focus heavily on factual analysis. Such an approach can be judged to have been designed to confer authority to the contents of the pamphlets. The empiricism of the Irish Land Committee's approach the land question was an important factor

¹⁷ Black, *Pamphlets*, pp 482, 486, and 489. Citing Norman Palmer, Samuel Clark mistakenly believed that only eleven pamphlets had been produced. Clark, *Social origins*, p. 307.

¹⁸ A landlord lobby group which published a series of fifteen pamphlets from 1880-1882.

¹⁹ See Barbara Lewis Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903* (Harvard, 1971), pp 72-8; Norman D. Palmer, 'Irish Absenteeism in the Eighteen-Seventies' in *Journal of Modern History*, xii, no. 3 (Sep. 1940), p. 362; Cormac Ó Grada, 'The Investment Behaviour of Irish Landlords, 1850-75: some preliminary findings', *Agricultural History Review*, xxiii, no. 2 (1975), pp 151-3.

²⁰ Clark, *Social Origins*, p. 307.

²¹ Both associations were founded in December 1880. Palmer, *Land League Crisis*, p. 225.

²² Clark, *Social Origins*, p. 307.

in landlords' retention of the moral high ground at a time when threats, moonlighting and agrarian outrages were approaching the peak of their intensity during the Land War.²³

In parliament, the Parnellites pursued the tactic of highlighting individual case studies as their preferred method of exposing the most flagrant abuses of landlordism in Ireland. Whereas this approach was intended to elicit the sympathies of parliamentary Liberals, the landlord approach, in an era of Liberal administration in Ireland, was to present persons in positions of power on both sides of the Irish Sea with either ammunition, in the case of supporters, or hard evidence in the case of opponents²⁴ – depending on their political persuasion – to show the flaws and failures of government policy, not only regarding the financial treatment of landlords, but also in the maintenance of law and order in Ireland.

The first in the Irish Land Committee's series of pamphlets appeared in November 1880, simply titled *The Land Question, Ireland Confiscation or Contract?* This work was less factual and more polemic than the later publications of the committee. From the copy in the Chief Secretary's Library, one finds that in excess of 6,000 copies of this work had already been produced by November 1880, showing that there was a significant appetite for such material in both Ireland and Britain.²⁵ No authorship was attributed to *Confiscation or Contract* save the identification of the committee behind its publication.²⁶

²³On the level of outrages from 1878-2, see L. Perry Curtis Jr., *The depiction of eviction in Ireland, 1845-1910* (Dublin, 2011), p. 91. With specific reference to moonlighting, Margaret O'Callaghan has urged caution over overstatement, stressing that moonlighting 'as a widespread phenomenon was not evident until after ... 1882'. Margaret O'Callaghan, *British high politics and a nationalist Ireland: criminality, land and the law under Forster and Balfour* (Cork, 1994), p. 82.

²⁴ In 1940, Norman Palmer argued that, having been distributed 'widely throughout Ireland at nominal cost' the primary intent of the Irish Land Committee's pamphlet campaign was to provide Irish landlords and their sympathisers with information for 'verbal defence and counter-attack.' What this ignores is the expansion of the movement and its publications into London in 1881. In conjunction with the petition campaigns of the committee [discussed subsequently] this indicates that lobbying rather than support for landlords was the committee's central objective. Norman D. Palmer, *The Irish Land League Crisis* (New Haven, 1940), p. 221.

²⁵ Attesting to the centrality of the Irish question in British politics, the pamphlet was published in both London and Dublin, as were all of the land committee's publications up to no. XI, which was produced in April 1881. Pamphlet XI coincided with the introduction of Gladstone's second Land Act into the Commons. When the next issue appeared in June 1881, it was only printed in Dublin. More comment will be made subsequently on the contraction on the movement from the summer of 1881 into the spring of 1882. On the scale of distribution, see Palmer, *Land League Crisis*, p. 221.

²⁶ It was, however, widely known at the time that the Pamphlet had been written by T.E. Webb. The subjects of authorship and anonymity will be discussed in greater detail subsequently.

Membership and objectives

Founded in 1879, the Irish Land Committee should be viewed in the context of a wider landlords' response to the land war and the foundation of the Land League.²⁷ Throughout its relatively brief existence, the Irish Land Committee had its headquarters at 31 South Frederick Street and later at the nearby 32 Molesworth Street, Dublin. By 1881, *Thom's Directory* records that the Irish Land Committee had a formal presence at the property on South Frederick Street with a Mr Walt. Gyles, Esq. listed as the committee's secretary.²⁸ One other premises which had a particular importance to the Irish Land Committee was at number 35 Molesworth Street, where the Leinster Lecture Hall was used to host a major committee gathering on at least one occasion.²⁹ Presiding at this and the majority of Irish Land Committee meetings for which reports survive was the Marquess of Waterford, who appears to have been one of the driving forces behind the committee.³⁰ Other key figures included the Marquess of Drogheda and the Marquis of Headfort, who both chaired meetings of the committee on various occasions.³¹

The Marquess of Waterford, John Henry de la Poer Beresford, head of the Irish Beresford family, was a major landowner, personally owning 109,179 acres in Ireland. An article from the *Irish Builder* in 1878 gives an extremely comprehensive overview of the family's holdings on both islands. Including the Marquess's 109,179 acres, eight members of the Beresfords owned 175,536 acres between them, with the vast majority of this in Ireland (157,091 acres) alongside holdings in Northumberland, Westmoreland, Hampshire, and Argyll.³² Given that the Irish Land Committee was so preoccupied from 1879 onwards with challenging the image of landlords as 'grasping tyrants and exterminators',³³ this article in the *Irish Builder* is a good example of popular sentiment against landlordism at the time.

²⁷ This was explicitly stated in the *Morning Post* in November 1880 where the committee was described as 'a body of noblemen and gentlemen ... exerting themselves to counteract ... the designs of the Land League: reprinted in *Irish Times*, 29 Nov. 1880.

²⁸ Only two references to the Irish Land Committee appear in *Thom's*, 31 Frederick Street South in 1881 and 32 Molesworth Street in 1882. Walter Gyles is listed as the committee's secretary on both occasions.

²⁹ *Irish Times*, 2 Sept. 1881.

³⁰ The Marquess of Waterford, one of the leading figures within the Irish Land Committee, held estates of over 109,000 acres in Ireland in 1878 (see above). A good map of major land holders can be found in Paul Bew, *Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-82* (Dublin, 1978), p. 13. For a list of prominent attendees of an Irish Land Committee meeting, see *Irish Times*, 5 Nov. 1880.

³¹ For meetings chaired by these two individuals see *Irish Times*, 5 Nov. 1880 and 9 Jan. 1880 respectively.

³² *Irish Builder*, xx, no. 447, p. 226, August 1, 1878.

³³ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. XIII: More facts and figures. Evictions* (Dublin and London, 1881), pp 19-20.

Following a detailed survey of the location and extent of the Beresford property portfolio, the *Irish Builder* entered into an examination of how the Beresfords, who ‘three hundred years ago ... did not own in Ireland a single foot of land’,³⁴ had come to purchase such vast holdings. The author was keen to stress that much of the Beresford wealth had been accumulated through appointments in the Church of Ireland and the military. Regarding ecclesiastical revenues, the *Irish Builder* claimed that, in thirty-four years as ministers and dignitaries of the Church of Ireland, eight Beresfords had received £916,454 between them. Previous to this, the former Lord Decies, William Beresford,³⁵ had received a further £200,000 from one of his archbishoprics.³⁶ In this manner, the *Irish Builder* railed against the ‘tax-eating Beresfords’. As a publication not formally linked to the emergent tenant rights movement, this article in the *Irish Builder* illustrates the broader disaffection for large landowners felt in Ireland at this point, before the outbreak of the land war. Similarly, in a speech lampooning the early publications of the Irish Land Committee, Edward Litton – recently elected Liberal M.P. for Tyrone and future land commissioner³⁷ – ridiculed the first of the Irish Land Committee’s publications as a ‘long continued whine addressed to English public opinion, expressing that the Irish landlords are all very goodfellows [sic] ... and that the tenants are an unreasonable lot ... who have no merits.’³⁸

The Irish Land Committee was clearly fighting an uphill battle. Whereas in Ireland, large landlords did not readily find sympathetic audiences, in Britain there was scope to find support. However, here the argument is that a primary goal of the Irish Land Committee was to redress the position of the landlord among members of the government rather than simply preaching to the converted in either Ireland or Britain.

Outlining the objects of the association in the columns of the *Irish Times* on 6 December 1880 – almost a year after its establishment – an Irish Land Committee statement explained that the committee was pledged to ‘the maintenance of the rights of property, and the creation

³⁴ *Irish Builder*, xx, no. 447, p. 226, August 1, 1878.

³⁵ William Beresford (1743–1819), 1st Baron Decies, Church of Ireland archbishop of Tuam. Martin McElroy, ‘Beresford, William 1st Baron Decies’ in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009) (<http://dib.cambridge.org.eproxy.ucd.ie/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a0605>) (19 Nov. 2012).

³⁶ As stated by the *Irish Builder*.

³⁷ See Brian Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland 1801–1922* (Dublin, 1978), p. 317.

³⁸ *Irish Times*, 27 Nov. 1880.

of a sound public opinion upon the Irish Land Question.³⁹ Illustrating the tactics and outlook of such a lobby in this period, the committee proposed to achieve its goals

By means of its publications, and through the medium of the press;

By collecting reliable information and supplying it to members of both Houses of Parliament;

By sending deputations to attend public meetings throughout the United Kingdom.⁴⁰

The idea that data collection was central to the objectives of the Irish Land Committee is particularly interesting. In many ways, such an organisation could be compared to a modern think-tank or policy institute in this sense. In contrast to agrarian agitation at grassroots level, the claim of the landlord lobby was that their information would be impartial, empirical, and – in the eyes of the committee – incontrovertible.⁴¹ Taking *Confiscation or Contract?* as a stand-alone title, the remainder of the Irish Land Committee's publications were numbered and appeared as a series between 1880 and 1882. Conforming to the objects of the association just quotes, issue number one of this series was avowedly empiricist. *The Land Question, Ireland. No. 1. Notes ... Griffith's valuation* provides a strong case against Griffith's valuation⁴² as a measure for fixing rents.⁴³ As the pamphlet points out, various counties in the south and west of the country were issued valuations between 1853 and 1855. The anonymous author argues that 'the country had not yet recovered [from] the effect of the famine when agriculture was greatly neglected, and when the poor's rate was, in many unions, very much higher than at present.'⁴⁴ An assertion that historians have subsequently corroborated.⁴⁵

One striking feature of the Irish Land Committee's 'Land Question in Ireland' series is the fluctuation between empiricism and polemic within the titles and subject matter. Whereas issue number I – notes upon Griffith's valuation – was committed to a presentation of facts with a less overtly propagandist overtone, issue number II – 'The anarchy in Ireland' struck a

³⁹ *Irish Times*, 6 Dec. 1880.

⁴⁰ *Irish Times*, 6 Dec. 1880.

⁴¹ Even among historians, there had been a tendency to treat the findings of the committee as fact. For instance, see William Vaughan's concerns about Barbara Solow's unquestioning use of Irish Land Committee statistics, W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), p. 250[n].

⁴² For a good synopsis of Griffith's valuation, conducted by Sir Richard Griffith in the 1850s and 1860s, see Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants*, pp 251-5 [appendix 10].

⁴³ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. 1. Notes upon the Government valuation of the land in Ireland commonly known as "Griffith's valuation.* [sic] (2nd ed., Dublin and London, 1880).

⁴⁴ Irish Land Committee, *No. 1. Notes upon ... Griffith's valuation*, p. 36.

⁴⁵ In particular, see Solow, *Land Question*, p. 67 and Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants*, pp 251-5 [appendix 10].

more alarmist tone. This escalation of the Irish Land Committee's campaign was justified by the assertion that 'it has become absolutely idle to canvas new statutes until old laws are enforced', reiterating the claim of the *Daily Telegraph* that the state of Ireland had become 'monstrous', 'disgraceful', and 'anarchical'.⁴⁶ Still committed to the presentation of evidence, 'Anarchy in Ireland' reproduced numerous judicial pronouncements and charges,⁴⁷ seemingly in an effort to bring to the attention of press and public in Britain the true extent of turmoil as it existed in Ireland since 1879. In this way, the Irish Land Committee portrayed itself to its readers as the victim. In 'Anarchy in Ireland', with its more emotive tone and title, there is a fair case for claiming that the object was to appeal to hearts and minds. However, when the full series of pamphlets is considered, the informational, and therefore lobby-minded nature, of the Irish Land Committee's efforts becomes clear. For instance, to return to the committee's work on Griffith's valuation, Norman Palmer is keen to stress that the committee went as far as to collect and synthesise the replies of 1,826 large landowners to a questionnaire.⁴⁸ Such a large scale effort would not have been undertaken simply to establish the veracity of the landlord case in the minds of sympathetic supporters. Instead, it is clear that these figures were aimed at the government at a time when the Bessborough commission⁴⁹ was giving official support to Land League's demand of the 3 F's.⁵⁰

Other lobbying of the Irish Land Committee

Apart from its publications, very little trace is left of the Irish Land Committee. However, its public activities in the 1880s do show that the committee was active in various different aspects of lobbying on the land question during its existence. In the summer of 1880, for example, one of the campaigns undertaken by the committee was to gather together signatures for a petition against the Compensation for Disturbance (Ireland) Bill.⁵¹ The traces of this campaign that can be reconstructed from contemporary reports and advertisements in the *Irish Times* give a good impression of how this campaign was conducted. The list of

⁴⁶ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. II. The Anarchy in Ireland* (Dublin 1880), p. 3.

⁴⁷ Notably those of Judges Fitzgerald and Baron. See Palmer, *Land League Crisis*, p. 220.

⁴⁸ Palmer, *Land League Crisis*, p. 220.

⁴⁹ A Liberal commission appointed to inquire into the tenurial situation in Ireland. The commission reported on 4 Jan. 1881 and had a direct bearing on the content of Gladstone's second land bill when it was introduced in April of that year. See O'Callaghan, *British High Politics*, pp 2, 73.

⁵⁰ The Land League at this point was keen not to allow the report and the ensuing land bill to diminish the 'momentum of dissatisfaction with landlordism. O'Callaghan, *British High Politics*, p. 73.

⁵¹ *Irish Times*, 30 July 1880, earlier notices concerning this petition can be found in the *Irish Times* for 13 and 14 July 1880. Towards the end of its existence, the Irish Land Committee organised a petition to Queen Victoria: *Irish Times*, 31 Jan. 1882.

premises where the petition could be signed gives an impression of the geographical confines of the work of the committee, centring on its offices on South Frederick Street in Dublin. Apart from at the offices of the committee, interested parties could sign copies of the petition at Boyle, Low, Murray, and Co's Bankers (35 College Green); Hodges, Foster, and Figgis (104 Grafton Street, bookseller and printers); William McGee (18 Nassau Street, bookseller and printers); and G. Herbert (117 Grafton Street, bookseller and printers). Given that these establishments were all within a short walk of each other in the south-city centre of Dublin, one must consider that the placing of the petition for signature at these locations was as much an expression of the proprietors' political leanings and affiliations as it was a means of facilitating the collection of signatures. The other great advocate of the Irish Land Committee was the *Irish Times*, which not only carried the normal paid advertisements of the committee, but also reported favourably and extensively on its meetings at a time when the *Freeman's Journal* was growing increasingly close in its sympathies to the Land League.⁵² Whereas the Land Committee may have found sympathy and supporters in the centre of Dublin, despite its proactivity in promoting its cause, the committee's efforts in other parts of the country did not bear so much fruit. In July, the committee circulated its petition to county councils around the country. The *Irish Times* records that Cork Corporation resolved to take no action when the petition was put before it, indicating the dominance of Land League sentiments at grassroots in Cork if not more generally.⁵³

Authors and authorship of the Irish Land Committee pamphlets

Returning to the printed output of the Irish Land Committee, one important aspect of the committee's publications was that the pamphlets did not publicise the identity of their authors and any editorial comment contained within the Irish Land Committee pamphlets was entered anonymously. The words of several authors, sympathetic, opposed, and unaligned with the Irish Land Committee were invoked across the range of the committee's pamphlet series. This began with pamphlet number four, 'French Opinion on the Irish Crisis', reproducing the views of Gustave de Molinari, a noted Belgian laissez-faire economist who had recently

⁵² On the sympathies of the *Irish Times*, one particularly important piece is an editorial of 25 June 1880. On the sympathies of the *Freeman's Journal*, see *Freeman's Journal*, 15 Dec. 1880, where the Irish Land Committee is described as being 'composed largely of gentlemen whose severity to the tenants in olden times is only equally by their abject and unreasonable panic today.', p. 8.

⁵³ *Irish Times*, 10 July 1880.

engaged with the Irish land question in the French press.⁵⁴ Molinari's contextualisation of the Irish case with examples and statistics from Belgium and France was used to good effect by the Irish Land Committee and one finds in this pamphlet an argument in favour of emigration as the solution to the distressed and depressed condition of Irish agriculture.⁵⁵ Support for emigration as a safety valve on the Irish economy became a running theme both in Irish Land Committee pamphlets and in the writings of landlord advocates more generally at this time.⁵⁶ Returning to Molinari, emigration was consistent with prevailing liberal economic ideas and the author contrasted the emigration option directly with the doctrines of 'the Political Doctors, Socialists, ... whom the Irish people have chosen to consult'. Thus casting the Irish problem in the context of European political debate, Molinari concludes with a plea for the laissez-faire solution favoured by Irish landlords, arguing that 'Ireland ... suffers not only from her Disorders, but also from her Doctors.'⁵⁷

This theme of allowing emigration and evictions – where the extent of the latter was argued to be grossly exaggerated⁵⁸ – to run their course in re-establishing balance to the beleaguered Irish economy of the early 1880s thus links the political sentiments of Irish landlords into the broader currents of European liberalism at this point. Eclipsed by the firm ties between Conservatism and the Irish landowning class, it should not be forgotten that, in this relatively early phase in the Irish land question, opposition to Gladstonism did not necessarily imply anti-Liberalism and the political dichotomy here was between the perceived socialistic or even anarchistic tendencies of the Land League and the free-market ideals of Irish landlords.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Specifically the *Journal des Débats*, Aug. – Sept. 1880. See Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. IV: French Opinion on the Irish Crisis* (Dublin and London, [1880]), p. 4.

⁵⁵ On French and Belgian examples, see *French Opinion on the Irish Crisis* pp 4 and 20. On emigration, see pp 24-5.

⁵⁶ For examples see Irish Land Committee pamphlets numbers V (p. 4) and VI (p. 23). Notable pamphlets advocating emigration and contained within the Dublin Castle pamphlet collection include W.M. Torrens, *Imperial and Colonial partnership in emigration. A paper read before the Royal Colonial Institute with the discussion, March 22nd, 1881 (The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Dunraven, K.P. (Vice-President) in the Chair* (London, 1881) and *Emigration from Ireland being the second report of the committee "Mr Tuke's Fund". Together with statements by Mr Tuke, Mr Sydney Buxton, Major Gaskell, and Captain Rutledge-Fair* (London, 1883).

⁵⁷ Irish Land Committee, *No. IV. French Opinion*, p. 25.

⁵⁸ This recurring theme is most comprehensively argued in Irish Land Committee, *No. XIII ... Evictions*. In relation to the period prior to the land war, this claim, with significant caveats, has been substantiated in Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in Ireland, 1848-1904* (Dublin, 1984), p. 38.

⁵⁹ The application of broader economic trends to the Irish land question has most famously been championed by Samuel Clark who casts the Land War as a battle between creditors (landlords and the petit-bourgeois) trying to recoup debts from those who worked the land. Clark, *Social Origins*. For a good summary of scholarship on the

Following on from Molinari, numerous influential opinions were harnessed by the Irish Land Committee. In 1880, Lord Dufferin,⁶⁰ then ambassador to St Petersburg and an opponent of Gladstone on Irish affairs, submitted a report to the Irish Land Commission. The Irish Land Committee determined that Lord Dufferin's report, having been laid before the commission and having been extensively reproduced in *The Times* was, 'in a sense ... public property.'⁶¹ The committee thus used Dufferin's report without seeking his permission. This in itself was neither surprising nor unusual in the wider context of the time. However, this move was recreated with much greater spectacle in the subsequent issue, when Gladstone's words from 1870 were dug up to haunt him, exposing the Prime Minister as one who had initially opposed in introduction of the 'three F's'⁶² during the passage of his first land act in 1870.⁶³ As a means of lobbying this tactic can be judged to have been highly effective, not only because it exposed the initial proximity of government and landlord positions before the Land War, but also because the evidence shows that these pamphlets were commercially popular and well received by the reading public, with both issues selling in excess of three and four thousand respectively.⁶⁴

As stated previously, editorial comment accompanying the above-mentioned authors was provided anonymously. However, in the four Irish Land Committee pamphlets issued between January and April 1881, just as Gladstone's highly contentious second land act was being prepared for introduction to the House of Commons, forewords to the Irish Land Committee pamphlets began to identify their author by the initial 'W.' From contemporary press reports, we can ascertain with confidence that the author in question was Dr Thomas E. Webb, Regius Professor of Civil Law at Trinity College Dublin.⁶⁵ Webb's central role in the

outbreak of the Land War, see W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in Ireland 1848-1904* (Dublin, 1984), pp 30-2.

⁶⁰ On the Earl of Dufferin, see Margaret O'Callaghan, *British high politics and a nationalist Ireland: criminality, land and the law under Forster and Balfour* (Cork, 1994), p. 159[n. 13].

⁶¹ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. VI: Lord Dufferin on the Three F's* (Dublin and London, 1881), p. iii.

⁶² Fair rent, fixity of tenure, and freedom of sale.

⁶³ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. VII. Mr Gladstone and the three F's* (Dublin and London, 1881).

⁶⁴ Irish Land Committee pamphlets numbers VI and VII (Dublin Castle volumes are in their third and fourth thousand respectively).

⁶⁵ Webb's authorship of these pamphlets appears to have been common knowledge as early as November 1880: *Irish Times*, 27 Nov. 1880 ('The land agitation: tenant right in Tyrone', p. 6). For a short biography of Webb,

work of the Irish Land Committee was acknowledged in September 1881. For his ‘admirable writings ... on the land question’, Webb was presented with a testimonial of a silver salver and other items of plate by the Marquess of Waterford.⁶⁶ Given that the Irish Land Committee pamphlets continued to be produced up to February 1882 and that editorial content bearing Webb’s initial does not appear after April 1881, it is unclear if Webb continued to write for the committee after the introduction of Gladstone’s second land bill in April. The final pamphlet bearing Webb’s initial concludes with a vehement denunciation of Gladstone, whose land bill is seen as not having originated from the Grand Old Man, but having its roots in ‘the unadorned eloquence of Mr. Parnell ... and the indefatigable energy of Mr. [John] Dillon ... and the pure motives of the Land League.’⁶⁷ By conceding to the Land League, Webb accuses the government of having transformed Ireland into a field of blood,⁶⁸ attesting to the charged sentiments that accompanied the introduction of the 1881 land bill.

This, Webb’s most impassioned contribution to the Irish Land Committee pamphlet series, and the altered reality brought about by Gladstone’s second Land Act (1881), was mirrored by an expansion of the Irish Land Committee’s organisation and infrastructure. April 1881 saw the committee’s establishment of a London office at 26 Great George Street, Westminster.⁶⁹ Thus, 1881 can be seen as the peak of the Irish Land Committee’s activity. Two pamphlets were issued in April. The second of these (number XI), having been prepared some time in advance, sounded a rather hollow note as the introduction of Gladstone’s bill had rendered its contents stale upon publication.⁷⁰ Two more pamphlets in the series emerged in June and July. However, by this point, although both the London and Dublin offices of the committee were still in existence, the pamphlet was only printed in Dublin, a decision that was repeated in the final two instalments. Despite this contraction, the land committee persevered in its work, although the extent to which this can be construed as lobbying given

see Kate Newmann, ‘Thomas Ebenezer Webb (1821 - 1903)’, *Dictionary of Ulster Biography* (2012) (<http://www.newulsterbiography.co.uk/index.php/home/printPerson/1691>) (19 Nov. 2012).

⁶⁶ *Irish Times*, 2 Sept. 1881. Webb is also explicitly identified as the author of pamphlet number X in *Irish Times*, 25 Apr. 1881.

⁶⁷ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. X: Mr. Gladstone’s Bill* (Dublin and London, 1881), p. 37.

⁶⁸ The author refers to Ireland being converted into an Acelanda. Irish Land Committee, *No. X: Mr. Gladstone’s Bill*, p. 37.

⁶⁹ First mention of the London office is on the cover of Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. X*.

⁷⁰ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. XI: Foregone Conclusions: the Bessborough Commission* (Dublin and London, 1881).

its Dublin publication and the fact that Galdstone's bill had now been introduced, rendering any further lobbying of the government futile.

Issue XII undertook important work from the landlord perspective: deconstructing the arguments made in the minority report of the Richmond Commission. The Richmond Commission had been a Tory initiative, set up in 1879 to inquire into the agricultural crisis.⁷¹ However, was inherited by, and reported to, a Liberal administration. Upon his return to the Prime Ministry, Gladstone installed Lord Carlingford (Chichester Samuel Fortescue, former Liberal Chief Secretary of Ireland⁷²) and Sir James Stansfeld⁷³ to the commission in 1880 and, dissenting from the main Conservative body on the commission, a cohort led by Lord Carlingford submitted a minority report in January 1880 to the satisfaction of the sitting Liberal government.

In assessing the strength of the Irish Land Committee as a lobby, this pamphlet can be judged as weak in comparison to previous instalments. The tract is largely opinionated and does not rely on evidence to the same extent as previous efforts. One of the key points made by the author is that the blame for the lack of industrialisation in Ireland, which up to that point was attributed to the idleness of those that worked the land had, in fact, been masked by the image of the peasant proprietor as perpetually energetic, skilful, industrious, and intelligent.⁷⁴ Following on from this, the pamphlet makes yet another systematic attack on the 3 F's, arguing that the defence of these principles by Lord Carlingford in his minority report disregarded facts and evidence.

The penultimate issue of the Irish Land Committee pamphlet series - *No. XIII: More facts and figures. Evictions*⁷⁵ – reverted to form, giving an authoritative survey of evictions and establishing a highly credible case that the scale and nature of evictions in Ireland was being

⁷¹ Callaghan, *British High Politics*, p. 2.

⁷² Chief Secretary from 1868-71. See H. C. G. Matthew, 'Fortescue, Chichester Samuel Parkinson-, Baron Carlingford and second Baron Clermont (1823–1898)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004; online ed., Jan 2008) (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9938>) (20 Nov. 2012).

⁷³ Liberal M.P. for Halifax, April 28, 1859 - July 13, 1895. See Alan Ruston, 'Stansfeld, Sir James (1820–1898)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004; online ed., May 2006) (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26288>) (20 Nov 2012).

⁷⁴ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. XII The Richmond Commission Notes on Lord Carlingford's Report* (Dublin and London, 1881), pp 4-10. For a challenge to the image of the idealised peasant proprietor, see p. 6.

⁷⁵ Irish Land Committee, *No. XIII ... Evictions*.

distorted by Liberals and Home Rulers. Using the statistics of *Thom's Almanac*, the Irish Land Committee was keen to stress that the level of evictions among tenant farmers in Ireland for the year 1880 was as low as 1 in 147, emphasising the leniency of landlords.⁷⁶ However, the particular importance of this work is not in its statistical content. Instead, there is a much more revealing subtext to *Evictions*.

Social revolution: the mentality of Irish landlords

In analysing the mentality and psychology of Irish landlords in this period, the concluding pages of this particular piece are particularly revealing in this respect. Here, the landlord is not fighting over the level of rent or arrears. Instead, we find the author fighting back against the vilification of landlords as a social class by the general public. The plea is for balance in an era where not only economic factors, but also the emergence of modern democracy and mass politics – which would reach a crest in 1884 with the Representation of the People Act⁷⁷ – was beginning to erode the strictures of a society which had insulated élites from majorities up to that point. The landlord case had merit; and historians have subsequently established that, taking Irish landlords as a group rather than focussing on some of the more notorious cases, they were more lenient and less ruthless than contemporary Land Leaguers in politics and the press would make them out to be. This pamphlet (number XIII) sums up well this sense of collective defamation felt among moderate landlords during the early ascendancy of Parnellism when the tenant rights movement seemed unstoppable. In concluding, the pamphlet's anonymous author issued an appeal against the perception that Ireland was a country plagued by eviction, stating that:

The picture presented in the foregoing pages is very different from that drawn by the Agitators, with which we are very familiar. These men know ... that they are speaking of a state of things that no more exists in Ireland than in Kent or Surrey; but they also know that assertions, no matter how reckless or false, if only made with sufficient boldness and repeated with sufficient frequency, will receive credit from the multitude, who know nothing of the facts, and have neither the opportunity nor the inclination to investigate them ... It is thus the character of Irish Landlords is vilified ... [as] the grasping tyrants and exterminators the Land League represents them to be.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Irish Land Committee, *No. XIII ... Evictions*, p. 6.

⁷⁷ 48 & 49 Vict. c. 3.

⁷⁸ Irish Land Committee, *No. XIII ... Evictions*, pp 19-20.

It is telling that this appeal comes from one of the very last pamphlets in the Irish Land Committee series. Published in July 1881, *Evictions* indicates that the landlords were at that point losing the propaganda war. As a lobby, the committee had appealed to reason and attempted to influence those in the highest echelons of politics and administration. However, within a month of this pamphlet's release, a far more influential publication emerged, edited by William O'Brien: one of the most talented journalists within the nationalist movement. *United Ireland*, a weekly, became a prized weapon in the Land League arsenal. Furthermore, the launch of *United Ireland* was timed to perfection. Gladstone's second land act⁷⁹ was placed on the Statute Book only nine days after the launch of *United Ireland*.⁸⁰ The enshrining the principle of the 3 F's thus gave a legitimacy to the claims of the Land League and indicated a desire for conciliation in government circles. The League's subsequent exhortation to its followers to 'test the act' was a mechanism by which the momentum built up through land agitation was not lost when a legal settlement was proposed.⁸¹ Furthermore, the arrest of Land League leaders and the issuing of the 'no rent manifesto' in October 1881 ensured that, while government sympathies with the Land League reached an all-time low – the movement having been criminalised in late October – Irish landlords found no space for the genteel tactics of pamphlet writing in this increasingly polarised political crisis. Much as the Land League had advocating testing the act, it was to the workings of the act that the Irish Land Committee turned in its final pamphlet.

Before assessing the content of the final contribution of the Irish Land Committee, it is important to give brief comment on the physical contraction of the Irish Land Committee as it began to fade out of Irish political life. By February 1882, when its final pamphlet appeared, the Irish Land Committee had moved premises from 31 South Frederick Street around the corner to 32 Molesworth Street. It is unclear whether this was a step up or a scaling back for the committee; indeed the ground rent on the Molesworth Street property was higher, although what share of each rent the Irish Land Committee contributed is unknown.⁸² What is

⁷⁹ Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881 (44 & 45 Vict., c. 49).

⁸⁰ *United Ireland* first appeared on 22 Aug. 1881.

⁸¹ See Clark, *Social origins*, p. 284.

⁸² The rents on 31 South Frederick Street and 32 Molesworth Street were £37 and £85 pounds respectively. The Irish Land Committee's tenancy in Fredrick Street coincided exactly with that of its other tenant, a Mr James McConnell, illuminating artist. At Molesworth Street, the committee shared the premises with Macdona and Brown, merchant clothiers and habit makers, a Mr James Brown also lived on the premises and it is unclear if he had anything to do with the associated cloth business. See *Thom's Directory* (1881 and 1882), p. 1398 and 1438 respectively.

clear, however, is that the Irish Land Committee had given up its London offices as well as its London printers for the last issue in its series. Thus it would seem that there was a clear diminution in either the finances or the desire to keep the Irish Land Committee going in this period.

Just as the Land League had sought to ‘test the act’, the final pamphlet of the *Irish Land Question* series, appearing in February of 1882, addressed the working of the Land Law Act. In particular, the Irish Land Committee took issue with the nature of appointments of commissioners and sub-commissioners under the act. The role of these individuals was to adjudicate in fixing fair rents and, especially in the case of sub-commissioners operating at local level, the land committee took issue with the personnel appointed. Leaving the question of whether these individuals were sufficiently qualified to perform their tasks to parliament, the land committee considered the proximity between sub-commissioners and the communities over which they presided. The three examples highlighted in the pamphlet are revealing. There is the case of ‘a gentleman who, two or three months before, had been a practicing solicitor in a certain northern town, presiding in the same town as Commissioner under the Land Act, and his partner pleading before him as the advocate of the Tenants.’⁸³ Furthermore, the committee held deep reservations about situations where

The brother of a parish priest [was] acting as Commissioner in a town not many miles from his brother’s parish, and within less than ten miles of his own dwelling-house; or a publican engaged in carrying out, not far from his own shop, an Act of Parliament which entertains so high an opinion of his calling as to make it a condition of statutory tenure, that no public-house shall be opened on the farm.⁸⁴

What one is seeing in these pamphlets is thus the inevitable conflict between the old orthodoxy and an upwardly mobile class now in receipt of state appointments. While the assertion here is that the appointment of the provincial bourgeoisie to positions of power would inevitably lead to corruption, it is important to point out that the landlords in no way question their own roles within the community, where a landlord would frequently have acted as justice of the peace on his own estates. Here, one begins to see the changing nature of the Irish land question and widening of participation in the work of the state as part of a trend in Liberal legislative initiatives which would culminate in the Representation of the People Act in 1884.

⁸³ Irish Land Committee, *The Land Question, Ireland No. XIV: The Working of the Land Law Act* (Dublin, 1882), p. 6.

⁸⁴ Irish Land Committee, *No. XIV ... Land Law Act*, pp 6-7.

Despite this criticism of the blinkered nature of landlord discourse, several important points are raised in this last pamphlet which explain in greater detail the landlord mentality of marginalisation in the early 1880s. Something that is otherwise forgotten when discussing fair rent in this period is that, in a situation similar – albeit in the opposite direction – to upward only rent reviews in modern Ireland, when fixing fair rents, it is noted that only in a very few cases were rents adjusted upwards by the sub-commissioners of the 1880s. Furthermore, in the instances where this did occur, the Irish Land Committee claims that restraint was exercised by the sub-commissioners in not awarding higher increases where the Landlord expressed ‘his willingness to accept a small increase.’⁸⁵ This practice enraged the land committee, who questioned the justice of such a practice when it was never applied in the reverse, concluding that ‘they [the sub-commissioners] are not so solicitous to consult his [the landlord’s] feelings when they are reducing the rent.’⁸⁶ In such circumstances, one finds the landlord lobby, at the end of a series of fifteen pamphlets stretching over a two year period still appealing to parliament to redress the balance in Ireland in which economic factors and the advent of popular politics was eroding both the channels of influence and the traditional roles of the landed classes.

In contrasting the Irish Land Committee to the Land League as two diametrically opposed representative bodies, the tactics of the former can be judged to have failed whereas the tactics of the latter triumphed. In the late nineteenth century, regardless of the accuracy of its contents or the merit of the case, pamphlet writing and civic engagement of this type was on the wane and the potent combination of parliamentary discipline and grassroots mobilisation were beginning to take hold.⁸⁷ By the First World War, all British political parties would adopt the tactics of the Irish party; pressmen would cement their dominance over pamphleteers as the marshals of public opinion; and the tactic of genteel persuasion would be consigned to the past.

⁸⁵ Irish Land Committee, *No. XIV ... Land Law Act*, p. 48.

⁸⁶ Irish Land Committee, *No. XIV ... Land Law Act*, p. 48.

⁸⁷ In particular, see Eugenio Biagini, *British democracy and Irish nationalism 1876-1906* (Cambridge, 2007), especially ch. 4.

Lessons in lobbying and land: concluding on the Irish Land Committee

Over its brief history, with its rise and demise coinciding closely with the outbreak and cessation of the land war, the Irish Land Committee stood as the primary representative body for landlord interest. While the focus of landlord organisation would eventually shift towards practical action with the successes of the Property Defence Organisation and the Orange Emergency Committee,⁸⁸ the Irish Land Committee played an important early role in combating the Land League. By voicing Irish landed opinion among British high-political circles, the committee can be seen as a precursor to the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union.⁸⁹ Whereas, in 1885, the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union was established to resist Home Rule while the Irish Land Committee was specifically focussed on the land question, these two movements arguably echo the concerns of the same social cohort – Irish, or more specifically southern-Irish, Unionists – in an era when Ireland’s landlord class found itself struggling for its own survival; as Roy Foster explains, landlords realised that ‘the land system would no longer support them ... [and] strongly conscious that things had to change in order to remain the same’.⁹⁰ Having collected so many pamphlets on the land question, the Dublin Castle library offers one of the most illuminating *vignettes* into the mentality of landlordism in the crisis-laden decade of the 1880s.⁹¹

Lone voices: non-affiliated authors in defence of properly

In differentiating ‘lobbying’ from a more neutral form of civic engagement, it is important to examine some of the less glamorous titles in the Dublin Castle collection. Many pamphlets by unaffiliated individuals constituted the dissemination of information by experts in various fields. It would seem natural that the authors would be keen for Dublin Castle to be made aware of such scholarship and, from the Castle’s perspective, that such scholarship be collected as useful additions to the Castle library and important works of reference for the administration. Pamphlets such as Champagne L'Estrange’s *Notes on the Utilization of the Beech-Mast in Ireland* were evidently produced with civic engagement in mind.⁹² Such publications typify the use of the pamphlet as a forum for inventors, innovators, and aspiring

⁸⁸ Norman Palmer claims that, up to late 1881, these two defence committees were ‘more effective than the Government in combating the Land League.’ Palmer, *Land League Crisis*, p. 231.

⁸⁹ Founded 1 May 1885.

⁹⁰ R.F. Foster, ‘Parnell and His People: The Ascendancy and Home Rule’ in *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, vi, no. 1 (Literature, Language and Politics in Ireland) (Jun. 1980), pp 122-3.

⁹¹ The Phoenix park murders in May 1882 stand out as a particularly climactic event in altering and hardening attitudes among the administration and élites during the 1880s.

⁹² Champagne L'Estrange’s *Notes on the Utilization of the Beech-Mast in Ireland* (Dublin, 1885).

industrialists. With more specific reference to the land question, J.H. Gregson's *An impartial survey of the land question with especial reference to proposed legislation* demonstrates civic engagement in a different form to that of the Irish Land Committee. It is instructive that Gregson sent his pamphlet to Chief Secretary W.E. Forster, again indicating that authors had a keen interest in making their work available to policy makers.⁹³

It would be remiss to overstate the significance of the Irish Land Committee in landlord pamphleteering in this period. Outside of this formal type of association, other pamphlets reflect fears of conspiracy and a growing sense of isolation among individual, and sometimes anonymous, authors.⁹⁴ Such titles as *The Truth about the Land League, its leaders, and its teaching* by 'One who knows'⁹⁵ and *Letters to a Grand Old Man, and certain cabinet ministers, lately our confederates* by 'Rory O' the Hills'⁹⁶ contrast starkly with the transparency and the at least nominal commitment to factualism in the pamphlets of the Irish Land Committee. Nonetheless, these two very different types of pamphlet writing should not be viewed as entirely separate and both played a role attempting to counter the meteoric rise of the Land League during this period. The main difference between these two genres of anti-Land League publication is in terms of their intended audience. The more sensational and impassioned titles appear to have been intended for mass circulation and popular consumption, something corroborated by evidence on their print runs.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, as shown already, the Irish Land Committee produced pamphlets with the stated intention of informing policy. Where such pamphlets enjoyed commercial success, one could argue that this was secondary to their stated aim.⁹⁸

⁹³ J.H. Gregson's *An impartial survey of the land question with especial reference to proposed legislation* (London, 1880).

⁹⁴ In total, fourteen out of 109 pamphlets relating to the land question were authored either pseudonymously or with initials only in the Dublin Castle collection. Two further pamphlets were anonymous.

⁹⁵ London, 1882.

⁹⁶ 2nd ed., London, 1882. In a clear effort at parody, the fictitious author is described on the covering page as 'some time National Schoolmaster, now a moonlighter'. On the longer history of this pseudonym and its use in threatening letters going back to 1869, see Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, pp 152-3.

⁹⁷ For instance the copy of *Parnellism* by 'an Irish nationalist' (Dublin, 1886) housed in the Oireachtas Library shows that over 16,000 copies of this title were produced, the highest print run indicated on any of the Dublin Castle holdings for the 1880s.

⁹⁸ For instance, of the copies housed in the Oireachtas Library, issue vi, 'Lord Dufferin on the three F's' was in its third thousand, this was the first issue to advertise such a fact since the initial *Confiscation or Contract*, the Oireachtas Library copy of which was in its sixth thousand. After issue vi, sales numbers appear to have increased up to March 1881 when 'Mr Gladstone's commissioners and Mr Gladstone' (issue ix) reached its tenth thousand. However, following the introduction of the 1881 Land Bill on 7 April, no issue of the Irish Land Committee series among those in the Oireachtas Library records being part of a run above one thousand.

In reconstructing the mentality of landlordism in the 1880s, one particularly stark example, albeit in relation to Home Rule rather than the land question, is the anonymously authored *The Repeal of the Union Conspiracy, or Mr Parnell, M.P., and the I.R.B.*⁹⁹ Contained within the front cover of this work is an organisational chart of the Irish Republican Brotherhood which, building on a standard military structure from rank and file to colonels, puts Charles Stewart Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party at the very apex of the pyramid, with the I.R.B. supreme council, its military council, and its ‘assassination committee’ beneath this. That works such of this had a ready audience was emphasised by price commanded by the Pigott forgeries upon which *The Times*’ ‘Parnellism and Crime’ articles hinged.¹⁰⁰ Much like *The Times* articles, *The Repeal of the Union Conspiracy* fixated on Davitt and Fenianism and the shadow of the Phoenix Park murders looms large in this particular pamphlet. Despite the fact that this pamphlet most likely had a strong impact on popular and élite opinion, it cannot be construed as lobbying. Instead, these kinds of work underline the marginalisation that was being felt among landlords and unionists in the 1880s when nationalism, agrarian agitation, and – by mid-decade – Gladstonian Liberalism were threatening the very nature of their existence. In this way, a very clear differentiation between pamphlets as lobbying and a more sensational, or at least emotive, form of pamphleteering must be made. One thing that is noteworthy is that Dublin Castle collected and preserved both types of material, giving an important insight into the interests of the administration and the reach of such pamphlets.

Conclusions: lobby, influence, and isolation, landlord pamphlets and the land war

Having examined the Dublin Castle pamphlet collection of the 1880s, it is immediately obvious that the land question completely consumed political debate in the era. Furthermore, what the Dublin Castle collection shows is the extent to which policy documents coming from both sides of the ideological divide were being produced with the hope that they would cross the desk of the Chief Secretary, the Lord Lieutenant, or even the Prime Minister

Methodologically, this could simply point to the fact that Dublin Castle’s library was become more proactive in collecting said titles at this pivotal stage in the land question but either way, it is a point worth noting.

⁹⁹ *The Repeal of the Union Conspiracy, or Mr Parnell, M.P., and the I.R.B.* (London, 1886).

¹⁰⁰ In total, £605 was paid for the Pigott forgeries. ‘Parnellism and Crime’ appeared in instalments from 18 April to 1 December 1888 in the London *Times* and led to establishment of the ‘Special Commission to Inquire into Charges and Allegations Against Certain Members of Parliament and Others’ which eventually exposed Pigott as a forger resulting in his flight and suicide. See F.S.L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1977), ch. 12.

himself.¹⁰¹ In assessing the efforts of landlords in print, Norman Palmer's approach of addressing landlord actions collectively in the context of 'landlord's defence' is helpful in unifying actions that otherwise might seem disjointed.¹⁰² Using this framework, anonymous and pseudonymous pamphlets can be better explained. Whereas policy orientated writing such as that of the land committee had a clear dimension of lobbying to it, it has been shown that many of these individual works fall into two distinct categories. On the one hand, many pamphleteers were informed professionals, often of a legal background who used pamphlets in their traditional role of imparting their expertise and thus this can be construed as a clear form of civic engagement. On the other hand, many individual works, especially those employing the cloak of a pseudonym, provide evidence of paranoia and a fear of conspiracy among the landlord classes. In these instances, there is no clear lobbying objective and the writing is either propagandistic or it could be said that the purpose behind the pamphlet's production is secondary to the fact that it is simply a manifestation of sentiment. In this way, such pamphlets link into Roy Foster's analysis of the psychology of landlords as a social group.

In assessing the efficacy of the Irish Land Committee as a lobby group, its record was impressively stated by the M.P. for Leitrim, Arthur Tottenham, who asserted that

The Irish Land Committee ... at great cost of time, trouble, and expense, put together many facts which [t]he[y] [sic] commended to the notice of the First Commissioner of Works as being a more valuable basis of information than the theories which the right hon. Gentleman [The Attorney General for Ireland, Hugh Law M.P.] formed in his fleeting visits to Ireland. The right hon. Gentleman had stated his belief that there was not in Ireland a single instance in which the improvements had been made solely by the landlord. He had no hesitation in referring to the pamphlet entitled Facts and Figures [Irish Land Committee pamphlet number III], because its accuracy had already been admitted by the Prime Minister, who quoted from it in his opening speech in introducing this Bill.¹⁰³

That the committee had captured the attention of the Prime Minister was one thing. Quite another was that sympathetic M.P.s were asserting, without eliciting challenges from the Home Rulers, that the figures compiled by the committee were factually incontrovertible. The

¹⁰¹ Gladstone's references to the publications of the Irish Land Committee are evidence of this: Arthur Tottenham, 'Ordinary condition of tenancies', 16 June 1881, *Hansard 3 (Commons)*, cclxii, col. 728.

¹⁰² To borrow the title of Palmer's chapter 9.

¹⁰³ Arthur Tottenham, 'Ordinary condition of tenancies', 16 June 1881, *Hansard 3 (Commons)*, cclxii, col. 728.

committee's aim of establishing its role as an authority on the land question thus appears to have been resoundingly successful. Despite this, the land committee failed in its primary founding objective, to counter the rise of the Land League. However, as a study in lobbying and tactics, this exploration of the committee has revealed much. Pamphlets were an effective means of catapulting opinions, and especially hard evidence, onto the desks of influential individuals. However, while such material may have informed these administrators and politicians, it cannot be said to have discernibly altered policy. In the face of mass mobilisation, parliamentary discipline, and the threat of agrarian agitation, 'facts and figures' elicited very little tangible action. Despite their previously dominant position in Irish life, southern unionists would now find themselves isolated and in decline. As such, Gladstonian liberalism and Irish nationalism began to spell the demise of the Irish landlord class in Ireland's social revolution.