Sir George Grey and Irish Nationalism

In the eighteen-eighties New Zealand Liberals made frequent use of Irish parallels in their condemnation of land aggregation and demands for direct state intervention to break up the great estates.¹ When Irish Nationalist M.P.s visited the country to collect funds for their movement, local radicals who gave assistance were able to adumbrate their own views for home consumption. Several prominent Liberals, like John Ballance and Patrick Buckley, were of Irish birth; others, including Joseph Ward and John Sheehan, were second generation colonial Irish; while some who had no connection with Ireland, such as Robert Stout and W. P. Reeves, took pains to make themselves familiar with Irish affairs.

Sir George Grey is a particularly interesting example of the link between Ireland and New Zealand issues. His mother was the daughter of the Rev. John Vignoles, an Irish clergyman of Huguenot descent who lived in Co. Westmeath.² A Dublin academic even accused Grey of changing his name from the Irish Gray to its more aristocratic English variant, but his descent from the Greys of Groby is indisputable.³ A biographer has, nevertheless, attributed Grey’s winning manner, ‘his eloquent tongue that led all hearts captive’, and his vindictive passions to his Irish ancestry.⁴ In New Zealand, the Irish immigrants believed Grey, like other politicians of obvious Irish antecedents, to be one of themselves. They certainly criticised him for lack of patriotism when his support for their interest appeared deficient in energy.⁵

Even if Grey’s Irish ancestry is ignored there can be no doubt about the influence of his mother’s country on his development. He spent six formative years as a subaltern in Daniel O’Connell’s Ireland. Arriving as a young man of eighteen in 1830, he departed in 1836 for the Australian explorations which led to his career as a colonial governor. Many writers agree that ‘Ireland changed his outlook’⁶ by

³ J. Collier, Sir George Grey, Governor, High Commissioner and Premier, A Historical Biography, Wellington, 1909, p. 3.
⁴ ibid, p. 2.
⁵ New Zealand Tablet [Tablet], Dunedin, 23 November 1883 and Freeman’s Journal, Auckland [F.J.], 23 June 1882.
showing him human misery at its worst. His varied experiences, collecting tithes for an alien state church, enduring the lashing of O'Connell's caustic tongue as his soldiers attempted to control the crowd at a public meeting, and his contacts with peasants oppressed by absentee landlords, all helped to kindle his determination to establish a new order in the colonies. He had, in addition, fallen under the spell of Richard Whately, later Archbishop of Dublin, whose liberal views had a considerable influence on his development. It was not, however, till the end of his gubernatorial career in 1868 that Grey was able to concern himself directly with Irish affairs.

When dismissed from the New Zealand governorship in 1868, Grey returned to England in an endeavour to justify his actions in the Southern Hemisphere. He rejected Disraeli's offer of a safe Conservative seat in parliament, hoping, no doubt, that the Liberals who subsequently took office would be more likely to restore him to colonial employment. This did not happen; and Grey soon found himself at loggerheads with the Liberal administration. Ireland provided the occasion of the quarrel, for Grey believed that Gladstone's proposed disestablishment of the Irish Church did not go sufficiently far, and wrote to the Daily News demanding a radical reform of the system of Irish landlordism.

In late 1869, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Granville, sharing his Liberal colleagues' dislike of imperialist adventures, sent a despatch to the Governor of New Zealand, suggesting large concessions for the Maoris as a prelude to the repatriation of the last British regiment. The despatch contained four principles upon which Grey eagerly seized. It claimed that the 'deep and wide-spread discontent' in New Zealand was caused by the confiscation of Maori lands; that the 'hope of recovering land and status' was the main incitement to rebellion; and that the restoration of the confiscated territory was a prerequisite for genuine pacification. Then Granville emphasised the significance of nationality: the Maoris were 'an independent people very unwilling to see nationality pass from them, and not unnaturally long for some recognition of their national authority'. Finally, he asserted that the Empire was not strong enough to hold down such people by military force against its will.

Grey immediately published a pamphlet, incorporating his Daily News letters on the Irish question, to show that Granville's despatch was a perfect description of the situation in Ireland, and partly true of England, but without relevance to New Zealand, a country about which the Liberal ministers were totally ignorant. Beginning with an account of the grant to the Earl of Essex in 1576 of 68,000 acres in Monaghan, Grey traced the development of Irish landlordism. He showed how the original owners of the confiscated land stayed on as tenants without rights, security or prospects. In a passage which might

7 Rutherford, p. 4.
8 ibid., p. 580.
9 Grey, The Irish Land Question, Auckland, 1889, p. 3. (1st edition, 1869.)
have come from Karl Marx’s recently published *Das Kapital* Grey complained that ‘whilst those toiling thousands were creating wealth, almost fabulous in amount, for a foreign landlord, and were ever and ever adding to the value of his capital in land, but the barest subsistence was left to them, they were without the power of legislation, or means of removing the evils of their condition’. Grey vigorously emphasised, with a wealth of quotation, the salient features of the Irish problem: subdivisions, evictions, lack of education, atrocious living conditions and population decline. In contrast, he was able to demonstrate the real merits of the Irish people. The women were proverbially chaste, serious crime was rarer than in England, and the Catholic Church was loyally supported through all vicissitudes. Moreover, the Irish had shown their true capacity abroad. Not only had their leaders obtained authority and prestige in the colonies, but the rank and file Irish voters had played an intelligent part in the establishment of the new democracies. When they gained the ability to purchase their own farms they became ‘steady and industrious’, as the Bishop of Lichfield (G. A. Selwyn) had commented in the House of Lords. A constant stream of remittances flowed home to relatives in Ireland from all parts of the world. Grey quoted Disraeli’s remark: ‘But put an Irishman in a country where there is a fair field for his talents in a variety of occupations, and you will see the Irishman not only equal, but superior to most races.’

The remedy, however, according to Sir George, lay not in continued emigration, but in the educative effects of self-government. Grey suggested a state legislature on the United States model. The Dublin assembly would control local matters such as land and education, while the Westminster Parliament, containing Irish representatives for imperial affairs, would deal with general questions concerning defence, tariffs and postal services. This scheme Grey believed to have innumerable advantages. It would help England by taking the Irish question out of British politics, where it was a potentially disruptive factor; by increasing Anglo-Irish trade; and by reducing the competition of cheap Irish immigrant labour with English workers. Opportunities would be opened up for Irishmen at home and the absentee landlords would be encouraged to return. Above all, Home Rule would raise the intellectual standards of the Irish people: ‘The highest education in earthly matters that can be given to man is that education which trains him to consider his duties, position, and rights as a citizen of a corporate community; to reflect on his duties to others, and their corresponding duties to himself . . . .’ Grey concluded by drafting a short Irish Home Rule Bill.

W. L. Rees claimed that this was ‘the first definite and practicable
proposition ever made for the local self-government of Ireland'.

This is too large a claim, though Grey's views did reflect the swing from O'Connell's ideal of Repeal of the Union to the limited Home Rule of Isaac Butt's party. Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill of 1886 accepted Grey's division of Irish and imperial questions, and like Grey's Bill proposed an Irish legislature of two houses, though the upper house was to be hereditary and not indirectly elective like the United States Senate. Gladstone, furthermore, though this was reversed in his 1893 Bill, excluded Irish M.P.s from Westminster.

In spite of Grey's anticipation of future events, the Liberals were embarrassed by his actions in 1869, especially as he stood unsuccessfully as an independent Liberal at a by-election for the borough of Newark in 1870. He told Milne: 'I preached a kind of new gospel.' His election manifesto did not actually demand Home Rule for Ireland, which he later included in the 'new gospel'.

But, as Rutherford points out, his views were well enough known on that question. Gladstone and Bright were definitely hostile. Gladstone was not fully converted to Irish Home Rule till 1885, while Bright always opposed the measure. Granville attacked Grey vigorously in the House of Lords.

Why had Grey taken an uncompromising stand that militated against his re-employment in the colonial service? His interest in Ireland undoubtedly remained; after the abortive 1867 rising his feelings were aroused by the fate of the Fenian prisoners. Nevertheless, other motivation must be sought. Grey's claim that Granville's despatch had no relevance to New Zealand was not actually argued in the pamphlet which dealt entirely with Ireland. If it had been, Grey would have been compelled to justify again the 1864 proclamation which confiscated over one million acres of Maori land in the Waikato. Grey did, however, mention the failure of the Irish land grants to make any reservations for the original inhabitants. This, presumably, referred to the 230,000 acres reserved for Maoris under the 1864 proclamation. The New Zealand confiscation had been criticised by the Colonial Office as likely to prolong the war, and Grey was obviously determined, like a lapwing, to direct attention away from his own nest. But controversy aside, Grey succeeded in presenting an interesting analogy between Ireland and New Zealand, especially when he drew attention to Granville's recognition of Maori nationalism.

Grey did not revive his interest in the Irish question till the early 1880s. Before that time, his fight against the abolition of the provinces and his premiership absorbed most of his energy. Before 1879 he was popular with the Catholic-Irish community. The New Zealand Tablet supported his fight on the provincial question, while Grey

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15 This was the pretext for Joseph Chamberlain's resignation.
16 Milne, p. 187.
17 ibid., p. 27.
18 Tablet, 7 November 1874.
argued the Catholic case for state aid to private schools in the education debates of 1877. The *New Zealand Freeman's Journal*, the Auckland Catholic weekly, was strongly in his favour.\(^{19}\) Grey expressed his views on Ireland whenever the occasion warranted. He was one of the speakers at the O'Connell Centenary Banquet at Wellington in 1875,\(^ {20}\) and recounted the familiar story of how he had heard the great Irish orator. While Premier, he told a public meeting about his former duties as a protector of tithe collectors in Ireland.\(^ {21}\) This work had particularly impressed Grey, for he told Milne at the end of his life: 'To me it appeared wrong, shameful, un-Christian, that money for a church which preached the love of God and His Son towards mankind, should be wrung from the people by armed soldiers. More, it seemed to me nothing less than blasphemy, a mocking of all true religion, and I thought it terrible to have to bear a part in the business.'\(^ {22}\) The *Tablet*, however, was not impressed, for it considered the secular New Zealand educational system, which was partly maintained by Catholic taxpayers, to be a greater injustice to Catholics than tithes in Ireland for the state church; Grey showed no signs of helping Catholic schools.

When Grey lost the premiership and the leadership of the Liberals in 1879, he reverted to the status of a private member with a small group of personal followers. For several reasons, the Irish questions became more important for him. First, events in Ireland had reached a dramatic stage. Michael Davitt's Land League, in alliance with Parnell's Parliamentary Party at Westminster, was forcing Gladstone's administration to temper repression with concession. Second, several of Grey's close followers, John Sheehan, J. A. Tole, W. J. Speight and John Lundon, had Irish connections. Finally, the poor Irish Catholics in New Zealand were all potential recruits to the Liberal cause. The priests, however, did their utmost to prevent Catholics from supporting opponents of state aid for their schools, and the Greysites, in general, eventually rejected this claim. The Irish question was thus a most useful wedge with which to split the Catholic 'block vote', especially as the circulation of Catholic weeklies like the *Tablet* and *Freeman's Journal* depended to a large extent on the quality and quantity of the Irish political news they supplied.

The Irish issue reached a crisis in 1881. Grey's erstwhile colleague, Robert Stout, lectured in defence of the Land League in Dunedin, Oamaru and Invercargill.\(^ {23}\) Defying the attacks of a generally hostile press, the New Zealand Irish established Land League branches all over the country. Subscriptions poured into the Tablet office for remittance to Dublin. In August, Grey spoke at a mass meeting in

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19 *F.J.*, 2 December 1881.
20 *Tablet*, 20 August 1875.
21 ibid., 1 March 1878.
22 Milne, p. 29.
23 *Otago Daily Times (O.D.T.*)*, Dunedin, 22 April; *North Otago Times*, Oamaru, 7 May; *Morning Herald*, 8 April 1881.
Wellington,\textsuperscript{24} called to establish a Land League branch. Many prominent men were present: John Ballance, John Sheehan, J. A. Tole and the Catholic Bishop Redwood.

The speeches defended the Land League and opposed Gladstone’s coercion. Grey spoke last. His views were greeted with tremendous enthusiasm. Like his colleagues he stressed the importance of the Irish precedent for New Zealand: ‘the speeches you have heard tonight mean more than you probably think. They mean this: If you agree with the speakers, that a state of civilisation, which has bound the world for a long time . . . is about to pass away; and that a new civilisation is to dawn upon the world, and that we are the men who are leading that civilisation on to the front.’ To hammer his argument home, Grey quoted several authorities to show the miserable condition of Ireland with its mounted police, squalid poverty and ‘naked clamorous beggars’. By way of contrast he cited Greville’s description of the pleasant life of the rich, playing whist and Macao till two or four in the morning. Grey called for self-sacrifice to bring about his new civilisation. He warned his listeners not to become the tools of a party but to stick to one thing, the establishment of a different system of land tenure which would recognise that ‘the world was made for man, not that man was to labour for a few upon the face of the earth’. Finally, he demanded: ‘Let us pledge ourselves mutually this night, that we will not abandon one another until such great and good ends are achieved.’

Reaction to the meeting was mixed. The New Zealand Times was generally sympathetic, and showed how dangerous it would be if the Lords rejected Gladstone’s Land Act. If it was passed, however, the editorial argued that there would be no further need for the Land League. Ireland would require no more money from New Zealand. ‘We always have entertained an intense repugnance to the transplanting of old-world factious grievances to the fair young lands of Australasia.’\textsuperscript{25} This was to be the stock argument of conservatives whenever the Irish Home Rule issue was raised in New Zealand. Two Irish correspondents of the New Zealand Times impugned Grey’s motives in speaking at the meeting. One mentioned rumours that the veteran statesman had promised £200 to the Land League and derided the whole episode as ‘only an election move’.\textsuperscript{26} ‘A Hibernian’ considered the meeting ‘a very “big farce”,’ in that ‘the moderate and more thinking men of the city’ had ignored it,\textsuperscript{27} and argued that it was a ‘forerunner for another sort of League, viz. the “Liberal Association”, which was a sufficient disgrace to us all in the Empire city some two years ago’. These Irishmen may have noticed the large

\textsuperscript{24} New Zealand Times (N.Z.T.), 2 August 1881. The speeches were published in pamphlet form: ‘Full report of speeches delivered at the monster public meeting held at Wellington, New Zealand, to express sympathy with the tenant farmers of Ireland and the Irish National Land League’, Wellington, 1881.
\textsuperscript{25} N.Z.T., 2 August 1881.
\textsuperscript{26} ibid., 3 August 1881.
\textsuperscript{27} ibid., 5 August 1881.
proportion of educational secularists on the platform. Both the Catholic newspapers were impressed. The *Tablet* remarked that 'every utterance made was of weight, and admitted no denial'.

The *Freeman's Journal* vigorously rebutted the charge that the Liberals were playing politics: votes would be lost rather than gained, 'but Sir George Grey and his leading colleagues are too deeply interested in the successful conclusion of the great land question to conceal their feelings'. The *Freeman* agreed that 'the battle which the League is so valiantly fighting is one affecting the whole civilised world'.

Nevertheless, Sir George's promised resolution in parliament was never proposed. In the general election, the Greyites did badly. John Lundon, of Samoan fame, lost his seat; Dr Wallis and Grey's future biographer Rees were also defeated. Ireland was not an issue in the election which was fought in an atmosphere of hysterical terror caused by the irrational Pakeha fear of the non-violent Te Whiti. Grey received the whole-hearted support of the *Freeman's Journal* in the election campaign, but the *Tablet* lamented that the Catholic block vote in Auckland had been given to an educational secularist.

When a Bill to give state aid to Catholic schools was introduced in 1882, Grey, Tole and Sheehan duly voted with the majority against it. A *Freeman's Journal* columnist sadly lamented that 'the Irish patriot's mantle of O'Connell has not fallen on Sir George'.

By this time the New Zealand Liberals were turning away from the Irish Land League. They were disgusted by the League's refusal to accept Gladstone's Land Act; the Phoenix Park murders, though no work of the Parnellites, brought the whole movement into disrepute. In mid-1883 the Irish Nationalists sent the brothers John and William Redmond to New Zealand and Australia on a fund collecting mission. The poorer Irish rallied to them, and £1,400 was contributed on the New Zealand West Coast alone. Though John Redmond was an educated and attractive young landlord whose subsequent leadership of the Irish party was to prove, in the first World War, too moderate for many of his countrymen, the New Zealand Liberals who had orated so vigorously in 1881 remained, with one or two exceptions, strictly aloof. Redmond, whose stock-in-trade contained quotations from the leading academic authorities of the day, religiously quoted in nearly every centre he visited a long passage from Grey's 1869 pamphlet: 'Give to Ireland a State Legislature and a State Executive in Dublin; secure thereby the residence of its ablest men in the

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28 *Tablet*, 14 August 1881.
29 *F.J.*, 12 August 1881.
30 ibid., 20 May 1881 and Lundon's speech at Wellington meeting.
31 ibid., 2 and 9 December 1881.
32 *Tablet*, 16 December 1881.
34 'Justitia' in *F.J.*, 23 June 1882. O'Connell had fought the Young Irelanders on the issue of secular education.
35 *Grey River Argus*, 15 October 1883.
country . . . . Dumb Ireland will then speak again . . . a willing people will be educated in that political knowledge which will enable them to put an end to the ills which afflict them . . . .' Sir George, though possibly flattered, did not return the compliment by attending the Redmond meetings and was consequently criticised in the Tablet. 'Had Sir George Grey, Mr Tole and Mr Sheehan been true Irishmen and what they profess to be—true Liberals and friends of the people—they would publicly have taken Mr Redmond by the hand, and one of them have presided at his meeting in Auckland.'

When the Redmonds succeeded in forming branches of the Irish National League, it was suggested that Protestants—in spite of the fact that Parnell was president of the League in Ireland—and 'upper ten Catholics' should be excluded from the movement which could then be used to register Catholic voters for the delivery of a block vote on the education question. It was even stated that these prohibited classes had previously attempted, 'with too much success', to 'turn the New Zealand branches of the Land League into a Greyite tail'. These efforts came to nothing, for the 1884 election resulted in the premiership of Stout, the most determined educational secularist in the country.

When Gladstone's conversion to Irish Home Rule became known in 1885, New Zealand Liberal opinion swung back to its 1881 posture. The Irish Nationalists in alliance with the British Liberals became eminently respectable. Grey joined Stout (by now a hated enemy), Montgomery, Atkinson and Macandrew in sending a cable of condolence to Gladstone, when the latter's Home Rule Bill was defeated in the House of Commons. The cable was supported by forty-two M.H.R.s and seven M.L.C.s. In the following year, Thomas Bracken introduced in the House of Representatives a motion censuring Salisbury's policy of Irish coercion. The Premier, Stout, spoke eloquently in favour, arguing that New Zealand had a positive duty to express its opinion on a matter of such significance to the future of the empire. Grey fully agreed with his rival on the importance of the issue, but censured the Premier for not introducing the subject in government time and thus forcing a division. Though Grey restricted the length of his speech the motion was, nevertheless, talked out. Grey claimed that the British Parliament's control of Ireland was an aspect of its imperial function and not, therefore, a private internal matter. The New Zealand liberal imperialists, a group including Stout, Atkinson, Grey and nearly all the Irish politicians, were, at this time, fascinated by the possibility that the establishment of federalism in Britain, beginning with Irish Home Rule, would lead to general imperial federation. Under such an arrangement, it was hoped, New Zealand might be able to encourage Britain.

36 O.D.T., 23 October 1883.
37 Tablet, 23 November 1883.
38 ibid., 1 February 1884.
39 N.Z.T., 14 June 1886.
Grey's short speech must have warmed Irish hearts. He attributed Irish misery to the bad laws of the past. How could the Irish be blamed for using secret means to redress wrongs if there was no legal way open to them? This was a reaffirmation of Grey's old view that self-government was one of the most potent educative forces. Grey, moreover, argued that the over-emphasised Irish crimes, though committed by a few people only, were visited on the whole of the nation. Yet Grey himself, when in 1883 he ignored the Redmond mission, was really attributing violence, as in the Phoenix Park murders, to the Irish nationalist movement as a whole.

In 1889 the Irish question was placed even more forcefully before New Zealanders, for a second Nationalist delegation led by Parnell's lieutenant, John Dillon, visited the country. This time conditions were favourable, but Grey was at first noncommittal when approached by the Auckland Irish just before the delegation's arrival. This coolness was matched by that of the delegates. At that time a rumour was circulating, and was to reappear later, that Sir George Grey was to be offered a seat in the British Parliament by the Irish Nationalist Party. Grey had stood for the British Parliament in 1870, and was almost certainly flattered by the suggestion. The Irish Party had already adopted several colonials as M.P.s and at one time Parnell had considered the nomination of Dadabhai Naoroji, the eminent Indian nationalist. The New Zealand Irish, therefore, demanded a seat as a status symbol. When Grey was no longer available, hopes were fastened on Sir Patrick Buckley. As soon as he landed in New Zealand, however, Dillon dashed these aspirations by stating bluntly that he knew of no such proposal. He had not even heard of Sir George's Home Rule views before arriving in Australasia. His interest was in any case in the people and not the politicians of New Zealand. Nevertheless, on the following day, Grey and Dillon met and talked for a 'considerable time'. Later Grey contributed £20 to the Irish evicted tenants fund and showed the whole delegation, Dillon, Sir Thomas Esmonde, M.P. and John Deasy, M.P., round the Auckland Art Gallery and Public Library. The ice was completely broken. When he appeared on the platform at Dillon's Auckland meeting, Grey received a standing ovation. The cheering and


42 Tablet, 7 June 1889.


45 New Zealand Herald (N.Z.H.), Auckland, 14 November 1889. It was even suggested that a Presbyterian Minister, G. Barclay, should have a seat for supporting Dillon. Tablet, 8 August 1890.

46 N.Z.H., 4 November 1889.

47 Ibid., 5 November 1889.

48 Ibid., 6 November 1889.

49 Ibid., 7 November 1889.
applause were maintained almost continuously throughout the address.' His non-attendance in 1881 was now more than forgiven. Grey's speech contained many of his old views on the Irish question. He stressed the educative effects of Home Rule, and condemned Arthur Balfour for bidding Ireland to stand still: 'advancement and progress must continue everywhere'. The advantages of federation were emphasised. Once again Grey sought to raise the topic to a higher plane of generality: 'they were raising more combinations in Ireland, and not only in Ireland, but a series of combinations throughout the whole Empire, whose object was to do all possible for the oppressed . . . . Now all men had begun to pity the poor and the unfortunate, to see that all men have equal rights and liberties.'

There was, however, some vocal opposition to Irish Home Rule in Auckland. The adversaries secured the services of Grey's great rival and enemy, Sir William Fox, as the main attraction at their anti-Home Rule meeting, held after the Irish delegates' meeting. Sir William did not restrict his comments to the subject of Ireland, but sneered at Grey for advocating Irish Home Rule when he had been the 'sole and inexorable resistance' to New Zealand self-government. F. J. Moss, who was writing a history of New Zealand, replied to Fox in the columns of the N.Z. Herald, arguing his 'version of the past to be entirely wrong and misleading'. A controversy with Fox followed.

Other New Zealand Liberals followed Grey's example in supporting Dillon. The tour was, in fact, a useful dress rehearsal for the election campaign of 1890 which brought Ballance's party to power. Dillon's cool approach to the veteran statesman was not maintained at the end of his tour. Many of Grey's forecasts, said Dillon, 'in regard to this country as well as Ireland, would be justified and verified by the lapse of time'. At a banquet in Dublin after his return home, Dillon mentioned Grey, 'the Nestor of politics in the Southern Oceans', amongst the five most helpful statesmen in Australasia. Grey, 'their noblest Roman, New Zealand's grand old man', was the only New Zealander mentioned by name in Sir Thomas Esmonde's Around the World with the Irish Delegates. This adulation did not please the Tablet, which was still attempting to organise a Catholic block vote on the education issue. Grey, who regarded his Law Practitioners Bill as a panacea for all the ills of the colony, went so far as to suggest that Catholics who deliberately abstained, as the Tablet ordered them to do when all candidates refused to support  }

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50 The speeches at this meeting were published in a pamphlet: Home Rule, Auckland, 1889 (Hocken Library, Dunedin, C.P. 50, No. 8), p. 14.
51 N.Z.H., 9 November 1889.
52 ibid., 12 November 1889.
53 ibid., 14, 15 and 16 November 1889.
54 Tablet, 7 February 1890.
55 ibid., 1 August 1890.
56 Sir Thomas G. Esmonde, Around the World with the Irish Delegates, Dublin, 1892, p. 117.
57 Tablet, 12 August 1892.
state aid, should be disenfranchised. The *Tablet* recalled bitterly how the Irish delegates had honoured Grey:

They thought that all the rest of us did no more than our duty by aiding them—but they evidently thought that Sir George had done a great deal more than his duty, for they lauded him up to the skies and almost above them, and did not tire for a long time of sounding his praises. Now we say if Home Rule is to be brought into our colonial affairs at all, Sir George Grey deserves the full benefit of it—and Irishmen are acting in a most unpatriotic and traitorous manner in opposing him in one of the objects that he holds dearest in life.58

The Catholic hierarchy at this time was furious that many Liberals who were prominent at Dillon’s meetings proved to be determined educational secularists. The Home Rule cause in Ireland had also been tarnished by the internecine quarrels resulting from the Parnellite split. Though Grey was known to be an educational secularist, he took no part in the discussion and voting on the two unsuccessful state aid bills introduced in 1881 and 1891. The Law Practitioners Bill, which reduced the intellectual qualifications required by lawyers, was becoming his ‘King Charles’ Head’.

The old warrior’s political work was now nearly done. In 1894 he suddenly sailed to England. There were still rumours afoot that he was to obtain a seat at Westminster as an Irish Home Ruler, but nothing came of them.59 His advanced age aside, Grey, with his prickly and authoritarian temperament, would have proved a most uneasy colleague in Dillon’s Nationalist Party. The New Zealand Irish never in fact achieved their ambition of obtaining the election of one of their number to an Irish seat in the British House of Commons.

The influence of Ireland on Grey’s development cannot be denied. His six years as a subaltern in Ireland were sufficient to provide him with a vivid example of the disastrous effects of land monopoly, an alien state church, and imperial rule. Though most historians have emphasised Grey’s autocratic attitude and his unscrupulous methods of dealing with opponents, it seems hardly just to attribute, as McLintock has virtually done, all Grey’s actions to crude self-interest.60 There is little doubt that Grey genuinely sympathised with the poor and downtrodden, and passionately desired their economic and intellectual emancipation. The Irish question itself became more dominant in Grey’s thoughts when he was out of office, especially towards the end of his career. The issue was generalised into a mystical vision of a new society where the exploitation of man by man would be impossible and unnecessary.

58 ibid., 29 January 1892.
59 Rutherford, p. 650, quotes Gisborne: ‘It is probably on the cards that even at his advanced age he may, if a general election takes place soon, be elected as a Home Ruler in Ireland.’
Grey agreed with Henry George and Karl Marx in attacking the current Malthusian view that overpopulation was the cause of Ireland's poverty. Ireland, with its weak middle class, was an ideal model for Henry George's argument that the natural enemy of the working man was the landlord and not the capitalist. Though Marx was contemptuous of Henry George, whose theory he stigmatised as 'merely a socialistically-fringed attempt to save the rule of Capitalism', his views on Ireland were not unlike those of the American. Grey, with his experience of Ireland and agricultural colonies, naturally gravitated towards George. Grey's 1869 pamphlet, however, anticipated *Progress and Poverty*, of which he received a presentation copy, by ten years. He was never in doubt as to the importance of George's book. When he heard that Stout was to lecture on Ireland in 1881 he sent him a copy of *Progress and Poverty*, describing it as 'a really great work'. Nevertheless, it is significant that Grey's 1869 pamphlet had many features in common with the resolution submitted by Marx to the International in the same year. Both emphasised the need for English workingmen to support Irish tenant farmers in the overthrow of landlordism. Both were critical of Gladstone's half-hearted attempts to solve the Irish question at that time. In his 1869 pamphlet, moreover, Grey, like Marx in the first volume of *Capital*, published two years earlier, attacked the attempt of the Irish landowners to replace men with cattle and emphasised the importance of emigrants' remittances to the Irish economy. Gladstone, as we have seen, eventually caught up with Grey's views, if not Marx's. Though in 1887 Sir George was sufficiently uncritical to imagine that even Salisbury might grant Home Rule, he had nevertheless made a genuine contribution to the debate.

It was, perhaps, this contribution which enabled Grey to stand out amongst New Zealand Liberals supporting Irish Home Rule. Grey, like his colleagues, undoubtedly played politics with the Irish question on many occasions. But there was something more. Grey's speeches on Ireland were relatively rare and he showed less interest in the successive phases of the Irish struggle than Robert Stout. Unlike Buckley and Tole he was never closely associated with Irish nationalist leagues in New Zealand. Nevertheless, Grey, to a greater

63 George, p. 160: 'the antagonism of interests is not between labour and capital, as is popularly believed, but is in reality between labour and capital on the one side and land ownership on the other . . . .' 
65 See section on Ireland in *Capital*, I (Everyman, II), 773-89.
69 *Tablet*, 29 April 1887.
extent than the others, was the focus of Irish aspirations in New Zealand. Obviously he had greater mana. But in addition he represented the section of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy which, in leaders such as Robert Emmet, Thomas Davis, Smith O’Brien and C. S. Parnell, had won immense popularity by identifying itself with the aspirations of the Catholic majority. The average Irish immigrant was so fascinated by what Grey was that he tended to be uncritical of what Grey did. A speech by Grey was enough; effective action on Ireland’s behalf was not required. Irish adulation spread to Grey’s New Zealand policies. The rhetorical myth of the approaching land revolution was apt to deflect attention from the prosaic campaign demanding state aid for Catholic schools. The *Freeman’s Journal* was a good example of this attitude.

Grey’s brand of Irish nationalism belonged to the older liberal tradition of men like J. B. Dillon, John Dillon’s Young Ireland father, not the full-blooded school of exclusive patriotism which, originating with Thomas Davis and stimulated by continental nationalism, was later to motivate Fenianism, Sinn Fein and the Gaelic League. As Charles Gavan Duffy has written: ‘Dillon followed in the track of Bentham and de Tocqueville and recognised a regulated democracy as the inevitable and rightful order of the world; and he saw with burning impatience the wrongs inflicted on the industrious poor by an aristocracy practically irresponsible. Davis desired a national existence for Ireland that an old historic nation might be raised from the dust, and a sceptre placed in her hand, that she might become the mother of a brave and self-reliant race.”

In one respect, Grey, who had always advocated popular education, would have supported Sinn Fein self-reliance. Nor can we argue, as Fox did, that the contrast between Grey’s paternal rule in New Zealand and his advocacy of Irish self-determination was *prima facie* evidence of hypocrisy. Irish nationalist leaders such as Parnell and O’Connell had been no less authoritarian; and in our own day the one party state appears to be the most logical culmination of an independence movement.

Ireland’s influence on Grey’s development was, however, more important than his advocacy of Irish Home Rule. The comparison between Grey and Daniel O’Connell, another member of the liberal-nationalist tradition, is significant: it was the ‘Liberator’ who introduced popular political agitation in Britain. When in 1879 Grey, with mass meetings and Liberal Associations, ‘attempted to organise his campaign along lines familiar in the Old Country’, he was following, perhaps directly, the technique originally developed by O’Connell.

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70 Though the Irish Parliamentary Party was known as the Irish Nationalists, many extremists denied that it was truly nationalist as it repudiated separation in practice.
in Ireland. This example may have been as important to New Zealand as the use of Irish analogies in the debate on Imperial Federation and New Zealand land reform. Nevertheless, the basic fact was that George Grey, though at times an unscrupulous and wily politician, discovered in Ireland a sympathy for the underprivileged which, throughout his long career, never entirely deserted him. The apocalyptic vision of a universal brotherhood with which Grey electrified so many audiences originated in the observation of the brutality of Irish peasant eviction.

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