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THE EFFECTS OF THE THIRD REFORM ACT ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND
ORGANIZATION IN INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN, 1886-1906

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ORGANIZATION IN INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN, 1886-1906

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An Abstract of the Thesis By
Michael S. Vernon

The Third Reform Act doubled the size of the British electorate by extending the
urban franchise reform of 1867 into the counties. The Act also called for a redistribution
of seats in Parliament which eliminated most multi-member constituencies and replace
them with single-member constituencies. These reforms changed the political landscape
resulting in a more democratic electorate. The twenty years following the Third Reform
Act are characterized by a Conservative ascendancy, which saw Conservatives take power
and control British politics for the next generation. This Conservative ascendancy was
possible because of the increased importance of public opinion in the electoral calculus of
British politics. The Conservative party effectively appealed to new voters and formed a
broad coalition around maintaining the status-quo, while the Liberal party failed to build a
comparable coalition and instead advocated for social reforms that were unpopular outside
of faddist pressure groups. The Liberal party split over Gladstone's support of Irish Home
Rule enabled the Conservative party to take power following the 1886 general election and
remain the dominant party until 1906.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Third Reform Act which necessitated a general election in 1885 had a significant impact on the course of British politics in the late Victorian period. The size of the electorate was more than doubled, and parliamentary representation was redistributed with the creation of single-member constituencies, ushering in a more democratic political process. The two general elections following the Third Reform Act resulted in the Liberal party losing seats in 1885 and falling out of power in 1886. Conservatives ascended to control of parliament following the 1886 general election and dominated British politics for the following generation.

This thesis argues that the Conservative ascendancy was possible due to the more democratic nature of the electorate after the Third Reform Act. The increased political organization and activity amongst all classes greatly enhanced the role of public opinion in electoral politics. This is seen in the 1885 general election, the first following the passage of the Third Reform Act. In this election, the Liberal party lost seats compared to the 1880 election. This loss of seats was due to the Liberal party's failure to effectively organize their base and their support of unpopular social reform campaigns. Although the Liberal party lost seats in 1885, they maintained their position as the governing party as Irish Nationalists aligned with the Liberals because of their support of Irish Home Rule.

However, Irish Home Rule split the Liberal party in 1886 and swept them out of power. While the Irish Home Rule crisis played a major role in the electoral defeat for the Liberal party, it was also indicative of their inability to appeal to the ideals of the electorate. The Conservative party, in large part, did not suffer from this problem. Their party organizations successfully appealed to the ideals of several classes of voters, such as national identity among the working-class, and defense of property among the middle-class, to bolster Conservative electoral support. It was this organizational strength of the Conservative party, and the collapse of the Liberal party that created the Conservative ascendancy of 1886-1906.

The Third Reform Act brought the total British electorate to over five and a half million voters, while also redistributing seats in Parliament. Although commonly referred to as a single reform, the Third Reform Act is two distinct reforms which combined to alter the British political system. The Representation of the People Act, 1884 granted an extension of household suffrage into all counties of Britain.[1] That act also eliminated the multiple voter eligibilities for a single individual within a single district.[2] While the largest effect of the Representation of the People Act, 1884 was felt in the counties of Britain, the 1880s were not without significant change for the boroughs as well. The other half of the Third Reform Act, officially known as the Redistribution of Seats Act 1885, achieved that change by redistributing parliamentary seats and establishing the modern system of single-member constituencies.[3]

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[1] The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. House of Commons. The Representation of the People Act, 1884, *Oxford University,* 1.

[2] The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. House of Commons. The Representation of the People Act, 1884, *Oxford University,* 2.

[3] The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. House of Commons. The Redistribution of Seats Act 1885, *Archive*, 1.

The division of previously multi-member constituencies into single-member constituencies allowed for more concise electoral battles between Liberals and Conservatives, as well as inter-party conflicts. The increased electorate and redistributed parliamentary seats of the Third Reform Act bolstered political activity and organization across all classes, and saw public opinion play a greatly enhanced role in electoral politics in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, British politics became increasingly democratic as Parliament introduced a wave of reforms increasing the size of the electorate and reconfiguring the distribution of parliamentary seats. The Third Reform Act of 1884-5 was the most significant of these nineteenth century reforms, bringing the total electorate to five and a half million voters, and establishing the single member constituency. The largest increase in electoral numbers came from the counties, which received the same voter qualifications as burghs received in the Second Reform Act of 1867. The Third Reform Act had a significant impact on burghs as well, as the creation of single member districts allowed for a more concise electoral fight between Liberals and Conservatives. This thesis argues that the Third Reform Act bolstered political organization and activity amongst all classes, creating a government that saw following public opinion as vital to remaining electorally relevant.

Before any examination of the effects of the Third Reform Act can be properly undertaken, it is prudent to first examine the state of British politics before the reforms in question. Prior to the Third Reform Act, the nineteenth century saw two major parliamentary reforms, in 1832 and 1867. The First Reform Act came about because the nineteenth century saw the importance of agriculture wane, and the traditional method of

electing the Commons was no longer practical, as the general interests of Britain were no longer being represented. As Britain's economic interests shifted towards the industrial urban centers it became apparent that parliament as then constructed offered a severely disproportionate representation of the population.[4]

According to Jonathan Parry, the Great Reform Act became a natural issue for the Whigs to support because of their hostility to Tory exclusiveness, and the extravagance and corruption of Tory ministers.[5] Parry also makes the argument that the Whigs made prototypical appeals to public opinion in their campaign for the Reform Act, stating:

> The early nineteenth century saw a sea-change in the relationship between whiggery and public opinion. On the one hand, many small borough patrons defected to government during the war. On the other, the unpopularity of government, especially after 1806 transformed whig fortunes…The whigs' calls for low taxation, opposition to repressive legislation, and criticism of the Regent's extravagance and influence gave them a much higher profile and popularity in the country…Nothing distinguished whigs from tories more than the former's willingness to rouse popular agitation.[6]

According to Parry, the Whigs supported the Reform Act because of their growing popularity in the country and because of postwar discontent.[7] Although there was initial Tory opposition to the notion of parliamentary reform, long-held anxiety over the French Revolution ultimately led to pressure both from above and below to reform the parliamentary system.[8] According to Toke S. Aidt and Raphael Franck, the support received by Whigs and Radicals in the 1831 general election, the last before the Great Reform and generally viewed as a referendum on the Reform Bill, came from voters in

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[4] Stephen J Lee, *Aspects of British Political History 1815-1914* (London: Routledge, 1994), 54.
[5] Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and the Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 74.
[6] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 74-6.
[7] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 76.
[8] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 54.

constituencies hit particularly hard by the 1831 Swing Riots.[9] This pressure, however, should not be interpreted as a call for democracy. Aidt and Franck make this argument in claiming that the riots were not concentrated in areas with a strong underlying support for reform, and that the most likely cause of the riots was instead the harsh socio-economic deprivation in rural areas in general and the poor harvests of 1828-29 in general, as evidenced by the frequency with which threshing machines were destroyed as a protest against the deteriorated conditions for agricultural laborers.[10] Thus, rather than being an outright movement towards democracy, the reforms were aimed at bringing new groups into the existing arena of power instead of handing power over to them directly.[11] As such, the 1832 Reform Act was a defensive measure to placate extra parliamentary forces.[12] To those already in power, the best method of preserving their power without creating unrest by ignoring calls for reform was to grant the franchise to the middle classes, which represented the industrial ownership.[13] This reform, which was given royal assent in June 1832 expanded the franchise to include middle class men, but did not change the number of seats in the House of Commons, with only 143 of 658 seats being redistributed.[14]

Despite the unprecedented extent of the 1832 Reform Act, it was still relatively limited in impact on a grand scale, with less than fifteen percent of British men being eligible to vote and seats in the Commons still unequally distributed.[15] Thomas Ertman

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[9] Toke S. Aidt and Raphael Franck, "Democratization Under the Threat of Revolution: Evidence from the Great Reform Act of 1832," *Econometrica* 83, no. 2 (2015): 508.
[10] Aidt and Franck, "Democratization Under the Threat of Revolution," 513-4.
[11] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 54.
[12] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 73.
[13] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 56.
[14] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 58.
[15] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 59.

however gives a generally favorable review of the Great Reform Act, arguing that it leaves three long-term consequences which, he argues, continue to resonate more than a century later.[16] The first of those consequences was the arrival of truly national, participatory politics. According to Ertman and John Phillips, the agitation for reform around the First Reform Act united ordinary people across Britain in political debates and lobbying.[17] The second consequence was the consolidation of a two-party system based around religious preference, with Tories/Conservatives primarily consisting of Anglicans and Whigs/Liberals the preferred party of Dissenters. The elimination of nomination boroughs meant that governments could no longer depend on them to return majorities to Parliament, and therefore necessitated the growth of political party organizations to ensure support among the constituencies.[18] Finally, Ertman argues that the relatively exclusive nature of the First Reform Act produced lasting consequences for British politics as it sowed the seeds of future parliamentary reforms over the course of the following century:

> [The] act contained within it the seed of the future reforms of 1867, 1884-1885, and 1918 because it still excluded the great majority of the adult population from the vote. Furthermore, the use of a uniform (and arbitrary) property value of £10 as the main electoral qualification in the boroughs in the face of great variations in the level of rents across the country meant that men who were well down the social scale but lived in expensive cities such as London obtained the vote whereas those similarly situated but living elsewhere did not (Hilton, 2006, p. 434). At the same time, the act provided a model for overcoming such inherent tensions and contradictions through a gradual lowering of electoral qualifications that, because they were clearly the result of political deals embodied in the various reform acts, no longer benefited from the legitimacy hallowed by time that the 40 shilling freehold and the diverse borough franchises had enjoyed prior to 1832.[19]

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[16] Thomas Ertman, "The Great Reform Act of 1832 and British Democratization," *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 8-9 (2010): 1009.

[17] Ertman, "The Great Reform Act of 1832 and British Democratization," 1009.

[18] Ertman, "The Great Reform Act of 1832 and British Democratization," 1010.

[19] Ertman, "The Great Reform Act of 1832 and British Democratization," 1010.

Parry takes a more critical stance of the First Reform Act, arguing that it did not drastically alter the social composition of parliament, with Members of Parliament still coming mostly from the wealthy, industrial, and gentrified families of Britain.[20] He went on to argue that the minor changes in parliamentary composition caused two important problems: the increased political activity of MPs threatened government control of the timetable for legislation, and the Radical MPs who had entered Parliament following the Reform Act pushed consistently for reforms that the government was not ready to grant.[21] Martin Pugh gives a similarly critical appraisal of the 1832 Reform Act, characterizing the changes brought by it as "remarkably slight."[22] Pugh claims that while the size of the electorate was doubled, to just over 700,000, that still only amounted to twenty percent of British adult men, and that the £10 householder qualification had effectively enfranchised the middle classes and largely excluded workingmen.[23] Of the overall significance of the First Reform Act, Pugh stated:

> While reform gave the middle-class formal recognition it did not allow them extra power, at least in the short term. The social composition of the post-1832 parliaments proved to be very similar to those of the earlier period. Most MPs continued to be drawn from landed and titles families in spite of the reduction in the number of small patronage boroughs. In short, 1832 failed to bring about a bourgeois revolution. On the other hand, those Whigs who claimed who claimed that the Great Reform Act represented a final solution of the reform question were over-optimistic. Indeed, no further reform took place until 1867, but once the old system had been altered there could be no fundamental objection to further change.[24]

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[20] Parry, *Liberal Government,* 99.
[21] Parry, *Liberal Government,* 102-3.
[22] Martin Pugh, *Britain Since 1789: Concise History* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999), 49.
[23] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 49.
[24] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 50.

Thus, while the Great Reform Act did double the size of the electorate, this increase in size only encompassed between fifteen and twenty percent of British men, mostly of whom came from middle class families. Ultimately, the reform did not drastically alter the composition or operation of Parliament but did create national politics and set the stage for future parliamentary reforms.

However, it was not until the 1860s that a new call for reform began to gain momentum in parliament. In the years between 1832 and 1867 democracy was a bogeyman, a threat to be held up as a sign of how things could go wrong.[25] However, by the mid-1860s there was little disagreement in Parliament that reform was necessary and that it needed to include a significant working-class enfranchisement.[26] This was the work of William Gladstone, who argued that parliamentary reform could be used to incorporate the working-class aristocracy into the existing political hierarchy to prevent the risk of socialism gaining a foothold in Britain.[27] Gladstone introduced a bill in 1866 which would have added only a few hundred thousand new voters; mostly shopkeepers and artisans who were known to be mostly pro-Liberal.[28] There was intense criticism of that bill by both sides as a large part of the Liberal party wanted universal manhood suffrage and the Conservative party desired a more selective electorate.[29] Disagreement over the terms of the bill ultimately led to John Russell and Gladstone's resignation and a minority Conservative government in which Benjamin Disraeli proposed a bill more progressive than the initial bill proposed by Gladstone.[30] Jon Lawrence calls this bill a

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[25] Hugh Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy: Britain 1832-1918* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 102.
[26] Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics 1848-1867: The Making of the Second Reform Act* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 265.
[27] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 138.
[28] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 99.
[29] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 139.
[30] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 99.

giant leap towards urban male democracy with the introduction of a male householder

franchise to urban Britain, which saw the electorate grow to 1.7 million voters by the

mid-1870s.[31]

　　This bill, which eventually became the Second Reform Act granted household

suffrage to men in the boroughs of Britain; an extension which Disraeli and the

Conservative party likely saw as the necessary price to pay for remaining in power.[32]

Under the initial bill proposed by Gladstone, the Liberal party had only offered to extend

the franchise to the middle class, whereas the Conservative bill proposed by Disraeli

extended the franchise to the urban working class in an attempt to convert them to

dependable Conservative voters.[33] Whether or not this move had the intended outcome is

questionable, as the Conservative party was out of power after a general election in 1868.

Martin Pugh echoes this sentiment, arguing that the Second Reform Act did little to help

Conservatives directly, with the general election of 1868 returning a larger majority for

Liberals than they had usually enjoyed, and for a time led to many Conservatives

condemning Disraeli for his folly in attempting to outflank the radicals.[34]

　　However, the Second Reform Act did have significant impacts on the political

landscape of Britain in the two decades between the Second and Third Reform Acts.

With the expansion of the electorate among working class voters in Britain's industrial

centers, the two major political parties became national parties rather than regional

ones.[35] The Second Reform Act also had the effect of making alternating governments

[31] Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 43.

[32] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 140-1

[33] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 141.

[34] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 99.

[35] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 143.

more frequent; a substantial change from the near generation of power that had been

enjoyed by the Liberal party between 1846 and 1867.[36]

Pugh takes a favorable view of the Second Reform Act, seeing three key impacts

of the reform. The first of those effects was to stimulate the organization of radical

pressure on parliamentarians in favor of further franchise reform.[37] Pugh also sees

significant changes in the electoral system; both Gladstone's introduction of the secret

ballot in in 1872 and a bill to place limits on election expenditure and penalties for

corrupt practices in 1883 made politics more open and democratic.[38] Finally, Pugh claims

that the Second Reform Act led to the Third Reform Act in 1885, when the qualifications

of the 1867 Act were extended to working men in the counties and increasing the

electorate to five and a half million voters.[39]

According to Lawrence, the Second Reform Act brought with it an increased

sensitivity among the British people towards the persistence of disorder in public politics,

with many observers noting an increase in electoral violence at the 1868 elections.[40]

However, Lawrence is also sure not to simply take those observers at their word and see

1867 as a watershed for the increase of electoral violence. Instead, Lawrence sees events

after the Second Reform Act as a result of the changing nature of public opinion and how

it was expressed. He argues that:

> What changed after 1867 was not so much the level of disorder, as the
> political and social context in which disorder was understood. In many
> boroughs non-voters were for the first time in a minority, at least among adult
> males, and traditional rituals that had symbolized their inclusion in the
> political system, such as public nomination at the hustings and the ritual

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[36] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 144.
[37] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 99.
[38] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 100.
[39] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 100.
[40] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters,* 44.

aspects of public voting, came to be seen as dangerous anachronisms which threatened to impede the smooth absorption of the new voters into orderly and rational electoral politics.[41]

Thus, the electoral violence that is sometimes associated with the 1867 Reform Act is not necessarily a direct result of the act itself, but instead an increased sensitivity to the violence as more people were becoming enfranchised and the old traditions of public politics were falling by the wayside.

John Vincent, in his work studying the Second Reform Act and its effects on Lancashire, sees significant impacts of the Second Reform Act on British politics. His argument is that the major impact of the Second Reform Act was the changes in the distribution of seats in Lancashire.[42] According to Vincent, this redistribution altered the number of members returned to Parliament for each party, and attributes that change more to the changes in each constituency rather than any change in the electorate itself.[43] He does however concede that the Second Reform Act brought about some significant indirect changes in the make up the electorate in Lanchashire in terms of rural versus urban elements. He claims that while the 1832 £10 freehold franchise worked against the rural laborers in Lancashire, the 1867 ratepayer franchise worked in their favor, especially at a time when the Cotton Famine had caused a reduction in the industrial population.[44] Vincent argues that this increase in the electorate at a time that Conservatives were favored among rural laborers was part of the reason that rural

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[41] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters,* 44-5.
[42] John Vincent, "The Effect of the Second Reform Act in Lancashire," *The Historical Journal* 11, no. 1 (1968): 86.
[43] Vincent, "The Effect of the Second Reform Act in Lancashire," 86.
[44] Vincent, "The Effect of the Second Reform Act in Lancashire," 87.

Lancashire saw in increase in the number of Conservatives returned to Parliament in the 1868 general election.[45]

Some historians have taken a more measured view of the Second Reform Act. Parry examines the Second Reform Act through the lens of its four stated objectives: male household suffrage, limiting that suffrage through a series of restrictions based on taxation, a high occupation franchise, and the limited redistribution of seats.[46] While it is clear to Parry that the Second Reform Act achieved those goals, it is because of those goals that he argues that the Act has had a very narrow scope of effectiveness. Like the Reform Act of 1832, the limited nature of seat redistribution on Parliament meant that in the following elections, there was not a significant change in its composition.[47] Hugh Cunningham reaches essentially the same conclusion as Parry, although addresses the issue by considering the provisions of the Second Reform Act under two heads: the extension of the franchise and the redistribution of seats in Parliament.[48] On the first account, Cunningham gives a critical assessment of the Second Reform Act, stating that before 1867 the franchise had been extended to roughly one in five men in England and Wales, but by 1869 that figure had only risen to around one in three.[49] That meant that nearly two-thirds of the adult male population and the entirety of the female population was without a vote.[50] The largest increase in the franchise of course came in the boroughs, and as such led to an uneven distribution of voting power, clustered in urban centers with agricultural laborers being left out of the political equation. For

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[45] Vincent, "The Effect of the Second Reform Act in Lancashire," 87.
[46] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 213-4.
[47] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 216-7.
[48] Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy,* 103.
[49] Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy,* 104.
[50] Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy,* 104.

Cunningham, it was this uneven distribution of political power that was the largest failure

of the measure to increase the size of the electorate under the Second Reform Act.[51]

Cunningham also had significant criticism of the Second Reform Act's limited attempts

to redistribute seats in Parliament. Those provisions were driven by the Conservatives'

desires to consolidate their strength in the counties, and as such sought to increase the

number of county seats to the detriment of urban constituencies.[52] This led to urban

constituencies of fewer than 10,000 voters losing one or both of their MPs, which

released 52 seats, 25 of which were given to newly created seats in the counties.[53]

Despite this effort at redistribution, several anomalies still remained, with Wiltshire and

Dorset, a constituency of 450,000 retaining 25 MPs while London had only 24 MPs for a

population of over three million.[54] To sum up his thoughts on the Second Reform Act,

Cunningham concludes by saying, "The practice of politics retained many elements of

the world before 1867 – or before 1832.[55]

The third piece of the trio of major parliamentary reforms of the nineteenth

century was the Third Reform Act of 1884-5. While often referred to as a singular entity,

the Third Reform Act consists of two major pieces of legislation: The Representation of

the People Act of 1884 and the Redistribution Act of 1885. These two acts were a

response to the inequality in the electoral system remaining after the 1832 and 1867

reforms.[56] In the years following the Second Reform Act in 1867, the Liberal party

maintained hegemonic control over Parliament, accelerating the pace of reforming

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[51] Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy,* 104.
[52] Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy,* 104.
[53] Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy,* 104.
[54] Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy,* 104.
[55] Cunningham, *The Challenge of Democracy,* 105.
[56] Sean Lang, *Parliamentary Reform 1785-1928* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1993), 103.

legislation drastically under the leadership of William Ewart Gladstone.[57] Most of these reforms were targeted at the working-class, particularly in the fields of education and local government reform designed at ending corruption.[58] However, the most important of the Liberal policies from 1874 forward was their commitment to further electoral reform, the most significant of which was a commitment to household suffrage.[59] In the late 1870s and early 1880s Gladstone drew the ire of Liberals in Parliament by abandoning the party platform in favor of reversing Disraeli's imperial policies.[60] Matters were worsened by the disruption of Irish Liberals in Parliament, who supported none of Gladstone's measures save the 1881 Land Act, which led to the departure of some of the aristocratic Whigs from the Liberal party. Facing disappointment from all sectors of the Liberal party, Gladstone introduced the Third Reform Act, increasing the number of voters to around 5.7 million, which amounted to sixty percent of the male population being enfranchised by 1885.[61] When taken together, the two acts comprising the Third Reform Act extended the urban enfranchisement of the Second Reform Act into the counties and essentially established the modern single seat constituencies in Parliament.[62] Thus, the Third Reform Act became the point at which Parliament opened its doors to the suburbs. Through the redistribution of seats in Parliament, the new seats were given largely to suburban areas, which were overwhelmingly middle-class areas and were mostly Conservative.[63] The 1884 reform did not introduce a wider franchise; it only extended the provisions of the 1867 Act into the counties, without altering the basic

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[57] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 236.
[58] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 237.
[59] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government, 280.*
[60] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 105.
[61] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 106.
[62] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 103.
[63] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 106.

thinking on who should and should not have the vote.[64] However, the Third Reform Act

did change the nature of the political nation in the years following 1884-5. The most

radical feature of the reform was the new redistribution of seats, which broke up the old

country constituencies and with them the traditional bonds of patronage and deference.[65]

The Third Reform Act also created new constituencies in heavily urban, working-class

areas of major cities, making class the most important determining factor in major

cities.[66] By creating a framework for a class-based political system, the Third Reform Act

was more of a step towards democracy than either its framers or its critics ever allowed

for.[67]

    It is this step toward democracy that sets the Third Reform Act apart from its

predecessors in 1832 and 1867. Although not intentional in nature, by enfranchising the

working-class in the counties and redistributing seats in Parliament, the Third Reform

Act set Britain further along the path towards true democracy. Lawrence goes so far as to

claim that the Third Reform Act was instrumental in initiating the emancipation of the

agricultural laborer.[68] He goes on to argue that:

> Within a decade elected county and parish councils existed alongside the
> new, more democratic Parliamentary divisions and the parties found
> themselves dragged inexorably into a competition for the farm laborer's vote.
> Reform heralded an explosion of political meetings across the countryside.
> As late as 1884 one still finds local Conservative parties such as the Oswestry
> Association holding no political meetings at all outside elections for dear that
> they might stir their quiescent radical foes into action. But once 'John Hodge'
> had the vote such an approach was unthinkable, not least because agricultural
> laborers were thought to be all but immune to traditional means of political
> persuasion.[69]

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[64] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 106.
[65] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 108.
[66] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 108.
[67] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 108.
[68] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters,* 69.
[69] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters,* 70.

For Lawrence, the enfranchisement of the agricultural laborer had significant importance

for the nature of political discourse. Many in the party organizations assumed that the

new rural voters were poorly educated and incapable of understanding political

pamphlets or fancy campaign prose.[70] As such, politicians were reminded to 'keep things

simple' for their largely uneducated and indifferent voters, noting that voters were much

more likely to be swayed by passionate campaign oratory than by policy and campaign

platforms.[71] Thus, one of the most significant impacts of the Third Reform Act was,

according to Lawrence, an alteration in the relationship between MPs and their

constituencies, as evidenced by language used on the campaign trail and in political

meetings.

Mary Chadwick takes a similar stance on the impact of the Third Reform Act on

the relationship between government and the people in the last years of he nineteenth

century. However, rather than examining the change in political discourse, Chadwick

instead chooses to examine the redistribution of seats. For her, the largest benefit of the

Third Reform Act was the creation of new seats in heavily urban areas, with the ratio

between the largest and smallest electorates being 1:8 rather than 1:250 as it had been in

the years before 1885.[72] For Chadwick, the importance of this redistribution was that for

the first time, the metropolis finally received adequate representation in Parliament.[73]

Once this redistribution was completed, the increased representation of the urban

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[70] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters,* 70.
[71] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters,* 70.
[72] Mary Chadwick, "The Role of Redistribution in the Making of the Third Reform Act," *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 3 (1976): 683.
[73] Chadwick, "The Role of Redistribution," 683.

working-class through the creation of single member districts created a system in which

the two major parties had to make a more concerted effort to appeal to potential voters.

Sean Lang takes a more critical view of the Third Reform Act, arguing that it did

not do enough to usher in true democracy. He claims that despite the franchise extension

of 1884, forty percent of the male working-class were still without the vote, as were all

women.[74] He continues by arguing that even though the vote was expanded into the

counties the old ties of patronage still existed in the counties, and that with no campaign

to free agricultural laborers from the system of deference, the old ways in the counties

was slow to die.[75] Lang also has criticism for the Redistribution Act, claiming that the

creation of new seats in the counties forced suburban votes to be either included in the

county seats, in which their mostly Conservative votes did not matter, or in urban districts

where their votes were not enough to have an impact on the ultimate outcome of any

election.[76] He argues that the Third Reform Act did not introduce democracy because the

government did not believe in it. Instead, Lang suggests that popular politics remained an

essentially intellectual affair and that the extension of the 1867 franchise did not indicate

an change in the basic thinking of who should and should not be allowed to vote.[77]

This thesis is split into five chapters, with each discussing a specific aspect of

British politics at the time of the Third Reform Act. Chapter 2 covers the Conservative

ascendancy of the last two decades of the Victorian period and how the changes brought

by the Third Reform Act enabled this ascendancy. Chapter 3 looks at the Liberal party

disintegration during the same period and how the Liberal party's inability to appeal to

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[74] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 104.
[75] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 104.
[76] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 106.
[77] Lang, *Parliamentary Reform,* 108.

popular opinion caused their fall from power. Chapter 4 explores the effects of the Third

Reform Act on the Irish Home Rule crisis. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the effects of the

Third Reform Act on the importance of pressure groups. Chapter 5 focuses on

sociopolitical pressure groups and how reformers outside of government exerted pressure

on Parliament to implement changes to British society and politics. Chapter 6 focuses on

economic pressure groups and how MPs were influenced by public opinion in their

implementation of economic reforms. When taken together these chapters will provide a

more complete picture of how the Third Reform Act created a political system which was

more democratic than that which had existed before the Act became law.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITY DURING THE CONSERVATIVE

ASCENDANCY

The twenty years following the passage of the Third Reform Act, from 1886-

1906, saw a Conservative ascendancy, during which, the Conservative Party reversed

almost forty years of political minority and served as the majority ruling party for nearly

the entire twenty-year period, with only a three-year period of Liberal government under

Gladstone and then Lord Rosebery from 1892 until 1895.[78] This period has been the

subject of intensive study from historians, with differing opinions on the causes and

importance of the Conservative return to power. Martin Pugh argues that the

Conservative return to power was caused by a sea change in British politics. Pugh states

that during this time the middle classes and Whig aristocrats were anxious to join the

Conservative party in a defense of property and other British institutions from the threat

of radicalism, socialism, and Irish nationalism. Many of the radical grievances at this

point had been satisfied, and those Nonconformists now within the political system were

more inclined to vote for the Conservative party, especially in the face of external threats

in the form of colonial rivalry and the Anglo-German naval race which together created a

more nationalistic mood with helped the Conservative party by pushing domestic issues

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[78] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*, 302.

off the agenda.[79] Jonathan Parry takes a different view; arguing that the rise of

Conservative party power was caused solely by the disintegration of the Liberal party

resulting from the Irish Home Rule crisis. Parry claims that the sectionalism and

radicalism of the Liberal party allowed the Conservative party to coalesce around a

nationalistic platform of maintaining the Empire in full.[80] Parry's argument that the

Conservative rise to power was solely caused by Liberal disintegration may be due to his

focus on the fortunes of Liberal government, but is nonetheless too narrow an

interpretation. A more accurate and thorough explanation for the rise of the Conservative

party from 1886-1906 comes from Jon Lawrence who provides a multifaceted

explanation across two works. Lawrence argues that the Conservative party's ascendancy

was caused in part by the active efforts of the party to persuade the urban working and

middle classes to vote for their candidates, and because of the disintegration of the

Liberal party in the midst of the Irish Home Rule crisis.[81]

The passage of the Third Reform Act created a political system in which direct

appeal to the newly enfranchised working classes was a necessity. While it is true that the

working classes in the cities had been given the franchise in 1867, the redistribution of

seats under the Third Reform Act created single member districts in industrial cities,

which meant that both Liberal and Conservative candidates had to appeal more

effectively and directly to the currents of public opinion to persuade their constituencies

rather than relying on traditional voting patterns, as seen by the sharp decline in

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[79] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789*, 107.

[80] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 308-9.

[81] Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 200-1; Jon Lawrence, "Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914," *The English Historical Review* 108 no, 428 (1993): 629.

uncontested returns in the 1885 election which was the first held since passage of the

Third Reform Act.[82] This reliance on currents of public opinion for electoral success was

beneficial for the Conservative party as they had a broader coalition than did the Liberal

party, and sought to maintain the status quo, whereas the Liberals were more focused on

unpopular social reform campaigns advocated for by a minority of potential voters. This

change is seen in Leeds, which was a three-member constituency in the years 1868-1885,

then split into five single member districts following the Third Reform Act.[83] This change

resulted in political power being more closely correlated with population in districts

across Britain, with the difference in population from the largest to smallest district being

8-1 after the Third Reform Act, whereas it had been 250-1 before the Act's passage.[84]

This redistribution, combined with the middle-class flight to the suburbs had caused the

towns and cities of Britain to become increasingly cohesive working-class

communities.[85]

Ultimately, it was the Conservative party that was best prepared for this new

challenge, and thus it was the Conservative party that gained enough support of the

middle and working classes to return to power. The Conservative party employed two

strategies to achieve this political advantage over their Liberal party counterparts. The

first was an appeal to middle-class industrialists in urban areas, the so-called "Villa

Tories." By reasserting their role as the defenders of property, the Conservatives were

able to maintain the support of the middle-class that they had enjoyed throughout the

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[82] Luke Blaxill, "Electioneering, the Third Reform Act, and Political Change in the 1880s," *Parliamentary History* 30, no 3. (2011): 346.
[83] Matthew Roberts, "'Villa Toryism' and Popular Conservatism in Leeds, 1885-1902," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 1 (2006): 220-1.
[84] Chadwick, "The Role of Redistribution," 683.
[85] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People,* 29.

nineteenth century. The second strategy employed was one aimed towards gaining the support of the newly enfranchised working classes in the wake of the Third Reform Act. To achieve this, the Conservatives sought to associate themselves with aspects of Victorian working-class culture. By sponsoring social clubs, associating with football teams, and defending the drink, the Conservatives presented themselves as more in touch with working-class values than the Liberal party which, in an attempt to gain more middle-class support overlooked working-class values because of the obsession with moral reform agenda of faddists.[86]

The dramatic rise of the Conservative party in 1886 was mirrored by the split and collapse of the Liberal party. The Liberal party split, caused by differences over the Irish Home Rule question occurred at the same time the Conservative ascendancy began, and was a major cause of the Conservative rise to power. The Liberal party split was not the sole cause for the rise of the Conservative party in the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century, but it was a major factor, as disaffected Liberals caucused with the Tories following the Irish Home Rule Crisis. The ineptitude of the Liberal party in appealing to its voters cannot be seen as the sole cause for the rise of the Conservative party either. To suggest either of those causes as the primary culprit would be to imply that the rise of Conservative party power was merely a passive benefit from the collapse of Liberal government. Instead, the Conservative ascendancy was caused by an active effort of the part of the Conservative party to expand their political organization and appeal to a newly expanded electorate and aided passively by internal strife within the Liberal party. By appealing to broad sections of the British polity, the Conservative party was able to

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[86] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 635.

solidify their support among the middle-class by presenting themselves as the defenders of propertied interests and the Empire, especially during the Irish Home Rule Crisis, while gaining significant enough support from the working-class by appealing to working-class culture and defending "English" values to gain a victory over the Liberal party.

The Conservative ascendancy in the late Victorian period is a subject that has received much attention from historians in the latter half of the twentieth century. The discussion of the Conservative rise to power has fallen into two schools. On the one hand, the Conservative rise to power is a product of the active efforts of the Conservative party to solidify support among their upper and middle-class and attempts to appeal to the newly enfranchised working-class voters after the Third Reform Act in 1885.[87] On the other, the Conservative party merely benefits from Liberal ineptitude in the late-Victorian period, only coming to power because of the split in the Liberal party caused by the controversial adoption of Irish Home Rule as a central tenet of the Liberal party platform. To best understand this debate, it is useful to examine the interpretation of the Conservative party's efforts, the Liberal party's ineptitude, and the Liberal split in 1885-6.[88]

Villa Toryism is the brand of Toryism that appealed to the middle-class. Matthew Roberts contributes to the argument that the Conservative ascendancy was a result of their own efforts. He explains that Conservatives were able to appeal to the newly enfranchised masses by rejecting the cold Liberal doctrines of utilitarianism and moral

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[87] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 635; Roberts, "Changing Context," 487; Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 227.
[88] W. C. Lubenow. "Irish Home Rule and the Social Basis of the Great Separation in the Liberal Party in 1886." *The Historical Journal* 28, no. 1 (1985): 126.

improvement, and instead focused on the old Tory-radical tradition.[89] In his study of

Villa Toryism in Leeds, Roberts explains that the driving force behind efforts to diminish

middle-class support for the Liberal Party was Leeds Church Extension Society, which

sought to build more churches.[90] This is indicative of the Conservative efforts to present

themselves as the defenders of the Established Church of England, which resonated with

the middle-class. The importance of the Established Church to Conservative support is

important not just religious grounds, however. The party's support of the Establish

Church also appealed to their jingoistic defense of Empire, as the Established Church

stood for Empire and Protestantism, in contrast to the devolution and Catholicism

associated with Irish Home Rule.

Roberts also shows Conservative efforts to gain support among the working-

classes and is quick to counter historians who claim that working-class Conservatism is

merely political deviancy.[91] He shows that the Conservative actively campaigned to gain

working-class support by presenting themselves as a non-ideological and pragmatic

party.[92] This effort to appeal to the working-class is echoed by Jon Lawrence, who shows

how the Conservative party deliberately associated themselves with aspects of urban

society such as public houses, football, and racing to distinguish themselves from the

moral reforming Liberals.[93]

The necessity of more effectively organizing the urban working-classes for

Conservative politics is seen in a meeting of the Conservative Party, as reported in the

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[89] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 222.
[90] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 227-9.
[91] Matthew Roberts, "Popular Conservatism in Britain, 1832-1914," *Parliamentary History* 26, no. 3 (2007): 387-8.
[92] Roberts, "Popular Conservatism," 399-402.
[93] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 638.

Leeds Mercury on 23 May 1887. Party leaders claimed that the Conservatives had long been guilty of understating the value of a careful and exact organization.[94] In this meeting Conservative leaders called on the party to effectively organize to counter the extant National Liberal Federation (NLF) and National League, which had been promoting Liberal ideas. They believed that Conservative power in government, which had been lacking since the 1840s had never equaled the real extent and predominance of Conservative ideals amongst the people of Britain. It was suggested that Liberal success could be attributed to their alliance with the Nonconformists because while the Established Church and Wesleyans (traditional Conservative allies) had no interest in becoming involved in politics, the Nonconformists did not share that same conviction. The presiding speaker of the meeting closed with a call to action for the Party to appeal to labor organizations and the church, without which the Radicals would be left powerless. The speaker claimed that organizing for the party will be "no work which the Conservative Club will find more useful to the party and the country than in stimulating organisations of this kind, and carrying them out to the fullest limits and to the most remote corners of the country."[95]

However, not all historians agree that the Conservative party regained power because of their own efforts to appeal to voters. Hugh Stephens argues instead that the Third Reform Act played a significant role in creating the Conservative ascendancy. According to Stephens, by the 1880s the distinction between county and borough was essentially non-existent, and that the Reform Act narrowed the gap between the two

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[94] "The Conservative Party." *The Leeds Mercury,* 23 May, 1887.
[95] "The Conservative Party." *The Leeds Mercury,* 23 May, 1887.

parties ideologically, making it easier for the Liberal Unionists to jump ship.[96] Thus, the changing electoral circumstances were the driving factor behind the Conservative ascendancy, rather than any efforts on the part of Conservatives to improve their fortunes.[97] This interpretation is supported by reports around the 1886 general election, which pointed to the Liberal government being defeated because of an alliance between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservative party.[98] This alliance is seen in the speech delivered by Peter Macliver during the 1886 general election. Macliver claims that his opponent in that election had initially come forward as a Liberal but had since been adopted into the Liberal Unionist fold. Macliver goes on to claim that his opponent was going to be welcomed into the Conservative party the very night of his speech.[99] However, this Stephens's interpretation of the Conservative ascendancy makes too much of the ideological similarities between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservative party. While these two parties agreed on their opposition to Home Rule, that should not be taken as an indication that they collaborated on a broad spectrum of policy. In the years following the defeat of Gladstone's Irish Home Rule measure, the Liberal Unionists were putting forward the same radical policies they had advocated for when they were competing against the Conservatives as part of the Liberal party.[100] This shows that although the alliance between the Conservative party and the Liberal Unionists party was effective in defeating the Irish Home Rule measure, the claim that ideological similarities

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[96] Hugh W. Stephens, "The Changing Context of British Politics in the 1880s: The Reform Acts and the Formation of the Liberal Unionist Party," *Social Science History* 1, no. 4 (1977): 499.
[97] Stephens, "Changing Context," 491.
[98] "The Defeat of the Government," *The Leeds Mercury,* 9 June 1886; "The Political Crisis," *Glasgow Herald,* 9 June 1886; "The Outlook," *The Pall Mall Gazette,* 10 June 1886; *"The Political Situation,"* *Birmingham Daily Post,* 11 June 1886; "The Parties of the Future," *Birmingham Daily Post*, 29 June 1887.
[99] "The General Election," *Glasgow Herald,* 29 June 1886.
[100] "The Evening Post," *The Nottingham Evening Post,* 5 November 1889; "Political Meetings," *Reynold's Newspaper.* 1 February 1891.

between the two parties made it easier for Liberal Unionists to jump ship to the Conservative party lacks nuance.

The Third Reform Act meant that previously large electoral constituencies were broken up into smaller, single member districts, as seen in Leeds where the three member constituency was split into five new districts.[101] The ultimate effect here is the democratization of politics, and the beginning of what Joseph Chamberlain referred to as 'government of the people, by the people.'[102] It is from this point that issues of the condition of the poor, the legitimacy of wealth and property, and Irish Home Rule were to feature prominently as permanent fixtures of the political agenda.[103]

Rather than examining the Conservative party's efforts to garner support among the middle and working-class voters, some historians instead choose to view the Conservative ascendancy through a framework centered around Liberal ineptitude. Although not giving it primacy in his argument, Jon Lawrence takes this view in his work on Urban Toryism, arguing that popular Toryism emerged as a critique of Liberal machine politics.[104] Other historians have also claimed that Liberal ineptitude in appealing to their constituencies created a situation in which the Conservatives could return to power. Hammond argues that the Liberal party split was caused by a clash of social class. His argument has lost some credibility over time, but should nevertheless be considered for its assessment that Home Rule was the turning point in British history.[105] Biagini claims that the Liberal party's failure to adequately mobilize their political

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[101] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 220-1.
[102] Blaxill, "Electioneering," 346.
[103] Blaxill, "Electioneering," 346-7.
[104] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 635.
[105] Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876-1906*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)*,* 12.

organization led to the rank-and-file party members challenging party leadership over the future of party policy.[106] Fraser argues along this line, stating that Liberal policy regarding property and reform created the wave of opinion needed for the Liberal Unionists to carry their support to the Conservative party.[107] Lawrence continues that the Liberal commitment to moral reform damaged their ability to appeal to the working-class.[108]

Finally, it is important to examine the way that the Liberal party split has been interpreted by historians over time. Initially, the social conflict theory gained much traction among historians.[109] This can be seen in the writing of Annie Porritt, writing shortly before the First World War, in which she explains that the Home Rule vote split the Liberal Party, causing the dissolution of Parliament and the creation of a Conservative government with a 118 member majority.[110] Lubenow asserts that many of Gladstone's contemporaries agreed with this social conflict theory, seeing it the reason for the Liberal Unionist defection.[111]

However, Lubenow himself rejects the social conflict theory, instead favoring the idea that the Liberal party split because of political rather than social reasons. He shows that despite the Liberal Unionist defection Gladstone still held the majority of all classes,

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[106] Biagini, *British Democracy,* 13.

[107] P. Fraser, "The Liberal Unionist Alliance: Chamberlain, Hartington, and the Conservatives, 1886-1904," *The English Historical Review* 77, no. 302 (1962): 66.

[108] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 644.

[109] The social conflict theory is an historical framework adopted by historians in the first half of the twentieth century. This theory comes from the Marxist view of history as a struggle between social classes. Here, the struggle is between the working classes who historians have viewed as supporting Irish Home Rule, and the propertied classes who historians have argued tended to support the maintenance of Empire. Thus, the Liberal party split was caused by the exodus of landed Whigs to the Liberal Unionist party.

[110] Annie G. Porritt, "The Irish Home Rule Bill," *Political Science Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1913): 304.

[111] Lubenow, "Irish Home Rule," 127.

and that the party split over issues that did not fit properly into the Liberal agenda.[112]

Stephens agrees with Lubenow, arguing that by the time of the 1886 election the two

parties had become similar, and that this made it easier for the Liberal Unionists to

defect.[113] This is echoed by Fraser, who argued that by 1892 Chamberlain had moved

closer to the Conservatives than some of his Liberal Unionist allies including

Hartington.[114] Fraser argues that the line between Conservative and Liberal had blurred in

the aftermath of the Third Reform Act, and that while Irish Home Rule may have played

a role in the initial split of the Liberal party it did not factor significantly in the permanent

separation of the Liberal Unionists.[115] Fraser's argument should be discounted however,

as the split between Liberals and Liberal Unionists was a permanent one, and the central

point of contention in that split was the Irish Home Rule issue, which remained

unresolved until after the First World War.[116]

The traditional bastion of Conservative party support during the nineteenth

century was the landed class. However, during the latter portions of the nineteenth

century, there was also a significant defection of middle-class voters to the Conservative

party, a fact that is given little attention or significance by those who promote the

'electoral sociological' explanation of the rise of the Conservative party.[117] This

movement of middle-class voters to the Conservative party, "Villa Tories" as they came

to be known, were a broad-based coalition of voters and represented a self-reliant,

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[112] Lubenow, "Irish Home Rule," 139.
[113] Stephens, "Changing Context," 499.
[114] Fraser, "Liberal Unionist Alliance," 63.
[115] Fraser, "Liberal Unionist Alliance," 63.
[116] Karen Stanbridge, "Nationalism, International Factors and the 'Irish Question' in the Era of the First World War," *Nations and Nationalism* 11 no. 1 (2005), 22.
[117] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 218.

hierarchical version of Conservatism.[118] The Conservative party was able to entice this

contingent of voters in the late nineteenth century through a concerted campaign designed

to take votes away from the Liberal party. By presenting themselves as the defenders of

propertied, especially the urban property interests, the Conservative party was able to

persuade factory owners who were concerned over Liberal party factory reforms. The

Conservative party also gained the support of the middle-class through their support of

the Empire, as maintaining the status quo was seen as a benefit for industrialists who

relied on imperial markets. By appealing to the economic interests of the middle-class the

Conservative party was able to break the Liberal party dominance over the borough seats.

In the new system of electoral politics brought about by the Third Reform Act, this was

an indictment of Liberal party machine politics, which many middle-class and working-

class voters felt was putting the interests of the party over the interests of the nation.

     As can be seen in the case of Leeds, the Conservative party mounted an

aggressive campaign to stamp out middle-class liberalism, both to rally and reassure their

supporters to and expand their traditional voting base beyond Anglican supporters.[119]

According to Matthew Roberts:

> The active pursuit of what was increasingly termed 'moderate Liberal support'
> by the Leeds Conservative party, which presented itself as the defender of
> property against the threat of a radicalized Liberal party, dated from the early
> 1870s. This led the Conservative party to exaggerate both the power of the
> radicals within the Liberal party, nationally and locally, and the disruptive
> and destructive effects of the radical programme.[120]

Thus, the Conservative party was making an active effort to court middle-class voters

away from the Liberal party. As suggested by Roberts, this effort was necessary for the

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[118] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 220.
[119] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 227.
[120] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 227.

Conservative party to be electorally relevant, because contrary to previous interpretations, Villadom was not always the electoral heartland of the late-Victorian Conservative party.[121] Instead, the enfranchisement and redistribution of seats created by the Third Reform Act created pockets of Conservative party support in the suburbs and industrial areas; areas in which the Conservative party had to work hard to maintain support.[122] With this shift in the electoral landscape, the Conservative Party looked for a new way to appeal to voters and gain support in those pockets.

To maintain that support, the Conservative party attacked the Liberal party as being concerned with socialist land reform legislation and claimed that the Liberal party could not be trusted with property rights and landed interests.[123] The Conservative leader Salisbury argued that all propertied classes had a reason to be afraid of the Liberal party's land reform policy, specifically naming the Irish Land Bill as socialist.[124]

The Third Reform Act caused a shift in the electoral landscape, which also led to a shift in Conservative party strategy. Unlike the Conservative party of previous years, the late-Victorian Conservative party became increasingly interested in the urban propertied elites, spurred by the redistribution of seats skewing electoral political in favor of the boroughs.[125] Through this campaign, the Conservative party was able to solidify their hold over the 'white-collar' professionals living in the suburbs.[126] To gain the support of the urban elites, the Conservative party employed a strategy of using local notables to stand for office and boost Conservative party commitment to civic

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[121] Roberts, "Popular Conservatism," 392.
[122] Roberts, "Popular Conservatism," 392.
[123] E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the British Conservative Party, 1880-1914*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 79.
[124] Green, *Crisis of Conservatism,* 81.
[125] Green, *Crisis of Conservatism,* 101.
[126] Green, *Crisis of Conservatism,* 103.

engagement in the community. This caused the urban elites to attach their identity and significance to the Conservative party and overcame their hesitance to support unknowns standing for office.[127]

Part of this middle-class support for the Conservative party, especially in the cities also came from a dissatisfaction with Liberal party machine politics. As Lawrence states:

> Central to this reaction was popular suspicion of machine politics as epitomized by Joseph Chamberlain's Birmingham Liberal Association -- the so-called Birmingham caucus. In the larger cities, where the caucus was generally most conspicuous, Conservative politicians seized on latent antagonism towards party as an essential element in the construction of an alternative, non-Radical political discourse. This discourse shared Radicalism's traditional concern with political exclusion, but the emphasis was now shifted from the exclusiveness of a restrictive franchise, to the exclusiveness of organized politics. The new Tory politics were not, therefore, simply a dry critique of organizational procedures within the Liberal party. Rather, the Tory case against the caucus encapsulated a much broader critique of the changing nature of late Victorian Liberalism.[128]

Many of the leaders of the urban Conservative party were wealthy merchants and manufacturers who had become disenchanted with the machine politics of the Liberal party and the changing nature of Victorian liberalism. According to them, the Liberal party had been hijacked by fanatical Nonconformists and faddists, an attack designed to paint the Liberal party as a close-minded and static sect that had lost its purpose and direction.[129] According to the Conservative party, the Liberal party's obsession with faddism had caused them to give up their libertarian philosophy on individual liberty, instead focusing on a 'coercive' model of state-sponsored reform without regard for social customs.[130] The final critique of Liberal party machine politics was the that this

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[127] Green, *Crisis of Conservatism,* 101-4.
[128] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 635.
[129] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 636.
[130] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 637.

preoccupation with moral reform caused the Liberal party to put their own interests above those of the nation.[131] The Conservative party offered instead a 'One Nation' program based around patriotic and anti-faddist rhetoric to construct politics of the non-political.[132] This policy allowed the Conservative party to gain the support of the urban middle-class by appealing to their patriotism and pragmatism.

Thus, the Conservative ascendancy of 1886-1906 saw the Conservative party replace the Liberal party as the governing power in Britain after a forty-year period of Liberal party domination. This was done by a concerted effort on the part of Conservative party organization to appeal to new constituencies while maintaining their support from the traditional power bases. The middle-class remained a stronghold of Conservative party power because of Conservative party efforts to present themselves as the defenders of property. This helped bring urban industrialists into the conservative fold, as they viewed the Conservative party as being most likely to protect their interests. The working-class was incorporated into the Conservative party following the implementation of the Third Reform Act because of an active Conservative party effort to appeal to the new voters. This was accomplished through associating the Conservative party with aspects of urban working-class culture such as leisure and the drink. This is seen through the establishment of Conservative party social clubs. The *Leamington Spa Courier and Warwickshire Standard* reported that in the years immediately following the Third Reform Act, Conservative organization had been extended extensively towards the middle and working-classes.[133] The Conservative party also defended the status quo of

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[131] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 638.
[132] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 231.
[133] "Benefits of a Provident Organization." *Leamington Spa Courier and Warwickshire Standard,* 7 August, 1886.

the Anglican Church, as the working-class was wooed by stability. The stability was also emphasized by appealing to the self-interest of the working-class. By presenting itself as the defender of the British Empire, the Conservative party was able to portray an image of a party concerned with protecting British industrial interests, which in turn meant that industrial workers would be able to enjoy regular employment and competitive wages.

However, it is not adequate or appropriate to only consider one cause of the Conservative ascendancy and the associated decline and split of the Liberal party. As demonstrated above, it is clear that the Conservative party played a major role in their own rise to power, but that does not discount the role that the Liberal party played in their own downfall. Lawrence, Hammond, and Biagini all give credence to the theory that the Liberal party was responsible for its own misfortunes in the years following the Third Reform Act.[134] The tensions within the Liberal party can be seen in 1885, as the London Correspondent for the *Ipswich Journal* argued that Chamberlain and his colleagues in government had good reason to be upset with the state of their party. According to this correspondent Jesse Collins had already caused a minor split in the Liberal party over agricultural reforms, and his propaganda campaign had cost the Liberal party a significant portion of its support from agricultural laborers.[135] Chamberlain is more pointed in his explanation of the split in the Liberal party and its subsequent failure to accomplish any of its goals. He places the blame squarely on the shoulders of Gladstone for being unable to compromise or move on from Irish Home Rule. The *Edinburgh Evening News* quotes Chamberlain's article about Disestablishment in Wales in the *Baptist* stating:

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[134] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 635. Biagini, *British Democracy,* 13.
[135] "Our London Correspondent," *Ipswich Journal,* 15 October 1885.

> Unfortunately at the very moment when the prospects of redress seem to be the most favourable, its has been overshadowed and darkened by the sudden introduction of a new subject of political contention, whose settlement may be long delayed. It may take ten or twenty years, or may even never be accomplished; but whether to process occupies a generation or a century "poor little Wales" must wait until Mr. Parnell is satisfied, and Mr. Gladstone's policy adopted. They will not wait alone…Thirty-two millions of people must go without much-needed legislation because three million are disloyal, while nearly 600 members of the Imperial Parliament will be reduced to forced inactivity because some 80 delegates, representing the policy and receiving the pay of the Chicago Convention, are determined to obstruct all business until their demands have been conceded.[136]

Chamberlain continues, claiming that as long as the Liberal party remains dedicated to Irish Home Rule, it will remain a shattered and impotent party.[137] The Liberal party's decline and eventual schism can also be partially explained by the hesitation of some members to change their way of thinking about political organization following the Third Reform Act. While political organizations were not new with the Third Reform Act, as the NLF had been founded in 1877, they Liberal party did not make as effective use of their political organizations as did their Conservative opponents in the two decades of Conservative ascendancy. William Clarke decried the new system of political organization, claiming it to be "machine politics" in the American style, and that this new organization would remove individual agency from politics altogether. Clarke argued that machine politics amounted to nothing more than wire-pulling and that although the political parties would remain, there would be no more valuable work for them to do.[138] Some were even more harsh in their criticism of the new political system than Clarke was. A correspondent from *The Nottingham Evening Post* stated that for an MP to freely speak his mind about the policy of his party leader was seen as the "highest of high

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[136] "Mr. Chamberlain on the Liberal Split," *Edinburgh Evening News,* 25 February 1887.
[137] "Mr. Chamberlain on the Liberal Split," *Edinburgh Evening News,* 25 February 1887.
[138] "Liberalism in Liverpool," *Liverpool Mercury etc,* 22 January 1884.

treason" in the eyes of the party machine.[139] This mistrust of political organization in the Liberal party can still be seen into the 1890s, as evidenced by Grant Lawson's rejection of a Justice of the Peace Bill on the grounds that it would "tend to foster political wire-pulling with regard to the magisterial bench."[140] This shows that the Liberal party was responsible for its own struggles because they were unable to effectively organize in the same way as the Conservative party.

Thus, the Conservative ascendancy of 1886-1906 was not merely a passive benefit of the disintegration of the Liberal party due to its own ineptitude. Instead, a more nuanced view of the Conservative ascendancy is required. One the one hand, the Conservative party did make a concerted effort to increase their organizational abilities in the years following the Third Reform Act. This increased ability to organize allowed to Conservative party to more accurately gauge public opinion and appeal to the newly enfranchised agricultural laborers. On the other hand, the Liberal party was largely responsible for their own decline and collapse in the years around the Third Reform Act. The party was unable to organize effectively due to trepidation over "machine politics" as explained above. This inability to organize left the party unable to draw significant support, especially in the years after 1886, when commitment to Irish Home Rule cause a split between Liberal and Liberal Unionists and made the Liberal party deeply unpopular for the next twenty years.

[139] Public Opinion," *The Nottingham Evening Post,* 30 December 1886.
[140] "Parliament," *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser,* 21 March 1895.

CHAPTER III

THE LATE VICTORIAN LIBERAL PARTY COLLAPSE

While the Conservative ascendancy was aided by the active efforts of the Conservative party to appeal to new sections of the electorate, the failings of the Liberal party during the same period must not be overlooked. It was from these failings that the Conservative party was able to draw much of its ammunition in the fight for electoral victory against the Liberal party. The Liberal party during this time decided on a policy course that became highly unpopular with voters and led to their decline in electoral relevance, and perhaps more importantly. Their schism from the Liberal Unionists. The first issue that plagued the Liberal party was their commitment to radical social reform. During this period the Liberal party, spurred by their Nonconformist supporters and MPs, attempted to introduce social reforms that proved to be deeply unpopular with their supporters. The Liberal party during this same time was losing support over what some claimed was their dependence on "faddists" to be politically relevant. Rohan McWilliam argues that these faddists (single-issue pressure groups) had become essential to the Liberal party by the late Victorian period and that Gladstone depended on their support to maintain his position as the leader of the government.[141] The Liberal party also suffered from organizational problems during this period which led to their decline. The NLF was

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[141] Rohan McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 1998), 67-8.

the largest Liberal organization at the time, but many were hesitant to join the

organization over fears that it would result in machine politics in the American style.[142]

Furthermore, there was some uncertainty about Gladstone as a leader. Many had expected

him to retire from politics and his return as Liberal party leader put a strain on the party.

Gladstone's leadership and his decision to tie the Liberal party to unpopular measures

like Irish Home Rule was the reason for the loss of Liberal power, and the eventual

schism with the Liberal Unionists.[143] Finally, the most pressing issue of the period, Irish

Home Rule, is also the issue that was responsible for the most tension within the Liberal

party. When Gladstone supported Irish Home Rule publicly in 1885, and tried to push the

issue through Parliament, he lost one third of the Liberal party in government, and the

unpopularity of the measure made the Liberal party politically irrelevant for most of the

next twenty years.[144] One of the reasons this measure was particularly unpopular was the

increasingly prominent nationalistic mood of the time, in which pride in the Empire was

growing and its maintenance became a major political tool. For some, the Gladstonian

support for the Irish Home Rule measure amounted to the first blow in the breakup of the

Empire.[145] As such, the Liberal party was derided for its desire to see the Empire

dismantled, which allowed the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives to improve their

electoral standings by coming out in support of the Empire.[146] When taken together,

these factors provide a picture of the Liberal party decline and ultimate dissolution in the

late nineteenth century. The years following the Third Reform Act were the first in a new

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[142] "Liberalism in Liverpool," *Liverpool Mercury etc,* 22 January 1884.
[143] D. A. Hamer, "The Irish Question and Liberal Politics, 1886-1894," *The Historical Journal* 12, no. 3 (1969): 524.
[144] Hamer, "The Irish Question," 524.
[145] "The General Election," *Daily News,* 1 July 1886.
[146] "The Political Situation," *Western Mail,* 1 May 1886.

era in which public opinion was much more important than had previously been the case. The Liberal party failed to effectively organize their base to convince new voters to support their party and the policies adopted by the Liberals during this period were also unpopular with the British electorate. The result of these failures was the decline of the Liberal party, the schism with the Liberal Unionists over the Irish Home Rule issue, and the political irrelevance of the Liberal party from 1886-1906. The Conservative party took power during this time, and although they did much to position themselves to gain sufficient support to take power from the Liberal party in the general election, they were aided in this goal by the poor fortunes of the Liberal party. These poor fortunes, which cost the Liberal party its nearly forty years of hegemony, were largely the result of the Liberal party's own designs.

During the late Victorian period, the Liberal party became obsessed with a social reform program that was deemed a moral crusade by some. This policy of social reform was heavily influenced by the Nonconformist sectors of the Liberal party base, and these supporters, often referred to derisively as faddists, advocated for reforms centered around one main issue their group wished to change, with that issue often being temperance.[147] This commitment to faddists, and the tensions it caused can even be seen in the period immediately preceding the Third Reform Act. A correspondent with the *Northern Echo* wrote about those tensions, making the argument that the Liberal party was in the wrong for supporting faddist measures instead of putting the full force of their legislative power behind the 1884 Reform Bill.[148] In the years preceding the Third Reform Act,

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[147] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 635.
[148] "The Duty of the Hour," *Northern Echo,* 27 October 1887. The Reform Bill in question here is the bill that would eventually become the Third Reform Act.

Gladstone's support of unpopular moral reform campaign did not come with a significant

cost for the Liberal party, as they maintained political hegemony for four decades until

1886. In the years following the Third Reform Act however, this support would be costly,

as the Liberal party lost seats in 1885 to the Conservative party, and then were swept

from power in 1886 because of the unpopular Irish Home Rule issue.

Conservative party leaders were also vocal about their distaste for the Liberal

party's obsession with faddists, and thought it against the best interests of the nation.

Charles Dalrymple MP railed against the faddists in 1885, arguing their insistence on

Disestablishment was the wrong course for Scotland because the Church belonged to the

people, and was a Church of the people, especially poor people. Dalrymple continued by

claiming that the people were heavily invested in the Church and would defend it

attacked by the government. Dalrymple closed his speech by stating that the faddists were

not likely to see favorable action on their desire for Disestablishment, but that they were

nevertheless insistent on "sinking every other question" until their grievances had been

redressed.[149] This alliance with faddists was a primary cause for the Liberal party's loss

of support within the working-classes. This is evident in the campaign for education

reform and disestablishment of the Church of England. In Chamberlain's radical

programme of 1885-6 the Liberation Society plan for total disendowment of the Church

of England was included for the first time.[150] This was a natural progression of radical

Liberal party thought, as the previous decades had seen a consistent growth of anti-

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[149] "Mr. Dalrymple, MP, on "faddism,"" *Edinburgh Evening News,* 15 January 1885.
[150] Michael Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism: The Reconstruction of Liberal Policy in Britain, 1885-1894* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975), 31.

Church sentiment amongst radicals in the Liberal party.[151] This was most obvious in the debate over public education. Nonconformists and radicals within the Liberal party were opposed to free education if voluntary schools were shut down due to lack of funds.[152] In England and Wales at the time, Nonconformists were compelled to send their children to schools under Church of England management. This fact produced a powerful argument among many Nonconformists to bring voluntary schools under the control of elected schools boards.[153] The collectivist approach to social policy can again be seen in the NLF proclamation that no settlements of the issue would be considered satisfactory unless all schools receiving public money were subject to public control through elected School Boards.[154] However, this movement towards disendowment and disestablishment was a major blunder on the part of the Liberal party. The ploy alienated moderate liberals and did not win any support for the radical wing of the Liberal party.[155] What the radical calls for disestablishment did do however was widen the growing split between Chamberlain and Gladstone, which became permanent over the issue of Irish Home Rule.[156] Chamberlain saw this split as being entirely caused by Gladstone's support for Irish Home Rule and believed that the rift between the two factions would not be mended until the Home Rule issue was settled.[157]

In the late nineteenth century, the Liberal party abandoned their traditional libertarian view on social reform for a state-interventionist approach, spurred by the

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[151] Paul Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism: The Middle-Class Experience 1830-1914* (New York: Longman, 1984), 72.
[152] Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism,* 33.
[153] Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism,* 102-3.
[154] Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism,* 105.
[155] Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism,* 32.
[156] Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism,* 32.
[157] "Mr. Chamberlain on the Liberal Split," *Edinburgh Evening News,* 25 February 1887.

moral populism of the radical Nonconformists.[158] Of these moral reform movements

perhaps none was as widespread and influential as the temperance movement. Henry

Cust spoke on these reform movements, and temperance in particular at a meeting of the

Bourne and District Workingman's Club, claiming that the attempts to enact temperance

reform had ushered in unprecedented partisanship which had ruined politics and turned

the politicians jealous and bitter. Cust went on the say that these reform groups were

obsessed with their own sphere of influence and cared little for other concerns. Cust felt

that this hindered the chances of progress and argued that such attempts at reform were

criminal.[159] This negative view of temperance reformers and their impact on the political

process is further evidenced in the debate over the local option. It was not until 1895 that

Liberal Unionists were able to bring a local option bill before Parliament with a realistic

chance of it passing, due to the Liberal party's tactics of blocking any such measure to

appease the temperance faddists in their support base. According to a writer for *The*

Belfast News-Letter, had it not been for these tactics, the local option question could have

been handled many years earlier, and in a practical matter.[160]

　　However, not all people in Britain viewed the moral social reforms in a negative

light. Social reformers, encouraged by the evangelical revivalism sweeping through

Britain in the latter part of the nineteenth century viewed self-improvement as the main

business of life and sought to shape their Christian beliefs into reform movements.[161]

This is evidenced by the foundation and growth of the United Kingdom Alliance, a

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[158] John Coffey, "Democracy and Popular Religion: Moody and Sankey's Mission to Britain. 1873-1875," in *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles 1865-1931,* ed. Eugenio F. Biagini, 93-119 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 116.

[159] "Mr. Cost, M.p., and Me. Younger at Bourne," *Grantham Journal,* 8 December 1894.

[160] "Local Veto," *The Belfast News-Letter,* 22 April 1895.

[161] Trygve Tholfsen, *Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 140-5.

radical temperance movement supported by radical Nonconformists in the Liberal party

and dedicated to temperance based on the local option.[162] A leader of the United

Kingdom Alliance, Dr. Frederic Richard Lees, argued that the drink was a public

problem, and as such needed a public solution.[163] This was a contradiction of Liberal

party policy during the first half of the nineteenth century, which saw government take an

active role in economic affairs, as evidenced by the repeal of the Corn Laws, but

generally maintain a laissez-faire stance in the social sphere.[164] The cause for this change

was the evolution of philosophical thought on the human condition, which saw poverty

and vice as symptoms of environment rather than inherent character flaws which must be

overcome. As such, alcoholism was not always the fault of the individual and could be

overcome by government action.[165] This collectivist approach to social reform did allow

for progress in civil engineering and public health while also decreasing the likelihood of

revolution and political radicalism.[166] However, collectivist and state interventionist

social reform also widened the gap between the social policies of the Liberal and

Conservative parties and alienated many of the more moderate Liberal party members.[167]

Although the Liberal party's dedication to unpopular social reform measures, and

their extreme reliance on faddists for support were definite factors in their decline in the

years flowing the Third Reform Act they are not the only culprits. Just as guilty were the

organizational problems within the Liberal party. In the years following the Third Reform

Act, a strong political organization was vital for electoral success. In an election which

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[162] Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism,* 75.
[163] James Kneale, "The Place of Drink: Temperance and the Public, 1856-1914." *Social & Cultural Geography* 2, no. 1 (2001): 44.
[164] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 282-3.
[165] Kneale, "The Place of Drink," 52.
[166] Lee, *British Political History,* 288.
[167] Lee, *British Political History,* 289.

saw the size of the electorate doubled since the 1867 reforms, it was essential for both

parties to persuade enough newly enfranchised voters to ensure their own success at the

polls.[168] Despite the existence of the NLF as early as 1877, the Liberal party failed to

effectively organize their base to support their measures, and further failed to measure the

temperature of public opinion on the Irish Home Rule question. An anonymous writer

under the name "Home Ruler" responded to a letter to the editor in Bristol arguing that

the Liberal party was beaten in the 1886 election because they were not effectively

organized. The writer claims that "the Liberals could beat the Tories in argument, but the

Tories beat us in organization."[169] From this letter, it becomes clear that the Liberal party

believed they suffered from organizational problems that cost them seats in the 1886

election. A meeting of the Leeds United Liberal Association showed these problems or

organization were foremost in the minds of the Liberal party leaders. At this meeting, a

discussion was help over the state of the party, and those in attendance agreed that more

was needed of the party's organization to spread the message of the party's leaders, who

it was agreed were the wisest and ablest the country had ever known. In particular it was

pointed out that the weakest part of the Liberal party organization was in voter

registration.[170] The committee noted that it was impossible for one agent to register every

voter in the entire town, and that it was instead necessary for each Parliamentary division

to see to registration within their own districts. Further, the committee claimed that the

Conservative party made use of a more centralized power structure than did the Liberal

party, and that it was that centralized power structure that had allowed the Conservative

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[168] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters,* 69.
[169] "Letters to the Editor," *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post,* 3 January 1888.
[170] "Leeds United Liberal Association," *The Leeds Mercury,* 17 March 1888.

party to make such significant gains in 1886.[171] The organizational troubles of the Liberal party were already evident to them during the 1886 election, as the correspondent from the *Derby Daily Telegraph* pointed out. He noted that the party organization was not what it needed to be in 1885, but that some improvement had been made going into the 1886 election.[172] However, even if this prediction of improved party organization had proven true, it likely would not have saved the Liberal party, as they had attached themselves to an extremely unpopular policy as their main platform in the 1886 election.

It was the Irish Home Rule movement that was perhaps the largest indicator of the Liberal party's decline in the latter years of the nineteenth century leading to the election of 1886. While the Home Rule movement first emerged in the 1870s, it was not until after the enfranchisement of the rural working-class in 1884 that it became a pressing concern for British parliament.[173] Gladstone came out publicly in favor of Home Rule in 1885, a move that allowed British parliament to maintain supremacy in the Home Rule question by controlling the debate over the question, but forced the Liberal party to become dependent upon Irish Nationalist MPs to maintain their power in government.[174] The reason for the Liberal party's dependence on the Irish Nationalists to maintain power was the disappointing electoral returns for Liberal party candidates between 1874 and 1885. During this period, there was intense criticism of the NLF's organizational methods, with some critics like John Morley MP claiming that the NLF degraded British politics to the American style "democracy" of machine politics.[175] With some in the

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[171] "Leeds United Liberal Association," *The Leeds Mercury,* 17 March 1888.
[172] "The Derby Daily Telegraph," *The Derby Daily Telegraph,* 8 July 1886.
[173] Porritt, "Irish Home Rule Bill," 300.
[174] Porritt, "Irish Home Rule Bill," 301-3.
[175] "Liberal Conference at Leeds." *Northern Echo,* 18 October 1883.

Liberal party distrustful of the NLF, the party lacked sufficient organization to effectively counter Conservative efforts to increase their standing in the cities and boroughs. This situation was made worse by the uncertainty over Gladstone's future in politics, with some expecting him to retire as leader of the Liberal party. When it became clear that Gladstone did not yet intend to retire, things did not improve as Gladstone's Midlothian campaign steered the Liberal party towards policy that was hitherto unfamiliar for them. Gladstone spoke extensively during this campaign, appealing to the religious sensibilities of the British electorate in decrying atrocities in Bulgaria and calling for British intervention against the Turks.[176] This change to Liberal policy caused the Liberal party to lose seats over the following elections, including the 1885 general election, the first after the Third Reform Act. Although the Liberal party remained the largest part in Parliament following the election, with 333 seats to the Conservative party's 251 seats, the Irish National party led by Charles Parnell won 86 seats, more than enough to shift the balance of power. Parnell initially the Parnellites planned to return the Conservative party to power, but when Gladstone's son leaked his father's intention to introduce an Irish Home Rule measure in Parliament the Irish Nationalists were persuaded to form a coalition with the Liberal party and keep them in power.[177] According to the *Nottingham Evening Post* it was Gladstone's insistence on Irish Home Rule despite domestic opposition in England that led to Mr. Chamberlain and several of his associates leaving the Liberal Party and forming the Liberal Unionist Party. Chamberlain and his followers needed an efficient organization to be effective as a party and to maintain independence

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[176] Parry, *Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 274-80.
[177] Biagini, *British Democracy,* 8-10.

from the Conservative Party.[178] This split, however, forced Chamberlain into an alliance

with the Conservative party leadership.[179] According to Lubenow, it is in the split

between the Gladstonian faction of the Liberal party and the Liberal Unionists under

Chamberlain and Goschen that the electoral sociological explanation of the Conservative

ascendancy is most obvious. Lubenow contended that for the most part, the split between

Gladstonians and Liberal Unionists came down to self-interest. The Gladstonian faction

maintained majorities in all sectors of the Liberal party, suggesting that it was political

rather than social issues that caused the disintegration of the liberal party.[180] Of these

political reasons, the most pressing was the ideological difference between Gladstonians

and the Whigs who seceded from the party in 1886. These Whigs, who had long been

considered the more conservative branch of the Liberal party, could not support

Gladstone's Irish Home Rule measure and thus felt they had no choice but to join the

Liberal Unionist cause.[181] The Whigs were more likely to be middle-class and Anglican

than the more radical members of the Liberal party who remained with Gladstone. For

them, the Irish Home Rule issue was an attack on the Empire, and an attack on property.

Land reform in Ireland was a major component of Irish Home Rule, and many Whigs felt

threatened by the prospect of Irish landlords being forced to sell their land.[182]

The largest impact of this split between the Liberal party and the Liberal

Unionists was to make it easier for the Conservative party to take control of the

government. The election of 1886 saw more Liberal Unionists stand for election in rural

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[178] "Public Opinion," *The Nottingham Evening Post,* 9 August 1886
[179] Fraser, "Liberal Unionist Alliance," 55-6.
[180] Lubenow, "Irish Home Rule," 131-3.
[181] Lubenow, "Irish Home Rule," 134.
[182] "Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association," *Birmingham Daily Post,* 13 May 1890.

districts, with the Liberal Unionist candidates more closely resemble the Conservative party than their erstwhile Liberal party colleagues on the issue of Irish Home Rule.[183] While this could be seen as an indication that the Liberal party split over Home Rule was responsible for the Conservative ascendancy, a better explanation is that the Conservative party efforts to appeal to the middle-class over issues of Empire and property rights sufficiently swayed public opinion enough to make winning an election as a supporter of Irish Home Rule a daunting task in many districts. While it cannot be denied that a Liberal candidate won election in 192 districts, it must not be overlooked that the Liberal lost 127 seats from the 1885 election.[184] This shows that the Irish Home Rule movement was sufficiently unpopular to cost the Liberal party the election. While the Conservative party and the Liberal Unionists did not share an ideological framework, their shared opposition to Irish Home Rule was enough common ground to allow a tenuous alliance, as the largest source of contention within the ranks of the Liberal party and the Liberal Unionists was the opposition of the Liberal Unionist faction to the adoption of Irish Home Rule as official party policy.[185]

The trend of defections from the Liberal party to the Liberal Unionists was not only something seen among the ranks of parliament; nor was it a movement that was only caused by the alienation engendered by the Irish Home Rule crisis. Many rural working-class voters, newly enfranchised by the Third Reform Act, decided to support the Conservative party rather than the seemingly more fitting Liberal party. This influx of working-class support for the Conservative party was caused by a conscious effort by the

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[183] Stephens, "Changing Context," 492.
[184] "The General Election, 1886," *Western Mail,* 19 July 1886.
[185] Stephens, "Changing Context," 491.

Conservative party's political organization to appeal to the working-class by identifying themselves with working-class urban culture and presenting the Conservative party as the defender of that culture.[186]

As has been stated before, the implementation of the Third Reform Acts caused Gladstone to introduce Irish Home Rule as an official policy of the Liberal party. The 1885 election saw the Liberal party lose seats to the Conservatives and become dependent on the Irish Nationalists to remain the governing party. The ideological opposition to Irish Home Rule made it easier for Liberal Unionists to form a tenuous alliance with the Conservative party.[187] This alliance between the two parties also made it easier for the working-class to support the Conservative party, as it no longer was apparent that the Liberal party was the party that best represented their interests. As such, working-class conservatism played a significant role in the Conservative party's success in the late-Victorian period.[188] To gain the support of those working-class voters the Conservative party deliberately associated themselves with aspects of urban society like the pub, racing, and football to distinguish themselves from the moral reforming Liberal party.[189] This was done through the founding of political clubs, which put as much emphasis on organizing parties and socials as they did on organizing voter registration drives.[190] Doing this ingratiated the Conservative party with the newly enfranchised urban working-class electorate, while gradually familiarizing them with political organization and participation. Perhaps the most important aspect of this campaign to

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[186] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People,* 108.
[187] Stephens, "Changing Context," 499.
[188] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 632.
[189] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 638.
[190] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 639.

gain the support of the urban working-class was the Conservative party's defense of the drink. Working-class identity was closely associated with the pub, and as such their politics revolved heavily around the 'beer barrel.'[191] While the Liberal party was dedicated to its 'crusade against sin,' the Conservative party dedicated itself to defense of drink and popular sport, elements which were vital to the identity of the urban working-class.[192]

In summation, the Liberal party experienced a significant decline in the final two decades of the Victorian period. This decline, and the ultimate schism of the party caused by Gladstone's support of Irish Home Rule played a large role in the Conservative ascendancy from 1886-1906. Although it was the Irish Home Rule Crisis that caused the Liberal party schism, there were already tensions within the party prior to 1886. Despite continuing to maintain the power in the government, the Liberal party had been increasing unpopular during the 1870s and 1880s as they became more entrenched with the faddists; single-issue pressure groups who used their influence to halt progress in Parliament until their pet issues were acted upon. This inability to enact legislation because of partisan maneuvering led to the distrust of party politics for fear that they would become similar to the "wire-pulling" machine politics of the American style. This fear of the Liberal party organization becoming nothing more than machine politics left the Liberal party unprepared for new electoral realities, and the Conservative party was able to use their centralized party organization to increased registration and persuade significant numbers of the agricultural working-class to vote for Conservative candidates. This was more easily done because of Gladstone's insistence on Irish Home Rule. In a

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[191] Roberts, "Popular Conservatism," 406.
[192] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 230.

period with a rising nationalistic mood and heightened pride in the Empire, Gladstone's advocacy of Home Rule seemed like an affront the Englishness, and thus made support of Home Rule unpalatable for many. This feeling was not limited to just British voters, as many Liberal MPs were unable to support Gladstone in his crusade for Irish Home and abandoned the party for the Liberal Unionist camp rather than compromise their beliefs about the Empire.

CHAPTER IV

POPULAR OPINION AND THE IRISH HOME RULES CRISIS

The Irish Home Rule Crisis was perhaps the most pressing and contentious political crisis of the late-Victorian period. Although the desire by some for Irish Home Rule had been present almost from the beginning of unification with Britain, the Irish Home Rule Movement did not reach zenith until the late nineteenth century with the growth of Irish national sentiment. The growth of this nationalistic sentiment in turn fueled the development of a political party dedicated to Irish Home Rule. This dedication can be seen in the January 1886 meeting of the Irish Parliamentary Party, in which members met to affirm their belief in legislative rights for Ireland, and to thank T.P. O'Connor for organizing Irish voters in Great Britain for their cause.[193] Further, the extension of working class enfranchisement into the counties and the parliamentary seat redistribution of the Third Reform Act forced the Irish Home Rule issue into the forefront of British politics, as the democratization of Ireland's boroughs and cities meant that from 1884, 80 percent of Irish MPs were supporters of Irish Home Rule.[194] It was this party, led by Charles Stewart Parnell that the Liberal party under the leadership of William Ewart Gladstone sought a coalition with to maintain control of government. The

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[193] "The Home Rule Question." *The Leeds Mercury,* 12 January 1886.
[194] Porritt, "The Irish Home Rule Bill," 300.

growth of Parnell's party, the Irish National Party, was spurred in part by the resurgence

of Irish national identity, as evidenced by an increased interest in the Irish language, Irish

literature and music, and traditional Irish culture.[195] This Gaelic revival was responsible

for the Irish coming to see themselves as culturally distinct from the rest of Britain.[196] As

one writer notes in *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* the "knowledge

of the Irish language…ought to be the first object of an Irish Nationalists young

ambition."[197] This cultural nationalism began to take root in the Irish youth in the last two

decades of the nineteenth centuries and was seen as a spiritual successor to the Young

Ireland movement.[198] The Gaelic League, which developed out of the Gaelic revival was

an effort to restore and cultivate the Irish language, which by the late nineteenth century

was dying out; only being spoken in a few districts throughout Ireland.[199] The Gaelic

Athletic Association (GAA) also sought to promote Irish culture, by encouraging Irish

youth to participate in traditional Irish sport, such as football, hammer throw, hurling, and

camogie.[200] These two organizations were representative of the cultural nationalism in

Ireland at the time, with the GAA calling traditional English games such as lawn tennis

and cricket alien, and the Gaelic League referring to those indifferent about the Irish

language "West Britons."[201] This cultural nationalism was a response to British thought

in the late nineteenth century. The Social-Darwinist, racist, nativist thought viewed the

Irish as an "inferior, simian-featured, irresponsible, irrational, and emotional subspecies

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[195] "The Irish Language," *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser,* 3 September 1879; "The Gaelic Revival," *Freeman's journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser.* 2 July 1894.
[196] Stanbridge, "Nationalism," 26.
[197] "News," *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser,* 14 May 1892
[198] Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Question: Two Centuries of Conflict,* 2nd ed. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 111.
[199] McCaffrey, *The Irish Question,* 112.
[200] McCaffrey, *The Irish Question,* 114.
[201] McCaffrey, *The Irish Question,* 113.

incapable of managing their own affairs."[202] Out of this racist British ideology came the Irish desire to prove their own cultural distinctiveness.[203]

In the late Victorian period, after the passage of the Third Reform Act, the Irish Home Rule Crisis became one of national significance. It was during this period that politics became more democratic, both in England and the "Celtic fringe" of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. As such, there was more of a need to appeal to the desires of the working classes. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century Britain was experiencing a prolonged economic decline and voters in Scotland and Wales were more concerned with bread-and-butter issues than with matters of Ireland and the empire. The result of this was the regionalization of politics in Britain, with the Conservative and Liberal parties dominating England and the "Celtic fringe," respectively.[204] Despite this attempt to appeal to the desires of the electorate however, the Liberal party was divided over the matter of Home Rule, with a faction breaking away and forming the Liberal Unionist party over the matter of Ireland remaining a fully incorporated part of the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the Irish Home Rule Crisis highlights the new nature of popular politics in the two decades following the passage of the Third Reform Act. It was at this time that politics in Britain were become more, rather than less, populist as the two major parties struggled to grasp the new challenges of mass politics. By necessity, politicians had to bow to electoral logic, and cater to the measures that their constituencies found important.[205]

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[202] McCaffrey, *The Irish Question,* 111.
[203] Stanbridge, "Nationalism," 26.
[204] McCaffrey, *The Irish Question,* 99.
[205] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters*, 70.

Though the union of 1801 had brought Ireland into a political union with the United Kingdom, it was never fully integrated into the British system.[206] The British government encouraged Ireland to expand its agricultural production, but did little to address the grievances of Irish farmers such as continually increasing rents and the inability of Irish tenant farmers to rise above the system of landlordism and own the land they worked.[207] Furthermore, the British did little to ease the tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. A Catholic Emancipation Bill was passed in 1828, giving all Catholics in Britain the right to vote in general elections and to hold seats in Parliament. Although the majority of the Irish population was Catholic, the Catholic emancipation actually decreased the size of the Irish electorate, as an accompanying parliamentary bill increased the property requirements from the franchise from two pounds to ten pounds in Ireland.[208] The discontent of the Irish over the perceived cultural and economic indifference of the British government allowed violent radical groups, such as the Fenian Brotherhood to take root in Ireland, protesting rural rents and the religious tithes.[209] Despite efforts of the Gladstone government to mitigate the influence of the Fenian Brotherhood through conciliation, fifty-nine Irish constituencies returned Home Rule MPs, and advocated for a return of the Irish parliament.[210] Efforts to conciliate Ireland failed, and the nation was soon polarized between the Catholic-Nationalist majority, and the Protestant minority in Ulster who wished to remain in the Union. Once given the vote, and allowed to sit in Parliament, the Irish Catholics formed the Home Rule Party,

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[206] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 102.

[207] Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr. *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 32, 426.

[208] David Gange, *The Victorians.* (London: OneWorld Publications, 2016.)*,* 44.

[209] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 103.

[210] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 103.

advocating for Irish self-government. After 1885 this party held to balance of power in the House of Commons, and forced a coalition with the Liberal government, as the number of Liberal party MPs was not sufficient to maintain a majority had Parnell chosen to align his party with the Conservatives, as had been the plan prior to Gladstone supporting Home Rule.[211]

The Irish question was the predominating issue in British politics in the final two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century.[212] In fact, the issue of Home Rule did more to define the identities of the major political parties of the late Victorian period than any other issue.[213] It is during this period that the issue of Irish Home Rule was taken up by the Liberal party under Gladstone in an attempt to unify the party.[214] Gladstone believed that the Liberal Party was close to fracture and that the call to action provided by the issue of Home Rule would deliver the necessary momentum to energize the party and keep all its constituent parts together.[215] The Liberal politician Chamberlain wrote that Gladstone:

> Did not conceal that his present interest was in the Irish question, and he seemed to think that a policy for dealing with it might be found which would unite us all and which would necessarily throw into the background those minor points of difference about the schools and small holdings which threated to drive the Whigs into the arms of the Tories or into retirement.[216]

Hamer argues that Gladstone's plan to unify the party through taking up the issue of the Irish question backfired however; one third of Liberal MPs rebelled in 1886, forming the Liberal Unionist Party over their opposition to Gladstone and Irish Home Rule.[217] Chief

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[211] Pugh, *Britain Since 1789,* 103.
[212] Hamer, "The Irish Question," 511.
[213] Matthew Kelly, "Home Rule for Ireland: For and Against," *The Historian* 124 (Winter 201/2015): 30.
[214] Hamer, "The Irish Question," 519.
[215] Hamer, "The Irish Question," 519.
[216] Chamberlain, quoted in Hamer, "The Irish Question," 519.
[217] Hamer, "The Irish Question," 521.

among their criticisms of Gladstone was that "Ireland blocks the way" of progress. The

Liberal Unionists believed that Gladstone had become obsessed with the idea of Irish

Home Rule, and that because of that obsession, domestic politics were suffering.[218] The

deep divisions between the Gladstonian Liberals and Liberal Unionists over the issue of

Home Rule was one of the main causes of the Liberal loss of power after 1885.[219]

The Conservatives were in power from 1886-1906 and believed that there could

be no middle ground on the issue of Home Rule. They believed that there could only be

government from Westminster, or government from Dublin.[220] Conservative sentiment

was that the Irish would not be content with anything less than full independence.[221]

Far from a monolithic face of support however, the Irish were as equally divided

over the issue of Home Rule as the British. Many Irish Protestants in the north of Ireland

supported continuing close ties with Westminster. Many of these supporters of the union

were descended from the English conquerors of Ireland, and their opposition to Home

Rule fits into a broader imperial mindset best summed up in the question "How can the

British hope to hold India if they cannot even hold Ireland?"[222] These supporters of union

were so determined to prevent Home Rule that they threatened to resort to violence

should Parliament pass and enforce a Home Rule Bill.[223] As Conservative MP Lord

Randolph Churchill wrote: "Ulster will fight; Ulster will be right."[224]

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[218] Hamer, "The Irish Question," 521.
[219] Hamer, "The Irish Question," 524.
[220] Kelly, "Home Rule for Ireland," 32-33.
[221] Kelly, "Home Rule for Ireland," 33.
[222] Kelly, "Home Rule for Ireland," 33.
[223] Kelly, "Home Rule for Ireland," 32.
[224] Kelly, "Home Rule for Ireland," 32.

Many Irish citizens also opposed Home Rule on the grounds that it was based on political despotism.[225] Many Irish people viewed their homeland as a subjugated colony of England.[226] They believed that the British introduced oppressive political structures onto the Irish to promote English interests over the interests of the Irish.[227] These Irish citizens viewed Ireland as a nation under occupation, and obeisance to Home Rule would validate their servitude.[228] This sentiment gave rise to the nationalist movement that eventually pushed for full Irish independence in the early twentieth century.[229]

Perhaps the largest impact of the Irish Home Rule Crisis upon British politics in the late-Victorian period was the division and decline of the Liberal party. According to the historian W.C. Lubenow, the class alignment of the two major political parties was the most striking feature of late-Victorian politics. As such, the Liberal Unionist party formed as a halfway-house for middle-class Liberals to transition to the Conservative party as they could no longer support Gladstone over the matter of Irish Home Rule.[230] While Gladstone's contemporaries favored a social conflict theory approach when examining the reasons for the defection to the Liberal Unionist Party, more recent scholarship from Biagini, Lawrence, and Lubenow has tended to prefer a more political rather than societal explanation. Eugenio Biagini argues that the Liberal party split was caused wholly by Gladstone's adoption of the Irish Home Rule cause, going so far as to claim it is generally regarded as one of his worst mistakes. He continues that Home Rule

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[225] Kelly, "Home Rule for Ireland," 33.

[226] John Rodden, "Neither Popes nor Potatoes: The Irish Question and the Marxist Answer," *The Midwest Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2009): 238.

[227] Rodden, "Neither Popes nor Potatoes," 239.

[228] Kelly, "Home Rule for Ireland," 34.

[229] John M. McEwen, "The Liberal Party and the Irish Question During the First World War," *Journal of British Studies* 12, no. 1 (1972): 114.

[230] Lubenow, "Irish Home Rule," 126.

was not a policy that was adopted rationally after considering all possible alternatives, but rather that it was an aging leader's personal obsession. Biagini echoes T. W. Heyk's sentiments claiming that his support of Irish Home Rule split the party and cost him the support of the working-class.[231] Contrary to Biagini and Heyk, Stephen Lee argues that the Liberal party schism was caused by Gladstone's management of the party rather than any ideological differences. According to Lee, Gladstone introduced the Irish Home Rule measure to unify the party around himself and thwart the ascendance of Chamberlain and his Radical policies.[232] However, the rapid adoption of Radical policies following the departure of the Liberal Unionists would seem to disprove this argument. Instead, Lawrence argues that the Irish Home Rule crisis was the cause of the Liberal party split, with Liberal Unionists unable to support Gladstone's Irish Home Rule measure, and the Gladstonian hardliners refusing to move off Irish Home Rule as their first priority.[233] While there was a clear split in the Liberal party over the issue of Irish Home Rule, it is difficult to find a vote in which social reasons were the cause of the split. Instead, the split was over political reasons. Lubenow argues that Gladstone controlled the majority of all social classes represented by the Liberal party of the time, suggesting that political rather than social reasons were the cause of the Liberal Party split.[234] This shows that social differences are not what separated the Liberal party in 1886. Rather it was political issues, which were the effects of the Third Reform Act.

Before a discussion of the effects of the Liberal party split can be discussed at length, there must first be an exploration of the cause for the split and Gladstone's

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[231] Biagini, *British Democracy*, 2.
[232] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History*, 174-6.
[233] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People,* 7, 200-1.
[234] Lubenow, "Irish Home Rule," 131-141.

adamant support of Irish Home Rule. Lee argues that Gladstone supported Irish Home

Rule because he desired to reclaim the reforming initiative from the Conservative party

but did not wish to tackle the social reform measures that were being put forward by

Chamberlain and the Radical wing of the party. Lee continues, claiming that Gladstone

was troubled by what he saw as the growing factionalism of the Liberal party, and desired

to embrace a major national issue in the hopes that it would unify the Liberal party.[235]

However, while Gladstone's distress over factionalism may be well-documented, his lack

of desire to tackle Radical social reforms should not be accepted as his reason for

supporting Irish Home Rule because in the years following the split the Liberal party

adopted those radical measures.[236] According to Jason Belcher, Home Rule support

would not imply independence from Britain but did allow Ireland to control a greater

measure of its own affairs, including gaining a stronger voice in the British government.

Meanwhile, the present state of devolution did not allow for Irish politicians to exert an

active voice in parliamentary proceedings. Gladstone viewed devolution as beneficial to

British Parliament because it meant that he could represent Irish interests by allowing

them self-governance while simultaneously "cleansing" the House of Commons from an

unstable element of the Irish Nationalists.[237]

Furthermore, and perhaps as a result of this Liberal party split, the two major

political parties became much more regional parties than had previously been the case.

Following the 1886 Irish Home Rule Crisis and Liberal party split, the Liberal party was

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[235] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 174-5.
[236] Biagini, *British Democracy,* 276.
[237] Jason Belcher, "Gladstonian Liberalism: A Catalyst for Social Representation and Democratic Reform in Victorian Britain" (2018). *Electronic Thesis Collection.* 244, 95-6. Belcher here is agreeing with the sentiments of Jonathan Parry on page 297 of his work *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain.*
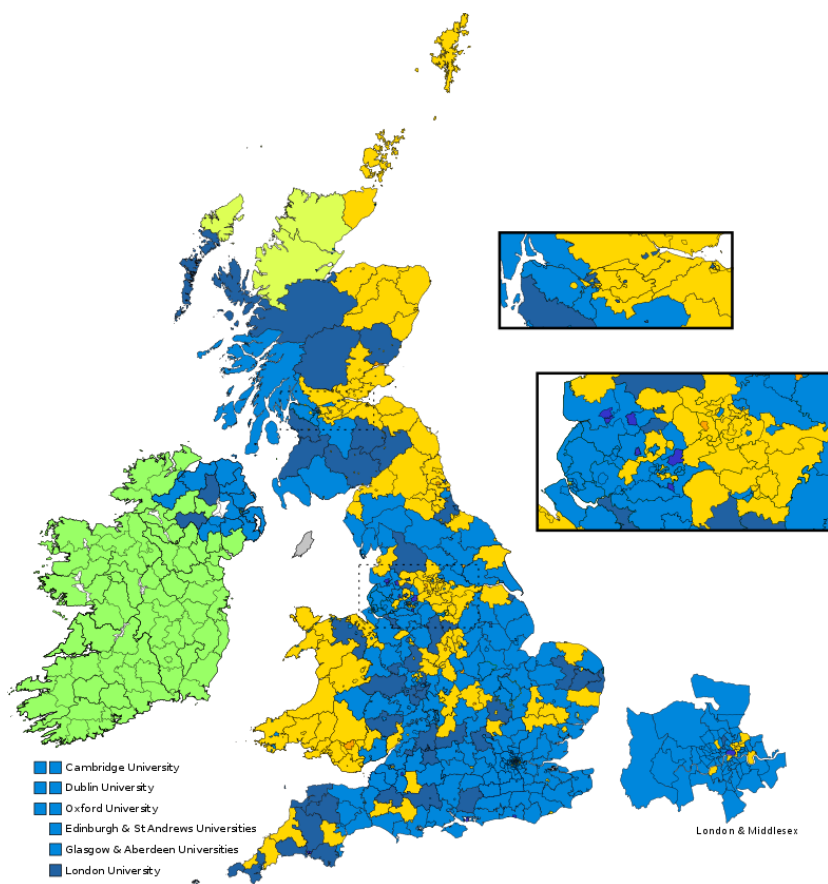
strongest in Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and major industrial areas of England, with the Conservative party stronghold being in England. This Conservative party hold over England was further strengthened by the additional of the Unionist caucus of the Liberal party joining them in all but name. The *Aberdeen Journal* predicted this alliances gave the Conservative bloc a majority of 118 seats, with the Gladstonian Liberals and Irish Nationalists only able to muster 282 seats.[238] The *Ipswich Journal* showed similar results with four English and one Welsh seats at Staffordshire, King's County, Yorkshire, Down, and Carnarvonshire flipping from the Liberal party to either the Conservatives or Unionists.[239] The *Pall Mall Gazette* enforced this claim by showing that of the 407 seats won by a Liberal or Unionist candidates in England, Scotland, and Wales, the Unionists candidates were victorious in 63 percent of cases despite winning the majority of those seats in both Wales and Scotland.[240] This trend follows earlier observations that the Conservative party was more dominant among the landed classes, and the Liberal party held sway among the working classes. However, due to the Conservative party's appeal to Empire, and Chamberlain's defection on the issue of Irish Home Rule, the 1886 election became more of an election of the dominant English Conservative majority against the Liberal strongholds in urban centers and Wales and the Irish Nationalists in Ireland, with the exception of Ulster. This is evidenced by the following map.[241]

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[238] "The General Election of July, 1886," *The Aberdeen Journal.* 20 July 1886.
[239] "The Newest Election Returns," *The Ipswich Journal.* 14 July 1886.
[240] "The General Election," *The Pall Mall Gazette.* 20 July 1886.
[241] Blue counties and boroughs represent victories for those opposed to Irish Home Rule, the yellow counties and boroughs represent victories for those in favor of Irish Home Rule, and the green counties and boroughs represent the Irish Parliamentary party victories.

Cambridge University
Dublin University
Oxford University
Edinburgh & St Andrews Universities
Glasgow & Aberdeen Universities
London University

London & Middlesex

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The result of the Irish Home Rule crisis and the consequent political realignment was a

contributing factor in the decline of the Liberal party and the subsequent Conservative

ascendancy of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. This realignment was enabled

by the Third Reform Act, which created the circumstances necessary for the Liberal party

split. By expanding the electorate, the Third Reform Act shrank the differences between

the Conservative and Liberal parties, makes it easier for Liberals to defect first to the

Liberal Unionist faction, and then ultimately to the Conservative party.[243]

[242] “United Kingdom General Election 1886,” Image, Wikimedia Commons, 6 August 2017.
[243] Stephens, “Changing Context,” 491-9.

Furthermore, the Third Reform Act had another, longer lasting impact on the execution of politics in the years following the Irish Home Rule Crisis in 1886. In the earlier Victorian period canvassing for jobs, commonly referred to as "jobbing" was not seen as political corruption in Ireland but rather part of the political culture. However, Irish Nationalists claimed that jobbing was a form of political prostitution and that the Act of Union only passed in Ireland because of promises of government favors.[244] Those Irish Nationalists, led by Parnell, gained increased influence in Parliament following the Third Reform Act, as increased enfranchisement in Ireland and the redistribution of seats meant the return of more Nationalist MPs. In the early 1880s jobbing took place amongst Irish MPs but faced criticism from anti-Parnellites. After the Third Reform Act and the Irish Home Rule Crisis this patronage dried up as the newly elected Unionist government was unsympathetic to Nationalist concerns.[245] However, during the Gladstone ministry of 1892-5 there was more evidence of Nationalist MPs participating in patronage, suggesting that their pledge not to do so was not taken seriously when confronted with the opportunity for advancement by a favorable government.[246] This provides further evidence to the claim that the Third Reform Act and Irish Home Rule Crisis created a new political system that was regional in nature. In the years preceding the Home Rule crisis, jobbing was commonplace, but then dried up in the years following the election of 1886. While this could simply be written off as Nationalist MPs taking their oath not to accept patronage more seriously, the fact that jobbing resurfaces in the period 1892-1895 suggests that it was instead the new, regional focus of politics that was to blame. The

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[244] McConnel, "Jobbing with Tory and Liberal," 105-6.
[245] McConnel, "Jobbing with Tory and Liberal," 108-11.
[246] McConnel, "Jobbing with Tory and Liberal," 111.

dominant Conservative and Unionist government had no interest in the Nationalist concerns, and therefore did not reward them with jobs.

The Third Reform Act played a final, major role in the development of the Irish Home Rule Crisis. In the years before the extension of the franchise, British politics had been conducted in a manner that valued "man over measure." The result of this shift was that the increased democratization of British politics created an environment in which Irish Home Rule became an important electoral issue. Candidates standing for election representing the Conservative party campaigned on the notion of Empire, while Liberal party candidates instead campaigned on giving Ireland the freedom to manage their own affairs internally.

For the Liberal party, the concept of popular liberalism had for a while been about democracy. For them, Home Rule was a natural extension of that democracy into Ireland.[247] Because of the franchise extension in 1867, and again in 1884-5, the traditional mode of politics gave way to the advent of the caucus. One the one hand it was argued that the caucus diminished politics by trading educated voters for the uninformed masses blindly following the party line, but on the other the caucus allowed for more effective party organization and mobilization of voters.[248] This new caucus model of politics brought the issue of Irish Home Rule to the forefront of British politics. This sentiment is echoed in a report by the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* from June 1887, which saw Gladstone delivered a four and a half hour speech championing Irish Home Rule, and further informed readers of the efforts of the Liberal caucus in disrupting the efforts

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[247]Biagini, *British Democracy,* 51.
[248] Biagini, *British Democracy,* 175-6.

of the Conservative and Unionist meetings.[249] This effort to disrupt the meetings of the opposition was a demonstration of the power of the caucus in politics following the passage of the Third Reform Act. The NLF was among the major Liberal party organization of the time, and was ultimately the first instance that rank-and-file party members had an opportunity to challenge party leadership over the policy and priorities of the party. The NLF did not challenge Gladstone over the issue of Irish Home Rule though. Instead, they stuck to Gladstone's policy with almost religious zeal despite the ultimate electoral unpopularity of the Home Rule proposal.[250]

The Liberal party was not the only party to have an effective organization advocating for Irish Home Rule in the 1880s. The Irish National League was the first mass organization for the Irish Nationalists and drew on long Irish tradition by appealing to county conventions for political support. By this method the INL was able to transform the Home Rule movement in Ireland into a well-knit, modern political party.[251] It was through the efforts of the INL mobilizing newly enfranchised voters in Ireland that the Home Rule movement was able to first elect MPs to represent them in Westminster. As reported in the *Leeds Mercury*, the INL celebrated electoral success in the 1885 election by gaining two hard-fought seats and forcing the Nationalists in Ulster into an alliance with the Irish Parliamentary party. According to John Dillon, the result of this victory was to eliminate divisions within the Irish Home Rule movement in Ireland, leaving, as John Dillon put it, "There would now be in Ireland only the Irish party and the English."[252] This victory was claimed to be the largest victory in Irish politics since the

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[249] "Mr. Gladstone spent a busy day in South Wales on Saturday," *Aberdeen Weekly Journal,* 6 June 1887.
[250] Biagini, *British Democracy,* 183-5.
[251] Biagini, *British Democracy,* 190-1.
[252] "The Irish National League and the Elections," *The Leeds Mercury,* 9 December 1885.

days of Grattan, and that the Liberal party leader, who championed Home Rule would look to the unanimity of Ireland as his justification.[253]

The caucus politics model created by the Third Reform Act had the result of leaving political organizations, especially the NLF in charge of shaping party policy over the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century. These party machines did much to increase democratic activity in Britain and Ireland, and by the nature of their operation moved the policy of their respective political parties more in line with the opinion of their rank-and-file members.[254]

In summation, the Third Reform Act had several impacts on British politics that were brought to greater prominence as a result of the Irish Home Rule Crisis. The Third Reform Act brought greater enfranchisement for the working classes and also drastically redistributed parliamentary seats, instituting the modern single-member constituency. This had the effect of creating a system in which candidates standing for election then had to appeal more directly to the desires of their constituencies. The consequence of this political shift was the regionalization of the Conservative and Liberal parties into England and the Celtic fringe respectively. Although the Liberal party did maintain some strength in the industrialized areas of England, it largely lost numbers in the nation as a whole, as the conservative party was more efficiently able to appeal to the working-class desire to maintain the Empire than was the Liberal party at appealing to the moral outrage of denying Ireland the right to govern themselves. Furthermore, the Third Reform Act was at least partially responsible for the Liberal party split of 1886 at the height of the

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[253] "The Irish National League and the Elections," *The Leeds Mercury,* 9 December 1885.
[254] Biagini, *British Democracy,* 205-9.

Irish Home Rule Crisis. The efforts to appeal to an increased electorate had the effect of

bringing the Conservative and Liberal parties closer together ideologically, which made it

easier for the disillusioned Liberals to defect first to the Liberal Union party, and then

later to the Conservative party. This ease of defection was especially seen in 1886, when

Gladstone's insistence on pressing the Home Rule issue became inconvenient for recently

elected MPs. More Liberal MPs were in seats considered to be vulnerable than were their

Conservative counterparts and many were hesitant to stand for election again so soon

after the 1885 election. As a result, many of those recently elected, vulnerable Liberal

MPs chose to defect to the Unionist cause, as it was in their political best interest. Finally,

the Third Reform Act created a political system in which political parties were more

dependent on effective organization for electoral success. As a result of the redistribution

of seats in parliament and the extension of the franchise, this meant that the Irish MPs

held the balance of power in Parliament. Irish Home Rule was thrust to the fore of British

politics by these political machines, which leveraged popular democratic sentiment,

especially in Ireland, for the creation of Home Rule measures. The importance of this

development is two-fold. First, it saw the evolution of British politics from a game of

"man over measures" in which MPs were elected based on their personal integrity to a

system in which candidates had to pay more attention to the opinions of their people.

Second, the development of the caucus finally gave rank-and-file party members an

opportunity to shape party policy rather than accept the party line dictated to them by the

party elites. Although the NLF initially followed Gladstone's policy religiously, by the

1890s it was in a position to dictate party policy. These developments were in line with

the longstanding ideals of popular democracy that were responsible for the passage of the

Third Reform Act.

CHAPTER V

SOCIOPOLITICAL PRESSURE GROUPS AND THE THIRD REFORM ACT

Political pressure groups have long been a part of British politics. From the very beginning of Victoria's reign these groups have pressured the government for greater power, more representation in government, or for government action in favor of some social or political cause they championed. Patricia Hollis argues that by 1867 pressure groups had become a necessary aid to government which evidenced healthy public concern, expanded the arena of government and widened access to government.[255] In his work on the middle-class Radical experience Paul Adelman shows the power of pressure groups through the campaigns of the Nonconformist National Education League. Adelman asserts that the methods of the Nonconformist pressure group were too antagonistic and contributed at least in small part to the Liberal party defeat in the 1874 election.[256] Stephen J. Lee states that Evangelical and Dissenting pressure groups had petitioned Whig MPs for reform and had collaborated with them in executing those reforms in the 1830s, but that the willingness of Whigs to impose repressive measures against Chartist activity provoked working-class hostility, and alienated Evangelicals and

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[255] Patricia Hollis, ed. *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian Britain* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1974), 26.
[256] Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism,* 6-7.

Dissenters to the extent that many of them voted Conservative in 1841.[257] Pressure groups occupied a place of extreme importance in Victorian politics, often acting as a guiding force for party policy. Indeed, this can be seen from the earliest days of Victoria's reign, with the publication of the People's Charter in 1838. This charter, the first to call for widespread electoral reform, demanded the franchise be extended to universal manhood suffrage, institute the secret ballot, eliminate property requirement for MPs and ensure their payment, redistribute seats in Parliament, and hold annual Parliamentary elections.[258] Although the Chartist movement did not yield immediate results in the 1830 or 1840s, it did set a precedent for political and social groups to pressure the government to address their concerns. Through continued pressure on Parliament throughout the Victorian period, the Chartists and their successors ultimately achieved most of the demands set forth in the People's Charter. According to Lee, the property qualification for MPs was abolished in 1859, the secret ballot was introduced in 1872, MPs were paid a salary beginning in 1911, and the franchise acts of 1918 and 1928 made suffrage universal and made adjustments for more equal electoral districts. Thus, in less than a century from its introduction almost all demands of the People's Charter had been met.[259]

Over the course of the Victorian period, political and social pressure groups became more influential on the course of parliamentary politics. Following the franchise expansion of the Second Reform Act, and especially following the franchise reform and redistribution of the Third Reform Act in the 1880s, these political pressure groups

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[257] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 73.
[258] "The People's Charter," *The Northern Liberator,* 2 June 1838.
[259] Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 99.

became a much more prevalent player on the political landscape. Certain reforms and ideological views of these pressure groups became ingrained in the political platforms of the two major political parties of the time, especially for the Liberal party.[260] Still more of those groups pressured Parliament from the outside, urging action on measures to bring Britain more in line with their visions of the ideal.

In this chapter, the focus will be placed on sociopolitical pressure groups urging change both domestically and throughout the wider Empire. During this period, the pressure groups most prevalent are those in the realm of religious reform and moral issues. On the liberal side of politics were those pressing for the disestablishment, education reform, and temperance. Additionally, those who sought to end or curtail Britain's imperial efforts, especially around the Boer War at the close of the nineteenth century, turned to the Liberal Party. Conversely, those pressure groups which identified with the conservative side of politics were likely to push for a greater expansion of the Empire. These conservative pressure groups were also likely to support what has been seen as the traditional idea of Britishness. They fought against the disestablishment of the Church and attempts by the Liberal party to control the morality of the British people. As such, they clung to their defense of the drink and popular entertainment such as football. As Jon Lawrence points out, the defense of "the pleasures of the people," especially the drink and sport were a central part of Tory electoral strategy. In his analysis of politics in Wolverhampton Lawrence argues:

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[260] Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism,* 71-2; Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 4. In this case Adelman shows the continued importance of Nonconformist interest groups to the Liberal party, and as such the importance of education reform to Liberal policy, especially within the Radical sector. Lee gives an analysis of the Anti-Corn Law League and shows the importance to both parties of maintaining a policy of free trade. The maintenance of this system would remain status quo for both parties until Chamberlain's tariff reform campaign in the early twentieth century.

certainly it was only when the drink issue came to the fore that Conservatives were able to win significant support from voters in the depressed and impoverished wards of the 'east end.'…The strong connections between Wolverhampton Toryism and professional sports carried similar overtones, and culminates in the Tory stranglehold over the affairs of Wolverhampton Wanderers football club in the 1890s, and the high profile manipulation of the team (and its players) in the Tory cause at Parliamentary elections.[261]

Thus, the Conservative party used their connection to, and defense of, elements of popular entertainment to endear themselves to the working-class and gain sufficient support to take seats from Liberal candidates.

In the final two decades of the Victorian era, following the ratification of the Third Reform Act, the political climate was such that sociopolitical pressure groups were able to have a much more prominent role in politics than had previously been the case. This increased role in politics is demonstrated in two key ways: the first being the incorporation of the demands of these groups into the political platforms of both the Liberal and Conservative parties, and the second being the changed dialogue of politicians in the years following 1885. It was during those years that party activism took hold and politicians made a more concerted effort to appeal to the desires of their constituents to ensure victory in an era of single-member constituencies.[262]

Paul Adelman claims that following the general election the Liberal party became more, rather than less radical. He argues that this is demonstrated by the 'Newcastle Programme' of 1891, which consisted of myriad radical demands such as Irish Home Rule, Welsh disestablishment, land, tax, and local government reforms, and reduction of

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[261] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People,* 107-8.

[262] Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters,* 71; Lee, *Aspects of British Political History,* 146. Lee shows the changes in the electoral landscape following the Third Reform Act (the enfranchise expansion in the boroughs, and the redistribution of seats) while Lawrence explains how politics following the 1884 Reform Act were more populist than they had been previously.

the Lords' powers, all of which were implemented due to pressure from without the party.[263] Here Adelman shows that political pressure groups wield sufficient power to directly influence party politics.

Much like Adelman, Michael Barker sees a prominent role for political pressure groups in the development of politics in late Victorian Britain. In his work detailing the relationship between Gladstone and Radical politics, Barker gives a significant discussion over the role of Nonconformist pressure groups on the Liberal party. According to Barker, the Nonconformists were instrumental in the push for education reform and it was their twin belief in public control of schools and nondenominational teaching that became key to the Liberal party's policy regarding religion and education. Barker continues by claiming that the NLF was dominated by Nonconformists by June 1891, and that any reforms in the realms of education was naturally be shaped the influence of the Nonconformists.[264]

Rohan McWilliam takes a similar view of the impact of popular pressure groups. In quoting the work of John Vincent, he argues that liberalism was nothing without the single-issue interest groups (often called faddists) pushing forward the program of reform around the figure of Gladstone.[265] Thus, McWilliam argues that while Gladstone was responsible in part for empowering the popular pressure groups, they were in turn responsible for giving him power to govern.

D G Wright takes a different perspective on the issue of radicalism and the impact of political pressure groups. Wright does not see a significant change in the relationship

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[263] Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism*, 9.
[264] Barker, *Gladstone and Radicalism*, 100-3.
[265] Rohan McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England* (London: Routledge, 1998), 67-8.

between government and pressure groups in the years following the Third Reform Act.

Instead he argues that this trend could be traced back to the beginning of the nineteenth

century, and even into the eighteenth century and the political agitation following in the

wake of the French Revolution.[266]

In his work on the temperance movement in Victorian Britain, Brian Howard Harrison

tends to agree with Wright's assessment of the role of pressure groups. Although

Harrison's analysis is limited in scope to just the temperance movement, he does show

that pressure groups played a significant role in British politics before the passage of the

Third Reform Act. According to Harrison:

> The years 1871-2 mark a turning-point in temperance history. Politicians had
> to grapple directly with the popular pressure group whose influence had been
> mounting in the provinces since the 1830s…These years also saw an
> important shift in party attitudes to the drink questions; in 1871-2 Gladstone's
> great administration was beginning to lose impetus, and enthusiasts for the
> alleged 'Conservative reaction' magnified the government's every mistake.[267]

Through this analysis Harrison shows that not only were popular pressure groups a

prominent part of politics in the years before the Third Reform Act, but rather that those

popular pressure groups were also capable of exerting enough influence to force action

on those issues, as Harrison explains that Gladstone introduced a bill addressing the drink

issue in the 1872 parliament.[268]

Agreeing with this sentiment, Andrew S Thompson wrote in 2000 that a more

nuanced approach should be taken to the matter of anti-imperialist sentiment in the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Thompson, anti-imperialism never

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[266] D.G. Wright, *Popular Radicalism: The Working-Class Experience 1780-1880* (London: Longman, 1988), 14.

[267] Brian Howard Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872* 2nd ed. (Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1994), 241.

[268] Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians,* 242.

gained more than a limited and conditional foothold in Britain in the years before 1914, and that anti-imperialists did not call for the complete dismantling of the colonial system, but rather the prevention of further territorial acquisition and the efficient government of the Empire.[269] Thompson does not see a significant impact on the growth of the anti-imperialist movement coming from the Boer War, instead arguing that although anti-imperialism did resurface around the turn of the twentieth century, the resurgence was not large enough to have any measurable impact other than to disrupt the Edwardian Labour movement.[270] Thus, while Thompson accepts that there was an increase in anti-imperialist sentiment in the aftermath of the Boer War, he rejects that the anti-imperialists had an impact on British politics during the same period.

Although historical opinion seems to be divided on the impact of political pressure groups in the years following the Third Reform Act, their impact must not be overlooked. The twenty years following the Third Reform Act are commonly referred to as the Conservative ascendancy and that rise to power was in large possible because of the impact of social and political pressure groups. These groups heavily influenced the platforms of both parties, with mixed results. The Conservative party was able to win working-class support thanks in large part to their defense of "traditional" English values such as the drink, the Church, and popular entertainment like football.[271] This was a direct response to the Liberal party becoming heavily involved with the moral reform movement favored by pressure groups. Unfortunately for the Liberal party, this led to their fall from grace following the Irish Home Rule Crisis.

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[269] Andrew S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 5.
[270] Thompson, *Imperial Britain,* 5, 23.
[271] Lawrence, *Speaking for the People,* 107-8.

It cannot be denied that political and social pressure groups existed before the Third Reform Act, and indeed even before the Second Reform Act. It can even be argued that these pressure groups played some role on the development of politics in Victorian Britain, as evidenced by the widespread demonstrations in Britain. According to newspapers from the time, the summer of 1838 saw significant demonstrations in support of the People's Charter in major industrial cities such as London, Bath, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, as well as minor settlements like Trowbridge.[272] However, this relatively high level of political activity did not translate into action on the part of parliament. In 1842, a petition of over three million signatures was presented to Parliament urging action in favor of the People's Charter and universal suffrage. This petition was ultimately ignored by government though, as the *Northern Star* states:

> Three and half millions have quietly, orderly, soberly, peaceably but firmly asked of their rulers to do justice; and their rulers have turned a deaf ear to that protest. Three and a half millions of people have asked permission to detail their wrongs, and enforce their claims for RIGHT, and the 'House' has resolved they should not be heard! Three and a half millions of the slave-class have holden out the olive branch of peace to the enfranchised and privileged classes and sought for a firm and compact union, on the principle of EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW; and the enfranchised and privileged have refused to enter into a treaty! The same class is to be a slave class still. The mark and brand of inferiority is not to be removed. The assumption of inferiority is still to be maintained. The people are not to be free.[273]

The failure of the Chartist movement despite such widespread support shows that although political and social pressure groups were active in the years before the Third

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[272] "Great Radical Demonstration at Bath in Favour of Universal Suffrage and People's Charter.," *The Northern Liberator,* 9 June 1838; "Tremendous Popular Demonstrations in New Castle," *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser,* 6 July 1838; "Radical Demonstration in Favour of the People's Charter," *The London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer,* 17 June 1838.
[273] "The Narrow House! And the Great Petition!" *The Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser,* 14 May 1842.

Reform Act, the political climate was not yet one in which the voice of the working-

classes was particularly valued, as the franchise was still limited to the middle-classes

following the Reform Act of 1832.

In the years following the ratification of the Third Reform Act, political and social

pressure groups had much more success petitioning government to address their

grievances. Education reform, namely the establishing of free education not dominated

by the Church of England in Britain, had been something desired by many groups such as

the National Education League and the Liberation Society since the mid-Victorian era.

Although the Education Act of 1870 did establish free elementary education in England

and Wales, it was not until 1885 that the cause of the Nonconformist Liberation Society

and National Education League was taken up by government. It was then that

Chamberlain's Radical Programme came about, championing causes that were previously

only considered by fringe pressure groups.[274] Indeed, the Liberation Society itself sees

the Third Reform Act as a watershed moment for the cause of free education and

disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England. As the leaders of the

Liberation Society said in a meeting held 13 January 1885:

> If an election was to take place by the unreformed constituencies still the
> growth of the sentiment of the country on this question of religious equality
> would have entitled the society to make this a question to be brought before
> the Legislature. In the new constituencies voters would come in a manner
> never before contemplated. Therefore. Whether the opinions of the society
> were the opinions of the majority or not it was well that they should test what
> is the opinion of the majority…If, as he believed, the great majority of the
> popular forces throughout the country were in harmony with them, in
> agreeing that religious equality is a sound principle, still more was it their
> duty not to be hesitating, not to be timid, but to determine at the next election

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[274] "Public Opinion," *The Nottingham Evening Post,* 7 August 1885. An Act of Provide for Public Elementary Education in England and Wales (1870).

this great question should occupy its proper place in the Liberal programme.[275]

This shows that the enfranchisement and redistribution provisions of the Third Reform Act created a system in which the will of the majority was more important than it had been in the years before its ratification.

This can also be seen through Chamberlain's promise to introduce temperance legislation into Parliament in 1886. The United Kingdom Alliance had been active in Britain since the middle of the nineteenth century advocating for the institution of legislation regulating the sale of alcohol throughout the nation. Following the franchise reform and seat redistribution of the Third Reform Act, Chamberlain promised to introduce legislation in favor of the temperance issue.[276] Although Chamberlain claimed he was not able to promise details of the form the bill was to take, he did promise that a temperance bill would be introduced in the upcoming parliament, and that he would share the details of said bill once they became available.

The fight over temperance can also be used to highlight the second major way the Third Reform Act changed the way that sociopolitical pressure groups and the government interacted with the people and with each other. It was in the years following the Third Reform Act that political discourse became more democratic, with politicians speaking more directly to the will of the people, abandoning the 'man over measures' form of politics that had been prevalent in earlier political eras. This can be seen in a report of a Liberal Association meeting in which Mr. Hoare spoke directly about the temperance issue. In this meeting, Mr. Hoare claimed that rather than outright abolition

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[275] "The Liberation Society and the General Election," *Daily News,* 14 January 1885.
[276] "The Conservative Party," *Daily News,* 14 March 1886.

of alcohol he favored the local option, the transfer of authority over alcohol to locally

elected boards. He claimed that this should be enough to satisfy those in the Liberal party

who advocated strongest for temperance, and that such a move was necessary because

despite the relatively small percentage of the larger party that the temperance faction

made up, they were instrumental in deciding who stood for election in any given

constituency.[277] This is further evidenced by a meeting held at Chester earlier in the

decade by Herbert Gladstone, MP. This meeting, organized by the United Kingdom

Alliance in support of James Tomkinson, the Liberal candidate for Eddisbury was meant

to show how the Liberal party supported the cause of temperance. At this meeting several

speakers including Gladstone, Wilfrid Lawson, MP Canon Baker, and James Tomkinson

himself extolled the virtues of the Liberal party. Lawson claimed that the Conservative

party felt that any temperance measures impeded upon the individual liberties of the

people, and as such would not support those measures as a party. Thus, according to

Lawson and the other speakers "The Liberal part alone supported temperance

legislation."[278] In this meeting the Liberal party spokesmen speak directly to supporters

of a major pressure group in Britain at the time and urge them to support the Liberal party

as they are the only party to take their concerns into account. This is a clear distinction

from earlier political discourse in which the major emphasis was placed on the personal

qualifications of candidates for Parliament and shows how the Third Reform Act creates

a political atmosphere in which candidates and political parties must be more active in

appealing to the will of their constituencies.

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[277] "M. H. E. Hoare and Temperance Reform," *Cambridge Independent Press,* 2 December 1898.
[278] "Mr. H. Gladstone And Sir W. Lawson on Temperance," *Liverpool Mercury etc,* 10 April 1890.

In conclusion, the ratification of the Third Reform Act had significant impacts on social and political pressure groups in the closing decades of the Victorian era. During these years pressure groups were able to exert much more influence in government and bring attention to and action for their causes in Parliament. This has been seen through Chamberlain's adoption of policies advocated by the Liberation Society and National Education League in his Radical Programme. In the years before the Third Reform Act, politicians did not have to show as much consideration for the will of the people, as expressed through pressure groups. However, in a system in which only one member was returned from each constituency, it became much more pressing to adhere to the wishes of the voters. This resulted in a system in which pressure groups were able to exert more influence in the shaping of policy.

The Third Reform Act also created a system in which those wishing to represent the people in Parliament had to speak directly to the wishes of the majority. This had previously not been the case, as men wishing to stand for election tended to instead extoll their own virtues. After the franchise expansion and seat redistribution of 1884-5 this system was no longer electorally viable. Again, with each constituency only returning one member it was vital that those wishing to be elected appeal to popular opinion. Thus, candidates spoke more openly on political issues, and associated themselves and their parties with those issues.

CHAPTER VI

ECONOMIC PRESSURE GROUPS AND THE THIRD REFORM ACT

Much like the social and economic pressure groups that came to exert significant

influence over government and popular opinion in the years following the passing of the

Third Reform Act, economic pressure groups were an important aspect of late-Victorian

politics.[279] Several of these groups advocated for action from the government in many

arenas of public life that were similar to those of the social and political pressure groups,

albeit for different reasons. Among those causes taken up by both economic and

sociopolitical pressure groups was the cause of religious reform, which was important to

economic pressure groups, although their reason for wanting to see the disestablishment

of the Church of England was the abolition of the Church rate, which many viewed as an

unfair taxation rather than the issue of education reform called for by Radical

Nonconformists.[280] Similarly, the debate over temperance adopted an economic tone

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[279] The most defining economic issue of the late-Victorian period was that of imperial preference and tariff reform. While the Liberal Party was mostly committed to the idea of free trade the Conservative party and the Liberal Unionists were more divided, with the Tariff Reform League forming to advocate for Chamberlain's tariff reform program. Other economic pressure groups existed in the form of labor and trade unions, with the largest being the Trades Union Congress. These groups fought for improved conditions for workingmen. Economic pressure groups also existed in the form of advocacy groups such as those arguing against temperance legislation because it would harm the livelihood of publicans and victuallers.

[280] *The Case for Disestablishment: A Handbook of Facts and Arguments in Support of the Claim for Religious Equality* (London: Society for the Liberation of Religion from State-patronage and Control, 1894), 251.

when discussing specific legislation. This is especially true in 1890, as discussion of a

Drink Bill was taking place in Parliament. As one Radical newspaperman puts it:

> For many weighty reasons the question is not one that can be decided offhand
> by cut-and-dried resolutions passed at hastily-convened meetings. The
> financial difficulties that surround it preclude precipitate treatment. There are
> economic rights, quite apart from those real or supposed, of the ordinary
> license-holders that must be duly considered. That, for instance, the rights of
> mortgagees, which have always been dealt with tenderly by the law, and
> which form so important a factor in the present licensing controversy: there is
> no getting away from the fact that rights have been legally acquired, and as
> such are entitled to legal protection.[281]

There were many in Britain who advocated against temperance reform as their ability to

sell liquor and other alcoholic beverages was their primary livelihood, there was also

those on the other side of the debate who advocated for tempered reform through the

local option, partly due to fears that any temperance bill would fail without such a

measure, as such a drastic measure would alienate those who depended on the urban

working-classes for electoral support. Such a move shows the level of influence that

economic pressure groups were able to exert over the government. This is demonstrated

in the case of the Trades Union Congress' advocacy against the influx of immigrants in

the late 1890s. The TUC successfully lobbied Parliament to create commission to study

the effects of immigration and ultimately result in the Aliens Act of 1905 which

expanded the circumstances under which aliens could be denied entry into Britain.[282]

    This can also be seen through pressure groups that were primarily concerned with

the influx of immigrant labor into the industrial centers of Britain in the closing decades

of the Victorian period. These pressure groups, primarily made up of urban working-class

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[281] "Drink Legislation," *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper,* 11 May 1890.
[282] B C Roberts, *The Trades Union Congress, 1868-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 183.

men, sought government action to curtail the patterns of immigration, as they claimed

that it took jobs away from able-bodied British men. These sentiments were expressed at

an 1892 TUC meeting by Mr. J Wilson MP, the Chairman on the Parliamentary

Committee of the TUC. According to the *Aberdeen Journal:*

> He afterwards spoke of the necessity for land reform and against foreign
> immigration, stating that the door must be shut against the enormous
> immigration of destitute aliens into this country. Briefly, these foreigners,
> driven out of their own county or countries of their adoption, fled here, and
> took work at any price. The tailoring and kindred trades, particularly in large
> centres of population, had been practically ruined, until one ceased to wonder
> why sweating flourished.[283]

This shows a clear link between the government, pressure groups, and the economy. The

Trades Union Congress, which was the largest trade union at the time, claiming to

represent over one and a quarter million workers, was openly advocating for a cessation

of foreign immigration with the aim of aiding British workers, and had support, as

indicated by Mr. Wilson's comments, from some members of Parliament, particularly

Conservative MPs, for whom patriotic nationalism was a central ideological tenet.[284]

 Perhaps the most significant impact of economic pressure groups on the political

landscape of the late Victorian period, however, was that of the debate over imperial

preference and tariff reform. It was here that several pressure groups converged over a

single issue, the matter of Britain's faltering economy when compared with those of the

United States and Germany. Joseph Chamberlain, the erstwhile champion of the Radical

Programme introduced a plan of tariff reform and imperial preference in to Parliament in

the early twentieth century that was met with intense opposition from several sectors of

the population and from government itself. Although Chamberlain's tariff reform

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[283] "The Trades Union Congress," *Aberdeen Weekly Journal,* 7 September 1892.
[284] Roberts, *The Trades Union Congress*, 182.

campaign ultimately failed, it gave perhaps the greatest showcase of political pressure by economic interests in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods. It was roundly opposed by those interests who supported free trade, which had been the status-quo since the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 and ushered in the resurgence of the Liberal party in 1906.[285] Thus, through the campaign to defeat Chamberlain's tariff reform program, economic pressure groups demonstrated that they were able to have an impactful influence upon government.

This influence, and its impact, will be measured in two ways throughout this chapter. First will be a discussion of the success these pressure groups had pressuring the government to action in the years follow the implementation of the Third Reform Act. The franchise expansion measures of the Third Reform Act created a greatly expanded electorate, with the most significant gains coming in the counties. Naturally, this created a more democratic electoral process, with the will of the majority becoming more readily apparent. To remain electorally viable, the two major political parties had to appeal to public opinion for support. It is here that it will be shown that pressure groups exerted their greatest influence. Acting as agents for public opinion, these economic groups pressured government for change. Eager to bolster their own power in Parliament, MPs from both parties incorporated the desires of these groups into their political platforms in election years and promised the change that the pressure groups sought. The second way that the influence of economic pressure groups will be measured in this chapter is through the changing dialogue of politicians themselves. In an era of democratic politics, especially with a greatly expanded working-class electorate, it was necessary for MPs to

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[285] Huw Clayton, "How Not to Run a Campaign: The Failure of the Unionist Free Traders, 1903-6," *Parliamentary History* 30, no. 2 (2011), 159.

change the ways in which they interacted with their constituencies. The days of 'man over measure' politics were gone and in their place was a new system in which public opinion ruled. Political dialogue of the late-Victorian period was characterized by direct appeals to reform measures such as limits on immigration to protect working-class jobs in Britain.[286] In this manner the influence of economic pressure groups can be measured by observing how their demands are incorporated into the speeches of MPs and candidates standing for election in the years following the Third Reform Act. By combining these two methods of measuring the success of economic pressure groups this chapter will show that the Third Reform Act created a significant change in the relationship between government and the people, creating a more democratic system.

Before a discussion of these economic pressure groups can take place however, it is important to review the existing literature on the topic to gain an understanding of how scholarship has developed in regard to it. Looking again to Adelman, one can see an interpretation that points towards the Conservative party commitment to tariff reform as a driving factor behind the Liberal party resurgence in 1906.[287] However, Adelman does not explicitly credit pressure groups for influencing either the Conservative party to support tariff reform or the Liberal party to reject tariff reform in favor of free trade. He does explain that the Liberal party favored free trade and an expansion of social reform and its associated government spending, but again, there is no mention of pressure groups being a factor in these developments.[288] While it could be argued that Adelman implies through his work that pressure groups play a major role in these developments, without

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[286] "The Trades Union Congress," *Aberdeen Weekly Journal,* 7 September 1892.
[287] Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism*, 138.
[288] Adelman, *Victorian Radicalism,* 146.

an explicit statement indicating as such, the reader should not assume this to be the case. As it stands, Adelman's work reads as a more traditional account of Radical politics with an emphasis on the Radicals in Parliament and not those who empowered them.

Pat Thane takes a more direct approach to his assessment of economic reform and pressure groups in the late Victorian period. Writing of the trade union fight for fair wages and the Liberal campaign to protect the free trade system, he shows a more direct link between pressure groups as representative of popular opinion and actions taken by the government.[289] Through his writing Thane shows the value of organized pressure in advocating for government action. Writing in the same collection of essays, John Shepherd echoes the sentiments of Thane, going so far as to argue that the TUC was responsible for the formation of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). He shows the TUC organizing campaigns to take the initiative on industrial matters before Parliament and collaborating with the newly-formed LRC on measures like unemployment and old age pensions, and campaigns against the 1902 Education Bill and Chamberlain's tariff reform programme. As Shepherd sees it, the growing *rapprochement* of the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC and Liberal politicians led to a period of strong Liberal politics in the early twentieth century.[290] This claim from Shepherd is a strong one in favor of economic pressure groups being incredibly influential over the government in the late-Victorians and Edwardian periods.

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[289] Pat Thane, "Labour and Local Politics: Radicalism, Democracy, and Social Reform 1880-1914" in *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics,* ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) ,241-255.

[290] John Shepherd, "Labour and Parliament: The Lib-Labs as the first Working-class MPs, 1885-1906" in *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics,* ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 207-8.

In perhaps the greatest work on the impact of economic pressure groups in the late-Victorian period E.H.H. Green discusses Chamberlain's tariff reform campaign at considerable length. In his work Green shows an undeniable link between economic pressure groups and the campaign for tariff reform. When discussing the support that Chamberlain had for tariff reform, Green quotes J.L. Harvin's *Imperial Reciprocity*, in which Harvin proclaims '1846 is not 1903'. Green explains that this means that the issues raised by the 1903 tariff campaign are completely different from those surrounding the debate over the Corn Law repeal in the 1840s. While the 1846 Corn Law debate had been primarily a question of Free Trade or Protectionism, Chamberlain's tariff reform campaign brought a new set of questions to the fore.[291]

Green goes on to explain that Chamberlain, supported by the Tariff Reform League, appealed to British agricultural interests to back his tariff reform program. This shows that by the early twentieth century politicians could use their ability to appeal to public opinion as another tool to encourage the passage of legislation in Parliament, as Chamberlain tries to do through the Tariff Reform League's attempt to appeal to agricultural interests, which had long been the leading economic power in Britain.

These economic pressure groups had significant success in pressuring the government to action on causes that were important to them. This can be seen first through the inclusion of the local option in temperance legislation. This local option would allow for locally elected boards in each constituency to determine whether alcohol would be sold in that locality, and the manner in which it would be sold.[292] Temperance legislation was initially included in the Liberal platform as a way to gain the support of

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[291] Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*, 207.
[292] "United Kingdom Alliance," *The Leeds Mercury,* 16 February 1887.

'faddists,' Nonconformists who tended to favor more radical social reform measures. These reforms were unpopular with the majority of the Anglican urban-working class, who viewed the drink as an integral part of their 'Englishness,' and of course with those who sold alcohol. This disdain for temperance reform is evident in speeches made at the Licensed Victuallers Dinner held in Fishponds Bristol. In these speeches, those taking the podium decried temperance legislation as robbery of both their livelihood and liberties. In a speech recorded by *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post*, this sentiment is explained by J.W. Plunkett MP as he remarks "When a man carried on a lawful trade it was unlawful to rob him of that trade. That was so before the new plan of robbing everybody of everybody's rights existed." In the minds of Plunkett and the other present at this meeting, the only way to protect the rights and livelihoods of the licensed victuallers and beer retailers was to include a measure allowing for the local option in any potential drink bill that may come in the future.

This disdain for temperance legislation was not limited to only one organization in the suburbs of Bristol. Rather, this was a sentiment that was shared by many publicans and beer retailers throughout Britain. In the years immediately following the Third Reform Act meetings were held across the country to discuss the possible implications of a drink bill. In all of these meetings, the idea of temperance legislation brought about much consternation from interested parties. The organizations favoring maintenance of the status-quo regarding temperance pledged to bolster their ranks and do everything possible to fight the implementation of any drink bill and agreed that at the very least a

local option measure would be a requirement for any such bill introduced into Parliament.[293]

This agitation in favor of the local option influenced the shaping of temperance legislation. In the years following the Third Reform Act, calls for the local option became progressively more imperious and difficult for government to ignore.[294] This was evidenced by the indication from Gladstone in 1889 that it was his conviction that any temperance bill forthcoming from Parliament must of necessity include a local option measure.[295] What this shows is that through the pressure they placed on government to act in their favor, these interest groups were able to shape legislation. This led to a shift from stricter temperance bills to more moderate bills dependent on locally elected boards to control the sale of alcohol. The sheer level of agitation and demonstration against the notion of temperance legislation also led Parliament to fail to enact any significant temperance measures, as the United Kingdom Alliance lamented in their 1894 annual report.[296]

The influence of economic pressure groups can further be seen through their efforts to curtail foreign immigration into Britain in the late Victorian period. Although there were some who felt that the influx of foreign workers was unproblematic, the opinion of many among the urban working-class was that these aliens were lowering the average wages of workers in Britain by accepting work at lower wages than native British workers were willing to do.[297] This sentiment was expressed in the annual meeting of

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[293] "Licensed Victuallers' Association," *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc,* 19 February 1887; "The Beer and Wine Trade," *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post,* 16 February 1888; "Licensed Victuallers' National Defence League," *Birmingham Daily Post,* 25 February 1888.
[294] "Licensing Reform," *The Northern Echo,* 19 September 1892.
[295] "Correspondence," *Birmingham Daily Post,* 13 December 1889.
[296] "United Kingdom Alliance," *Aberdeen Weekly Journal,* 19 October 1894.
[297] "Letters to a Workman," *Reynold's Newspaper,* 13 December 1896.

organized labor delegates in Glasgow when the President of that assembly, a Mr. Hodge, expressed his belief that:

> the door must be shut against the enormous immigration of destitute aliens into this country. Foreigners driven out of their own country fled here. They took work at any price – poverty-stricken themselves, they brought poverty to others.[298]

This same sentiment was echoed almost verbatim across the United Kingdom, indicating that the desire to curb immigration was widespread, at least among the urban working-classes.[299]

Ultimately, the sentiment against immigrant workers and the efforts of economic pressure groups in urging the government to pass measures to protect British labor resulted in the introduction of an Alien Immigration Bill into Parliament by Mr. Ritchie.[300] This bill served two purposes: first to curtail the influx of immigrant labor into Britain, especially London, and second to endear the Conservative party to the urban working-class, as many Liberal party MPs said they would not support the bill.

The second method of measuring the influence of economic pressure groups can be done by examining the immigration issue as well. The Conservative Prime Minister of the time, Lord Salisbury, speaks directly about the importance of implementing immigration measures to shore up Conservative party support amongst the working class in an interview with Mr. White. According to Lord Salisbury, "I am very anxious to pass

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[298] "The Labour Parliament," *The Preston Guardian,* 10 September 1892.
[299] "Trades' Union Congress in Glasgow," *Glasgow Herald,* 7 September 1892; "The Trades Union Congress," *Aberdeen Weekly Journal,* 7 September 1892.
[300] "The Evening News," *Edinburgh Evening News,* 16 November 1895; "From Our London Correspondent," *Liverpool Mercury etc,* 19 November 1895.

an Alien Immigration Bill and I believe that it would be valuable and much demanded by the working classes in many districts."[301]

Although this bill was ultimately not successful, the fact that Lord Salisbury spoke on it so candidly, especially with regards to its benefits for the working classes shows that it was important for politicians to vocally support causes supported by public opinion, as evidenced through interest groups. On the opposite side of this support was the failure of H.H. Asquith and Henry Campbell-Bannerman to support a second Alien Immigration Bill in the early twentieth century. Their failure to support measures called for by public opinion was one of the main causes for the continued electoral woes of the Liberal party in the twentieth century prior to 1906.[302]

This importance for politicians to speak directly to their constituencies about measures that affected them was further seen through Chamberlain's campaign for tariff reform. During this campaign Chamberlain traveled across Britain speaking to audiences urging support of his plan for tariff reform and imperial preference. Beginning in September 1903 in Glasgow, Chamberlain engaged in a nationwide propaganda campaign with stops in Newcastle, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, and other major industrial centers supported by the Imperial Tariff League, which sought to bring tariff reform to fruition.[303] This speaking tour was further accompanied by a call for new subscribers to the Tariff Reform League. Specifically, Chamberlain and the Duke of Sutherland were looking for one thousand new supporters, each willing to contribute

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[301] "Lord Salisbury on Alien Immigration," *Edinburgh Evening News,* 30 March 1896; "Political and Official," *Glasgow Herald,* 30 March 1896.

[302] "The Aliens Bill," *The Courier and Argus,* 3 May 1905.

[303] "Question of Preferential Tariffs," *Aberdeen Daily Journal,* 22 June 1903; "Mr. Chamberlain's Autumn Campaign," *Derby Daily Telegraph,* 30 September 1903; "Mr. Chamberlain's Campaign," *Aberdeen Daily Journal,* 28 October 1903; "Mr Chamberlain's Campaign," *The Nottingham Evening Post,* 18 December 1903.

£100 to the League's coffers to support the distribution of 'millions of pamphlets' through League offices throughout the country.[304] Such a dedicated propaganda campaign and speaking tour shows the importance of speaking directly to the currents of public opinion. The supporters of tariff reform also make an effort to combat the assumptions of their opponents, as evidenced by a letter from Sir Herbert Maxwell, MP published in *The Aberdeen Journal.* In his letter, composed as a response to a correspondent questioning the wisdom of tariff reform, Maxwell states:

> Dear sir, -- In reply to your first question, I can only say that I have every confidence in Mr Chamberlain's assurance that he will be no party to any scheme which is likely to increase the cost of food generally. He has pointed out in Glasgow the outlines of a tariff which, if it should slightly raise the price of wheat and corn (which it is far from certain that it would) would diminish the price of other food stuffs of universal consumption, such as tea, coffee, cocoa, etc. I so not share Sir Edward Grey's fears that preferential trading would diminish the wages of agricultural labourers in this country, nor can I understand the source from which those fears arise. Opponents of tariff reform cannot have it both ways. Either the taxation of of foreign foodstuffs will raise the price in this country, in which case there will be more remunerative employment upon the land, or it will leave the price unchanged, in which case farm labourers will continue to receive better value for their labour than that class have ever received until recent years.[305]

The extent to which Chamberlain and his supporters go to appeal to the working-classes through their assurances that tariff reform will not cause an increase in food costs but will instead improve their quality of life demonstrates the importance of appealing to public opinion, especially of the working-classes, in the years following the Third Reform Act.

To conclude, economic interest groups had a considerable impact on political activity in the years following the Third Reform Act. The enfranchisement of the rural working-classes and the general redistribution of seats in Parliament created a more

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[304] "Chamberlain Campaign," *The Evening Telegraph,* 20 November 1903.
[305] "The Fiscal Problem," *Aberdeen Daily Journal,* 30 January 1903.

democratic political system in which public opinion was more influential than had previously been the case. As such, interest groups became an important tool in the shaping of policy by holding government accountable for implementing measures that the electorate wanted. This can be seen through the introduction of a local option measure to discussions of temperance and the introduction of bills to curtail foreign immigration and protect British workers. Pressure groups also influenced the way that politicians interacted with their constituencies, by forcing them to abandon the 'man over measures' model of political discourse and instead adopt one in which public opinion was much more valuable. This is evident in Chamberlain's 1903 campaign for imperial preference in which he made a tour of Britain speaking in favor of his measures, supported by the Tariff Reform League's pamphlet and propaganda campaign. In this new political system, which was made possible by the Third Reform Act, political discourse and interaction became more democratic, with politicians and the public both playing a role in the creation of policy.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Third Reform Act dramatically altered the political landscape of late Victorian Britain. The Act doubled the size of the electorate by extending the 1867 franchise reform into the boroughs and redistributed parliamentary seats by breaking up old multi-seat constituencies and introducing new single-member districts. The result of these measures was to create a political system which was more democratic than had been the case under the 1832 or 1867 Reform Acts. The division of previously multi-member constituencies into single-member constituencies allowed for more concise electoral battles between Liberals and Conservatives, as well as inter-party conflicts. The increased electorate and redistributed parliamentary seats of the Third Reform Act bolstered political activity and organization across all classes, and saw public opinion play a greatly enhanced role in electoral politics in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods.

The effects of the Third Reform Act were widespread and felt throughout a wide spectrum of late Victorian politics. Both the Liberal and Conservative parties were affected by the altered political landscape, as the redistribution of seats created a system in which elections were more closely contested by both parties and appeals to public opinion became necessary to win elections. The Liberal party was unable to effectively

adapt to this new landscape, and as such was relegated to electoral irrelevance in the two decades following the Third Reform Act. The Conservative party on the other hand embraced the increased political activity and organization that came with franchise expansion and seat redistribution and saw twenty years of political domination.

The Third Reform Act also affected the Irish Home Rule movement. Gladstone's need to maintain Liberal power led him to endorse Home Rule openly in the years following the Third Reform Act in an attempt to create a coalition with the Parnellite Irish Nationalists. However, this move had the opposite result, and led to many Liberal MPs deserting the party over their refusal to support the Home Rule measure suggested by Gladstone. This ideological refusal to support Irish Home Rule, and the increased importance of popular opinion in the years following the Third Reform Act led to the formation of the Liberal Unionists. By jumping from the Liberal party ship to that of the Liberal Unionists, MPs appealed to their constituencies by advocating for social reform measures and the maintenance of the British Empire, which was a popular sentiment at the time.

The Third Reform Act's impact on pressure groups is also significant in the two decades following the implementation of the Act. While it is true that pressure groups existed prior to 1884, it was in the final two decades of the nineteenth century that their influence was felt to the fullest extent. These pressure groups were an easily recognizable outlet of public opinion and served to both expand the arena of government and to increase public participation in government.

In chapter two the Conservative ascendancy, and how it was affected by the Third Reform Act, was discussed at length. In the 1886 election the Conservative party won a

landslide victory against the Liberal party and ushered in a twenty-year period of

Conservative party hegemony. The changes in the political landscape brought about by

the Third Reform Act created the need for an advanced political organization and more

active efforts to persuade the working-classes to support the Conservative party. This was

done by a concerted effort on the part of Conservative party organization to appeal to

new constituencies while maintaining their support from the traditional power bases. The

middle-class remained a stronghold of Conservative party power because of Conservative

party efforts to present themselves as the defenders of property. This helped bring urban

industrialists into the conservative fold, as they viewed the Conservative party as being

most likely to protect their interests. The working-class was incorporated into the

Conservative party following the implementation of the Third Reform Act because of an

active Conservative party effort to appeal to the new voters. This was accomplished

through associating the Conservative party with aspects of urban working-class culture

such as leisure and the drink. This is seen through the establishment of Conservative

party social clubs. The *Leamington Spa Courier and Warwickshire Standard* reported

that in the years immediately following the Third Reform Act, Conservative organization

had been extended extensively towards the middle and working-classes.[306] The

Conservative party also defended the status quo of the Anglican Church, as the working-

class was wooed by stability. The stability was also emphasized by appealing to the self-

interest of the working-class. By presenting itself as the defender of the British Empire,

the Conservative party was able to portray an image of a party concerned with protecting

British industrial interests, which in turn meant that industrial workers would be able to

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[306] "Benefits of a Provident Organization," *Leamington Spa Courier and Warwickshire Standard,* 7 August 1886.

enjoy regular employment and competitive wages. Thus, the Conservative ascendancy of 1886-1906 was not merely a passive benefit of the disintegration of the Liberal party due to its own ineptitude. Instead, a more nuanced view of the Conservative ascendancy is required. One in which the split of the Liberal party and its ineptitude in appealing to its electoral base provided a passive benefit upon which the Conservative Party made an active effort to build a base of support and solidify their electoral relevance.

Chapter three analyzed the role of the Third Reform Act in the disintegration and split of the Liberal party. This disintegration was caused by several factors, not least of which was Gladstone's support for Irish Home Rule. This move was unpalatable to many in the party, and directly led to the formation of the Liberal Unionist party as many Liberal, including Joseph Chamberlain and George Goschen. However, even before this final split the Liberal party had been in decline. This decline was evident following the 1885 general election, which left them dependent on the Parnellites to maintain their control over government. This election, and the 1886 election which saw them lose power and much of their prestige, were indicative of the Liberal party problem in the era of the Third Reform Act. The party was unable to appeal to effectively organize or appeal to public opinion in a way that persuaded voters to prefer Liberal candidates. As such, working-class conservatism played a significant role in the Conservative party's success in the late-Victorian period.[307] To gain the support of those working-class voters the Conservative party deliberately associated themselves with aspects of urban society like the pub, racing, and football to distinguish themselves from the moral reforming Liberal party.[308] This was done through the founding of political clubs, which put as much

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[307] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 632.
[308] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 638.

emphasis on organizing parties and socials as they did on organizing voter registration drives.[309] Doing this ingratiated the Conservative party with the newly enfranchised urban working-class electorate, while gradually familiarizing them with political organization and participation. Perhaps the most important aspect of this campaign to gain the support of the urban working-class was the Conservative party's defense of the drink. Working-class identity was closely associated with the pub, and as such their politics revolved heavily around the 'beer barrel.'[310] While the Liberal party was dedicated to its 'crusade against sin,' the Conservative party dedicated itself to defense of drink and popular sport, elements which were vital to the identity of the urban working-class.[311]

Chapter four explored the impact of the Third Reform Act on the Irish Home Rule Crisis. The Third Reform Act created a political system in which political parties were more dependent on effective organization for electoral success. As a result of the redistribution of seats in parliament and the extension of the franchise, this meant that the Irish MPs held the balance of power in Parliament. Irish Home Rule was thrust to the fore of British politics by these political machines, which leveraged popular democratic sentiment, especially in Ireland, for the creation of Home Rule measures. The importance of this development is two-fold. First, it saw the evolution of British politics from a game of "man over measures" in which MPs were elected based on their personal integrity to a system in which candidates had to pay more attention to the opinions of their people. Second, the development of the caucus finally gave rank-and-file party members an

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[309] Lawrence, "Class and Gender," 639.
[310] Roberts, "Popular Conservatism," 406.
[311] Roberts, "'Villa Toryism'," 230.

opportunity to shape party policy rather than accept the party line dictated to them by the party elites. Although the NLF initially followed Gladstone's policy religiously, by the 1890s it was in a position to dictate party policy. These developments were in line with the longstanding ideals of popular democracy that were responsible for the passage of the Third Reform Act.

Chapter five looked at the interconnectedness of the Third Reform Act and socioeconomic pressure groups in the final decades of the nineteenth century. The ratification of the Third Reform Act had significant impacts on social and political pressure groups in the closing decades of the Victorian era. During these years pressure groups were able to exert much more influence in government and bring attention to and action for their causes in Parliament. This has been seen through Chamberlain's adoption of policies advocated by the Liberation Society and National Education League in his Radical Programme. In the years before the Third Reform Act, politicians did not have to show as much consideration for the will of the people, as expressed through pressure groups. However, in a system in which only one member was returned from each constituency, it became much more pressing to adhere to the wishes of the voters. This resulted in a system in which pressure groups were able to exert more influence in the shaping of policy.

The Third Reform Act also created a system in which those wishing to represent the people in Parliament had to speak directly to the wishes of the majority. This had previously not been the case, as men wishing to stand for election tended to instead extoll their own virtues. After the franchise expansion and seat redistribution of 1884-5 this system was no longer electorally viable. Again, with each constituency only returning

one member it was vital that those wishing to be elected appeal to popular opinion. Thus, candidates spoke more openly on political issues, and associated themselves and their parties with those issues.

Chapter six discussed the role that economic pressure groups played in the years following the implementation of the Third Reform Act. The enfranchisement of the rural working-classes and the general redistribution of seats in Parliament created a more democratic political system in which public opinion was more influential than had previously been the case. As such, interest groups became an important tool in the shaping of policy by holding government accountable for implementing measures that the electorate wanted. This can be seen through the introduction of a local option measure to discussions of temperance and the introduction of bills to curtail foreign immigration and protect British workers. Pressure groups also influenced the way that politicians interacted with their constituencies, by forcing them to abandon the 'man over measures' model of political discourse and instead adopt one in which public opinion was much more valuable. This is evident in Chamberlain's 1903 campaign for imperial preference in which he made a tour of Britain speaking in favor of his measures, supported by the Tariff Reform League's pamphlet and propaganda campaign. In this new political system, which was made possible by the Third Reform Act, political discourse and interaction became more democratic, with politicians and the public both playing a role in the creation of policy.

Ultimately, the Third Reform Act created a political system in Britain that was more democratic than had been the case after either the 1832 or 1867 Reform Acts. While it is accurate to argue that true democracy did not come about until the interwar period,

the impacts of the Third Reform Act must not be overlooked. The division of previously

multi-member constituencies into single-member constituencies allowed for more concise

electoral battles between Liberals and Conservatives, as well as inter-party conflicts. The

increased electorate and redistributed parliamentary seats of the Third Reform Act

bolstered political activity and organization across all classes, and saw public opinion

play a greatly enhanced role in electoral politics in the late-Victorian and Edwardian

periods. Thus, the years following the Third Reform Act were more democratic than

those preceding it. This more democratic system created a Conservative ascendancy,

which saw the Conservative party take power following the 1886 general election and

remain in power for the next generation.

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BOOKS

The Case for Disestablishment: A Handbook of Facts and Arguments in Support of the Claim for Religious Equality. **London: Society for the Liberation of Religion from State-patronage and Control, 1894.**

This book is a handbook that was designed to instruct temperance campaigners in the arguments to make when questioned about their support for temperance legislation. In this book are religious arguments claiming that alcohol is deteriorating the moral fabric of British society. This book was useful to my research into the effects of Nonconformists and pressure groups on Liberal party policy in the late nineteenth century.

LEGISLATION

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. House of Commons. The Representation of the People Act, 1884, *Oxford University.*

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. House of Commons. The Redistribution of Seats Act 1885, *Oxford University.*

NEWSPAPERS

Aberdeen Weekly Journal

Birmingham Daily Post

Birmingham Daily Post

Cambridge Independent Press

Daily News

Derby Daily Telegraph

Edinburgh Evening News

Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser

Glasgow Herald

Grantham Journal

Ipswich Journal

Leamington Spa Courier and Warwickshire Standard

Liverpool Mercury

Liverpool Mercury etc.

Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper

Northern Echo

Reynold's Newspaper

The Aberdeen Journal

The Belfast News-Letter

The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post

The Courier and Argus

The Derby Daily Telegraph

The Evening Telegraph

The Leeds Mercury

The London Dispatch and People's Political and Social Reformer

The Northern Liberator

The Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser

The Nottingham Evening Post

The Pall Mall Gazette

The Preston Guardian

Western Mail

SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS

Adelman, Paul. *Victorian Radicalism: The Middle-Class Experience 1830-1914.* **New York: Longman, 1984.**

Adelman's work is a survey of middle-class radicalism from the beginning of the Victorian era up to the beginning of the First World War. This work discusses many of the interest groups and reform campaigns covered in this thesis, most notably the temperance and disestablishment campaigns.

Barker, Michael. *Gladstone and Radicalism: The Reconstruction of Liberal Policy in Britain, 1885-1894.* **New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1975.**

In this work Barker discusses and analyzes Liberal party policy under Gladstone at the end of the nineteenth century. Barker discusses Liberal party policy and Gladstone's motivation for committing the Liberal party to these policies. Of particular importance to this paper was Barker's treatment of Gladstone and the Irish Home Rule movement.

Biagini, Eugenio F. *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876-1906.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.**

This book is beneficial for the understanding of how Irish Nationalism and the Home Rule Crisis impacted democratic politics in late-Victorian Britain. By using a "politics from below" approach, Biagini is able to give insight into popular politics and how politicians interacted with their constituencies. This allows for a discussion of Conservative efforts to become electorally relevant, and of the Liberal decline in the late 1880s.

Clark, Samuel and James S. Donnelly, Jr. *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914.* **Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.**

Clark and Donnelly's work explores the role of the Irish working-class in political unrest throughout the entirety of the nineteenth century. While the scope of this work was wider than the scope of my thesis, this work was useful for the chapters on Irish Home Rule in the late nineteenth century.

Coffey, John. "Democracy and Popular Religion: Moody and Sankey's Mission to Britain. 1873-1875," in *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles 1865-1931,* **ed. Eugenio F. Biagini, 93-119. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.**

This chapter discusses the impact of religious revivalism on British politics in the Victorian period. Coffey argues that the growth of Nonconformity in Britain following the wave of revivalism was responsible for the path of Liberal party policy, as the Nonconformists were a stronghold of Liberal support.

Cunningham, Hugh. *The Challenge of Democracy: Britain 1832-1918.* **Harlow: Longman, 2001.**

In this book Cunningham provided an exploration of the political reforms from the Great Reform to the outbreak of the First World War in terms of how those reforms took Britain towards true democracy. Cunningham shows that democracy did not have an accepted definition during this time and was spoken of with both disdain and acclaim. This work explores the effects of political reform and democracy on the interconnected roles of the government and the people.

Gange, David. *The Victorians.* **London: OneWorld Publications, 2016.**

Gange's work is a general introduction to the Victorian period. His work provided a basic framework of understanding upon which was place the work of other historians to add breadth to my understanding of the Third Reform Act.

Green, E. H. H. *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the British Conservative Party, 1880-1914.* **London: Routledge, 1995.**

A view of Conservative decline during the period 1880-1914 framed through Chamberlain's insistence on the tariff reform campaign. Provides a narrative of Conservative high politics. This book serves as a counter to the narratives of popular Conservatism in the late-Victorian period and serves as an historiographical counterpoint to my thesis. This book contends that despite Conservatives governing during this period, the party was in decline rather than in ascendancy.

Harrison, Brian Howard. *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872.* **2nd ed. Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1994.**

Harrison's work discusses the relationship between the British people and alcoholic drinks. In this book he explores both sides of the temperance issue: the religious reformers who wanted to control alcohol and the publicans and working-class men who fought to maintain their rights to sell and consume alcohol. This was useful both for my research into the Liberal party collapse and the effects of pressure groups.

Hollis, Patricia, ed. *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian Britain.* **London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1974.**

This collection, edited by Patricia Hollis provides analysis and exploration of pressure groups in the early Victorian period. This work was useful to my research as it provided an overview of political pressure groups and their methodology in the mid-nineteenth century. The chapter of Chartism was especially useful because it showed the early failures of pressure groups against which I set their later successes.

Lang, Sean. *Parliamentary Reform 1785-1928.* **Abingdon: Routledge, 1993.**

This work is a wide survey of parliamentary history and reform from 1785 until the full enfranchisement of women in the 1920s. Lang offers analysis of each major reform and the governmental and public response to calls for these reforms. Lang's work was useful for both discussing public opinion and the differences in the political landscape following the Third Reform Act.

Lawrence, Jon. *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair.* **Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.**

Lawrence's work provides analysis of the interactions between the government and the people, and the people's role in electing their own leaders. This book is a narrative history exploring the role of public opinion up to the twentieth century. However, Lawrence's work in discussing the electoral conditions around 1867 and 1885 were helpful in my research to analyze how the Third Reform Act changed British political participation.

Lawrence, Jon. *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.**

Like Biagini's *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, Lawrence uses a "politics from below" approach to government in Britain. This book uses statistical analysis to combat common assumptions about popular politics during the period and embraces the linguistic turn approach to interpreting how the constituencies interacted with their MPs. This work is useful to the discussion of popular Conservatism, especially among the urban working class.

Lee, Stephen J. *Aspects of British Political History 1815-1914.* **London: Routledge, 1994.**

A general treatment of the major political issues of nineteenth century Britain. Provides useful background discussion of the conditions surrounding the Conservative ascendancy, such as Home Rule and the Third Reform Act.

McCaffrey, Lawrence J. *The Irish Question: Two Centuries of Conflict.* **2nd ed., Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015.**

McCaffrey provides a narrative of the struggle between Britain and Ireland from Ireland's incorporation into the United Kingdom in 1800 to the establishment of the Irish Free State. McCaffrey discusses the impacts of Irish nationalism on the Irish Question, and the effects of the Irish Question on British politics and empire. This work was useful to my research for the Irish Home Rule crisis and the breakup of the Liberal party.

McWilliam, Rohan. *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England.* **London: Routledge, 1998.**

McWilliam provides an introduction to the major policy and ideology developments of the nineteenth century. This work was useful for the

historiographical discussion of the Third Reform Act and gives vital insights into the faddist pressure groups that had become essential to the success of the Liberal party.

Parry, Jonathan. *The Rise and the Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

A general history on Liberal government in the Victorian period. This book will be useful to my historiography, as it presents Home Rule as the cause for the Liberal split. Parry's work is also helpful in showing how the Liberal party was unable to appeal to some working-class voters because of their insistence of moral reform.

Pugh, Martin. *Britain Since 1789: Concise History*. Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999.

Pugh's work is a general political history of Britain from the French Revolution through the leadership of Tony Blair in the late twentieth century. This work has been useful as a reference for major political developments throughout the Victorian era, especially the political reforms of 1867 and 1884.

Roberts, B. C. *The Trades Union Congress, 1868-1921*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.

Roberts's work is a history of the Trades Union Congress from the Second Reform Act until just after the First World War. The Trades Union Congress (TUC) was the largest labor union in Britain at the time, and as such was also the largest interest group. This work was useful to my research because it gave me valuable insight into how economic interest groups petitioned government in the years following the Third Reform Act.

Saunders, Robert. *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics 1848-1867: The Making of the Second Reform Act*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2011.

Saunders's work analyzed the Second Reform Act and the role that democracy played in the implementation of that reform. This work was useful to my research as it provided both a narrative for the Second Reform Act, which formed the political system altered by the Third Reform Act, and by establishing an argument that public opinion became more important as more citizens were given the franchise.

Shepherd, John. "Labour and Parliament: The Lib-Labs as the first Working-class MPs, 1885-1906." in *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics,* ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

While this work did not play a large role in my research, it did provide some insight into working-class politics. As the working-class became a larger portion of the British electorate, Shepherd argued that the Liberal-Labour alliance played

an important role in ensuring representation for the working class and served as a forerunner to the Labour party.

Thane, Pat "Labour and Local Politics: Radicalism, Democracy, and Social Reform 1880-1914." in *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics,* ed. Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Thane's work shows the importance of local politics and party organization to the major political parties in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. In this chapter, Thane discussed the role of democracy and public opinion in social reform.

Tholfsen, Trygve. *Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

Tolfsen's work provides a narrative of political radicalism amongst the working-classes in Victorian Britain. While this work is a valuable overview of working-class radicalism, it was especially useful for my purposes as Tholfsen gives insights on the effects of working-class considerations on the Irish Home Rule question.

Thompson, Andrew S. *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932.* New York: Routledge, 2014.

Thompson provides an overview of the role the British Empire played in politics in the late Victorian period into the twentieth century. Thompson spent considerable effort discussing the role of the Boer War on British politics, and he argues that a more nuanced approach than the status quo is necessary. According to Thompson the anti-imperialist movement did not gain much momentum from the Boer War, as had previously been thought.

Wright, D. G. *Popular Radicalism: The Working-Class Experience 1780-1880.* London: Longman, 1988.

Wright's work is an overview of the working-class role in radical politics for most of the nineteenth century. Although Wright's narrative ends before the period discussed in my thesis, his work is useful for my analysis of public opinion and the role of working-class activism in the Liberal party before the Third Reform Act.

JOURNALS

Aidt, Toke S., and Raphaël Franck. "Democratization Under the Threat of Revolution: Evidence from the Great Reform Act of 1832." *Econometrica* 83, no. 2 (2015): 505-47.

This work examines the link between parliamentary reform and the risk of political revolution in 1830s Britain. An empirical analysis of the riots that occurred near British constituencies showed that British voters were persuaded to vote for pro-reform politicians after seeing the violence of the Swing Riots firsthand. This article is useful for placing the process of democratization within a broader context of the nineteenth century.

Belcher, Jason. "Gladstonian Liberalism: A Catalyst for Social Representation and Democratic Reform in Victorian Britain" (2018). *Electronic Thesis Collection*. 244.

Belcher's thesis discusses Gladstone's legacy and achievements as leader of Parliament and the treatment he has received by subsequent historians. Belcher argues that Gladstone should not be considered a democratic revolutionary, but that he did implement some elements of democratic change in his reforms. Belcher's analysis of Gladstone was useful to my research into Gladstone's motivations for supporting Irish Home Rule in the 1880s.

Blaxill, Luke. "Electioneering, the Third Reform Act, and Political Change in the 1880s," *Parliamentary History 30,* no 3. (2011): 343-373.

This article uses the borough of Ipswich as a focus to discuss the changes in the process of electioneering in the year immediately following the Third Reform Act. Blaxill argues that historians have underestimated the extent to which the Third Reform Act transformed the political culture. He further argues that the Third Reform Act had the unintended consequence of nationalizing politics.

Chadwick, Mary. "The Role of Redistribution in the Making of the Third Reform Act," *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 3 (1976): 665-683.

In this article Mary Chadwick argues that the Third Reform Act was the most significant of the three franchise reform acts during the nineteenth century, despite receiving the least attention from historians. In her work, Chadwick argues that what sets the Third Reform Act apart from the other two acts was its focus on redistribution.

Clayton, Huw. "How Not to Run a Campaign: The Failure of the Unionist Free Traders, 1903-6," *Parliamentary History* 30, no. 2 (2011): 158-174.

Clayton's article provides an analysis of the failure of Chamberlain's tariff reform campaign in the early twentieth century. This tariff reform campaign was designed to implement a system of imperial preference, which went against the status quo of free trade. Clayton's article argues that the Liberal Unionists failed to understand mass politics, and as such the tariff reform campaign failed and the Liberal Unionists lost seats in the 1906 election.

Ertman, Thomas. "The Great Reform Act of 1832 and British Democratization," *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 8-9 (2010): 1000-1022.

> This article focuses on the period of political change around the First Reform Act. This period began with Catholic Emancipation, but eventually culminated in political reform for the entirety of Britain. Ertman argues that this period had a threefold impact on the political order by removing executive control of the legislative, brought a two-party system, and served as a catalyst for future reforms.

Fraser, P. "The Liberal Unionist Alliance: Chamberlain, Hartington, and the Conservatives, 1886-1904," *The English Historical Review* 77, no. 302 (1962): 53-78.

> An account of the Liberal Unionist party and Chamberlain's transition from Liberal, to Liberal Unionist, to Conservative. Gives context into the shifting ideological bases of the two parties following the Third Reform Act. This article shows how Conservative efforts to reform convinced Chamberlain and other Liberal leaders that the Conservative party was better upholding principles of liberalism.

Hamer, D. A. "The Irish Question and Liberal Politics, 1886-1894," *The Historical Journal* 12, no. 3 (1969): 511-32.

> This article gives an overview of the Irish Home Rule question in the final two decades of the nineteenth century. Hamer argues that the Irish Question occupied a place of political predominance in the closing decades of the Victorian period. Hamer gives valuable insight into the importance of Irish Home Rule to Gladstone and to the Liberal party.

Kelly, Matthew. "Home Rule for Ireland: For and Against," *The Historian* 124 (Winter 201/2015): 30-36.

> Kelly's work provides an introductory overview of the major arguments both for and against Irish Home Rule and discusses the groups who supported both sides. This work was useful for setting my argument and gaining a basic understanding of the main sides of the Irish Question

Kneale, James. "The Place of Drink: Temperance and the Public, 1856-1914," *Social & Cultural Geography* 2, no. 1 (2001): 43-59.

> In his treatment of temperance in Britain during the Victorian period, Kneale argues that rather than continuing their efforts at reforming individuals the United Kingdom Alliance instead shifted their efforts towards outright banning alcohol. This wider scope of activity for a faddist pressure group is used to show the effects of the Third Reform Act.

Lawrence, Jon. "Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914," *The English Historical Review* 108, no. 428 (1993): 629-652.

An exploration of the role that social class and gender played in popular Conservatism in the late-Victorian period. This article, like Lawrence's other work, provides an account of politics from below. This article is useful in the historiographical discussion of the Conservative ascendance, as it suggests that Conservatives regained power through their own efforts.

Lubenow, W. C. "Irish Home Rule and the Social Basis of the Great Separation in the Liberal Party in 1886," *The Historical Journal* 28, no. 1 (1985): 125-142.

An account of the Liberal split in 1886. Lubenow contends that it was political reasons rather than social reasons that led to the Liberal split. This article is useful to my research as the Conservative ascendancy begins in part with the Home Rule Crisis. Lubenow claims that it was easier for Liberals to defect as the two parties had become ideologically closer.

McConnel, James. "'Jobbing with Tory and Liberal': Irish Nationalists and the Politics of Patronage 1880-1914," *Past & Present* 188, no. 1 (2005): 105-131.

This article gives insight into how patronage played a role in the Irish National party in the late-Victorian period. This article was not particularly useful to my research once I switched topics but does give insight into the prominence that patronage played in gaining political relevance. This article could also be used to explain why the Irish Nationalists were in a coalition with the Conservative party for a short period.

McEwen, John M. "The Liberal Party and the Irish Question during the First World War," *Journal of British Studies* 12, no. 1 (1972): 109-31.

In this article John McEwen asks a simple question, but one which he argues has not been given as much attention as it merits: How many nails did Ireland put in the Liberal coffin between 1914 and 1918? McEwen argues that Home Rule was a unifying force for the Liberal party at the outbreak of the war, but Ireland's growing separatism made the prospect harder to cling to and made the Liberal more unpopular.

Porritt, Annie G. "The Irish Home Rule Bill," *Political Science Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1913): 298-319.

A near contemporary account of the Irish Home Rule movement. This article is useful to my research because it gives insight into the social conflict theory of Liberal decline and serves as a counter to my thesis. This fits into the

historiographical picture I am presenting, in that contemporaries ascribed to the
belief that Conservatives came to power because of a Liberal collapse.

Roberts, Matthew. "Popular Conservatism in Britain, 1832-1914," *Parliamentary*
History **26, no. 3 (2007): 387-410.**

This article is vital to my understanding of popular Conservatism in Britain. Much
of my argument was inspired by Roberts' ideas and this article forms the
backbone of my thesis. It provides an overview of Conservative efforts to appeal
to the electorate as it expands and allows for other research to be used to support
its main arguments.

Roberts, Matthew. "'Villa Toryism' and Popular Conservatism in Leeds, 1885-
1902," *The Historical Journal* **49, no. 1 (2006): 217-246.**

This article is a localized account of popular or 'Villa' Toryism in the late
Victorian period. This article is key to my arguments that the Conservatives make
active efforts to solidify their support among the middle class. It shows how the
Conservative party placed themselves in position to be the advocates for industry
and property.

Rodden, John. "Neither Popes nor Potatoes: The Irish Question and the Marxist
Answer," *The Midwest Quarterly* **50, no. 3 (2009): 232-254.**

Rodden's article asserts that both Marx and Engels spent considerable debating
the Irish Question and believed that an industrialized Ireland could be a vital force
in their socialist revolution. However, Marx ultimately lacked a real answer for
Ireland. Rodden argues that this topic has been largely overlooked by other
historians and claims that Marx's assertion that the Irish Question was a matter of
haves vs. have nots needs more attention.

Stanbridge, Karen. "Nationalism, International Factors and the 'Irish Question' in
the Era of the First World War," *Nations and Nationalism* **11 no. 1 (2005):**
21-42.

In this article Stanbridge considers the factors that led all players in the Irish
Home Rule crisis to adopt policies that ultimately became irreconcilable. Part of
this analysis is a discussion of nationalism on both the British and Irish sides, but
the discussion of Irish nationalism and the effect it had on calls for Home Rule
were especially useful to my research.

Stephens, Hugh W. "The Changing Context of British Politics in the 1880s: The
Reform Acts and the Formation of the Liberal Unionist Party," *Social*
Science History **1, no. 4 (1977): 486-501.**

This article gives a narrative of the formation of the Liberal Unionist party. This is a subject that Stephens claims has not been given much attention from historians. This article is useful to the historiographical discussion of the Liberal Unionist party and the Third Reform Act because Stephens believes that the Third Reform Act caused the Liberal Unionists and Conservatives to drift together ideologically. This claim is countered by others such as Biagini and Lawrence.

Vincent, John. "The Effect of the Second Reform Act in Lancashire," *The Historical Journal* **11, no. 1 (1968): 84-94.**

This article discusses the effects of the Second Reform Act on Lancashire in the late 1860s. By analyzing the electoral data from 1868, Vincent seeks to ascertain the impact of the expanded electorate on the Conservative success in that election. Through analyzing the data, Vincent suggests that the expanded electorate was not the cause of the Conservative success but was rather previously existing political issues.