

THE LIBERAL UNIONIST PARTY, 1886-1912

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Abstract

This dissertation consists of an examination of the Liberal Unionist party over the entire period of its existence, from 1886 to 1912, and demonstrates the importance of the party to a complete understanding of British political history in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods. The Liberal Unionist party retained a significant degree of independence from other parties for far longer than historians have generally assumed. In particular, the relationship between the Liberal Unionist party and the Conservative party, with whom they co-operated in an electoral alliance from 1886 and participated in a coalition government from 1895 to 1905, continued to be fraught with tension and conflicts over parliamentary representation and ideology until the last years of the party's existence. Conversely, many Liberal Unionists retained ties of sentiment and ideology with the Liberal parties for many years after the Home Rule division of 1886. In the course of demonstrating the continued independence of the Liberal Unionist party, this dissertation examines the central and local party organization, the operation of the electoral alliance between the Liberal Unionists and Conservatives, and the construction and nature of Liberal Unionist identity. An important component of this dissertation is the identification of every Liberal Unionist candidate and M.P. based on a variety of primary sources (see Appendixes C and D), which allows for a more detailed and accurate discussion of the history of the party than previously had been possible.

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Wesley Ferris
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Abbreviations

BLA	Birmingham Liberal Association
BLUA	Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association
BUL	Birmingham University Library
BNCA	Bury North Conservative Association
CH	Chatsworth House
CKS	Centre for Kentish Studies
DCLUF	Devon and Cornwall Liberal Unionist Federation
DUL	Durham University Library
E&NSLUA	East and North of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association
LA	Lincolnshire Archives
LDLUA	Lichfield Division Liberal Unionist Association
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
MDLUA	Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association
MLUA	Midlands Liberal Unionist Association
MLUF	Metropolitan Liberal Unionist Federation
NCLUF	Northern Counties Liberal Unionist Federation
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NLU	National Liberal Union
NRU	National Radical Union

OLUA	Oxford Liberal Unionist Association
RO	Record Office
SCUA	Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association
TCL	Trinity College Library, Cambridge University
ULUA	Ulster Liberal Unionist Association
UP	Ugbrooke Park
VCH	Victoria County History
WDLUA	West Derbyshire Liberal Unionist Association
WLUA	Women's Liberal Unionist Association
WSLUA	West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association

Introduction

This dissertation is an in-depth discussion of the Liberal Unionist party from its creation in 1886 to its merger with the Conservative party in 1912. Several different aspects of the party are analysed, including central and local party organization, the operation of the electoral alliance with the Conservative party, and the nature of Liberal Unionist identity, including the extent to which Liberal Unionists continued to identify with Liberalism. This discussion also places due weight on the period after 1895, when the Liberal Unionists joined a coalition government under the Conservative Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury. Most historians have dismissed the Liberal Unionist party as a mere adjunct of the Conservative party, either from the moment the party was formed or, at the latest, from 1895. However, as this dissertation demonstrates, the Liberal Unionist party remained distinct from the Conservative party far longer than most historians have assumed, in terms of party organization, support amongst the electorate, and identity.

* * * * *

The Liberal Unionist party was born out of the upheaval that divided the Liberal party in the mid-1880s over the question of granting Home Rule, or self-government, to Ireland. After the 1885 general election, W. E. Gladstone, the leader of the Liberal party, embraced Home Rule, and most Liberals fell into line with their leader, while the Conservatives moved into staunch opposition to Home Rule. However, a significant minority of Liberals also came to oppose Home Rule. Thus, when at 1 a.m. on June 8th,

1886, the Second Reading of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was defeated by 341 votes to 311 in the House of Commons, ninety-four Liberal M.P.s had voted with the Conservatives against the measure.¹ These ninety-four M.P.s formed the basis of the Liberal Unionist party, which, even before the decisive vote, had begun negotiations for an electoral alliance with the Conservative party. Ultimately, it was agreed that no incumbent Liberal Unionist would be challenged by a Conservative candidate, and vice versa. This electoral pact would form the basis of Liberal Unionist-Conservative co-operation, commonly known as the Unionist alliance, for the duration of the existence of the Liberal Unionist party. This electoral alliance was immediately put to the test after the vote on Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, as Parliament was dissolved. In the ensuing general election, the Conservatives won the most seats, though falling short of an overall majority, while the Liberal Unionists won seventy-seven.² Lacking a majority, Lord Salisbury, the leader of the Conservative party, offered to form a coalition government with the Liberal Unionists in July 1886, even to the extent of offering the premiership to Lord Hartington, the Liberal Unionist leader. However, Hartington and other Liberal Unionists wished to retain their separate identity and avoid becoming subsumed within the Conservative party, and the offer of coalition was declined, though general support was pledged to the Conservative government. When Lord Randolph Churchill resigned

¹ For a discussion on these ninety-four M.P.s, see Brian William Rodden, Anatomy of the 1886 Schism in the British Liberal Party: A Study of the Ninety-Four Liberal Members of Parliament Who Voted Against the First Home Rule Bill (PhD Dissertation, Rutgers University, 1968). See also W. C. Lubenow, Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis: The British House of Commons in 1886 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 344.

² The number of Liberal Unionist M.P.s elected at each general election are calculated from Appendix C.

as Chancellor of the Exchequer in December 1886, Salisbury renewed his offer of coalition, and Hartington again declined, though the Liberal Unionist George Goschen did join the Conservative government to replace Churchill.

There were two main factions within the Liberal Unionist party. The larger comprised the Whig followers of Lord Hartington, and included such individuals as his trusted lieutenant Henry James, Goschen, Lord Derby, and Lord Lansdowne. The smaller faction consisted of Radical (sometimes referred to as Radical Unionist) followers of Joseph Chamberlain, the Birmingham M.P. and architect of the ‘caucus,’ or modern party organization. For Chamberlain’s faction in particular, the separation from the rest of the Liberal party was keenly felt, and hopes were entertained that reunion would follow. Chamberlain himself initially believed that Gladstone would retire after his defeat at the 1886 general election, which would open the way for reunion on a moderate Irish policy. However, Gladstone remained as Liberal leader, eager to continue his crusade for Home Rule. After the resignation of Churchill at the end of 1886, Chamberlain and a fellow Liberal Unionist, George Otto Trevelyan, began the Round Table Conference with representatives of the Gladstonian Liberals to see if any common ground could be found on which Liberal Unionists, or at least Chamberlain’s followers, could rejoin the Liberal party. However, by the spring of 1887 the talks had broken down, and in the years that followed Chamberlain became increasingly comfortable in the Unionist alliance, and by the early 1890s he no longer looked for reunion with the Liberal party.

The policy of the Liberal Unionists towards the minority Conservative

government formed after the 1886 general election was to ensure the government's survival as long as the only possible alternative government was a Liberal one committed to Home Rule. With such support, the Conservative government remained in power until another general election was called in 1892, though there were a number of secondary issues, such as temperance, that strained the Unionist alliance. Some Liberal Unionists, including Trevelyan, found themselves more uncomfortable working with the Conservatives than supporting a Home Rule policy, and gradually returned to the Liberal party, though the bulk of the Liberal Unionists remained. In 1891, Hartington's father, the 7th Duke of Devonshire, died, and Hartington succeeded to the peerage and vacated the House of Commons for the House of Lords. A measure of Chamberlain's increasing stature and commitment to the Liberal Unionists was seen in his acclamation as leader of the Liberal Unionist party in the House of Commons, though Hartington, now Devonshire, remained leader of the party as a whole.

At the 1892 general election, in which the Liberals won a minority victory, the Liberal Unionists were reduced to forty-six M.Ps. The Liberal Unionist alliance with the Conservatives was strengthened in opposition to Gladstone's second Home Rule Bill in 1893, during which Chamberlain further proved his Unionist credentials by his vigorous attacks on the measure. After the bill's defeat in the House of Lords in September 1893 and Gladstone's subsequent retirement, Lord Rosebery became leader of the Liberal party and Prime Minister. However, Gladstone's retirement did not provoke any significant defections from Liberal Unionist ranks back to the Liberals. Indeed, the Liberal Unionists

and the Conservatives were drawing closer together, and momentum was growing in favour of the two parties forming a coalition government in the event of the resignation of the Rosebery government. However, the movement towards coalition was not without setbacks, the most serious of which was a conflict between the two parties in the spring of 1895 over which would contest Warwick and Leamington after the retirement of the incumbent A. W. Peel. As Peel was the Speaker, there was some doubt over whether he could be considered a Liberal Unionist, and local Conservatives angled to put their own candidate forward. However, Chamberlain felt this to be a direct challenge to his political influence in the West Midlands, and confronted the Conservatives over the constituency. The conflict over Warwick and Leamington was briefly a national crisis, with Chamberlain threatening to retire from politics altogether, before it was resolved through the adoption of Alfred Lyttelton as a compromise Liberal Unionist candidate.³

With the conflict over Warwick and Leamington settled, the way was open for a coalition government when Rosebery's faltering government was defeated in the House of Commons in June 1895. Lord Salisbury was called upon to form a government, and though he did not again offer to serve under Devonshire, a coalition was agreed upon. Devonshire and Chamberlain initially met with Salisbury and Arthur Balfour regarding the disposition of offices, with Devonshire becoming Lord President of the Council and Chamberlain becoming Colonial Secretary. Two other Liberal Unionists entered the

³ M. C. Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics, 1886-1895* (Oxford, UK: Dugdale Society Occasional Papers, 1962), p. 66-69. For a recent revisionist account of this crisis, see Ian Cawood, 'Joseph Chamberlain, the Conservative Party and the Leamington Spa Candidature Dispute of 1895,' in *Historical Research*, Vol. 79, No. 206 (Nov. 2006), p. 554-577.

Cabinet: Lord Lansdowne as Secretary of State for War, and Henry James, who was also elevated to a peerage as Lord James of Hereford, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.⁴

In the general election that followed the formation of the 1895 coalition Unionist government, the Unionists won a striking victory, with the Liberal Unionists capturing seventy-one seats. In the years afterwards, Chamberlain increasingly emerged as the leading figure in the Unionist cabinet. Salisbury had initially been surprised at Chamberlain's desire for the Colonial Office, and commented to Selborne, his son-in-law, that 'my impression is that Chamberlain's interest in the Colonies is entirely theoretic & that when he gets into office he will leave the practical work entirely to you.'⁵ Salisbury could hardly have been more mistaken, as Chamberlain quickly became the leading advocate of imperialism and the integration of the Empire. This culminated in the Boer War (1899-1902), during which a general election was held in order to capitalize on the patriotism of wartime. The 'khaki' election of 1900 resulted in another resounding Unionist victory, with the Liberal Unionists themselves electing sixty-seven M.P.s. After the election, Lord Selborne entered the Cabinet as the First Lord of the Admiralty, while Lord Lansdowne became Foreign Secretary. In 1902, Salisbury retired, and was replaced as Prime Minister by Arthur Balfour. Though he had perhaps not given up all hope of

⁴ For additional Liberal Unionist office-holders in the 1895-1905 Unionist government, see Appendix E.

⁵ Cited in Peter Marsh, The Discipline of Popular Government: Lord Salisbury's Domestic Statecraft, 1881-1902 (Hassocks, UK: The Harvester Press, 1978), p. 244.

becoming Prime Minister,⁶ Devonshire was again not consulted by Salisbury. In addition, while Chamberlain's public profile might have given him a claim to the premiership, his status as a Liberal Unionist, much the smaller of the two parties of the Unionist alliance, ruled him out.⁷ In the Cabinet reconstruction that accompanied Salisbury's resignation, Lord James retired against his will, and Austen Chamberlain entered the Cabinet as Postmaster-General.

On May 15th, 1903, Joseph Chamberlain launched his campaign for Tariff Reform in a dramatic speech in Birmingham. He believed that the imposition of tariffs against foreign goods would not only help British industry and increase employment, but could also be used to bind the colonies closer to Britain through Imperial Preference. Chamberlain's advocacy of Tariff Reform split both the Liberal Unionist and Conservative parties, with Devonshire becoming a leading Unionist Free Trader. In September 1903 Joseph Chamberlain resigned as Secretary of State for the Colonies in order to be free to campaign for Tariff Reform. Several Unionist Free Traders also resigned, including Devonshire several weeks after Chamberlain. While Balfour

⁶ It had been suggested in some quarters, for instance, that a brief Devonshire premiership might be a natural bridge to Balfour's subsequent leadership. See Sir Almeric Fitzroy, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1 (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, 1925), Apr. 9th, 1901, p. 50-51.

⁷ At this point, Chamberlain was quite willing to serve under Balfour, and had publicly expressed his willingness to do so as early as 1900. See T. A. Jenkins, 'Hartington, Chamberlain and the Unionist Alliance, 1886-1895,' in *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 11, Pt. 1 (1992), p. 138. David Dutton, though, has suggested that Chamberlain attempted to subsequently displace Balfour after the 1906 general election. See David Dutton, 'Unionist Politics and the Aftermath of the General Election of 1906: A Reassessment,' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Dec., 1979), p. 861-876; *ibid.*, 'His Majesty's Loyal Opposition' *The Unionist Party in Opposition, 1905-1915* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1992), ch. 3. Similarly, at the same time, H. T. Anstruther's desire to be appointed chief government whip was frustrated by his position as a Liberal Unionist. Fitzroy, Aug. 8th, 1902, p. 97 and Sept. 15th, 1902, p. 105-106.

attempted to steer a middle course between Tariff Reform and Free Trade, the cabinet reconstruction that accompanied these resignations included the promotion of Austen Chamberlain to become Chancellor of the Exchequer, the replacement of Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office by another Liberal Unionist, Alfred Lyttelton, and the appointment of the Liberal Unionist H. O. Arnold-Forster as Secretary of State for War. Other Liberal Unionists, such as Lansdowne, may not have agreed entirely with Chamberlain over Tariff Reform, but remained in the government. In the Liberal Unionist party, Chamberlain quickly won over a majority of the rank-and-file as well as M.P.s for Tariff Reform, and in early 1904 seized control of the party organization from Devonshire, and became leader of the party.

Balfour's government, increasingly weakened by infighting over Tariff Reform as well as other issues, was routed at the general election held in January 1906. The Liberal Unionists themselves shared in the Unionist defeat, being reduced to twenty-seven seats. In the following years many of the original Liberal Unionists leaders left the political scene: Chamberlain suffered a crippling stroke in July 1906 that ended his active political career, and Devonshire died in 1908. Though the party shared in the moderate Unionist recovery of the January and December 1910 general elections, winning forty-three and forty-nine seats respectively, the division between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives was becoming increasingly blurred, and difficulty was encountered maintaining separate Liberal Unionist organizations at the local level.⁸ When the

⁸ However, the fact that Austen Chamberlain was a Liberal Unionist was a factor against his election as leader of the two Unionist parties after Balfour's resignation in 1911.

Conservative party reformed their party organization in 1911-1912, the opportunity was taken to merge the two parties into a united Conservative and Unionist party. As such, the Liberal Unionist party formally came to an end on May 10th, 1912, with the final meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council.

* * * * *

Historiographical interpretations of the Liberal Unionist party have reflected broader trends in the discussion of late-Victorian and Edwardian political history. Traditionally one means of understanding British political history has been through ‘high politics.’ In this view, politics is to be understood as the actions and interactions of a limited number of elites, normally those at Westminster, and factors outside the world of these elites are of, at most, secondary importance. Thus, explanations for political change focus on political leaders and the decisions they make. As A. B. Cooke and John Vincent commented in *The Governing Passion*, a classic ‘high politics’ text, ‘explanations of Westminster should centre not on its being at the top of a coherently organised pyramid of power whose bottom layer was the people, but on its character as a highly specialised community, like the City or Whitehall, whose primary interest was inevitably its own very private institutional life.’⁹ In such a view, the leading figures of the Liberal Unionist party are seen as struggling for political power at Westminster against both Liberal and Conservative rivals, with Home Rule being nothing more than the current pivot on which political manoeuvring would take place. Joseph Chamberlain in particular has been

⁹ A. B. Cooke and John Vincent, *The Governing Passion: Cabinet Government and Party Politics in Britain, 1885-86* (Brighton, UK: The Harvester Press, 1974), p. 18.

depicted as primarily interested in preserving his power base by whatever means necessary, including utilizing the Round Table Conference for his own political ends.¹⁰

The other traditional means of understanding modern British politics has been through a focus on socioeconomic factors as the primary determinant of voter choice and the impetus behind political change, with the most commonly identified factor being class.¹¹ According to this interpretation, class came to increasingly define British politics in the late nineteenth-century, as the rise of mass democracy was coupled with increasingly class-based voting. In particular, the enfranchisement of the working-class was seen as an important step towards class-based politics, in which a party representing the interests of the workers would be arrayed against a party representing the interests of capital. Methodologically, an important component of this approach has been what has been termed ‘electoral sociology,’ in which electoral results are explained by the socioeconomic characteristics of constituencies or regions.¹² This interpretation has been most prominent in the lengthy historiographical debate over the decline of the Liberal party

¹⁰ Michael Hurst, Joseph Chamberlain and Liberal Reunion: The Round Table Conference of 1887 (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

¹¹ Though the importance of other factors have also been suggested. For an argument in favour of religion, see Kenneth Wald, Crosses on the Ballot: Patterns of British Voter Alignment since 1885 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

¹² For examples of ‘electoral sociology,’ see *ibid.*; Henry Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 1885-1910 (London, UK: Macmillan, 1967). However, as Jon Lawrence, Jane Elliot, and Alex Windscheffel have noted, ‘electoral sociology’ in this time period is confronted with serious evidentiary problems, not least of which is that boundaries for the collection of census data rarely corresponded with constituency boundaries. See Jon Lawrence and Jane Elliot, ‘Parliamentary Election Results Reconsidered: An Analysis of Borough Elections, 1885-1910,’ in E. H. H. Green, ed., An Age of Transition: British Politics, 1880-1914 (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 19-21; Alex Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London (Woodbridge, UK: The Royal Historical Society, 2007), p. 5-6. As such, this dissertation does not attempt to relate statistical evidence, such as Liberal Unionist election results, to socioeconomic factors, such as class, ethnicity, or religion.

and the rise of the Labour party, with the suggestion being that the rise of class-based politics, and the enfranchisement of the working-class, doomed the Liberals to all-but-inevitable replacement by Labour.¹³ It was also necessary to explain the notable success of the Conservative party from 1886. This was done by emphasizing that the middle-class moved to the Conservatives, creating what has become known as ‘villa toryism.’ The Conservatives, it is suggested, also worked to mitigate the effects of the new democratic system through low turnout and tight registers, and that working-class support for the Conservatives was marginal and transitory, as it would always be susceptible to switching to a rising working-class party.¹⁴ In this framework, the Liberal Unionist party served one purpose – the transferal of wealth and influence, particularly aristocratic, from the Liberal party to the Conservative party, as part of the class realignment of British politics. The importance of Home Rule to the formation of the Liberal Unionist party was also downplayed, as the creation of the party was seen as the final culmination of a lengthy process of increasing alienation felt by many wealthy and aristocratic individuals with the direction of the Liberal party. Home Rule, thus, was merely the trigger by which the upper-class, already out of sympathy with much of the Liberal party, finally broke and

¹³ H. C. G. Matthew, R. I. McKibbin, and J. A. Kay, ‘The Franchise Factor in the Rise of the Labour Party,’ in *English Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 361 (Oct., 1976), p. 723-752. For an overview of the historiographical debate, see G. R. Searle, *The Liberal Party: Triumph and Disintegration, 1886-1929* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1992).

¹⁴ The classic articulation of this argument is James Cornford, ‘The Transformation of Conservatism in the Late Nineteenth Century,’ in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Sept., 1963), p. 35-66. See also Richard Shannon, *The Age of Salisbury, 1881-1902: Unionism and Empire* (London, UK: Longman, 1996), p. 313; Martin Pugh, ‘1886-1905,’ in Anthony Seldon, ed., *How Tory Governments Fall: The Tory Party in Power Since 1783* (London, UK: Fontana Press, 1996), p. 190; Dutton, ‘His Majesty’s Loyal Opposition’, p. 2-3. For a recent restatement of this thesis, though with subtle differences, see Marc Brodie, *The Politics of the Poor: The East End of London, 1885-1914* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2004).

moved over to the Conservatives.¹⁵ Hence, as Neal Blewett suggested, ‘the Liberal Unionist Party acted as a stepping-stone to the right for electors of conservative inclination but anti-Conservative prejudices.’¹⁶

Though these traditional interpretations have emphasized the importance of the Liberal Unionist party in the context of the political crisis of 1886, they have not done justice to the full history of the party. The ‘high politics’ school, while illuminating the various strands of Liberal Unionism at the Westminster level, does little to explain how the Liberal Unionist party fared among the broader electorate, and why it received the support that it did. Similarly, a class-based approach often reduces the Liberal Unionist party to a mere reflection of perceived economic and social developments in late-Victorian Britain. This serves to obscure the motivations of particular Liberals in leaving their party over the question of Home Rule, and more broadly ignores the vital role of ideas and questions of identity in the evolution of the Liberal Unionist party. Moreover, from a class-based perspective, the historical significance of the party is limited to its perceived role in 1886 of separating the aristocracy and wealth from the Liberal party. Thus the subsequent history of the Liberal Unionist party receives scant attention.

Indeed, the very fact that the party continues to exist for twenty-six years after it had

¹⁵ Gordon L. Goodman, ‘Liberal Unionism: The Revolt of the Whigs,’ in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Dec., 1959), p. 172-188; Donald Southgate, *The Passing of the Whigs, 1832-1886* (London, UK: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1962). For a more recent reinterpretation, placing the secession of the Liberal Unionist peers in the context of longer-term aristocratic unease with the direction of the Liberal party, see David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999), p. 502-516.

¹⁶ Neal Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties and the People*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 15. Similarly, Gordon L. Goodman has suggested that the party was a ‘half-way house.’ See Goodman, ‘Liberal Unionism: The Revolt of the Whigs,’ p. 188.

accomplished its historical ‘task’ is a matter of some puzzlement to historians utilizing a class-based interpretation of British political history. As one historian has suggested, the initial reluctance of even Whig Liberal Unionists to promptly join the Conservatives after 1886 was ‘curious.’¹⁷

In recent decades, the study of political history has expanded to include new approaches that move beyond ‘high politics’ and reductive socioeconomic factors. New categories of analysis, including race and gender, have been utilized to enhance our understanding of political change and the construction of identity.¹⁸ There has also been an increased focus on popular politics that de-emphasizes the importance of class and undermines notions of the ‘modernization’ of politics.¹⁹ This has had a particular impact on the historiography of the Conservative party.²⁰ Working-class Conservatism is now seen as vibrant and effective, and strongly gendered.²¹ Nor is the allegiance of the middle-class to the Conservatives seen as inevitable. Instead, the Conservatives had to actively engage in appealing to the middle-class, and constantly adjust their appeal in

¹⁷ Robert Blake, ‘1783-1902,’ in David Butler, ed., Coalitions in British Politics, (London, UK: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1978), p. 16.

¹⁸ For an example from an earlier period, see Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall, Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁹ Patrick Joyce, Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Jon Lawrence, Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁰ For a recent overview of the historiography of the Conservative party, see Matthew Roberts, ‘Popular Conservatism in Britain, 1832-1914,’ in Parliamentary History, Vol. 26, Pt. 3 (2007), p. 387-410.

²¹ Jon Lawrence, ‘Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism, 1880-1914,’ in English Historical Review, Vol. 108, No. 428 (July, 1993), p. 629-652.

order to maintain their electoral allegiance.²² Finally, recent research has suggested that Conservative electoral success was not closely related to low turnout and tight registers.²³ Moving away from a determinist model of class politics has also allowed for a reconsideration of the political role of Whiggery in the late nineteenth-century. As T. A. Jenkins has suggested, Whiggery remained a vital component of the Liberal party, and was in no way becoming a diminished force in the years leading up to the Home Rule division.²⁴ Jenkins has also emphasized the importance of Lord Hartington to the Liberal Unionist party, particularly with respect to the binding of an often-erratic Joseph Chamberlain to the Unionist alliance.²⁵

There has also been an increase in attention paid to the ideas and ideologies of politics, particularly in terms of how they affected and motivated political change. With respect to the Conservative party, the work of E. H. H. Green has been particularly influential.²⁶ W. C. Lubenow has also examined the question of ideology and the Liberal Unionists. Based on a detailed examination of the background and voting records of the

²² Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London; Matthew Roberts, 'Villa Toryism' and Popular Conservatism in Leeds, 1885-1902,' in The Historical Journal, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Mar., 2006), p. 217-246.

²³ Lawrence and Elliot; Paul A. Readman, 'The 1895 General Election and Political Change in Late Victorian Britain,' in The Historical Journal, Vol. 42, No. 2 (June, 1999), p. 487-491.

²⁴ T. A. Jenkins, Gladstone, Whiggery and the Liberal Party, 1874-1886 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1988).

²⁵ Jenkins, 'Hartington, Chamberlain and the Unionist Alliance.'

²⁶ E. H. H. Green, The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the British Conservative Party, 1880-1914 (London, UK: Routledge, 1995); *ibid.*, Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also Paul Readman, 'The Conservative Party, Patriotism, and British Politics: The Case of the General Election of 2000,' in The Journal of British Studies, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Jan., 2001), p. 107-145.

1886 Parliament, he has concluded that there was not a clear relationship between class and those Liberals who objected to Home Rule. As he commented, 'ideology, rather than social interest and constituency pressure, counts for much in the explanation of parliamentary behaviour, even in the midst of constitutional crisis.'²⁷ Moreover, there was not a clear relationship between the issue of Home Rule and other issues, suggesting that the Liberal split over Home Rule did not easily map onto existing moderate/radical divisions in the party. In addition, because the Home Rule divide did not correspond to Liberal divisions on other issues, there was very little else that the party as a whole agreed upon.²⁸

Another recent trend has been what has been referred to as the 'local turn' in the study of political history, in which historians have focussed their attention on 'the ways that specific social, economic, and cultural factors constrained, shaped and influenced political mobilization in a specific locality.'²⁹ These local studies have revised our understanding of the ways in which the Conservative and Liberal parties operated at a constituency level, and in particular have emphasized the conditional nature of electoral support, in that parties had to constantly work and rework their appeals in order to gain

²⁷ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 30-31. See also *ibid.*, 'Irish Home Rule and the Social Basis of the Great Separation in the Liberal Party in 1886,' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Mar., 1985), p. 125-142.

²⁸ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, ch. 6.

²⁹ Matthew Roberts, Review of Marc Brodie, *The Politics of the Poor: The East End of London, 1885-1914*, in *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 25, Pt. 3 (2006), p. 423-424. For a more general overview of the renewed emphasis on the local, see Philip Harling, 'The Centrality of Locality: The Local State, Local Democracy, and Local Consciousness in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain,' in *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Vol. 9 (2004), p. 216-234.

the support of the electorate. As such, these recent local studies have contributed to the movement away from determinist models to explain British politics. The work of Jon Lawrence on Wolverhampton, Matthew Roberts on Leeds, and Alex Windscheffel on London have emphasized the extent of a genuine Conservative popular politics that had a cross-class and positive appeal.³⁰ Conversely, the work of Patricia Lynch on three rural English constituencies and James Moore on Manchester and Leicester have emphasized the continued viability of popular Liberalism in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods.³¹

The use of new approaches to the study of political history have greatly broadened our understanding of the evolution of modern British political history, though their impact on the historiography of the Liberal Unionist party is more mixed. As noted, W. C. Lubenow's work has brought attention to the heterogenous ideological composition of the Liberal Unionist party, while T. A. Jenkins has re-emphasized the importance of Lord Hartington. In general, however, much of the recent work utilizing such approaches have not contributed to a revision of our understanding of the importance of the Liberal Unionist party. E. H. H. Green's work on Conservatism, for example, downplays the role of Liberal Unionism in the growth of support for Tariff Reform in the Conservative

³⁰ Lawrence, 'Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism'; Matthew Roberts, 'Villa Toryism' and Popular Conservatism in Leeds, 1885-1902;' *ibid.*, 'Constructing a Tory World-View: Popular Politics and the Conservative Press in Late-Victorian Leeds,' in *Historical Research*, Vol. 79, No. 203 (Feb, 2006), p. 115-143; Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London*, *passim*.

³¹ Patricia Lynch, *The Liberal Party in Rural England, 1885-1910: Radicalism and Community* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2003); James Moore, *The Transformation of Urban Liberalism: Party Politics and Urban Governance in Late Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006).

party.³² This has been particularly the case with recent studies of local politics, which have either overlooked the Liberal Unionist party or argued that the Liberal Unionists were not a vital and independent party.³³ Alex Windscheffel's engaging examination of London Conservatism nevertheless does not differentiate between Liberal Unionist and Conservative M.P.s, and includes the former in statistical analysis of the Conservative party's performance in the capital.³⁴ The work of Patricia Lynch and James Moore, meanwhile, has sought to emphasize the continued strength of Liberalism after 1886 in no small part by suggesting that the Liberal Unionist secession did not seriously weaken local Liberalism, that the Liberal Unionist party never constituted a serious threat to the Liberal party, and that it was subservient to the Conservatives.³⁵

Overall, then, despite the shifts in the historiography of modern British political history, the Liberal Unionist party has continued to be viewed as a marginal force. The extent of this neglect can be particularly demonstrated by a comparison with the nascent Labour party. The emergence of the Labour party has been a major theme in the

³² Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*, p. 6-11.

³³ The one exception to this trend has been Victoria Barbary's examination of Liberal Unionism in Bury. An important observation in this work is that in Bury, a majority of Liberal Unionist activists were manual wage-earners, contradicting the traditional class-based interpretation of the party. See Victoria Barbary, *'From Platform to Polling Booth': Political Leadership and Popular Politics in Bolton and Bury, 1868-1906* (PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2007), esp. p. 177-178.

³⁴ Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London*, ch. 5 and Appendix 2. Similarly, Kathryn Rix's recent work on constituency agents does not differentiate between Liberal Unionist and Conservative agents, and includes one Liberal Unionist agent, Charles Vince, in her discussion of Conservative agents. See Kathryn Rix, *The Party Agent and English Electoral Culture, 1880-1906* (PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2001), p. 74n.

³⁵ Lynch, p. 46-50; James Moore, 'Liberal Unionism and the Home Rule Crisis in Leicester, 1885-1892,' in *Midland History*, Vol. 26 (2001), p. 177-197; *ibid.*, 'Manchester Liberalism and the Unionist Secession, 1886-1895,' in *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol. 15 (2001), p. 31-40.

historiography of the period from 1886 to 1914, particularly in terms of whether it already constituted a major threat to the Liberal party.³⁶ Indeed, the vast amount of work on the pre-war Labour party greatly exceeds the attention paid to the Liberal Unionist party.

However, a comparison of the electoral performance of the two parties in three elections they both contested – 1906, January 1910, and December 1910 – does not provide a basis for this disparity. In the three general elections contested by both the Liberal Unionists and Labour, the former won more seats than the latter in the two 1910 general elections, and the latter won only two seats more than the former in 1906.³⁷ Indeed, Labour won fewer seats in the 1918 general election than the Liberal Unionists won in 1886, 1895 and 1900.³⁸ Labour would only exceed the electoral performance of the Liberal Unionists at the 1922 general election, when they were no longer a third party. Moreover, the Liberal Unionists contested more constituencies than Labour at each of the last three general elections prior to the First World War.³⁹ As such, in the period when both parties were junior partners in an electoral alliance with a larger party, it was the Liberal Unionists, not Labour, that had the superior electoral performance. The fact that the Labour party has

³⁶ See, for example, Matthew, McKibbin, and Kay; Searle, *The Liberal Party*; P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); George L. Bernstein, *Liberalism and Liberal Politics in Edwardian England* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

³⁷ The Liberal Unionists won 27 seats in 1906, 43 in January 1910, and 49 in December 1910, as compared to Labour totals of 29, 40, and 42 respectively.

³⁸ Labour won 57 seats in 1918. The figures on Labour seat totals in this section derive from F. W. S. Craig, *British Electoral Facts, 1832-1987*, 5th ed. (Aldershot, UK: Parliamentary Research Services, 1987), p. 52.

³⁹ For the number of constituencies contested by Liberal Unionist candidates, see Table 3A. The figures for Labour (50, 78, and 56 respectively) are drawn from F. W. S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918*, (London, UK: Macmillan, 1974), p. 579.

nevertheless received the bulk of the attention of historians can be largely attributed to the politics of this period being viewed through the lens of the victorious parties. Historians know that the Labour party would eventually break their alliance with the Liberal party and displace it as the primary party of the centre-left in British politics, while the Liberal Unionist party would eventually fuse with the Conservative party just before the First World War. This distorts our understanding of politics in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period, by making what was uncertain and unpredictable at the time seem inevitable and pre-ordained.⁴⁰ The Liberal Unionist party remained a distinct and important political party throughout the bulk of its existence, and made a contribution to the evolution of British politics in this period far beyond being the mere vessel by which wealthy Liberals passed over to the Conservatives.

Indeed, an eagerness to dismiss Liberal Unionism as a marginal and ineffective force has led to simple factual errors. Patricia Lynch, for example, in her examination of Liberalism in three English county constituencies, suggests that ‘in 1895, the Conservative and Liberal Unionists parties merged, and their candidates became known as Unionists.’⁴¹ However, the two parties did not formally merge until 1912. In other cases, a focus on Liberalism can lead to important Liberal Unionist sources being overlooked, even when the viability of Liberal Unionism is the focus of discussion.

⁴⁰ For example, David Dutton has commented that ‘it was the lot of such as the Liberal Unionists and the Liberal Nationals to be absorbed within the embrace of their more powerful ally and to disappear without trace from the political stage.’ See David Dutton, *A History of the Liberal Party in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 291.

⁴¹ Lynch, p. 50.

James Moore, in evaluating the strength of Liberal Unionism in Manchester, has suggested that ‘the only detailed coverage of Liberal Unionist activities is to be found in the pages of the Gladstonian Manchester Guardian.’⁴² This ignores The Liberal Unionist, the newspaper of the party from 1887 to 1892, which contained detailed reports of local organizing activity, including for Manchester.⁴³

Another aspect of certain discussions on Liberal Unionism has been to take Liberal critiques of Liberal Unionism at face value to demonstrate the weakness of Liberal Unionism. For instance, in arguing that the Liberal Unionist-Conservative fissure was not responsible for the adoption of Tariff Reform by the Unionist alliance, E. H. H. Green uses a quote from H. H. Asquith to suggest that distinctions between the two parties were becoming blurred. Writing to Alfred Lyttelton on December 16th, 1894, Asquith commented that ‘I confess I regard the nominal distinction between Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives as one which has quite ceased to have any practical meaning.’⁴⁴ Although Green concedes that Asquith was ‘not an unbiased observer,’ he does not adequately place Asquith’s comment in its proper context. After W. E. Gladstone’s retirement as Liberal leader in early 1894, Lyttelton, who was Gladstone’s nephew, was moving towards joining the Liberal Unionists and standing as a candidate. When Henry James learned that Lyttelton was to spend Christmas with Gladstone, he was afraid that Lyttelton might be swayed to return to the Liberals. James also commented

⁴² Moore, The Transformation of Urban Liberalism, p. 89n.

⁴³ For instance, see The Liberal Unionist, June 15th and July 6th, 1887, and June, 1889.

⁴⁴ Green, p. 6-7.

that 'I picture to myself with much joy the fury of H. H. Asquith . . . at A. L.'s defection.'⁴⁵ Hence Asquith's comment to Lyttelton was most likely part of an effort to convince Lyttelton not to join the Liberal Unionist party, rather than simply being a factual description of the current political situation. As W. C. Lubenow has noted, the use of class rhetoric by Liberals in 1886 was not because the divisions in the Liberal party over Home Rule had a class basis, but rather because the language of class was an effective rhetorical tool in mobilizing popular support for Home Rule.⁴⁶ Similarly, Liberal critiques of Liberal Unionism may have reflected the desire of Liberals to marginalise and defeat the Liberal Unionists, as opposed to describing the actual position of the Liberal Unionists.⁴⁷ This is not to suggest that all Liberal criticisms of Liberal Unionists can be rejected out of hand. However, it is important to question why Liberals made such comments, and to examine whether there was a basis for what they were arguing. Moreover, such an examination necessitates the use of Liberal Unionist sources, particularly if the aim is to draw conclusions on the strength and effectiveness of Liberal Unionism at a national or local level.

Finally, most examinations of Liberal Unionism focus on the formation of the

⁴⁵ Chatsworth House (hereafter CH), 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2596, James to Devonshire, Dec. 22nd, 1894.

⁴⁶ Lubenow, 'Irish Home Rule and the Social Basis of the Great Separation in the Liberal Party in 1886,' p. 141.

⁴⁷ Similarly, A. W. Roberts suggests that Liberal Unionism was 'not a significant independent force' in Leeds and western Yorkshire on the basis of two comments from a local Liberal organizer. See A. W. Roberts, 'Leeds Liberalism and Late-Victorian Politics,' in *Northern History*, Vol. 5 (1970), p. 147. In contrast, a more detailed examination of Huddersfield by Robert B. Perks has demonstrated that, in that part of western Yorkshire at least, Liberal Unionism was very much a significant independent force. See Robert B. Perks, *The New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour in the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1885-1914, with Special Reference to Huddersfield* (PhD Dissertation, Huddersfield Polytechnic, 1985), p. 100.

Unionist coalition government in 1895 as the point at which the distinctions between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives becomes sufficiently blurred as to make Liberal Unionists indistinguishable from their coalition partners. Thus, though formal fusion of the two parties did not occur until 1912, the formation of the Unionist government is seen as the effective end of the Liberal Unionist party. Typical of this sentiment is Gordon L. Goodman's comment that 'at this point [1895] interest in the Liberal Unionists as a political entity fades.'⁴⁸ Similarly, in the compilation and display of electoral statistics, Conservative and Liberal Unionist seat totals have been frequently combined for general elections after 1895, with the clear inference that after that year there were no substantial differences between the two parties, and that the Liberal Unionists no longer ought to be treated as an independent party.⁴⁹ This reflects a significant undercurrent in the

⁴⁸ Goodman, 'Liberal Unionism: The Revolt of the Whigs,' p. 188. Similarly, Roy Douglas has suggested that by the 1890s the Liberal Unionists 'were Conservatives for all practical purposes,' Anthony Seldon has argued that the Conservatives had absorbed the Liberal Unionists by the end of the 19th-century, and Ian Cawood has commented that the 1895 election results demonstrated that the Liberal Unionists 'were a rapidly diminishing force.' See Roy Douglas, *The History of the Liberal Party, 1895-1970* (London, UK: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1971), p. 4; Anthony Seldon, 'Conservative Century,' in Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball, eds., *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 64; Cawood, 'Joseph Chamberlain, the Conservative Party and the Leamington Spa Candidature Dispute of 1895,' p. 574. See also Robert Self, *The Evolution of the British Party System, 1885-1940* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2000), p. 61. One recent exception to this trend is Richard Shannon's work on the Conservative party under Salisbury, which highlights the Liberal Unionist aspects of various differences within the Unionist alliance after 1895. See Richard Shannon, ch. 15-18.

⁴⁹ For example, see G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 861-863; Martin Pugh, *State and Society: A Social and Political History of Britain, 1870-1997*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Arnold, 1999), 141; Seldon and Ball, p. 787-788; Pugh, '1886-1905,' p. 191; Iain McLean, *Rational Choice and British Politics: An Analysis of Rhetoric and Manipulation from Peel to Blair* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 88 and 92. In F. W. S. Craig, *British Electoral Facts, 1832-1987* and N. J. Crowson, *The Longman Companion to the Conservative Party Since 1830* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2001), the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists are combined throughout. Similarly, Michael J. Turner has suggested that the Conservative party won 'large majorities' at the 1886, 1895, and 1900 general elections, when in fact in 1886 and 1900 the Conservatives had a majority only in conjunction with the Liberal Unionists. See Michael J. Turner, 'Political Leadership and Parties, 1846-1900,' in Chris Williams, ed., *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Malden, MA: Blackwell

historiography of the Liberal Unionist party, in that historians, knowing the ultimate fate of the party, have focussed on explaining the movement of the party towards fusion with their Conservative allies. This overlooks the fact that a number of Liberal Unionists always sat uncomfortably in their alliance with the Conservative party, and that there were a substantial number who, as a result of this conflict, drifted back towards the Liberal party, including in the period after 1895.

This dissertation, then, at its most basic level, aims to take the Liberal Unionist party seriously and to evaluate their contribution to the evolution of modern British political history on their own terms, without trying to fit every detail into a neat narrative of gradual but inevitable gravitation towards fusion with the Conservative party. The result of taking this approach has been to demonstrate that the Liberal Unionist party remained an independent political entity for far longer than historians have generally assumed. This independence consisted not only of organizational separation from the Conservatives, but also a different ideological and rhetorical approach to politics, in which the Liberal Unionists aimed to differentiate themselves not only from the Liberals but also from the Conservatives, in order to position themselves as a separate and distinguishable entity in the political landscape. Central to this conclusion is the evidence demonstrating continued tensions between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives, particularly at a local level, right up to the point at which the two parties fused in 1912. These tensions were focussed on the question of which party would contest which seats,

and, as this dissertation demonstrates, the formal electoral pact between the two parties was the site of numerous conflicts, and was only one factor among many that influenced the transfer of constituencies from the Liberal Unionists to the Conservatives and vice versa. In addition, for a number of Liberal Unionists, the Unionist alliance, rather than becoming increasingly comfortable, was a constant test of their political convictions. If, as has been suggested, the Liberal Unionist party was a 'vehicle' by which moderate Liberals crossed to the Conservative party,⁵⁰ then quite a number disembarked before reaching their destination. Finally, this dissertation argues that 1895 did not constitute a watershed moment in the progression of the Liberal Unionist party towards fusion with the Conservatives. Indeed, the period from 1895 to 1903 saw a much more unsettled Liberal Unionist party than had been the case in the three prior years of Liberal government, as the declining threat of Home Rule after 1895 allowed for other issues to come to the fore, on which there were serious divisions of opinions between some Liberal Unionists and their nominal Conservative allies. It would only be with the emergence of Tariff Reform in 1903, and the subsequent transformation of the Liberal Unionist party after Joseph Chamberlain and his allies seized control of it, that the differences between the Liberal Unionist party and the Conservative party began to fade, though these differences did not fully subside even with fusion in 1912.

Historians aiming to investigate the Liberal Unionist party have to confront the fact that there is no central party archive, such as that which exists for the Conservative

⁵⁰ Thomas J. Spinner, Jr., George Joachim Goschen: The Transformation of a Victorian Liberal, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 240.

party. Indeed, the papers of the central party organization appear not to have survived intact.⁵¹ Nevertheless, this dissertation has used the papers of Liberal Unionist politicians, both front-bench and back-bench, local organizations, newspapers, including the party newspaper, and party propaganda to reconstruct the party's history.⁵² Moreover, recently opened archival sources, such as the Alexander Low Bruce Papers at the National Library of Scotland and the papers of the 9th Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth House, reveal new insights into the development of the party. Another notable obstacle confronting the historian of the Liberal Unionist party is establishing just who stood as Liberal Unionist candidates. There has been some confusion among various sources in differentiating between Liberal Unionist and Conservative candidacies, especially in general elections after 1895. As such, a major component of this dissertation has been the development of a complete list of all Liberal Unionist M.P.s and candidates from 1886 to 1912.⁵³ The creation of this list allows for the first time a comprehensive discussion of the distribution of Liberal Unionist candidacies, allowing conclusions to be

⁵¹ There are even indications that such papers may never have existed in the first place. In 1906, Joseph Chamberlain was informed that the Executive Committee of the Liberal Unionist Council kept no formal record of its meetings. Birmingham University Library (hereafter BUL), Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/62, [?] to Chamberlain, May 20th, 1906.

⁵² Though the papers of most major Liberal Unionist figures are available, two sets are conspicuous by their absence: George Goschen's papers seem to have disappeared at some point after the publication of Arthur Elliot's biography of Goschen, while the papers of Lord Nathaniel Rothschild were burned after his death. See Spinner, p. 246; Cooke and Vincent, p. 84n; and Derek Wilson, Rothschild: A Story of Wealth and Power (London, UK: Andre Deutsch, 1988), p. 307-308.

⁵³ For the details of the creation of this list, and the list itself, see Appendix C. The problems with earlier lists of Liberal Unionist M.P.s has led to some inaccurate statements by historians. John Ramsden, for instance, has suggested that Liberal Unionist M.P.s, as a percentage of the overall Unionist party, had declined from 17% in 1900 to 11% in January 1910. However, the revised figures based on Appendix C demonstrate that the Liberal Unionists still comprised 16% of the Unionist party in the House of Commons in January 1910. See John Ramsden, The Organisation of the Conservative and Unionist Party in Britain, 1910-1930, (PhD Dissertation, Oxford University, 1974), p. 13.

drawn regarding the evolution of the electoral performance of the party, and a through evaluation of the operation of the electoral pact with the Conservatives.

This dissertation also utilizes a variety of methodological approaches in its construction of the history of the Liberal Unionist party. The ‘high politics’ approach is emphasized where appropriate, such as in the discussion on the evolution of the central party organization, but it is also essential to move beyond the world of Westminster to ensure a balanced view of the party. There is also a focus on local politics, as it was on the local level where ideologies and identities met the sharp end of electoral politics. At the same time, overall conclusions regarding the strength and endurance of the Liberal Unionist party cannot be deduced from a limited number of local case studies, and as such, this dissertation discusses local politics over a wide range of constituencies and regions. Moreover, this discussion includes areas not only of Liberal Unionist strength, such as Birmingham and western Scotland, but also areas of Liberal Unionist weakness. Attention is also paid to the role of ideas in the Liberal Unionist party. As diverse as the ideological makeup of the party may have been, there were still a number of issues on which some Liberal Unionists found themselves in opposition to their Conservative colleagues. The importance of these ideological differences, then, is emphasized in the ebb and flow of M.P.s joining and leaving the Liberal Unionist party. Finally, this dissertation also stresses the importance of identity to any understanding of the Liberal Unionist party. Even as different wings of the party had ideological differences, members of the party utilized similar languages in constructing a distinctive Liberal Unionist

identity that integrated their Liberal heritage and positioned the party as above the petty squabbles of partisan politics.

The first chapter provides a history of the party's central organization, including ancillary bodies like the Liberal Union Club, and demonstrates the importance of Chamberlain's takeover of the party organization in 1904 in transforming the party into a vehicle to promote Tariff Reform. The second chapter focuses on local party organization, establishing not only that local Liberal Unionist associations were more active and numerous than has generally been considered, but also that the Liberal Unionists maintained an independent local organization into the Edwardian period. The third chapter examines the operation of the electoral pact between the Liberal Unionist and Conservative parties, and demonstrates the extent to which the pact was not followed and the depth of the friction at the local level between the two parties over which was to contest what constituencies. The fourth chapter focuses on the question of ideology, and the constant struggle for many Liberal Unionists between their Liberalism and their Unionism, a tension that increased after 1895 and culminated in the split in the party over the question of Tariff Reform after 1903. The final chapter examines the question of Liberal Unionist identity, and how Liberal Unionists constructed a separate identity for themselves in the early years of the party's existence.

Chapter 1: Central Party Organization

The national organization of the Liberal Unionist party was initially formed out of a need to prepare for an imminent and bitter general election contested against former colleagues in unprecedented circumstances. Though the general election of 1886 was successfully fought, and several ancillary organizations formed, the national organization was not without its problems. Lord Wolmer, chief whip from 1888 to 1892, was able to address the issue of insufficient funding, but fusion between the Liberal Unionist Association and Joseph Chamberlain's National Radical Union (hereafter NRU) did not end the rivalry between the Hartington and Chamberlain wings of the party organization. However, the effectiveness of the national organization improved after 1892, when Chamberlain's supporters took control. From this point forward, the national organization was an important component to the overall success of the Unionist alliance, and remained active right until the formal end of the party in 1912. Though the question of continued relevance had to be addressed after the formation of the Unionist government in 1895, by the turn of the century the national organization was perceived by some to be stronger than its Conservative counterpart. Control of the national organization by Chamberlain's supporters would prove decisive when Chamberlain launched his campaign for Tariff Reform in 1903, which split the Liberal Unionist party in two. By the summer of 1904, Chamberlain was able to gain complete control of the party organization, and push the Duke of Devonshire and his Free Trade supporters out of

the party. Chamberlain then moved the national organization away from its traditional focus on opposition to Home Rule by making it an adjunct of his Tariff Reform campaign, thus reflecting the reorientation of the party under Chamberlain's leadership. Ultimately, after several failed attempts, the organizations of the Liberal Unionist and Conservative parties would be merged in 1912.

The national Liberal Unionist organization began in early 1886, while manoeuvring over Gladstone's Home Rule Bill was under way. As Alfred Milner, George Goschen's private secretary, commented on March 16th, 'it is no use fighting in Parliament, unless we know what we mean to do, when the appeal is made to the country.'¹ The first efforts at organization came during March and early April of 1886, when Hartington and Goschen, as the leading Whig opponents of Home Rule, met occasionally with backbench supporters to discuss parliamentary arrangements and speaking engagements.² Once Gladstone had introduced his Home Rule bill on April 8th, it became apparent that a more formal organization of the Liberal dissidents was required, and the 'Liberal Committee for the Maintenance of the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland' was formed. Defeated Liberal candidate F. W. Maude was appointed secretary as the only full-time employee, and offices were taken at 35 Spring Gardens.³ A

¹ National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/9, Milner to A. L. Bruce, Mar. 16th, 1886.

² See, for example, Goschen's meeting on Apr. 14th. Cooke and Vincent, p. 405.

³ Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner, dep. 6, fo. 170-171, Alfred Milner to Goschen, Apr. 20th, 1886. The offices at 35 Spring Gardens were rented from Michael Biddulph, Liberal (and later Liberal Unionist) M.P. for Herefordshire, Ross. BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 7-8.

small number of backbench M.P.s, in particular Albert Grey and Alexander Craig Sellar, as well as Alfred Milner, formed the backbone of the early efforts at organization. Once Hartington agreed to let his name appear on the Committee, they were able to assemble a sizeable list of Liberal supporters.⁴ This organization was formalized on May 22nd through a meeting of Liberal Unionists at the Westminster Palace Hotel over which Hartington presided. A General Committee of fifty-nine was appointed, including nineteen M.P.s and thirteen peers, to supervise the organization, and a smaller Executive Committee of eleven was formed for day-to-day operations, though the practical work remained in the hands of those who had been working on the organization since the previous month.⁵

Prior to the vote on the Second Reading of the Home Rule Bill on June 8th, 1886, the nascent Liberal Unionist organization had two primary functions, the first of which was the mobilization of opposition to Home Rule in the country. As Milner commented to Goschen, ‘we must set the constituencies in a blaze of dissension right & left & frighten the party-men thoroughly as to the consequences of passing these measures.’⁶

John St. Loe Strachey, reviewer and future editor of the Spectator, headed up the

⁴ Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner, dep. 6, fo. 186-191, Alfred Milner to Goschen, Apr. 26th, 1886. On the list of supporters, see, for example, Durham University Library (hereafter DUL), 4th Earl Grey Papers, 239/4, T. H. Huxley to Albert Grey, Apr. 27th, 1886.

⁵ Times, May 24th, 1886; BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 10-11.

⁶ Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner, dep. 6, fo. 194-201, Alfred Milner to Goschen, Apr. 28th, 1886. This was particularly important in light of the fear expressed by Hartington that the Liberals might delay a vote on the Home Rule Bill so that the Gladstonian rank-and-file could put pressure on wavering Liberal M.P.s to support the government. See Agatha Ramm, ed., The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, 1876-1886, Vol. II: 1883-1886 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 449n.

production of a vast number of pamphlets and leaflets for distribution throughout the country.⁷ Craig Sellar believed that each Liberal Unionist should ‘flood’ his own constituency with propaganda, sending 126 000 leaflets to his agent to distribute in his constituency.⁸ In addition to propaganda, public meetings were scheduled, and some of the organizers travelled to different parts of the country to whip up support and create regional Liberal Unionist associations.⁹ The second major function was to mobilize and oversee opposition to the Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons. Careful attention was paid to the balance of numbers on the measure, and a close watch was kept on those Liberal M.P.s who were unsure of how they would cast their vote. On May 29th, 1886, for example, a committee meeting was held at Spring Gardens to discuss action on the upcoming vote on the Second Reading, going over in detail the list of expected supporters and opponents of the bill.¹⁰ When the vote was taken on June 8th, the Unionist margin of victory was in line with the predictions of the Liberal Unionist organizers.¹¹

When it was formed, the Liberal Unionist Association was operated by and primarily worked for the Whig section of the Liberal dissidents, with Chamberlain’s smaller Radical faction remaining outside. Though Chamberlain had been able to get the Liberal organization in Birmingham to endorse his policy on April 21st, the National

⁷ Arthur Elliot, The Life of George Joachim Goschen, First Viscount Goschen, 1831-1907, Vol. II (London, UK: Longmans, 1911), p. 82.

⁸ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/27, A. Craig Sellar to A. L. Bruce, June 10th, 1886.

⁹ Cooke and Vincent, p. 410.

¹⁰ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19512, Arthur Elliot Diary, May 29th, 1886.

¹¹ Cooke and Vincent, p. 432.

Liberal Federation, which he had done so much to organize, went over almost entirely to the Gladstonians after its meeting on May 5th. In the aftermath Chamberlain had expressed an interest in joining the nascent Liberal Unionist organization, but many of his followers declined, and key allies like Powell Williams advised Chamberlain of the importance, if he wished to maintain his following, of avoiding the impression that he and Hartington were working too closely together.¹² Once the Home Rule Bill was defeated, Chamberlain thus turned to the task of creating a separate organization, the NRU. This new organization was formed in part for electoral purposes, but also to advance Chamberlain's plan for the extension of local self-government to all parts of the United Kingdom, including Ireland.¹³ However, the initial response was lukewarm, causing Chamberlain to suggest that the draft circular announcing the formation of the organization should not list the names of those who had agreed to join it. Chamberlain had to rely largely on family members to fill the offices of the NRU, and the initial meeting on June 18th only half-filled the Midland Institute in Birmingham.¹⁴

Once Parliament was dissolved, the focus of the Liberal Unionist organization turned to the forthcoming election. Many of the M.P.s who had been active in April and

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 424; BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/72/4, Powell Williams to Chamberlain, May 11th, 1886. Not all Radicals avoided the Liberal Unionist Association – Peter Rylands, for instance, was appointed to the general committee of the association at the May 22nd meeting.

¹³ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/11/13, Joseph Chamberlain to Arthur Chamberlain, June 9th, 1886.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, JC 5/11/15, Joseph Chamberlain to Arthur Chamberlain, June 10th, 1886; Peter Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 251; R. A. Wright, *Liberal Party Organisation and Politics in Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton, 1886-1914, with Particular Reference to the Development of Independent Labour Representation* (PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 1977), p. 119.

May were now tied down in their constituencies, but peers such as Lord Camperdown and Lord Monteagle came forward in their place, and Milner remained to supervise the work.¹⁵ Of vital importance to the functioning of the new organization was the question of funding, and the meeting of May 22nd established a Finance Committee, consisting of Brand, Craig Sellar, Grey, Sir John Lubbock, Michael Biddulph, and Lord Rothschild.¹⁶ It has been suggested that the Liberal Unionists had a generous amount of money for the 1886 general election campaign: the Birmingham Daily Post reported on June 9th that the party had £30 000 pounds available; A. B. Cooke and John Vincent have suggested that Albert Grey was placed in charge of finances with the goal of raising £50 000; and the rumour amongst Gladstonians was that the May 22nd meeting which formed the Liberal Unionist Association had been held in part to raise £100 000 for the election.¹⁷ Nevertheless, there are indications that the financial state of the new party was not solid in its first months of existence. In April, Milner complained to Goschen of a lack of funds, and wondered ‘Where are the Dukes with the long purses?’¹⁸ Just prior to the general election, after sending £500 in response to a request of support from Lord

¹⁵ One exception was Sir John Lubbock, who sat for London University and thus was able to attend meetings of the Liberal Unionist committee in June. See British Library, Avenbury Papers, Add. MS. 62683, Avenbury Diary, June 16th and 18th, 1886.

¹⁶ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 15.

¹⁷ Cooke and Vincent, p. 110 and 424-425.

¹⁸ Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner, dep. 6, fo. 180-185, Milner to Goschen, Apr. 25th, 1886. However, some money from the ‘Dukes’ was eventually forthcoming. On June 10th, Lord Derby gave £2000 to Biddulph, comprising the contributions of the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Westminster, and Lord Cowper. John Vincent, ed., The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby (1826-93) between 1878 and 1893: A Selection (Oxford, UK: Leopard’s Head Press Ltd., 2003), June 10th, 1886, p. 835n.

Melgund, Henry Hozier, a Liberal Unionist organizer, commented that ‘I hope to goodness that this will be all you may require for our finances are getting to a very low ebb and I have now nowhere to turn for supplies.’¹⁹ During the election itself, Craig Sellar explained to Alexander Low Bruce, a leading Edinburgh Liberal Unionist, that the demand for funds was outstretching available resources. Each local association was asking for assistance, they had endless demands from candidates to have their election expenses covered, and they were sending money over to Ulster to assist the campaign there. The priority was to cover the election expenses of candidates, but not every application could be met, and the committee had to decide which ones to accept. Only small sums could be sent to the regional and local associations, such as the £250 sent to the two regional associations covering Scotland. Craig Sellar also noted the party itself could not afford to distribute pamphlets across the entire country, and instead urged each local candidate to order and pay for pamphlets created by the central organization for distribution in their own constituency.²⁰ F. W. Lambton, who contested Northumberland, Berwick-upon-Tweed, had originally hoped for a contribution of £100 from the central party funds, but after hearing from Albert Grey about the perilous state of the party’s finances, he reduced his request to £25. Indeed, Grey himself had to cover his own election expenses.²¹

¹⁹ NLS, 4th Earl of Minto Papers, MSS. 12548, Hozier to Lord Melgund, June 7th, 1886. I am indebted to Dr. T. A. Jenkins for this citation.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/35, A. Craig Sellar to A. L. Bruce, June 6th, 1886; *ibid.*, Acc. 11777/27, A. Craig Sellar to A. L. Bruce, June 10th, 1886.

²¹ DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 217/5, F. W. Lambton to Albert Grey, Aug. 14th, 1886.

After the often-bitter general election campaign of 1886, a meeting of the Executive Committee was held on July 24th, where it was resolved that the Liberal Unionist party organization should be maintained. As such, the central organization was reformed as the Liberal Unionist Association.²² It was also agreed that Chamberlain should be approached to join the Association, which Hartington did in two letters to Chamberlain of July 25th and August 1st.²³ Chamberlain replied on August 2nd that he had no objection to joining the Liberal Unionist Association, and that he saw no reason why it should conflict with his own NRU.²⁴ This arrangement was formalized at a meeting of all Liberal Unionists at Devonshire House on August 5th, when Chamberlain formally acknowledged Hartington's leadership.²⁵

In its early years, the operation of the Liberal Unionist Association was overseen by a small executive committee composed of the leaders of the party, including Hartington and Chamberlain, meeting on a regular basis. Day-to-day affairs were in the hands of Hozier, who had been appointed as the full-time paid secretary on August 6th, 1886, while the offices of the Association remained at 35 Spring Gardens until they moved to 31 Great George Street on September 29th, 1887. The membership of the Association consisted of the subscribers to the party funds, though individuals could join

²² BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 30. Members of the new association were also advised to withdraw their subscriptions from the Central Liberal Association on Parliament Street, and transfer them to the Liberal Unionist Association.

²³ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC5/22/12, Hartington to Joseph Chamberlain, July 25th, 1886; *ibid.*, JC 5/22/14, Hartington to Joseph Chamberlain, Aug. 1st, 1886.

²⁴ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2038, Joseph Chamberlain to Hartington, Aug. 2nd, 1886.

²⁵ Cooke and Vincent, p. 456-457.

as Associates without subscription.²⁶ An important focus of the Association in its early years was the formation of local Liberal Unionist associations in all parts of the country. A sub-committee was formed consisting of Arthur Elliot, W. S. Caine, and Henry Hobhouse to discuss organization, and they advised that the central Association should authorize representatives to travel throughout the country to assess the state of organization and assist in the formation of local associations, a recommendation that was approved at a meeting of the executive committee on March 4th, 1887.²⁷ Though the executive committee framed a formal constitution for the Association in late 1887, which would have vested all powers in the current executive committee, this proposal lapsed, and no formal rules for the Liberal Unionist Association were ever adopted.²⁸

The Liberal Unionist Association had some problems in the first years after the Liberal split. Caine complained in February 1887 that Hozier was not up to the task of organization and was putting in only a half hour of work each day at Spring Gardens. Later in the year Hartington noted that when Hozier was away the Association's offices were at 'sixes and sevens.'²⁹ John Boraston, who had formerly been Leonard Courtney's agent in Cornwall, was brought in to serve as Hozier's assistant. However, the situation did not noticeably improve, and in October 1887 Chamberlain was complaining to

²⁶ The subscription amount was set at £2.2.0 at a November 2nd, 1886 meeting of the executive committee. BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 37.

²⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, Mar. 4th, 1887.

²⁸ Ibid., Oct. 17th, 1887; Times, May 19th, 1904.

²⁹ Hurst, Joseph Chamberlain and Liberal Reunion, p. 345; Herefordshire Record Office (hereafter RO), Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/289, Hartington to James, Oct. 7th, 1887.

Edward Heneage of the delays in organizing a Liberal Unionist Conference for that year.³⁰

Moreover, friction soon arose between Hozier and Boraston, breaking out into an open row in November 1887.³¹ Suggestions were made that Henry Hobhouse and Edward Wodehouse could take over the supervision of the party organization, but a meeting of the executive committee on January 14th, 1888 decided instead to retain Hozier and part with Boraston, a decision that was sharply opposed by Elliot and Hobhouse.³² In the end, however, Hozier resigned his position in the spring of 1888, replaced by Robert Bickersteth, who would in turn resign in 1891 and be replaced as chief agent and Secretary of the Liberal Unionist Association by Boraston, a post the latter would retain for the rest of the existence of the Liberal Unionist party.

An important element of the national Liberal Unionist organization was the Liberal Union Club, which originated out of a desire to create an organization that would serve a similar role within the Liberal Unionist party as the Eighty Club served within the Liberal party. Several meetings of Liberal Unionists, including Arthur Elliot and F. W. Maude, in February of 1887 led to the formation of the club, with the inaugural dinner, Hartington presiding, on March 30th.³³ A significant addition to the ranks of the Liberal Union Club was provided several months later due to events in the Eighty Club. When

³⁰ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/41/24, Chamberlain to Heneage, Oct., 1887. For Heneage's criticisms, see *ibid.*, JC 5/41/3, Heneage to Chamberlain, Sept. 29th, 1887.

³¹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, Nov. 25th and 28th, 1887.

³² CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2165, Lord Stalbridge to Hartington, Jan. 3rd, 1888; NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, Jan. 14th and 18th, 1888.

³³ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, Feb. 12th and 18th, 1887; *Times*, Mar. 31st, 1887. Bickersteth had been defeated as the Liberal Unionist candidate for Leicester in 1886.

the Home Rule crisis broke in 1886, the Eighty Club initially took a stance of neutrality on the issue.³⁴ This neutrality became increasingly difficult to maintain as the Home Rule divide became further entrenched, and several of the more active younger Liberal Unionists in the Eighty Club agitated for a clear break from the club.³⁵ At a February 9th, 1887 meeting of the Eighty Club, Arthur Elliot proposed F. W. Maude as joint secretary, to represent Liberal Unionists, but the motion was defeated by twenty-seven votes to twenty.³⁶ Matters came to a head in May of 1887 when the Eighty Club refused to invite Chamberlain to be the principal guest at a club dinner. At a meeting of the club on May 18th, Liberal Unionists put forward a motion that guests should be invited from both wings of the party, but this was rejected in favour of an amendment that the club endorsed Gladstone's Home Rule policy and that all Liberals ought to oppose the Conservative government's Crimes Bill. After this rejection the Liberal Unionist members of the club left, and in the following days 80, out of a total Eighty Club membership of approximately 240, submitted their resignations, and instead adhered to the Liberal Union Club.³⁷

The organization of the club consisted of Hartington as President, three Vice-Presidents (in 1888 these were Chamberlain, James, and Lord Stalbridge), an Executive Committee, and an Honorary Secretary. Members were elected by the Executive

³⁴ Elliot, p. 116. Note, though, that W. S. Caine accused the Eighty Club of fermenting opposition to his candidacy in the Apr. 6th, 1886 by-election at Barrow-in-Furness. See BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/10/16, Caine to Chamberlain, [n.d. - ca. 1886].

³⁵ DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 182/8, Philip Lyttelton Gell to Albert Grey, Feb. 9th, [1887].

³⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, Feb. 9th, 1887.

³⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, May 18th, 1887.

Committee on the nomination of two members of the club, and candidates were required not only to be Liberal Unionists but also willing to work for the party. As of July 27th, 1887, new members would be required to pay an entrance fee of one guinea, in addition to whatever annual subscription they gave to the funds of the club, though the Executive Committee could waive the entrance fee for up to twenty-five new members each year.³⁸ Branch clubs were soon formed elsewhere in the country, including Edinburgh and Dublin. The Honorary Secretary organized the work of the club, but there was significant turnover in this position in the early years of the club, with no fewer than five different Honorary Secretaries serving between the founding of the club and the 1892 general election.³⁹ By May 1888 the club had 425 members, which included fifty-six Liberal Unionist M.P.s, as well as twenty-nine defeated Liberal Unionist candidates.⁴⁰

One of the two primary functions of the club were social activities, of which the highlight were the dinners held to entertain the leaders of the party. Several were held each year, and such occasions were often used by party leaders to make important speeches.⁴¹ In addition to these major dinners, it was felt important for the club to serve as the means by which party members could mingle with the leadership, and new members integrated into the party. Early efforts to these ends over the summer of 1887

³⁸ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl Lichfield Papers, D615/PP/5/1/9, Liberal Union Club, List of Members, May, 1888.

³⁹ The five were F. W. Maude, Oliver Duke, J. Parker Smith, Andrew Noel Agnew, and William Miller.

⁴⁰ Among the twenty-nine were six who would later be elected as Liberal Unionist M.P.s, including J. Parker Smith and H. O. Arnold-Forster.

⁴¹ At a Liberal Union Club dinner on June 14th, 1887, after the breakdown of the Roundtable Conference, Chamberlain declared forcefully in favour of joint action with the Conservatives. See NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 14th, 1887.

focussed on fortnightly meetings at which the issues of the day were debated. However, these meetings did not prove a success, as debates proved difficult with no opposition. Instead, aristocratic members of the party held a series of receptions at their London houses for members of the Liberal Union Club. Overt politics were de-emphasized and formal speeches dissuaded at these receptions, as the focus was on the social integration of the party.⁴²

There was a general expectation that the members of the club would assist the party with propaganda and election work. As the Honorary Secretary J. Parker Smith commented in 1888, the club did not ‘desire to include men, even though they agree with it in opinion, who are merely attracted by its dinners and other social opportunities.’⁴³ A particular focus was on providing speakers, and the club served as a central clearing house for the dispatch of speakers to wherever they were requested. By December of 1887, 108 meetings throughout England had been addressed by members of the club, with about fifty more already planned for the following weeks.⁴⁴ Members of the club also undertook to debate the Irish Question in Liberal clubs, and in the early years assisted in the establishment and organizing of local Liberal Unionist associations.⁴⁵ Similar to the Eighty Club, the Liberal Union Club provided experience at speaking and organizing, and became a ‘nursery’ for younger Liberal Unionists who would go on to stand as candidates

⁴² The Liberal Unionist, Sept. 1st, 1888.

⁴³ Ibid., Sept. 1st, 1888.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Dec. 1st, 1887.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Sept. 1st, 1888.

for the party.⁴⁶ Amongst the members of the club in 1888 were twenty-two future candidates, ten of whom would be successful, including Austen Chamberlain.⁴⁷ In late 1888 the club funded a 'Union Jack' van, complete with a projector and literature, to tour rural constituencies.⁴⁸ The work accomplished by the van was widely praised,⁴⁹ in particular during the October 1889 by-election in Buckinghamshire, Buckingham, and over the next couple of years several more were put in the field. By 1891 Andrew Noel Agnew, the Honorary Secretary of the club, claimed that they had been active in every by-election held that year in a rural constituency.⁵⁰ Their operation was expensive, and it was decided in 1890 that a levy of £5 would be applied to constituencies which were worked by the vans. By the summer of 1892 the club operated five 'Union Jack' vans, which worked throughout England and Scotland in the weeks leading up to the 1892 General Election.⁵¹

Another important Liberal Unionist organization was the Women's Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter WLUA). Formed in 1888, the WLUA included

⁴⁶ Moisei Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, Vol. I (Trans., New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1908), p. 562-563.

⁴⁷ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl Lichfield Papers, D615/PP/5/1/9, Liberal Union Club, List of Members, May, 1888.

⁴⁸ The Liberal Unionist, Dec. 1st, 1888. It would not be until 1891 that the Conservatives would first use a van as part of their political education efforts. See Kathryn Rix, "'Go Out into the Highways and the Hedges': The Diary of Michael Sykes, Conservative Political Lecturer, 1895 and 1907-8," in Parliamentary History, Vol. 20, Pt. 2 (2001), p. 211-212.

⁴⁹ For example, see Peter Gordon, Politics and Society: The Journals of Lady Knightley of Fawsley, 1885-1913 (London, UK: Routledge, 2005), April 23rd, 1889, p. 140.

⁵⁰ Times, Oct. 3rd, 1889 and Nov. 25th, 1891. Agnew also claimed that the Liberal Unionists were the first to use magic lantern lectures as part of their propaganda efforts.

⁵¹ Times, Apr. 1st, 1890; Liberal Unionist, June 1st and July 1st, 1892.

prominent feminists such as Millicent Garret Fawcett and Isabella Tod,⁵² as well as wives and relatives of prominent Liberal Unionist politicians, such as Kate Courtney, who became the Honorary Secretary, and Mary Arnold-Forster.⁵³ Lady Stanley of Adderly took a leading role in the organization of the association, and became its first president. In addition to affiliated branch associations throughout the country, a separate organizing committee was established for Scotland, and honorary secretaries were appointed for Ireland.⁵⁴ By September 1889 there were twenty-one branch associations, with the largest, in Birmingham, consisting of over 1000 members. Other branch associations included several in London, with most of the rest scattered between various urban centres and the Southwest. The WLUA also had active associations in Ireland, including several in areas, such as County Tipperary, where they constituted the only significant body of Unionist organization. Prominent female Liberal Unionists would undertake speaking tours and propaganda work, especially during elections.⁵⁵ Of equal importance, female volunteers assisted with canvassing during elections, particularly in working-class

⁵² Tod was the 'moving spirit' behind the foundation of the Ulster Women's Liberal Unionist Association, and the sole female member of the executive committee of the Ulster Liberal Unionist Association. See Noel Armour, 'Isabella Tod and Liberal Unionism in Ulster, 1886-96,' in Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, eds., *Irish Women's History* (Dublin, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 2004), p. 72.

⁵³ Gordon L. Goodman, *The Liberal Unionist Party, 1886-1895* (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1956), p. 121-122. See also Armour, p. 84.

⁵⁴ *The Liberal Unionist*, July 1st, 1888. In western Scotland, it was the Liberal Unionists who took the initiative in the Unionist alliance regarding the formation of organizations specifically for women. See Catriona Burness, 'The Making of Scottish Unionism, 1886-1914,' in Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday, eds., *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s* (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 27.

⁵⁵ Tod, for example, spoke in support of Leonard Courtney's campaign in 1886, and undertook a speaking tour of Scotland in 1892. Armour, p. 84-85; Maria Luddy, 'Isabella M. S. Tod,' in Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy, eds., *Women, Power and Consciousness in 19th-Century Ireland: Eight Biographical Studies* (Dublin, Ireland: Attic Press, 1995), p. 222.

districts, and canvassed by themselves, though they were advised to avoid ‘really low and bad streets.’⁵⁶ Female canvassers were also encouraged to canvass their own neighbourhoods in the belief that they would be familiar to the local inhabitants. Female volunteers could thus constitute a ‘territorial militia’ that would be useful during elections as a result of their efforts beforehand. For example, during the by-election held in 1889 in Central Birmingham, the Birmingham WLUA contributed approximately fifty canvassers to the successful Liberal Unionist campaign.⁵⁷ By the summer of 1892 membership in the WLUA had reached 7000, and the organization played an active role in the 1892 General Election, with the leaders of the association holding meetings throughout the United Kingdom, and members actively contributing to the election efforts, including thirty-five canvassers at Bradford, seven at Brixton, fourteen at Cambridge, thirty-three at Darlington, twenty at Handsworth, and twelve at Marylebone.⁵⁸

Despite the valuable work undertaken by the WLUA, it sat uneasily within the Liberal Unionist party. Though some Liberal Unionists, like Leonard Courtney and Lord Wolmer, were sympathetic to women’s suffrage, the leaders of the party were hostile.⁵⁹ Moreover, some looked upon the involvement of women in politics as a necessary evil, in that the active assistance by women in support of the Gladstonians necessitated the

⁵⁶ The Liberal Unionist, Nov., 1891.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Sept. 1st, 1889.

⁵⁸ Ibid., July 1st and Aug. 1st, 1892.

⁵⁹ Constance Rover, Women’s Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866-1914 (London, UK: Routledge & K. Paul, 1967), p. 115-117; Martin Pugh, The March of the Women: A Revisionist Analysis of the Campaign for Women’s Suffrage, 1866-1914 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 131-132; ibid., The Tories and the People, 1880-1935 (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 61; Marsh, Joseph Chamberlain, p. 302.

mobilization of female supporters of the Liberal Unionist party, an attitude that infuriated Fawcett.⁶⁰ After the first organizational meeting, as Kate Courtney noted, some women reported that they could not attend further meetings, due to the opposition of their husbands, with the result that Lady Stanley had to visit these husbands to convince them otherwise.⁶¹ Indeed, in writing to congratulate the WLUA on its formation in 1888, Chamberlain felt it necessary to dispel any notion that he opposed their work.⁶²

The Liberal Unionist Association also financed the publication of The Liberal Unionist, the official newspaper of the party, which was first published in March 1887.⁶³ As Hartington explained in the first edition, the newspaper would fill a special role by being able to disseminate the views of the party and support the causes that it espoused.⁶⁴ With St. Loe Strachey as editor, the newspaper initially published weekly before switching to monthly in August, 1887.⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, The Liberal Unionist focussed on the Irish Question, both praising the Conservatives' administration of the island, as well as exposing and fulminating against Irish Nationalist 'outrages'. A cornerstone of the newspaper were signed articles on contemporary events by Liberal Unionist M.P.s and peers, as well as reporting on organizational activity at the local and regional level.

⁶⁰ Ray Strachey, Millicent Garrett Fawcett (London, UK: John Murray, 1931), p. 129.

⁶¹ Patricia Hollis, Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 62n.

⁶² The Liberal Unionist, Aug. 1st, 1888.

⁶³ On the Liberal Unionist press generally, see Stephen Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Vol. 1 (London, UK: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), p. 286-294.

⁶⁴ The Liberal Unionist, Mar. 30th, 1887.

⁶⁵ On the financial contributions of the Liberal Unionist Association, see CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2201, Wolmer to Hartington, Dec. 12th, 1888.

For a political paper The Liberal Unionist had a respectable circulation, reaching a peak of 25 000 copies an issue.⁶⁶ But there was some debate over who exactly was reading the newspaper. Both H. O. Arnold-Forster and T. W. Russell claimed that the newspaper had an important impact amongst workingmen, while Strachey himself believed it to be a success precisely because it was not too popular. Instead of attempting to appeal to the entire public, a role he suggested was already filled by the Conservative press and Liberal Unionist pamphlets, The Liberal Unionist appealed to the educated classes.⁶⁷ However, from the start Strachey had to struggle to gain contributions from leading Liberal Unionists; both Lord Derby and R. B. Finlay declined to submit contributions for the first issues, Derby commenting that he did not have anything new to say.⁶⁸ More importantly, the newspaper failed to gain any significant amount of advertising revenue, as advertisers were reluctant to be associated with the organ of a specific political party.⁶⁹ The Liberal Unionist was published through the 1892 general election, but due to financial reasons was discontinued that fall. Some Liberal Unionists suggested that the decision to fold the newspaper was a grave error; A. V. Dicey went so far as to declare it to be an ‘act of cowardice’ that would have serious implications.⁷⁰ Strachey, however, concluded that the reading public was not interested in a purely political newspaper run by a political party.

⁶⁶ Harry Bralley, St. Loe Strachey and the Politics of Dilemma: A Study of Political Journalism During the Edwardian Era (PhD, University of South Carolina, 1971), p. 17.

⁶⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19489, fo. 110-111, Strachey to Elliot, Sept. 12th, 1892.

⁶⁸ House of Lords RO, John St. Loe Strachey, STR/5/2/1, Lord Derby to Strachey, Mar. 22nd, 1887; *ibid.*, STR 29/1/18, R. B. Finlay to Strachey, Apr. 1st, 1887.

⁶⁹ Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Vol. 1, p. 304-305; Eugenio F. Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876-1906 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 268.

⁷⁰ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19489, fo. 110-111, Strachey to Elliot, Sept. 12th, 1892.

As he stated to Arthur Pearson in 1908, in the context of his satisfaction that the Times would not be run by the Tariff Reform organization, he was convinced that a paper run by a political organization always meant bad journalism, and that it was far better that a newspaper be run as a honest business proposition.⁷¹ The Liberal Unionist was replaced by the party newsletter Memoranda, published monthly, which contained excerpts of speeches by leaders of the party and articles on political topics of the day, and which was distributed to local Liberal Unionist associations throughout the country.

An important auxiliary arm of the Liberal Unionist party was the Rural Labourers League, formed after Jesse Collings was ejected by Gladstonians from the Allotments and Small Holdings Association in 1888.⁷² Both Chamberlain and James were outraged by the actions of the Gladstonians, and immediately resolved to form a rival organization and, after having raised £1000, the Rural Labourers League was born.⁷³ Officially the League was non-partisan, and campaigned for the improvement of conditions amongst agricultural workers. In practice the League operated in support of the Unionist cause, and of the Liberal Unionist party in particular. With Collings as President, Chamberlain, Devonshire, and a number of Liberal Unionist peers and M.P.s dominated the list of

⁷¹ House of Lords RO, John St. Loe Strachey Papers, STR/35/1/19, Strachey to Arthur Pearson, Jan. 7th, 1908.

⁷² Sir John L. Green, Life of the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, Part II (London, UK: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), p. 195-206.

⁷³ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 8, fo. 1-2, Chamberlain to Wolmer, Mar. 13th, 1888; BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/14, James to Chamberlain, n.d. [ca. Mar. 1888]. A banquet for Collings in protest of the action of the Allotments and Small Holdings Association was held by the Liberal Union Club on June 5th, 1886. See the Times, June 6th, 1888.

Vice-Presidents, and over 90% of subscriptions came from Liberal Unionists.⁷⁴ By 1892 the League employed six full-time agents who had visited a thousand villages in the previous year, and they also assisted at by-elections.⁷⁵ Despite the obvious campaigning in support of the Unionist cause, it was able to achieve particular successes as a result of its appearance of non-partisanship. Since the workers of the League avowed that they sought to benefit all inhabitants of a village regardless of political affiliation, their meetings were attended by Gladstonians as well as Unionists, and this gave an opportunity to reach and convert Gladstonians that would not be achievable through a more partisan approach.⁷⁶ The League also published a weekly newspaper, the Rural World. Chamberlain claimed in 1892 that labourers were being converted to Unionism just from reading the newspaper, that agents in Essex, Worcestershire, and other counties were selling them by the hundreds, and it was expected that circulation would soon reach 20 000.⁷⁷

Within a few years of the party's creation, it became clear that further improvements in the party's organization would be desirable. When Lord Wolmer was appointed chief whip of the party in the summer of 1888, he was also made responsible for the party organization. As part of his efforts, Wolmer put forward a proposal for the

⁷⁴ On the list of officers, see DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 282/3, Jesse Collings and J. L. Green to Albert Grey, Oct. 5th, 1893.

⁷⁵ Mr. Green of the Rural Labourers League assisted with canvassing during the 1889 by-election in Central Birmingham. BUL, JC 6/2/1/20, Austen Chamberlain to Joseph Chamberlain, Apr. 11th, 1889.

⁷⁶ British Library, Balfour Papers, Add. 49773, fo. 34-35, Memorandum on the Rural Labourers League, n.d.

⁷⁷ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/5/52, Chamberlain to Balfour, Feb. 6th, 1892.

creation of a central council, consisting of representatives of regional organizations and other party agencies. The proposal was first discussed at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Liberal Unionist Association on November 15th, 1888, and plans were finalized in the following months.⁷⁸ The inaugural meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council was held at the offices of the Liberal Unionist Association in London on March 22nd, 1889. Hartington presided and was elected chairman, and Lord Stalbridge was elected vice-chairman. In his speech Hartington pointed to the primary purpose of the Council:

We have thought that, perhaps, up to the present time there has not been sufficient co-operation among all portions of the Liberal Unionist organization. We in London have been working perhaps without the full knowledge of what you were doing. Our friends in the country have also been working without being fully acquainted, in the same way, with what they were doing. We think this council will afford a means of better knowledge among ourselves of what is taking place both in London and in the largest provincial centres . . . [a]nd we think that by the discussion which we hope will take place in this council the leaders of the Liberal Unionist party will obtain valuable information on all questions pertaining to organization and management.⁷⁹

In the early years of the Council, meetings focussed on organizational matters, including reports of new constituency associations, with Wolmer taking a leading role. Amongst the topics discussed were improving the relationship with local women's Liberal Unionist associations, dealing with the local press, countering Gladstonian and Parnellite propaganda, and the formation of Liberal Unionist working men's

⁷⁸ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MSS. 19514, Arthur Elliot Diary, Nov. 15th, 1888.

⁷⁹ Times, Mar. 23rd, 1889.

associations.⁸⁰ A majority of the Council was composed of representatives of particular regions throughout the United Kingdom, some of whom were directly elected by regional associations. In addition, several individuals – including party whips, the secretary of the Liberal Union Club, and other notables – were appointed members.⁸¹

An important component of Wolmer's reforms was the integration of Chamberlain's NRU under the umbrella of the overall Liberal Unionist party organization. In late 1886 and early 1887, the NRU had focussed on finding correspondents in constituencies, as opposed to creating new local constituency associations, so as to avoid widening the breach with the Gladstonians while the potential for reconciliation remained.⁸² However, once the Round Table Conference had irretrievably broken down, the NRU began vigorously creating local Radical Unionist organizations throughout the country.⁸³ This led to some overlap with the efforts of the Liberal Unionist Association, and friction between Radicals and Whigs over organizational matters.⁸⁴ Wolmer's solution was that while the NRU could continue to distribute propaganda throughout the country and plan meetings for Chamberlain, organizationally it would be limited to the Midlands, in effect becoming the Midlands regional arm of the Liberal Unionist Association. To symbolize this link Chamberlain's

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Oct. 23rd, 1889. Wolmer placed great importance on the formation of working men's clubs.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Mar. 21st, 1889.

⁸² Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and the Liberal Reunion*, p. 147; Wright, p. 121.

⁸³ For instance, early in 1887 Chamberlain urged Tobit Evans, a Welsh Liberal Unionist, to found an organization in Wales to link with the NRU. See Kenneth O. Morgan, 'The Liberal Unionists in Wales,' in *National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Winter, 1969), p. 166.

⁸⁴ See, for example, BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/12/3, Joseph Chamberlain to Austen Chamberlain, Dec. 3rd, 1888.

lieutenant J. Powell Williams and the first secretary of the NRU, James S. Baily, were appointed as the West Midlands representatives on the Liberal Unionist Council. The NRU also sought to broaden its appeal by changing its name to the National Liberal Union (hereafter NLU). As Powell Williams noted, the use of 'Radical' had been found to limit the ability of the organization to appeal to Liberal Unionists of all stripes, and that the new Radicalism increasingly embraced by the Liberal party was little different from socialism.⁸⁵ The new relationship between the two organizations was symbolized by Hartington's visit to Birmingham in April 1889 on Chamberlain's invitation to address the conference of the NLU.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, Wolmer's reforms were not entirely successful. Though the Liberal Unionist Council did succeed in bringing together Liberal Unionist leaders from across the country, it had no executive authority of its own. Any actions it recommended would ultimately depend on the approval of the party leadership for implementation.⁸⁷ Arthur Elliot, a Scottish representative on the Council, was dismissive of its value: 'The truth is these meetings of the Council, except for purposes of advertisement, & pleasing provincial members of L.U. Association, are of very little practical importance.'⁸⁸

Conflicts between the Liberal Unionist Association and the NLU also were not removed by the incorporation of the latter under the umbrella of the former. In October 1889

⁸⁵ The Liberal Unionist, Oct. 1st, 1889.

⁸⁶ Patrick Jackson, The Last of the Whigs: A Political Biography of Lord Hartington, Later Eighth Duke of Devonshire (1833-1908) (London, UK: Associated University Press, 1994), p. 276.

⁸⁷ Goodman, The Liberal Unionist Party, p. 124.

⁸⁸ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19514, Arthur Elliot Diary, Oct. 22nd, 1889.

Liberal Unionists in Huddersfield attempted to affiliate with the NLU, despite its location in Yorkshire. Hartington objected to the proposal, arguing that difficulties would arise if local associations were to be affiliated with two central organizations.⁸⁹ Chamberlain replied that he saw no problem with double affiliation, though he was content to leave the matter up to Wolmer and Powell Williams.⁹⁰ Hartington felt he had made no impression on Chamberlain with his objections, and the following year noted that Chamberlain was still encouraging local associations to affiliate with the NLU, regardless of location.⁹¹ Distrust between the two organizations remained. When a vacancy was rumoured in Stoke-on-Trent in April 1889, a constituency that fell within the purview of the NLU, Powell Williams stressed to Chamberlain the importance of demonstrating their capability of dealing with the situation to Wolmer.⁹² Chamberlain himself was dismissive of Wolmer's reforms, suggesting to Austen Chamberlain that 'it is all organization and nothing else and I expect he is only making trouble for himself.' However, Chamberlain saw one advantage: his organizers would be in contact with organizers throughout the country, and they might be able to get useful information from them.⁹³ Hartington for his part did not look forward to closer ties with Chamberlain's men. To James he commented: 'We don't want to have anything to do with Mr. Bailey or the Birmingham crew. They raise no money, and I do not believe that except in Birmingham and perhaps

⁸⁹ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/22/46, Hartington to Chamberlain, Oct. 13th, 1889.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, JC 5/22/145, Chamberlain to Hartington, Oct. 14th, 1889.

⁹¹ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/407, Hartington to James, May 28th, 1890.

⁹² BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 6/2/1/14, Powell Williams to Chamberlain, Apr. 8th, 1889.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, JC 5/12/4, Joseph Chamberlain to Austen Chamberlain, Dec. 15th, 1888.

in the West of Scotland they have any influence.’⁹⁴ Despite these concerns, Hartington began to play a lesser role in the management of the Liberal Unionist organization, becoming a less frequent attendee at meetings of the Executive Committee of Liberal Unionist Association, and increasingly content to leave organizational matters in the hands of James and Wolmer.⁹⁵

Another focus for Wolmer from 1888 onwards was the finances of the party. Hartington sent out two general appeals for financial support, both of which failed to garner the required funds. Wolmer then turned to what he referred to as ‘the assessment plan’, whereby letters were sent to Liberal Unionist supporters informing them that a donation of a set amount would be appreciated. As he explained to A. V. Dicey in 1895, ‘about 5% of those I addressed were furiously angry; about 20% took no notice; but about 75% paid up like lambs . . .’⁹⁶ Despite this success, the state of Liberal Unionists finances remained insecure leading up to the 1892 General Election, prompting Dicey to complain in 1891 that ‘it would be absolutely disgraceful for a party which must contain more rich men for its numbers than any party in England to be beaten in a contest on which turned the fate of the country, for want of funds.’⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/407, Hartington to James, May 28th, 1890.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 43-44, Hartington to Wolmer, Oct. 9th, 1889. Arthur Elliot urged Devonshire in 1892 to keep ‘in close contact as possible with the L.U. organization, [and] that the officials who managed it should remain of the right stamp.’ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19517, Arthur Elliot Diary, Feb. 7th, 1892.

⁹⁶ London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), A. V. Dicey Papers, A/NFC109/77, Selborne to Dicey, Aug. 23rd, 1895. John Tyndall was one Liberal Unionist who responded favourably to the assessment plan, though not in the amount requested. See Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 13, fo. 37-38, John Tyndall to Wolmer, Dec. 2nd & 4th, 1888. I am indebted to Dr. T. A. Jenkins on this point.

⁹⁷ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 13, fo. 99-102, Dicey to Wolmer, Nov. 11th, 1891.

The solution arrived at by Wolmer was to raise a special election fund, under the control of the party leadership, which would be used to finance the electoral organization of the party and cover the expenses of candidates. This fund would be separate both from any funds raised by local associations and from the regular funds of the Liberal Unionist Association. The fund was raised from thirty-nine individual contributors, each of whom was approached, on the recommendation of Wolmer, by Hartington in a personal letter.⁹⁸ The initial target for the fund, as expressed by Hartington in May 1890, was £60 000,⁹⁹ but by the time of the General Election the extraordinary sum of £131 785 had been raised.¹⁰⁰ Of this sum, £22 000 was raised by eleven Liberal Unionist peers, with the largest contributions coming from the Duke of Bedford (£5500), Lord Rothschild¹⁰¹ (£5000), and the Earl of Derby (£3000). Several Liberal Unionist M.P.s also contributed. However, the largest subscriptions came from individuals who were not members of the parliamentary party, with £65 000 coming from just four contributors: Sir John Muir, Henry Wiggin, John Jaffray, and E. H. Carbutt. As T. A. Jenkins has suggested, there is compelling evidence that in the cases of the latter three, their subscriptions were received in exchange for baronetcies, thus indicating that one reason for the ability of Wolmer to

⁹⁸ For an example of Wolmer's recommendation, see Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 152-153, Hartington to Wolmer, Dec. 8th, 1891.

⁹⁹ T. A. Jenkins, 'The Funding of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Honours System,' in English Historical Review, Vol. 105, No. 417 (Oct., 1990), p. 921.

¹⁰⁰ The list of contributors and expenditures is contained, as an enclosure to a letter from Wolmer to Hartington, in CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2503A.

¹⁰¹ Lord Rothschild's two brothers Alfred and Leo raised an additional £5000, and Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, Liberal Unionist M.P for the Aylesbury division of Buckinghamshire, contributed £700.

improve the finances of the Liberal Unionist party was through the sale of honours.¹⁰² Of the £131 785 raised, £66 800 had been expended up to September 1892, with the largest single expenditure being £22 500 transferred to the Liberal Unionist Association for election expenses. The remainder of the expenditures were related to supporting the various organizational branches of the Liberal Unionist party, including £10 000 transferred to Chamberlain for operations in the Midlands, £8900 related to the failed Manchester Examiner, £5000 to the Rural Labourers League, and £2500 to the Liberal Union Club for the operation of the Union Jack vans. The balance of £65 010 was deposited by Wolmer in a bank on Fleet Street, and he suggested to Hartington that the remainder of the election fund constituted ‘a reserve of strength which one day may be useful.’ He also commented that no one knew of the existence of the fund except himself and Hartington, and knowledge of its existence should remain limited.¹⁰³ In early 1896 Wolmer, now Lord Selborne, noted the continued existence of this fund, still on deposit, and that Hartington alone had authority to decide on its use.¹⁰⁴

Some of the 1892 election fund was raised through the party’s regional associations. In February 1892, A. L. Bruce, treasurer of the East and North of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter E&NSLUA), was already raising funds for the forthcoming election.¹⁰⁵ However, as Wolmer’s correspondence with Bruce indicated,

¹⁰² Jenkins, ‘The Funding of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Honours System.’

¹⁰³ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2503, Wolmer to Devonshire, Sept. 5th, 1892.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 340.2687, Selborne to Devonshire, Mar. 25th, 1896; ibid., 340.2688, Selborne to Devonshire, Mar. 26th, 1896.

¹⁰⁵ This included contributions from H. J. Moncrieff (£50), H. G. Younger (£1000), and T. D. Brodie (£50). See NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/33, H. J. Moncrieff to A. L. Bruce, Feb. 1st, 1892; ibid.,

Wolmer was opposed to the creation of separate local funds for the election, and strongly encouraged the transferral of contributions raised locally to the central fund he was raising. He argued that there were a number of expenses, such as financing contests in Irish seats, that required a large central fund, and that the formation of local funds would cripple the electoral efforts of the Liberal Unionist party.¹⁰⁶ The executive of the E&NSLUA, however, was reluctant to see its money transferred to a central fund without assurances that the funding requirements of the constituencies affiliated to their association would be met. A compromise was ultimately reached, on the suggestion of Wolmer. All funds, other than those required to meet the expenses of the E&NSLUA, would be transferred to Wolmer's central fund, on the condition that the whole amount would be made available to the association, if needed, to contribute to the expenses incurred by candidates in the East and North of Scotland.¹⁰⁷ Unsurprisingly, the E&NSLUA would later claim that all of the £4000 collected by Bruce and transferred to Wolmer's central fund was required by the association to cover the expenses of Liberal Unionist candidates, and this sum was transferred to the association in June 1892.¹⁰⁸

Acc. 11777/38, H. G. Younger to A. L. Bruce, Feb. 6th, 1892; *ibid.*, Acc. 11777/27, T. D. Brodie to A. L. Bruce, Feb. 18th, 1892.

¹⁰⁶ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/19, Wolmer to A. L. Bruce, Feb. 11th, 1892. Wolmer also directed those who normally contributed to regional associations to send their contributions to his central fund instead, as in the case of Lord Camperdown's £500 subscription to the 1892 election fund. See *ibid.*, Acc. 11777/28, Camperdown to A. L. Bruce, June 18th, 1892.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Acc. 11777/19, Wolmer to A. L. Bruce, Feb. 24th, 1892.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Wolmer to A. L. Bruce, June 16th, 1892. Of the £4000, the following was earmarked for specific constituencies: Ross and Cromarty (£1000), Western Fife (£700), Clackmannanshire and Kinross-shire (£500), East Edinburgh (£500), Central Edinburgh (£250), Montrose Burghs (£250), Stirling Burghs (£250), Dumfries Burghs (£250), Leith Burghs (£150). The remaining £150 was reserved for emergency expenditures. Thus the £4000 expenditure to the E&NSLUA listed in the general account was not directly related to that association requiring a 'special subvention', as suggested by T. A. Jenkins, or due to

Bruce was not the only treasurer of a regional Liberal Unionist association who assisted in the raising of the 1892 election fund, as Sir John Muir, who contributed £20 000, was the treasurer of the West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter WSLUA), and Sir Thomas Brocklebank, who contributed £3295, was treasurer of the Liverpool Liberal Unionist Association.

Wolmer's successful fundraising left the Liberal Unionist party with ample funds to conduct the 1892 election campaign. Unlike in 1886, significant contributions were forthcoming from the central party organization to assist candidates throughout the United Kingdom. Both Arthur Elliot, defeated at Roxburghshire, and Arnold White, defeated in Northumberland, Tyneside, for example, received a £250 contribution from central party funds towards their campaign expenses.¹⁰⁹ Wolmer's success in raising £131 785 is best seen in comparison to the efforts of as Richard Middleton, the Conservative party agent who sought to raise £80 000 to cover anticipated Conservative expenses in the 1892 general election, and of this target collected £45 000 from Conservative peers.¹¹⁰ Perhaps the clearest indications of Wolmer's financial achievement was the ability of the party to contribute £7500 to the Conservative election fund, as the Liberal Unionist share of certain joint expenses.

Despite the generous funding available, the Liberal Unionist party suffered a net

Wolmer's being returned for West Edinburgh. See Jenkins, 'The Funding of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Honours System,' p. 938.

¹⁰⁹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19473, fo. 187-192, Arthur Elliot to 4th Earl Minto, June 26th, 1892; DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 209/2, Arnold White to Albert Grey, Sept. 29th, 1891.

¹¹⁰ Richard Shannon, p. 370-371; Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, British Political Finance, 1830-1980 (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1981), p. 36.

loss of eighteen seats in the 1892 general election. Though a significant reason for the losses was a general reaction against the Conservative government, there was also a sense in the party that their organization was not fully effective.¹¹¹ Lewis Fry, defeated in North Bristol, commented that polling day had demonstrated that the Liberal Unionist organization in his constituency had been 'defective.'¹¹² Thus Wolmer came in for criticism. Chamberlain suggested to James that Staffordshire, Lichfield was an example of Wolmer's 'mismanagement.' Chamberlain had told Wolmer that the Liberal Unionist candidate Leonard Darwin must support the Eight Hours Miners' Bill, but Wolmer had given no instructions on the matter to Darwin and, as a result, Chamberlain had to intervene to assist Darwin, who managed to eke out a narrow eleven-vote victory. For Chamberlain, the general election had shown the necessity of reorganizing the central administration of the party.¹¹³ James agreed, noting that Chamberlain's striking successes in the West Midlands, against the national electoral tide, had given him great prestige for the future management of the party, and that 'we have been sadly outgeneralled for the last five years, and it must not occur again. Surely we can find a man as good as

¹¹¹ See Jenkins, 'Hartington, Chamberlain, and the Unionist Alliance,' p. 132-133.

¹¹² NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19489, fo. 35-36, Lewis Fry to Arthur Elliot, July 13th, 1892.

¹¹³ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/557, Chamberlain to James, June 17th, 1892. Darwin's candidacy may have been saved by the continued unpopularity of the Liberal incumbent, Sir John Swinburne. In adjacent Western Staffordshire, the Liberal Unionist incumbent, Hamer Bass, supported the Eight Hours Miners' Bill, and was re-elected comfortably, while in West Nottingham, the opposition of the incumbent Liberal, Sir Henry Broadhurst, and the support of the Liberal Unionist candidate, Charles Seely, was an important factor in the latter's victory, one of the few Liberal Unionist gains of the 1892 general election. See Pelling, p. 194-195 and 208; J. H. Linforth, Leaves from an Agent's Diary, Being Some Reminiscences of Thirty Years' Work as a Liberal Agent (Leeds, UK: Wildblood & Ward, 1911), p. 142-147.

Schnadhorst, and it will be in Birmingham he will be found if at all.’¹¹⁴ Even before the last contests were completed Wolmer had made it known he wished to resign as the party whip,¹¹⁵ and in late July 1892, Chamberlain, Wolmer, and James met and decided that H. T. Anstruther should replace Wolmer as whip, with responsibility limited to patronage and the management of the party in the House of Commons. Chamberlain’s lieutenant J. Powell Williams was appointed to lead the organization of the party, while Wolmer remained responsible for finance, the one signal success of his tenure as party whip.¹¹⁶ Anstruther, Powell Williams, and Wolmer formed the basis of a management committee to which was added Austen Chamberlain, as a new junior whip, and John Boraston. As he controlled the expenditure of funds, Wolmer claimed that effective control remained in his hands, but in practice Wolmer appears to have neglected his financial responsibilities, and by 1895 it was Anstruther who was responsible for the raising of a fund to contest the forthcoming general election.¹¹⁷

Yet ultimately, Powell Williams emerged as the true force behind the central Liberal Unionist organization. Powell Williams had been Chamberlain’s chief organizer

¹¹⁴ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/25, James to Chamberlain, July 16th, 1892. Francis Schnadhorst had been Chamberlain’s chief organizer up to 1886, when he sided with Gladstone over Home Rule. On his career, see Barry McGill, ‘Francis Schnadhorst and Liberal Party Organization,’ in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar., 1962), p. 19-39.

¹¹⁵ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/74/19, Wolmer to Chamberlain, July 10th, 1892. To Arthur Elliot Wolmer later suggested that he resigned in order to play a more active role in the House of Commons. NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19489, fo. 100-103, Wolmer to Elliot, Aug. 14th, 1892.

¹¹⁶ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 8, fo. 38-39, Chamberlain to Wolmer, July 17th, 1892; BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/22/153, Chamberlain to Devonshire, July 25th, 1892.

¹¹⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19489, fo. 100-103, Wolmer to Elliot, Aug. 14th, 1892. On Anstruther’s responsibility for the 1895 election fund, see Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 13, fo. 144-147, Anstruther to Wolmer, June 27th, 1895.

in the West Midlands since the 1886 Liberal split, and Chamberlain had come to view his lieutenant as indispensable, noting that he ‘knows more than anyone else of the inside of party politics and of how things are going in the constituency.’¹¹⁸ By November 1892 Arthur Elliot described him as being ‘in command’ at the Liberal Unionist offices at 31 Great George Street, while James observed to Chamberlain that ‘no one could be pleasanter to deal with . . . than Powell Williams.’¹¹⁹ The importance of Powell Williams was noted by James in January 1893 when he went to the Liberal Unionist offices to discuss propaganda related to the recent Meath election revelations. However, ‘Powell Williams was absent ill, so we could do no more than recommend that certain things should be done.’¹²⁰ Boraston also proved an effective chief agent, in frequent contact with local constituency associations regarding a wide range of matters, from registration and the possibility of dissolutions to requests for information on Liberal activity and reports of the potential impact of changes to the election laws.¹²¹ Anstruther, though, came in for criticism from Chamberlain, suggesting that ‘he does not quite understand that it is the duty of leading to lead – and that if they can’t do this they had better resign.’¹²²

¹¹⁸ Jenkins, ‘Hartington, Chamberlain, and the Unionist Alliance,’ p. 133.

¹¹⁹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19518, Arthur Elliot Diary, Nov. 1st, 1892; BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/30, James to Chamberlain, Dec. 18th, 1892.

¹²⁰ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/32, James to Chamberlain, Jan. 9th, 1893. On the Meath election revelations, which revolved around the political activity of Catholic clergy, see Seamus Matthews, ‘Patrick Fullam, MP of Donore, and the Meath election of 1892,’ in *Journal of the Old Drogheda Society*, Vol. 14 (2004), p. 133-137.

¹²¹ For examples of Boraston’s correspondence, see the papers of the Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association, contained in Ugbrooke Park (hereafter UP), 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27/28.

¹²² CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2508, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Jan. 14th, 1893.

The 1895 election fund, raised under Anstruther's supervision, did not match the sum raised by Wolmer in 1892, but it was still more than sufficient to meet required expenditures. In February 1895 Wolmer reported a conversation with Anstruther in which the latter commented that he had collected £6000 more than what was required, with additional contributions still to come in.¹²³ According to the balance sheet of the 1895 election fund, £42 513.0.11 was raised. Of this amount, £18 331.1.7 was spent on election expenses, the vast majority of which (£17 934.5.5) consisted of subsidies to candidates. Other expenses paid from the election fund included £1000 for the publication of the Rural World, £3217.18.11 for election petitions,¹²⁴ a £3500 transfer to the Liberal Unionist Association, and £1318 towards the 1896 by-election in Staffordshire, Lichfield, which followed a successful petition against the victorious Liberal candidate in the 1895 general election. A surplus of £13 285.13.9 remained after expenses, of which £11 756.17.6 was invested.¹²⁵ Over the next four years, this surplus formed the basis of the funding of the Liberal Unionist Association. While £15 350 was transferred to the Liberal Unionist Association, as well as a £400 special grant to the Midlands Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter MLUA), a further £20 000 in donations was raised between August 1896 and June 1900, so that by the 1900 general election the

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 340.2604, Wolmer to Devonshire, Feb. 12th, 1895.

¹²⁴ The Liberal Unionist Association offered to pay the £1000 deposit towards Arthur Elliot's petition for Durham. NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19521, Arthur Elliot Diary, Aug. 1st, 1895.

¹²⁵ CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box O, Bundle 34, Liberal Unionist Association General Election Account, 1895. These figures generally coincide with those Anstruther reported to Devonshire after the 1895 general election. See CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2652, Anstruther to Devonshire, Sept. 30th, 1895.

surplus had increased to £17 715.16.3.¹²⁶

After the formation of the Unionist government in June 1895 and the subsequent resounding victory in the general election brought the Liberal Unionists and Conservatives closer together, questions arose as to the desirability and viability of a continued separate existence for the Liberal Unionist organization. Some Liberal Unionist supporters worried that coalition with the Conservatives would inevitably lead to fusion.¹²⁷ In August 1895 Devonshire wrote to Chamberlain for his opinion on the matter.¹²⁸ Chamberlain depreciated the suggestion of a general manifesto on the maintenance of Liberal Unionist organizations, believing that their Conservative allies might be offended by such a pronouncement. He believed that the best course would be to leave the question up to local organizations, with the inevitable result that the weaker organizations would amalgamate with their Conservative counterparts, but emphasized that where Liberal Unionist strength existed, it should be maintained, in part to ensure the continued possibility of conversions from Liberals who would not be comfortable crossing directly to the Conservatives. Chamberlain clearly had in mind the continued separate existence of his Liberal Unionist organization in Birmingham and the West Midlands, suggesting that his supporters would not merge with the Conservatives even if he asked them to.¹²⁹ Devonshire raised the issue again in December, and also noted that

¹²⁶ CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box O, Bundle 34, Statement of Account, Aug. 1st, 1896 to June 30th, 1900.

¹²⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2635, James Knowles to Devonshire, July 15th, 1895.

¹²⁸ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/22/93, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Aug. 2nd, 1895.

¹²⁹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2639, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Aug. 3rd, 1895; *ibid.*, 340.2642, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Aug. 16th, 1895.

with Powell Williams having been appointed Financial Secretary to the War Office, there was the question of who would supervise the central Liberal Unionist organization.¹³⁰

Later that month Selborne and Powell Williams met to discuss the situation, and agreed that if fusion was desired in particular locations by the local Liberal Unionists, and it was judged suitable, it would not be discouraged, but that in most constituencies separate Liberal Unionist organizations should be maintained. They agreed that Boraston should operate the organization of the Liberal Unionist Association, under the supervision of Powell Williams, who would endeavour to meet Boraston several times a week. Selborne and Powell Williams also emphasized the desirability of an authoritative public statement on the maintenance of a separate Liberal Unionist organization.¹³¹ The statement took the form of a letter from Devonshire to James that the latter read out at a banquet to members of the Council of the Metropolitan Liberal Unionist Federation on January 23rd, 1896.

While emphasizing that fusion should not be opposed where it was appropriate and desired, Devonshire argued that in most instances fusion might result in a loss of strength and morale in the Unionist party, as it 'would be a misfortune if, by the premature relinquishment of the name and organization which have done such good service to the Unionist cause, any of our friends should feel themselves compelled to make a choice between the Liberal name and principles which they have never abandoned and the Unionism which may appear to have ceased, for the moment, to be a practical or urgent

¹³⁰ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2664, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Dec. 1st, 1895.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 340.2667, Selborne to Chamberlain, Dec. 6th, 1895. Chamberlain entirely agreed with Selborne's and Powell Williams' conclusions. See *ibid.*, 340.2668, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Dec. 6th, 1895.

question.¹³² James felt this position was justified later in 1896, when the resignation of Lord Rosebery as Liberal leader created the potential for new Liberal Unionist recruits from the Liberals.¹³³

Though the Liberal Unionist organization was maintained, there were increasing concerns about its effectiveness at a time when it was in a coalition government with the Conservatives and when the threat of Home Rule had receded, and how enthusiasm was to be maintained and fresh blood injected into the ranks of its organization. One body for which reforms were proposed in order to stimulate the party was the Liberal Unionist Council. Devonshire did not have a high opinion of the council, suggesting that it ‘was an invention of Wolmer’s, and I do not know that it ever did much good, and probably might be altered without much harm or allowed to expire, which it very nearly did, until Heneage reminded us of its existence and a belated meeting was called some time in July [1896].’ However, he wondered to James if it might not be a good idea to allow the council to discuss issues of policy in addition to organization, in order to allow provincial delegates a sense that they were able to have input on current debates.¹³⁴ The result was a modification of the rules of the Liberal Unionist Council, adopted its meeting on February 11th, 1897, that allowed for policy discussions.¹³⁵ However, as Devonshire had earlier noted to James, discussions on issues that might divide Liberal Unionists from

¹³² *Memoranda*, Vol. 4 (Feb., 1896), p. 31-33.

¹³³ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/94, James to Chamberlain, Oct. 24th, 1896.

¹³⁴ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1775, Devonshire to James, Oct. 1st, 1896.

¹³⁵ *Times*, Feb. 12th, 1897.

Conservatives were avoided, which necessarily meant that debates by the Council were limited to issues on which there was no significant disagreement.¹³⁶ As well, the new rules provided only that resolutions on policy would be submitted to the party whips for consideration by the leaders, but without any obligation on the part of the leadership to take such views into account.¹³⁷ Thus the reforms did nothing to improve the work of the Liberal Unionist Council, and it remained isolated from the actual decision-making process in the Liberal Unionist party. Arthur Elliot continued to be dismissive of the importance of the Council, suggesting that it was run merely ‘as a branch office of the Party Whips, & the meetings are attended chiefly by those who are themselves interested in keeping up the organization’, and that no issues of importance were discussed.¹³⁸

Edward Heneage, who resigned as chairman of the council in 1899, complained afterwards to Elliot that ‘the whole thing is now managed by Powell Williams for the sole interest of Chamberlain, & that Anstruther & Boraston are entirely managed by Powell Williams, & that the Duke does nothing, & allows everything to slide.’¹³⁹ An insightful comment on the importance the leaders of the party attached to the Council can perhaps

¹³⁶ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1775, Devonshire to James, Oct. 1st, 1896.

¹³⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19552, Liberal Unionist Council Standing Orders and Rules, 1897. By the same rules the membership of the council was expanded to 114, which included ninety-four elected by regional associations and twenty nominated by the Executive Committee of the Liberal Unionist Association.

¹³⁸ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19522, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 16th, 1896; *ibid.*, MS. 19524, Arthur Elliot Diary, Mar. 27th, 1900. Elliot’s criticisms, though, may have been tainted by his opposition at this time to continued independent Liberal Unionist organization and the electoral compact with the Conservatives, which he felt was responsible for his being unable to find an acceptable seat.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, MS. 19523, Arthur Elliot Diary, Mar. 20th, 1899. Note, though, in the same entry, Elliot’s opinion of Heneage: ‘Heneage is a fussy self important busy-body & I much doubt whether there is any foundation at all for his grumblings.’

be gleaned from the fact that it was not until 1902 that it was noticed that James held no position on it.¹⁴⁰

Efforts were also undertaken to revitalize the Liberal Union Club. In 1899, a number of the older members of the Club's Executive Committee resigned to make way for younger members, in the hope that they would bring fresh energy to its operations.¹⁴¹ In order to demonstrate the continued vitality of the Liberal Union Club, it was decided to invite Lord Salisbury to be the guest of honour at a club dinner.¹⁴² Salisbury was unable to attend, owing to the illness of his wife, so a dinner was held for Balfour instead on May 16th, 1900, with Chamberlain presiding.¹⁴³ Though the dinner was a success, the invitation of such a prominent Conservative reflected the continued diminishing of the differences between the Liberal Unionist and Conservative wings of the Unionist alliance. Membership in the club continued to increase, from 631 in 1895 to 691 in 1902, but it is illustrative of the weakening political character of the club that by 1902 a rule had been added that 'the General Committee shall have power to cancel the membership of any member of the Club, whenever they are satisfied that the conduct (whether political or social) of such member is inconsistent with the objects and well-being of the Club, or injurious to the interests of the Unionist cause.'¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1131, John Boraston to James, Feb. 6th, 1902.

¹⁴¹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19522, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 5th, 1899.

¹⁴² BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/130, James to Chamberlain, June 22nd, 1899.

¹⁴³ *Times*, May 17th, 1900. This was the dinner at which Chamberlain publicly expressed his openness to serving in a government under Balfour. See Jenkins, 'Hartington, Chamberlain, and the Unionist Alliance,' p. 138.

¹⁴⁴ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl Lichfield Papers, D615/PP/5/1/9, Liberal Union Club, List of Members.

H. T. Anstruther was again in charge of fundraising for the 1900 general election, and he managed to collect a total of £39 640. An unsigned document in the papers of the 9th Duke of Devonshire contains a list of nineteen subscribers, who in total contributed £34 000 to the fund.¹⁴⁵ The largest contributors were Lord Burton, the Duke of Bedford, Sir Edward Durning-Lawrence, and Lord Rothschild, each of which contributed £5000.¹⁴⁶ Of the money raised, £12 569.10.9 was spent on election expenses, with the largest expense again being subsidies to candidates totalling £12 081.6.1.¹⁴⁷ £6243 was also spent on other expenses, including £1000 for an election petition in West Islington,¹⁴⁸ £4500 transferred to the Liberal Unionist Association, and £700 transferred to local Liberal Unionist associations. With the money remaining from the 1895 election fund, this left a surplus of £38 806.19.7, most of which was invested. As only £2500 in donations were received up to 1904, the surplus money of the 1900 election fund and the interest derived from investments were essential to the continued financing of the Liberal Unionist Association. However, the heavy expenditure of the central association, which totalled £31 850 between November 1st, 1900 and January 31st 1904, left the surplus of

Apr., 1902.

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix A.

¹⁴⁶ In addition to the latter three, T. B. Bolitho, Sir A. H. Brown, and Sir Donald Currie also contributed to the 1892 election fund. Perhaps indicative of the closer relations of the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists was Lord Rothschild's donation of £3000 to the Conservative election campaign as well. See Richard Shannon, p. 508-509.

¹⁴⁷ CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box O, Bundle 34, Liberal Unionist Association Balance Sheet, July 1st, 1900 to Nov. 30th, 1900.

¹⁴⁸ At the 1900 general election, the Liberal Unionist candidate F. H. Medhurst had been defeated by a margin of only nineteen votes in West Islington.

the 1900 election fund reduced to £15 498.15.6 invested in securities.¹⁴⁹

On May 15th, 1903, Chamberlain transformed British politics when he launched his Tariff Reform campaign in Birmingham. His speech that day, and subsequent comments in the House of Commons later that month, set the stage for a prolonged debate within the Unionist party regarding the question of adopting Tariff Reform as official party policy.¹⁵⁰ Though many within the Unionist party embraced Chamberlain's Tariff Reform campaign, resistance soon emerged amongst Unionists who wished to preserve Free Trade, with Devonshire reluctantly assuming the leadership of the latter group.¹⁵¹ Arthur Balfour, meanwhile, attempted to navigate a middle course between the extremes of whole-hog Tariff Reform and dogmatic Free Trade, aiming above all else to maintain party unity.¹⁵² Thus when the Unionist party was riven by internal dissension from 1903 onwards over the Tariff Reform question, the leading figures of the opposing factions would also be the two leading figures of the Liberal Unionist party.

¹⁴⁹ CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box O. Bundle 34, Liberal Unionist Association Private Fund Statement of Account, Dec. 1st, 1900 to Dec. 31st, 1901; *ibid.*, Liberal Unionist Association Private Fund Statement of Account, Jan. 1st, 1902 to Dec. 31st, 1902; *ibid.*, Liberal Unionist Association Statement for 1903 and to Jan. 31st, 1904.

¹⁵⁰ On the Tariff Reform question, see Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*, *passim*.

¹⁵¹ On the Unionist Free Traders, see Richard A. Rempel, *Unionists Divided: Arthur Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain and the Unionist Free Traders* (Newton Abbot, UK: David & Charles, 1972). Though reluctant, Devonshire ultimately committed himself wholeheartedly to opposing Tariff Reform. Commenting to Alfred Hopkinson, a former Liberal Unionist M.P., and referencing the Fair Trade agitation of the 1880s, Devonshire stated: 'I think I had the best of it then and Chamberlain is not going to have it all his own way now.' See Alfred Hopkinson, *Penultima* (London, UK: Martin Hopkinson Ltd., 1930), p. 49.

¹⁵² As Martin Pugh has suggested, a majority of the Conservative rank-and-file supported Tariff Reform, and Balfour 'scuttled ignominiously after them.' See Pugh, '1886-1905,' p. 194. For a recent re-interpretation of Balfour's stance on Tariff Reform that suggests that Balfour was committed to a certain version of Tariff Reform, as opposed to being concerned solely with party unity, see E. H. H. Green, "No Settled Convictions"? Arthur Balfour, Political Economy, and Tariff Reform: A Reconsideration,' in *ibid.*, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, ch. 1.

With the Liberal Unionist party divided on the Tariff Reform question the activities of the central party organization became increasingly important. Since the 1900 General Election, the operations of the Liberal Unionist Association had been supervised by a committee composed of Powell Williams, H. T. Anstruther, and Lord James.¹⁵³ Powell Williams had been something of a disappointment in his position at the War Office from 1895 until 1900, but as Chamberlain noted after the 1900 General Election, he still felt that Powell Williams was ‘the best political organizer living and I should like to make more use of him.’¹⁵⁴ Powell Williams remained Chamberlain’s chief organizational lieutenant, thus allowing Chamberlain to exert a strong influence over the workings of the Liberal Unionist organization. This influence was apparent in late May, when Liberal Unionist Free Traders noticed that the central party organization was offering to distribute copies of Chamberlain’s May 15th speech advocating Tariff Reform to local Liberal Unionist associations.¹⁵⁵ Devonshire, in his position of President of the Liberal Unionist Association, wrote directly to Chamberlain on the matter, noting that such distribution suggested that the organization was committed to one side of the Tariff Reform question, but that the organization should remain neutral. In response Chamberlain ‘in a most friendly tone’ noted that he had anticipated the difficulty, and had no objection to the central party organization remaining out of the Tariff Reform

¹⁵³ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1864, Memoir, p. 74-76.

¹⁵⁴ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 9, fo. 122-123, Chamberlain to Selborne, Nov. 6th, 1900.

¹⁵⁵ Fitzroy, May 29th, 1903, p. 133-134.

controversy.¹⁵⁶ On June 20th, the committee met with Devonshire and Chamberlain at the latter's request, at which he suggested official neutrality of the party organization on Tariff Reform and offered joint editorship of literature, which was agreed to.¹⁵⁷ However, Chamberlain noted that the MLUA was in a different position, and suggested that its operations could be extended throughout the country to assist his efforts.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, in June Chamberlain established a Tariff Committee of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association, under the supervision of Charles Vince, Secretary of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association, and William Jenkins, Secretary of the MLUA. The Committee corresponded with Unionists throughout the country, offering to send out Tariff Reform propaganda for distribution.¹⁵⁹ Powell Williams even wondered at the continued viability of the Liberal Unionist party in the new political climate, commenting to James that 'old signposts are going to be torn up, and quite new political concentration camps are likely to be set up in their stead' and that 'existing organizations, formed to meet a pre-existing state of things, may for aught I can tell be found no longer useful.'¹⁶⁰

The Cabinet crisis of September 1903, which saw the resignations of Chamberlain and Devonshire, opened a new chapter in the Tariff Reform controversy. Chamberlain

¹⁵⁶ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2908, Devonshire to Chamberlain, May 29th, 1903; Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1228, Devonshire to James, June 1st, 1903; NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19493, fo. 15-16, Devonshire to Elliot, June 1st, 1903.

¹⁵⁷ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1864, *Memoir*, p. 74-76.

¹⁵⁸ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2909, Chamberlain to Devonshire, May 29th, 1903.

¹⁵⁹ Julian Amery, *Joseph Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform Campaign: The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Volume Five: 1901-1903* (London, UK: Macmillan, 1969), p. 301-302.

¹⁶⁰ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1227, Powell Williams to James, May 31st, 1903.

had resigned in order to be free to publicly campaign for Tariff Reform, which began with a major speech in Glasgow in early October.¹⁶¹ Devonshire's resignation had been greeted with relief by his Free Trade followers,¹⁶² and at their urging he assumed the leadership of the Unionist Free Traders, and was subsequently elected President of the Free Food League on October 23rd.¹⁶³ As a result, pressure increased to define the position of the central party organization. Throughout the country supporters of Chamberlain introduced resolutions in favour of Tariff Reform at local Liberal Unionist associations, and Devonshire received inquiries on how such resolutions should be dealt with.¹⁶⁴ A serious situation arose with the annual meeting of the Durham County and North Riding Liberal Unionist Association at Newcastle on October 20th. As part of the conference Chamberlain was to address a meeting that evening, in a speech that was part of his public campaign for Tariff Reform. Naturally enough, Chamberlain wanted the meeting of the association to pass a strong resolution in favour of his proposals, and Powell Williams was deputed to ensure that Chamberlain's wishes were fulfilled.¹⁶⁵ The resolution introduced at the meeting by H. Pike Pease, one of Chamberlain's supporters, was along the lines of what the latter desired, stating that '... the time has now come

¹⁶¹ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, p. 583-586.

¹⁶² See, for example, the letters from Lord Northbrook, Lord Avebury, F. W. Lambton, and Arthur Elliot to Devonshire, dated Oct. 6th, 1903, in CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3000-3003.

¹⁶³ Rempel, p. 69.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Devonshire's correspondence with the Honorary Secretary of the Central Glasgow LUA. CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box X, Bundle 12, William Black to Devonshire, Oct. 19th, 1903. See also CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3043, Lord St. Germans to Devonshire, Dec. 24th, 1903 for the question of Tariff Reform in Southeast Cornwall.

¹⁶⁵ DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 272/6, Jonathan E. Backhouse to Grey, Sept. 12th, 1903.

when the Fiscal Policy of this Country should be re-considered with a view of promoting a closer union of the Empire and of securing a modification of the Hostile Tariffs of Foreign Countries.¹⁶⁶ Jonathan Backhouse, President of the association, read a letter from Devonshire in favour of neutrality.¹⁶⁷ Yet the meeting endorsed Chamberlain's policy by a large margin, which resulted in six resignations from the Executive Council of the association, including three M.P.s.¹⁶⁸ The growing support for Chamberlain's policy amongst the rank-and-file of the Liberal Unionist party demonstrated by this meeting prompted Powell Williams to send an aggressive letter to James, proclaiming the coming triumph of Chamberlain:

Chamberlain is going to carry all before him with the country; and, if the L.U. party do not recognize that fact so much the worse for the L.U. party. I have not been in political life for 25 years without being able to spot the winning horse, whether my sympathies were with him or not. I think the Duke's letter to Backhouse is very good: but B. carried the conference 10 to 1 in favour of all Chamberlain! So will it be in all the great centres of industry.¹⁶⁹

In the face of the growing Chamberlainite pressure, Devonshire and his supporters began to contemplate the fate of the Liberal Unionist Association, starting with the state of the finances.¹⁷⁰ The situation was complicated by Anstruther's impending resignation as M.P., government whip, and member of the committee supervising the operations of

¹⁶⁶ Julian Amery, Joseph Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform Campaign: The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Volume Six: 1903-1968 (London, UK: Macmillan, 1969), p. 483-484.

¹⁶⁷ CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box X, Bundle 12, Jonathan E. Backhouse to Devonshire, Oct. 7th, 16th, and 19th, 1903.

¹⁶⁸ The three were H. Crawford Smith, F. W. Lambton, and Arthur Elliot.

¹⁶⁹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3016, Powell Williams to James, Oct. 22nd, 1903.

¹⁷⁰ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1265, Devonshire to James, Oct. 9th, 1903.

the Association.¹⁷¹ Considering that Sir Saville Crossley, a Chamberlain supporter, was to be Anstruther's replacement, Devonshire and the Free Traders wanted the appointment of a fourth member of firm Free Trade convictions to ensure balance on the committee.¹⁷² Nevertheless, Devonshire keenly felt the absence of experienced political organizers on his side in the struggle; as he complained to James, 'I wish we had a skilled wire-puller to consult.'¹⁷³

By late 1903, Devonshire and his supporters were increasingly aware of the extent to which Chamberlain had the support of the rank-and-file of the Liberal Unionist party. As James noted to Elliot, they knew that if public meetings were called to discuss Tariff Reform, Chamberlain, with the assistance of Powell Williams, would win large majorities for his position.¹⁷⁴ At the same time, Devonshire was increasingly frustrated with a situation in which the central party organization was formally neutral while local associations, in receipt of central party funds, were adopting resolutions favourable to Tariff Reform. He was now uncertain how long formal neutrality could even be maintained in the face of Chamberlain's growing strength.¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, Devonshire had opened a correspondence with Chamberlain on October 23rd regarding the future of the Liberal Unionist party and its organization, which would continue until early January, and

¹⁷¹ Anstruther was resigning to take a post with the Suez Canal Company.

¹⁷² Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1300, Devonshire to James, Dec. 22nd, 1903.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* M45/1269, Devonshire to James, Oct. 15th, 1903.

¹⁷⁴ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19493, fo. 127-130, James to Elliot, Dec. 2nd, 1903. See also Fitzroy, Nov. 14th, 1903, p. 165.

¹⁷⁵ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1300, Devonshire to James, Dec. 22nd 1903; British Library, Lord Avebury Papers, Add. MS. 62674, Avebury Diary, Dec. 3rd, 1903.

would be published in the Times on January 11th. Devonshire also attempted to negotiate through Lord Selborne, by handing a memorandum on possible terms for neutrality to the latter for consideration by Chamberlain.¹⁷⁶ Over this period, Devonshire would make two strategic errors that would end any hopes of retaining control over the Liberal Unionist organization.

One mistake came on December 12th, when Devonshire, with the approval of the Free Food League, published a letter advising Unionist Free Traders not to vote for Tariff Reformers. This was aimed at two forthcoming by-elections in Lewisham and Camberwell, Dulwich, in which the two Unionist candidates were supporters of Chamberlain.¹⁷⁷ The letter constituted the first public breach of the agreement on neutrality between Devonshire and Chamberlain, with the latter suggesting that Devonshire's action 'has created a new situation which is embarrassing to all of us and cannot be maintained,' and that a meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council would have to be called in order to pass judgement.¹⁷⁸ Devonshire understood the consequences of his letter, telling Goschen in October that 'if I identify myself with or take the lead in opposition to Chamberlain's policy, I shall I think inevitably break up the Association.'¹⁷⁹ Devonshire's letter was resented by large sections of the Liberal Unionist party as a

¹⁷⁶ This effort was an abject failure, as the terms Selborne passed on to Powell Williams and Chamberlain were markedly different from those Devonshire had handed him. By the time the error was realized in February 1904, it was too late. See Amery, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol. 6, p. 578-579; Fitzroy, May 11th, 1904, p. 203.

¹⁷⁷ Rempel, p. 71-73.

¹⁷⁸ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3042, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Dec. 22nd, 1903.

¹⁷⁹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3009, Devonshire to Goschen, Oct. 10th, 1903.

‘betrayal’ that constituted little more than support for the Liberal party.¹⁸⁰

Devonshire’s other mistake occurred in his letter to Chamberlain of October 23rd. In it he suggested that it ‘must have occurred to most of us that it is impossible with any advantage to maintain under present circumstances the existence of the Liberal Unionist Organization, but before taking any steps in the matter I should be very glad to know your views.’¹⁸¹ In making this suggestion, Devonshire was acting on the advice of Goschen, who had suggested that if the neutrality of the party organization could not be maintained, it would be better to dissolve it.¹⁸² Chamberlain pounced on this opportunity, and in his reply claimed Devonshire aimed to break up the Liberal Unionist organization for the sole reason that its members did not agree with him on an issue other than that on which the party had been formed. Chamberlain thus was able to portray himself as the defender of the party organization, as opposed to simply one side in an ideological battle.¹⁸³ In a subsequent letter Devonshire claimed that he had not intended to suggest the dissolution of the party organization, but the damage was done.¹⁸⁴ When this correspondence was published in January 1904, it served to reinforce Chamberlain’s control over the organization of the Liberal Unionist party, as moderates on the issue of Tariff Reform

¹⁸⁰ NLS, Minto Papers, MS. 12374, fo. 73-76, Hugh Elliot to 4th Earl Minto, Jan. 1st, 1904. See also H. Pike Pease’s letter to the *Times*, Feb. 1st, 1904. Devonshire wrote the letter in part due to his anger at Balfour for supporting Unionist candidates who openly advocated Tariff Reform. See Rempel, p. 72.

¹⁸¹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3017, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Oct. 23rd, 1903.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 340.3010, Goschen to Devonshire, Oct. 11th, 1903.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 340.3021, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Oct. 26th, 1903. As one observer commented, ‘Mr. Chamberlain is an excellent judge of the uses of the long spoon, and has made the most of the Duke’s candour and indifference to dialectical subtlety.’ Fitzroy, Jan. 15th, 1904, p. 179.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 340.3022, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Oct. 31st, 1903.

were opposed to any suggestion that the party organization should be dissolved. For example, though the WSLUA had adopted a position of neutrality in late 1903, after the publication of the Devonshire-Chamberlain correspondence it unanimously stated its opposition to any extinction of the Liberal Unionist party.¹⁸⁵ As A. V. Dicey commented, Devonshire, through a lack of diplomatic skill, had ‘allowed Chamberlain to pose as the man anxious to keep together the Unionist party & to throw on the Duke the odium of proposing to break up the Unionist organisations.’¹⁸⁶ Acknowledging Chamberlain’s victory in the published correspondence, Winston Churchill suggested that it demonstrated Chamberlain’s primacy, with the result that ‘hundreds of Liberal Unionists all over the country will silently revert to Liberalism.’¹⁸⁷

Aware of his strength, Chamberlain, on several occasions during his correspondence with Devonshire, challenged the latter to call a meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council to resolve the issue.¹⁸⁸ Devonshire demurred, suggesting that it was inappropriate to convene a meeting that would only expose Liberal Unionist divisions.¹⁸⁹ Regardless, Chamberlain now resolved to take the fight out into the open, telling Collings that ‘I want a meeting of the Association to choose between him and me.’ Prodded by

¹⁸⁵ NLS, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association (hereafter SCUA) Papers, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, 1900-1910, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Jan. 15th, 1904, p. 147-148. See also Catriona Burness, *‘Strange Associations’: The Irish Question and the Making of Scottish Unionism, 1886-1918* (East Linton, UK: Tuckwell Press, 2003), p. 175-178.

¹⁸⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19493, fo. 210-216, Dicey to Elliot, Jan. 18th, 1904.

¹⁸⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3063, Winston Churchill to Devonshire, Jan. 13th, 1904.

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3050, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Jan. 4th, 1904.

¹⁸⁹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3048, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Jan. 2nd, 1904.

Powell Williams, who was concerned about inquiries by Devonshire and his supporters regarding the disposition of the funds of the party, Chamberlain resolved to hold a meeting of the Council regardless of whether Devonshire consented.¹⁹⁰ As a result, Chamberlain convened a meeting of members of the Liberal Unionist Council on February 3rd. Though Devonshire and many of his supporters did not attend, eighty-four of the 120 members did.¹⁹¹ Resolutions from local Liberal Unionist associations were read deploring any attempt to dissolve the party organization. Chamberlain, who presided and spoke at length, managed to get two main resolutions adopted that called for the continuation of the party organization, and the maintenance of neutrality on the Tariff Reform Question. A resolution was also adopted that called for a reconstruction of the Liberal Unionist Council on a broader, more representative basis.¹⁹² By placing the question on the grounds of the survival of the party organization, as opposed to Tariff Reform, Chamberlain was able to mobilize the vast majority of the party to his side. Devonshire acknowledged as much when he noted that Chamberlain's initial grounds for wanting a public meeting, which had been to discuss the Tariff Reform question, had not actually been the basis of Chamberlain's February 3rd meeting.¹⁹³

After his meeting, Chamberlain submitted a report to Devonshire containing the

¹⁹⁰ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 6, p. 581.

¹⁹¹ Not every attendee was a supporter of Chamberlain, though, as amongst the members present were the Free Traders Alexander Cross and H. Crawford Smith.

¹⁹² *Times*, Feb. 4th, 1904.

¹⁹³ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3081, Devonshire to James, Apr. 15th, 1904.

resolutions adopted.¹⁹⁴ In a letter several days later Devonshire still attempted to delay a confrontation, commenting that he would like to take more time to consider the resolutions.¹⁹⁵ There the matter rested for several months, in no small part due to the sudden death of Powell Williams on February 6th, 1904. Chamberlain keenly felt the death of his close ally and chief organizer; he even blamed himself for Powell William's death.¹⁹⁶ The impending annual meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council, scheduled for May 18th, would be the occasion for Chamberlain to complete his capture of the Liberal Unionist organization, through the introduction of the resolutions adopted at the February 3rd meeting, and a set of draft rules for a revised Liberal Unionist Council. Realizing that the issue could no longer be deferred, Devonshire decided that he would retire from the Presidency of the Liberal Unionist Council.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, Chamberlain's supporters were increasingly restless under the formal neutrality of the organization; as Hugh Elliot complained, the state of neutrality had in practice paralysed the party organization and played into the hands of Devonshire's supporters.¹⁹⁸ After consultation with James,¹⁹⁹ Devonshire communicated with Chamberlain that at the annual meeting he planned to speak briefly on the published correspondence between the two and the resolutions of

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 340.3070, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Feb. 3rd, 1904.

¹⁹⁵ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 6, p. 587.

¹⁹⁶ To his wife Chamberlain commented that 'It is my fault, I have worked him to death.' See *ibid.*, p. 555.

¹⁹⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19527, Arthur Elliot Diary, Apr. 15th and 24th, 1904.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Minto Papers, MS. 12374, fo. 77-80, Hugh Elliot to 4th Earl Minto, Apr. 3rd, 1904.

¹⁹⁹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3088, Devonshire to James, May 6th, 1904; *ibid.*, 340.3089, Devonshire to James, May 7th, 1904.

February 3rd, and that he would provide no opposition either to the dissolution of the present Liberal Unionist Council or the reconstruction of the party organization as proposed by Chamberlain. Nevertheless, he stated that his presidency of the Council, and membership in the Liberal Unionist Association, would lapse on their dissolution, and that he would not become a member of the reconstituted organization, ‘if it were held to debar me from giving such advice in regard to the choice or support of candidates professing Unionist opinions as might seem to me called for in the circumstances of each case.’²⁰⁰ Chamberlain agreed with Devonshire’s proposal for the handling of the resolutions, but objected to Devonshire’s statement that he reserved the right to give advice on the support of Unionist candidates:

I gather from your letter that you reserve to yourself the right to advise your friends to vote against Liberal Unionist candidates, duly selected by the local Associations, if their views on the fiscal question are not approved by you. If this is so, it is not neutrality but war to the knife with all who hold my opinions. I do not complain as I like a clear situation, but it does seem to me that your decision to this effect must necessarily prevent common action in the future. I am sorry that this should be the case, mainly on personal grounds, but if we must part it will be on my side at any rate with no diminution of the respect & regard I have always entertained for you.²⁰¹

The annual meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council, attended by sixty-seven members, including seventeen M.P.s, proceeded largely along the lines that Devonshire had outlined in his letter to Chamberlain. After briefly speaking on the history of the Liberal Unionist Council and the Liberal Unionist Association, he discussed the

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 340.3090, Devonshire to Chamberlain, May 14th, 1904.

²⁰¹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3091, Chamberlain to Devonshire, May 15th, 1904.

correspondence between himself and Chamberlain, and emphasized that the necessity of maintaining his freedom to give advice on Unionist candidates would prevent him from having any association with the reconstituted Liberal Unionist organization. Speaking after Devonshire, Chamberlain once again placed himself as the defender of the existence of the Liberal Unionist party and its organization, suggesting that ‘in place of the weak and unrepresentative authorities we have at present I propose to create great representative authorities as to whose right to express the opinion of the Liberal Unionist party there can be no possible doubt.’ After some debate Chamberlain’s resolutions were then voted on, and adopted by a large majority. The tone of the meeting was generally conciliatory, with Chamberlain moving a vote of thanks in Devonshire as the chair at the end of the meeting, and Devonshire’s final words to the meeting emphasizing that each member had much to be proud of in their successful resistance to Home Rule over the previous eighteen years.²⁰² Not all of Devonshire’s supporters agreed with his surrender; Lord Avebury later suggested that it would have been better to stay and fight Chamberlain’s supporters.²⁰³ However, after a prolonged struggle Devonshire had realized that the only remaining course was to concede control over the organization to Chamberlain. During the May 18th meeting Arthur Elliot had attempted to delay consideration of the February 3rd resolutions through a point of order and by suggesting a referral of the proposed rules to a committee for discussion. Both Devonshire and James

²⁰² *Times*, May 19th, 1904.

²⁰³ British Library, Lord Avebury Papers, Add. MS. 62684, Avebury Diary, July 18th, 1904.

did not support Elliot, and his attempt was defeated by a large margin. As Elliot suggested in his diary, it was apparent that by this point Devonshire wished mainly to bring the question to a final resolution.²⁰⁴

After the May 18th meeting, Chamberlain began the organization of his reformed Liberal Unionist Council. His objective was to merge the existing Council and the Liberal Unionist Association into a single body, under his overall control.²⁰⁵ To this end, Boraston issued a circular on June 10th to all subscribers to the Association, asking them to transfer their subscriptions and membership to the reformed Liberal Unionist Council.²⁰⁶ The new Council would consist of representatives of local Liberal Unionist associations, elected in the proportion of one representative for every thousand electors, in addition to all Liberal Unionists Peers and M.P.s, all subscribers of one guinea, and representatives of non-constituency organizations, such as the WLUA and the Liberal Union Club. The basis of representation resulted in a greatly enlarged Council, supervised by a small Executive Committee, consisting of the six officers of the Council, four members elected by the Council, and up to two additional members co-opted by the Executive Committee itself.²⁰⁷ Chamberlain himself assumed Devonshire's old post of President, while Lords Lansdowne and Selborne became Vice-Presidents, Victor Cavendish became Honorary Secretary, Lord Fitzwilliam became Honorary Treasurer,

²⁰⁴ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19527, Arthur Elliot Diary, May 18th, 1904.

²⁰⁵ Prior to the May 18th meeting, Chamberlain had mistakenly believed that the Liberal Unionist Council and the Liberal Unionist Association were the same organization, and had to be corrected on this point by Boraston. BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/13, Chamberlain to Boraston, Apr. 29th, 1904.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, MS. 19552, fo. 64-65, Circular Letter by John Boraston, June 10th, 1904.

²⁰⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19552, fo. 66-67, Rules of the Liberal Unionist Council, 1904.

and Sir Saville Crossley became Chair of the Executive Committee. John Boraston remained as Secretary, and continued to supervise Liberal Unionist organization.²⁰⁸

These appointments, along with the rules themselves, were confirmed at the first meeting of the reformed Liberal Unionist Council on July 14th, 1904, attended by representatives of 278 Liberal Unionist associations.²⁰⁹ At this meeting, Chamberlain proclaimed that the reformed Council represented the creation of a new democratic body, fully in tune with Liberal Unionist opinion throughout the country, and commented that ‘what we have done is to convert an oligarchy into a republic.’²¹⁰ In practice, however, the reformed Council had the same lack of authority as the original. Indeed, the great increase in numbers rendered the Council capable of only discussing the most general of resolutions, and in effect devolved operational control of the party organization to the Executive Committee, controlled by Chamberlain. Indeed, the WSLUA briefly considered refusing to send delegates to the first meeting of the Council on the basis that the delegates sent would have little practical control over the operations of the party organization. Though delegates were eventually sent, continued unease was expressed at the 1904 Annual General Meeting of the WSLUA, at which the reformed council was criticized as being ‘more of a chorus than a Council.’²¹¹ Though Chamberlain trumpeted the democratic

²⁰⁸ After the first meeting of the reformed Council, Chamberlain expressed his gratitude to Boraston for his assistance regarding the reorganization of the party and his continued loyalty. BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/15, Chamberlain to Boraston, July 15th, 1904

²⁰⁹ There were a few isolated cases of local Liberal Unionist associations refusing to send delegates to the first meeting of the reformed Liberal Unionist Council.

²¹⁰ *Times*, July 15th, 1904.

²¹¹ Burness, ‘*Strange Associations*’, p. 178.

nature of the new party organization, the practical outcome of the struggle of Devonshire and Chamberlain in 1903 and 1904 had been to deliver the party organization into the hands of the latter.

Chamberlain's conquest of the Liberal Unionist Council was mirrored in the Liberal Union Club. When the Tariff Reform question first arose, the club resolved on a firm policy of neutrality, avoiding any assistance to Free Traders or Tariff Reformers, and not taking part in any election in which Tariff Reform, as opposed to Home Rule, was the primary issue before the electorate.²¹² However, such a state proved to be increasingly difficult to maintain by the end of 1903, with supporters of Joseph Chamberlain, led by J. Parker Smith, Sir Fortescue Flannery, and Austen Chamberlain, and supporters of the Duke of Devonshire, led by Arthur Elliot, struggling for control of the club. Arthur Elliot was in favour of open confrontation with the Tariff Reformers in the club, and organized a public letter by Free Trade members to Devonshire congratulating him for his stand.²¹³ But James dampened Elliot's enthusiasm for open conflict, noting that the Free Traders were badly outnumbered in the club.²¹⁴ At the Annual General Meeting of the club on March 23rd, 1904, Flannery introduced a motion that emphasized the importance of maintaining the organization of the Liberal Unionist party, and that the Liberal Union

²¹² NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19526, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 26th, 1903.

²¹³ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19476, fo. 122-125, Arthur Elliot to the 4th Earl Minto, Feb. 11th, 1904; *Times*, Feb. 8th, 1904.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, MS. 19493, fo. 204-207, James to Arthur Elliot, Jan. 16th, 1904. James also noted that the Secretary of the Liberal Union Club, Victor Russell, though a Free Trader, was obligated to follow the line of his cousin the Duke of Bedford, who was a supporter of Chamberlain. See *Ibid.*, MS. 19493, fo. 200-201, James to Arthur Elliot, Jan. 13th, 1904.

Club should render all assistance possible to all Liberal Unionist candidates regardless of their position on Tariff Reform. Believing that the resolution would result in the club actively supporting Tariff Reformers, Elliot moved an amendment that would maintain the club's neutrality by not intervening in cases where the candidate was primarily running on the Tariff Reform question. Elliot's amendment was rejected, and Flannery's motion adopted by a margin of seventy-two to forty.²¹⁵ Victor Russell, Secretary of the Liberal Union Club, attempted to maintain the neutrality of the club after the Annual General Meeting, directing supporters of Free Trade to communicate with Elliot, and suggesting that the thirty-six representatives the club had been assigned to the reformed Liberal Unionist Council could be split evenly between supporters of Free Trade and Tariff Reform.²¹⁶ However, the vote of March 23rd was seen by Devonshire's supporters as a declaration in favour of Chamberlain, and Elliot organized other Free Trade members of the club, who resolved on joint action at the appropriate time.²¹⁷ The breaking point came at a special general meeting of the club on June 29th, 1904, called primarily to elect the club's representatives to the reformed Liberal Unionist Council. Russell had issued a circular on the matter on June 17th, which included a call for funds, noting that the funds collected during the 1900 General Election had been exhausted, and additional funds

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, MS. 19552, fo. 28-29, Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Liberal Union Club, Mar. 23rd, 1904.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, MS. 19552, fo. 44, Victor Russell to George Carslake Thompson, May 2nd, 1904; *ibid.*, MS. 19493, fo. 221-222, Victor Russell to Elliot, [n.d.]. Russell also attempted to organize a dinner for the club with Lord Selborne in the chair, but Elliot strongly objected on the basis of Selborne's support for Tariff Reform. See NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19493, fo. 241-242, Victor Russell to Elliot, June 6th, 1904.

²¹⁷ *Times*, Apr. 25th, 1904.

were required to continue its work.²¹⁸ Elliot had strongly objected to the circular, on the basis that it had not been approved by the General Committee, and related his objections in a letter published in the Westminster Gazette. At the meeting of June 29th, Flannery and Parker Smith expressed outrage that Elliot communicated club matters to the public. When Parker Smith moved a resolution in favour of the club sending representatives to the reformed Liberal Unionist Council, Elliot introduced an amendment that had been earlier agreed upon by Devonshire's supporters:

That the L.U. Club having no confidence that the resources & energies of the Club will not be used by the new Liberal Unionist Council to promote the policy of the Tariff Reform League – a policy in no way connected with the purpose for which the Club was founded, – declines to recognize the new Council as a fit exponent of the political principles of the Liberal Unionist Party.²¹⁹

After discussion, Elliot's amendment was rejected by a margin of one hundred and eight to sixty-four, and the integration of the Liberal Union Club into Chamberlain's new party organization was complete. Elliot and his supporters promptly walked out of the meeting, and later that day resigned their membership in the club.²²⁰ Elliot's relationship with the Eighty Club came full circle in November 1904, when he dined as a guest at the club.²²¹

An important issue in the correspondence between Devonshire and Chamberlain

²¹⁸ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19552, fo. 50, Circular Letter by Victor Russell, June 17th, 1904.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, MS. 19527, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 23rd, 1904.

²²⁰ Times, June 30th, 1904; Henry W. Lucy, The Balfourian Parliament (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), p. 324-327. Elliot and his supporters also formed the Unionist Free Trade Club, initially largely composed of Liberal Unionists, which became a cornerstone of Unionist Free Trade organization. See Rempel, p. 147.

²²¹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19527, Arthur Elliot Diary, Nov. 30th, 1904.

in late 1903 was the fate of the party funds. Devonshire was keen to ascertain the status of the party funds, and ensure that they did not fall into the hands of Chamberlain's supporters for use by Tariff Reformers.²²² Devonshire argued that the fund from which grants were provided to the Liberal Unionist Association to cover expenses did not belong to the association but rather to himself.²²³ Chamberlain objected to this view, suggesting that part of the funds had been raised by his associates and that a significant number of the subscribers were followers of his views.²²⁴ Devonshire's continued efforts to ascertain the state of the funds and gain control over them came to the attention of Powell Williams, who promptly informed Chamberlain, and were an important cause of Chamberlain's decision to force the issue over control of the party organization at the beginning of 1904.²²⁵ In a letter of January 2nd, 1904 Devonshire yielded, agreeing that the funds should not be disposed without consulting the subscribers.²²⁶ T. A. Jenkins has argued that the funds in question in this correspondence was the remaining balance of the 1895 and 1900 election funds, which can be confirmed by the balance sheets of these funds in the 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers.²²⁷ Chamberlain would ultimately control these funds, as according to the final balance sheet, the remaining funds as of January

²²² See, for example, CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3011, H. T. Anstruther to Devonshire, Oct. 11th, 1903; Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1272, Devonshire to James, Oct. 16th, 1903; *ibid.*, M45/1277, Devonshire to James, Oct. 19th, 1903.

²²³ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3017, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Oct. 23rd, 1903.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 340.3021, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Oct. 26th, 1903.

²²⁵ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 6, p. 581.

²²⁶ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3048, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Jan. 2nd, 1904.

²²⁷ Jenkins, 'The Funding of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Honours System,' p. 932-933; CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box O, Bundle 34, Liberal Unionist Association Private Fund Balance Sheets, 1895-1904.

31st, 1904, comprising £2664.11.5 on deposit and £15 498.15.6 invested in securities, were transferred jointly to Selborne and Victor Cavendish on November 17th, 1904.²²⁸ Chamberlain was also quite right to note the divided allegiances of the subscribers to the party funds. For the 1900 election fund, at least two of the subscribers, the Duke of Bedford (£5000) and J. C. Williams (£500), were supporters of Chamberlain.²²⁹ Of the subscribers to the Liberal Unionist Association, a list in the Arthur Elliot Papers, undated but presumably from the 1903-1904 period, lists a total of 252 names, of which Elliot indicated thirty-one were supporters of Tariff Reform and forty-three were supporters of Free Trade.²³⁰

There is also the question of the disposition of the substantial remaining balance of the 1892 election. T. A. Jenkins has suggested that this fund may have remained under Devonshire's control after Chamberlain's takeover of the Liberal Unionist party, in large part because Chamberlain was unaware of the size of this fund.²³¹ Indeed, as Selborne commented to Devonshire in 1896, 'No one knows of the existence of this balance except you & me.'²³² Certainly the balance sheets of the 1895 and 1900 funds indicate that these sums were separate from the earlier election fund, and give no direct indication that money was transferred from the 1892 fund to help cover the expenses of the Liberal

²²⁸ CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box O, Bundle 34, Liberal Unionist Association Statement for 1904 and to Jan. 31st, 1904.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, Box O, Bundle 34, L.U. Fund, Oct. 10th, 1903. J. C. Williams was a Cornish landlord and former Liberal Unionist M.P. for Cornwall, Truro.

²³⁰ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19552, fo. 11-20, Liberal Unionist Association List of Subscribers, [n.d.].

²³¹ Jenkins, 'The Funding of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Honours System,' p. 932-934.

²³² CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2688, Selborne to Devonshire, Mar. 26th, 1896.

Unionist Association. However, there are grounds to doubt Selborne's assertion that Chamberlain was not aware of the existence of the 1892 election fund. Among the Alexander Low Bruce papers is the formal letter that Devonshire wrote to him, inquiring whether Bruce would be willing to co-ordinate the collection of subscriptions to the election fund amongst his friends in Scotland. Devonshire pointed out that the fund would be disposed of by Wolmer, acting under the directions of not only himself, but also Chamberlain.²³³ The involvement of Chamberlain in the administration of the fund was also confirmed by Wolmer himself in a letter to Bruce written shortly after Devonshire's letter, in which Wolmer stated that the central party fund would 'be administered under the immediate supervision of the Duke of Devonshire & Mr. Chamberlain.'²³⁴ There is also the fact that two of the large contributions received in exchange for two baronetcies involved individuals in Chamberlain's West Midlands 'duchy' – Henry Wiggin was a Birmingham businessman and the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Staffordshire, Handsworth, and John Jaffray was a prominent Birmingham newspaper proprietor. In both cases the hand of Chamberlain can be seen in their contributions and their subsequent honours.²³⁵ However, the £35 000 contributed by Wiggin and Jaffray far exceeded the £10 000 transferred from the 1892 election fund to Chamberlain's organization in the Midlands, which at least hints that Chamberlain might have had some understanding of what had become of the remaining £25 000. Though this suggests that if Devonshire retained

²³³ *Ibid.*, Acc. 11777/29, Devonshire to A. L. Bruce, Feb. 6th, 1892.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, Acc. 11777/19, Wolmer to A. L. Bruce, Feb. 11th, 1892.

²³⁵ Jenkins, 'The Funding of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Honours System,' p. 921-923.

control of the balance of the 1892 election fund after 1904, it was not necessarily through ignorance of its existence on the part of Chamberlain, there is still insufficient evidence to draw conclusions regarding into whose hands this fund ultimately passed.

After Chamberlain's takeover of the Liberal Unionist party, the organization became effectively an adjunct to his Tariff Reform campaign.²³⁶ Those who opposed Tariff Reform in the Liberal Unionist party quit, were converted, or were driven out, for as Chamberlain commented to Selborne, 'the Party . . . will be stronger without the "malignants" & without the half-hearted.'²³⁷ The publication of Memoranda, which had been suspended at the end of 1903, was resumed late in 1904, and its content emphasized the Tariff Reform question.²³⁸ Chamberlain used meetings of the Liberal Unionist Council to demonstrate popular support for his position, and the new rules of the council included a provision that it had as one of its objects the securing 'from time to time the authoritative expression of the opinions of the Liberal Unionist party on questions of public policy and current legislation.'²³⁹ This provision was included precisely so that resolutions in favour of Tariff Reform could be introduced to and adopted by the council, with the proclaimed democratic basis of the council giving such resolutions the appearance of mass support within the party.²⁴⁰ At the July 14th, 1904 inaugural meeting

²³⁶ In Neal Blewett's words, the party organization became 'the Tariff Reform command post for the whole party.' Blewett, The Peers, the Parties and the People, p. 35. As Chamberlain commented to Boraston, 'our people love a fighting policy and that is what we are now going to undertake.' BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/15, Chamberlain to Boraston, July 15th, 1904.

²³⁷ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 9, fo. 130-131, Chamberlain to Selborne, June 3rd, 1904.

²³⁸ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27, Circular Letter by John Boraston, Nov. 7th, 1904.

²³⁹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19552, fo. 66-67, Rules of the Liberal Unionist Council, 1904.

²⁴⁰ For Chamberlain's involvement with the main resolution of the second annual meeting of the Liberal

of the reformed Liberal Unionist Council, a resolution, formulated by Chamberlain, was introduced expressing support for Tariff Reform and Imperial Preference, and was adopted with an almost unanimous vote. Chamberlain also used the annual meetings of the Council as occasions to make important speeches on Tariff Reform, such as on the evening of July 14th after the inaugural meeting.²⁴¹ It was during a speech after the second annual meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council on November 21st, 1905 that Chamberlain issued his famous attack on Balfour by commenting that ‘no army was ever led successfully to battle on the principle that the lamest man should govern the march of the army.’²⁴² The organization was also utilized to support Tariff Reform, a fact noted ruefully by J. S. Sandars to Balfour in 1907:

Percival Hughes comes to me with the complaint that everywhere the Liberal Unionists – posing as Liberal Unionists but in reality Tariff Reform Leaguers – are, with the encouragement of Austen and Co., trying to squeeze out or capture our local Conservative Associations.²⁴³

Sandars’ concerns were substantiated by Liberal Unionist organizing activity from 1904. As A. K. Russell has noted, the reformed Liberal Unionist Council, as an organ of Tariff Reform, came to be in some ways a rival to Conservative party organizations, particularly in terms of propaganda,²⁴⁴ while in 1906 the WLUA merged with the

Unionist Council on November 21st, 1905, emphasizing that it should focus on Tariff Reform, see BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/35, Chamberlain to Boraston, Oct. 19th, 1905; *ibid.*, AC 2/1/3/45, J. Wilson to Boraston, Nov. 13th, 1905.

²⁴¹ *Times*, July 15th, 1904.

²⁴² Rempel, p. 133.

²⁴³ J. S. Sandars to Balfour, Apr. 1907, cited in John Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-1940* (London, UK: Longman, 1978), p. 39.

²⁴⁴ A. K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide: The General Election of 1906* (Newton Abbot, UK: David & Charles, 1973), p. 53.

Women's Association of the Tariff Reform League to form the Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Association.²⁴⁵ When the prominent Conservative Free Trader Lord Robert Cecil was opposed by local Tariff Reformers in 1909, the rebels formed a rival organization that quickly won recognition from the Liberal Unionist Council.²⁴⁶ In Devonshire, Ashburton, the local Liberal Unionist Association had disappeared in the mid-1890s, but in 1904 it was revived under the presidency of the Tariff Reformer Lord Clifford of Chudleigh. The rules of the revived association included the provision on ascertaining local opinion on current issues, and to advocate Tariff Reform in addition to mobilizing Liberal Unionist support in the constituency.²⁴⁷ The party organization was also utilized to attack those Liberal Unionist M.P.s who rejected Tariff Reform, as in the case of C. H. Seely in Lincoln.²⁴⁸

Chamberlain's opponents also repeatedly observed that the organization of the Liberal Unionist party was being utilized to promote Tariff Reform. In June 1904 Arthur Elliot declared that Chamberlain's reformed Liberal Unionist Council would be merely 'a branch of the Tariff Reform League, & a purely protectionist organization,' while James commented to Balfour in late 1905 that 'Liberal Unionism with all its perfect machinery, has . . . been entirely captured.'²⁴⁹ Edward Heneage, though he proclaimed his support for

²⁴⁵ Joni Lovenduski, Pippa Norris, and Catriona Burness, 'The Party and Women,' in Sheldon and Ball, eds., *Conservative Century*, p. 619.

²⁴⁶ Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties and the People*, p. 213.

²⁴⁷ Correspondence between Clifford and Boraston, UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27.

²⁴⁸ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/26-27, Chamberlain to Boraston, May 25th and 26th, 1905.

²⁴⁹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19527, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 13th, 1904; Rempel, p. 120.

Tariff Reform in January 1904, complained in 1905 that the Liberal Unionist party organization has become ‘purely Birmingham’.²⁵⁰ Prior to the inaugural meeting of the reformed Liberal Unionist Council, seven Liberal Unionist M.P.s wrote to Boraston, in a letter for publication, that they declined to join the reformed council on the basis that the old organizations were being converted ‘into a “machine” for promoting the new Birmingham doctrines of preference and protection.’²⁵¹ Devonshire echoed these sentiments in a speech in the House of Lords on July 22nd, 1904, where he stated that the Tariff Reform League, in its attacks on Unionist Free Trade candidates, would henceforth be assisted by Chamberlain’s Liberal Unionist Council.²⁵² Liberals also took up this line of attack. After the inaugural meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council had introduced Lord Selborne and Lord Lansdowne as Vice-Presidents, Henry Campbell-Bannerman had moved a vote of censure in Balfour’s government in the House of Commons, on the basis that members of the Cabinet had accepted offices in an organization committed to the taxation of food.²⁵³

In allocating offices in the reformed Liberal Unionist Council, Chamberlain had been eager to gain the adherence of prominent Liberal Unionist moderates on the Tariff Reform question, in order to demonstrate the broad basis of support for his reorganization. Though Lord Selborne was an ardent Tariff Reformer, neither Lord

²⁵⁰ *Times*, Jan. 23rd, 1904; Lincolnshire Archives (hereafter LA), Edward Heneage Papers, 2 HEN 5/30/50, Edward Heneage to Ernest Grange, Nov. 30th, 1905.

²⁵¹ *Times*, July 13th, 1904.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, July 23rd, 1904; Fitzroy, July 21st, 1904, p. 212-213.

²⁵³ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 6, p. 610. Devonshire had also pursued this line of criticism in his July 23rd speech in the House of Lords.

Lansdowne or Victor Cavendish were, as both were willing to consider Retaliation but were uneasy over the full Tariff Reform programme. However, though Lansdowne and even Selborne might disagree with Chamberlain on occasion,²⁵⁴ in practice their influence on the operations of the Liberal Unionist party organization only existed to the extent that they agreed with Chamberlain. Prior to the inaugural meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council, both Lansdowne and Cavendish had objected to the proposed resolution on Tariff Reform, with the latter suggesting to his uncle that if the proposed resolution was introduced he could not take office. Though Chamberlain agreed that the resolution should not cause embarrassment to the Government, he was unwilling to compromise on the support of the resolution for Tariff Reform, and ultimately the resolution was introduced as Chamberlain originally desired, without any resignations.²⁵⁵ Another conflict arose at the end of 1904, when Ernest Hatch, the Conservative Free Trade M.P. for Lancashire, Gorton, wrote to Selborne and Lansdowne regarding a circular that had been distributed in his constituency regarding the reorganization of the local Liberal Unionist Association. Printed on the stationery of the Liberal Unionist Council, it included among the aims of the Liberal Unionist party preferential tariffs with the colonies and retaliation against foreign competition. Considering that the names of Selborne and Lansdowne appeared on the circular, Hatch inquired whether the circular had been issued with their agreement, and whether they agreed with the fiscal policy

²⁵⁴ Alan Sykes, Tariff Reform in British Politics, 1903-1913 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 84 and 104-105.

²⁵⁵ Amery, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol. 6, p. 590-593; CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3099, Victor Cavendish to Devonshire, July 10th, 1904.

contained therein. Though Lansdowne stated that the circular had not been issued with his sanction, neither Selborne or Lansdowne were willing to enter into a discussion on policy.²⁵⁶ The circular provoked controversy on the Executive Committee of the Liberal Unionist Council, with Cavendish in particular objecting to being identified with Tariff Reform.²⁵⁷ At a meeting on December 16th Cavendish conveyed his objections to the circular to Chamberlain, and noted that he would feel compelled to resign if the organization was not loyal to Balfour. For his part Chamberlain said that he realized the difficulty with the circular and promised to avoid such conflicts in the future.²⁵⁸

Despite Chamberlain's assurances, the Liberal Unionist party organization continued to be used to push for Tariff Reform. In November 1905, Cavendish received a draft of the annual report of the Liberal Unionist Council, and he felt that its focus on Tariff Reform made his position on the council impossible, and he drafted a letter of resignation. Lansdowne sympathized with Cavendish's concerns, and agreed that resignation would probably be necessary, but that it would be better to wait and act together.²⁵⁹ When Cavendish attended a meeting of the council on December 12th, he came to the conclusion that Chamberlain would not meet his concerns. No policy was discussed at the meeting, he suggested, because it 'appears to be assumed that everyone

²⁵⁶ The correspondence was published in the *Times* on Dec. 15th, 1904.

²⁵⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3119, Victor Cavendish to Devonshire, Dec. 5th, 1904.

²⁵⁸ CH, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box B, Bundle 20, Victor Cavendish to Lady Evelyn Cavendish, Dec. 16th, 1904.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Box D, Bundle 1, Victor Cavendish to Lady Evelyn Cavendish, Nov. 14th, 23rd, and 27th, 1905.

connected with it [the Liberal Unionist Council] is a thorough going Tariff Reformer.’²⁶⁰ Nevertheless, neither Lansdowne nor Cavendish would resign from the council, in part due to the impending General Election and the re-emergence of the Home Rule issue in Lord Rosebery’s declaration at the end of November. However, Lansdowne identified the key reason why they did not resign in a letter to his daughter, when he commented that though they ought to have resigned, Chamberlain’s actions had not quite been enough to warrant taking the final step.²⁶¹ Chamberlain was always able to say just enough to keep his Balfourian colleagues on the council, while yielding no practical influence over its operations to them.²⁶² The Liberal Unionist party organization under Chamberlain, though it retained the veneer of broad support, had largely become a Tariff Reform organization, utilized to suit Chamberlain’s ends.

In the years after Chamberlain’s takeover of the Liberal Unionist party organization, the question of fusion with the Conservative party became increasingly prominent. After the 1906 general election, there was increasing discontent within the Conservative party over the state of their organization, and discussions of reform invariably touched on the position of the Liberal Unionist party and the viability of two

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Box D, Bundle 1, Victor Cavendish to Lady Evelyn Cavendish, Dec. 12th, 1905.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Box B, Bundle 26, Lansdowne to Lady Evelyn Cavendish, Jan. 16th, 1906. Similarly, Lyttelton complained in December 1905 that a leaflet put out by the party was ‘a defence of frank & naked Protection.’ In response, Chamberlain had the particular leaflet removed from circulation, though naturally this did nothing to change the overall direction of the party’s policy under Chamberlain’s leadership. See BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/49, Alfred Lyttelton to Chamberlain, Dec. 12th, 1905; *ibid.*, AC 2/1/3/50, J. Wilson to Boraston, Dec. 13th, 1905.

²⁶² Lansdowne made similar complaints regarding Chamberlain’s conduct of the Liberal Unionist Council immediately after the 1906 general election, but again to no real effect. See Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: A Biography* (London, UK: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929), p. 348-351.

party organizations operating in tandem.²⁶³ There was also the reality that younger Unionists entering politics did not have a memory of the Liberal split in 1886, and thus many of the younger recruits gravitated towards the larger of the two sections of the Unionist alliance.²⁶⁴ Chamberlain himself suggested the fusion of the two party organizations in the immediate aftermath of the 1906 general election, in no small part as a means to capture the Unionist party for whole-hog Tariff Reform. The Valentine Compact in February 1906 between himself and Balfour at least initially appeared to represent the capitulation of Balfour to Chamberlain's views, rendering organizational reform unnecessary to carry Tariff Reform.²⁶⁵ Moreover, Chamberlain's subsequent stroke in July 1906, which ended his active political career, ended any immediate push from that quarter for organizational reform.²⁶⁶

Internal pressure within the Conservative party for organizational reform peaked after the December 1910 general election,²⁶⁷ and despite Balfour's hesitations, a Unionist Organization Committee was formed early in 1911 to review the organization of the Conservative party, with part of its work naturally touching on the relationship with the Liberal Unionist organization. Amongst the nine members of the committee was Lord Selborne, who was appointed in part on the basis of his having formerly served as the

²⁶³ Dutton, *'His Majesty's Loyal Opposition'*, p. 126.

²⁶⁴ Burness, *'Strange Associations'*, p. 212. In Paisley, for example, from 1890/91 to 1895/96, only three new members were added to the committee of the local Liberal Unionist Association. See Catriona M. M. Macdonald *The Radical Thread: Political Change in Scotland. Paisley Politics, 1885-1924* (East Linton, UK: Tuckwell Press, 2000), p. 62.

²⁶⁵ Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 25.

²⁶⁶ Dutton, *'His Majesty's Loyal Opposition'*, p. 129-130.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 133-134.

Liberal Unionist Whip.²⁶⁸ When the committee delivered its final report in June 1911, it did not recommend the fusion of the Conservative and Liberal Unionist parties, but did note the overlap between the operations of the two organizations, and suggested that there be just a single Supervising Agent for each district of thirty to thirty-five constituencies who would work on behalf of both organizations, and that the Conservative and Liberal Unionist head offices should be located under the same roof.²⁶⁹ In addition, the committee recommended that responsibility for the Conservative party organization should be split into three roles: the Chief Whip would continue to supervise the operation of the party in the House of Commons, a treasurer would be appointed to control the finances and organize the raising of funds, and a party chairman who would be responsible for the party organization outside Parliament. This division of responsibility bears a striking resemblance to the division of labour agreed to in the Liberal Unionist party after the 1892 general election. This was probably not a coincidence, as not only was Selborne a member of the committee, but also Akers-Douglas suggested to Balfour in June 1911 that the committee had agreed to accept ‘Selborne’s plan.’²⁷⁰

Though fusion was not recommended in 1911, the idea remained at the fore of Unionist politics. The resignation of Balfour provides an indication of the closer relationship between the two wings of the Unionist party in 1911. In 1902, when a

²⁶⁸ Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 58.

²⁶⁹ Centre for Kentish Studies (hereafter CKS), 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, O.37, Unionist Organization Committee Report, June 1911.

²⁷⁰ Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 59-60. Such a division of responsibilities had also been suggested by Leo Amery, Liberal Unionist M.P. for South Birmingham. See *ibid.*, *The Organisation of the Conservative and Unionist Party in Britain*, p. 105.

meeting of Unionist peers and M.P.s was called to formally acclaim Balfour as the successor to Salisbury, it had to be held at the Foreign Office instead of at the Carlton Club due to the position of the Liberal Unionists.²⁷¹ In contrast, the meeting in 1911 which elected Andrew Bonar Law as Balfour's successor was attended by Austen Chamberlain, despite it being held at the Carlton Club.²⁷² At the Annual Meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council on December 1st, 1911, Sir Savile Crossley, while commenting that he did not feel that fusion at that moment was appropriate, noted that 'sooner or later it must come, and when the Liberal Unionist leaders are convinced that it is for the interests of the Unionist party as a whole that fusion should take place, they will be prepared to lay the matter before the Liberal Unionist Council and take their decision.'²⁷³ Moreover, the increasing awareness among Conservatives of the efficiency of the Liberal Unionist organization increased support for fusion.²⁷⁴ As the Unionist Organization Committee noted in its report, complaints regarding literature sent from party headquarters did not include literature produced and distributed by the Liberal Unionist Council.²⁷⁵ During the December 1910 election Lord Lansdowne commented to Austen Chamberlain that he had heard numerous complaints of the state of the Conservative

²⁷¹ Richard Shannon, p. 551.

²⁷² Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 66.

²⁷³ *Memoranda*, Vol. 20 (Jan., 1912), p. 32. At the end of 1910, Leo Amery had commented to Bonar Law that the division between the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists was an 'anachronism' and pure fiction. John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds., *The Leo Amery Diaries, Vol. I: 1896-1929* (London, UK: Hutchinson, 1980), Amery to Bonar Law, Dec. 16th, 1910, p. 72-74.

²⁷⁴ As John Ramsden has suggested, 'there was little doubt that in their best areas, the Liberal Unionists were organised far more efficiently than the Conservatives were in any area . . .'. See Ramsden, *The Organisation of the Conservative and Unionist Party in Britain*, p. 12.

²⁷⁵ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, O.37, Unionist Organization Committee Report, June 1911.

Central Office, but that this did not extend to the Liberal Unionist organization.²⁷⁶ As Lord Balcarras observed while negotiations were underway, the integration of the Liberal Unionist organization would greatly improve the morale and organization of the Conservative party.²⁷⁷

Early in 1912, on the basis of a proposal by Arthur Steel-Maitland, who had been appointed Conservative Party Chairman as part of the 1911 reforms, negotiations for fusion began in earnest. A Special Committee was formed of members from both parties which recommended fusion, a decision that was announced publicly on April 19th, 1912.²⁷⁸ Joseph Chamberlain was reluctant to consent to fusion, but under pressure from Austen Chamberlain he relented, and gave his blessing to the end of the Liberal Unionist party.²⁷⁹ Joseph Chamberlain was also kept fully apprised of the status of the negotiations,²⁸⁰ and the announcement of April 19th was accompanied by a letter from him stating his approval and his recommendation that it be accepted by the Liberal Unionist party. The terms of fusion were put before the respective parties at simultaneous meetings of the National Conservative Union and the Liberal Unionist Council on May 9th, 1912, and in both cases resolutions in favour of the proposition were passed

²⁷⁶ Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties, and the People*, p. 281. The *Daily Telegraph* commented after the December 1910 general election that the improved Unionist results in the West Country were due largely to improved organization by the Liberal Unionist Council. See Pelling, p. 173n.

²⁷⁷ John Vincent, ed., *The Crawford Papers: The Journals of David Lindsay, Twenty-Seventh Earl of Crawford and Tenth Earl of Balcarras, 1871-1940, During the Years 1892 to 1940* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), Mar. 15th, 1912, p. 267.

²⁷⁸ *Times*, Apr. 19th, 1912.

²⁷⁹ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 6, p. 976.

²⁸⁰ See, for example, House of Lords RO, Andrew Bonar Law Papers, BL/33/4/9, Law to Joseph Chamberlain, Feb. 12th, 1912.

unanimously.²⁸¹ The last step in this process occurred on July 10th, 1912, when it was officially decided that Liberal Unionists should generally be allowed membership in the Carlton Club on the same basis as Conservatives.²⁸²

Though the party organization formally disappeared, Liberal Unionists continued to exercise influence in the organization of the unified party. The Liberal Unionist Lord Farquhar had already been appointed Conservative party treasurer in 1911, and in the last years before the First World War the finances of the Unionist party notably improved.²⁸³ After fusion, John Boraston was appointed Principal Agent of the Unionist party, where he joined William Jenkins, who had been appointed the previous year as chief organizing agent after serving as the district agent for the MLUA.²⁸⁴ As Austen Chamberlain noted privately, the Conservative push to improve their organization provided a unique opportunity for fusion: 'Indeed when you come to think about it, it is an amazing thing that their two chief officers will now be Boraston and Jenkins! What jealousies this would have awakened a little time ago.'²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ Times, May 10th, 1912.

²⁸² Sir Charles Petrie, The Carlton Club (London, UK: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955), p. 151. Previously, Austen Chamberlain and several prominent Liberal Unionists had been elected members of the Carlton Club in the fall of 1911.

²⁸³ Ramsden, The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, p. 69. When Farquhar and Steel-Maitland were attempting to raise a large fund to provide steady financing for the central party organization, Lord Rothschild provided a large subscription that assisted in acquiring other contributions.

²⁸⁴ Dutton, 'His Majesty's Loyal Opposition', p. 139. Jenkins would eventually succeed Boraston as Principal Agent. Another former Liberal Unionist organizer, Sir Leigh Maclachlan, also served as Conservative Principal Agent from 1927 to 1928. J. C. C. Davidson, Chairman of the party during Maclachlan's tenure, commented that 'He was an old Liberal Unionist of great cunning and ability, but not with any great personality or presence. He was a very shrewd election agent.' See Robert Rhodes James, Memoirs of a Conservative: J. C. C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers, 1910-1937 (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 266n.

²⁸⁵ Amery, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol. 6, p. 977. As John Ramsden has suggested, the

Chapter 2: Local Party Organization

The Home Rule divide in the Liberal party necessitated the formation of both a national organization of the Liberal Unionist party and local Liberal Unionist associations, even though at the local level the process of organizational division from the Liberals took several years after 1886 to accomplish. This reflected the unwillingness of many Liberal Unionists to abandon their Liberal ties and heritage. Once the necessity of independent local organization was generally recognized, and as a result of the increasingly large divide between Liberals and Liberal Unionists, there was a rapid increase in the late 1880s and early 1890s in the number of local Liberal Unionist associations. Notably, the number of associations remained relatively constant into the early 1900s, indicating that the formation of the Unionist government in 1895 did not signal the beginning of organizational decline at a local level. Such associations had unique problems to overcome as a result of their status as a junior partner in an electoral alliance, despite operating in the same political conditions as their Liberal and Conservative counterparts. Liberal Unionist associations in many places were also supported by a small but distinct Liberal Unionist rank-and-file, and though their effectiveness varied, these organizations were more active than historians have generally assumed. However, Tariff Reform transformed local Liberal Unionist associations, as the secession of Free Traders left some associations weakened, and many of those which

appointments of Jenkins and Boraston were in part due to the replacement of Balfour by Bonar Law as Conservative party leader, which reflected that amateurism had been superseded by professionalism. See Ramsden, *The Organisation of the Conservative and Unionist Party in Britain*, p. 39.

remained became merely adjuncts of Chamberlain's Tariff Reform campaign.

Ultimately, there was an increasing trend towards fusion between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives, though the strongest associations survived even beyond fusion on a national level.

Though many local Liberal associations were in an unsettled state prior to 1886,¹ the struggle over Home Rule began in earnest on the local level after Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill on April 8th, 1886. In the month that followed, Liberal associations throughout the country met to debate the Home Rule proposals, and a majority came into line with Gladstone. This process was led by a number of large associations in urban centres like Newcastle, Nottingham, Leeds, Halifax, and Derby.² When the National Liberal Federation met on May 5th, it overwhelmingly endorsed Gladstone. Chamberlain's Birmingham allies in the federation he had helped create could only resign in protest.³ A number of Liberal M.P.s opposed to Home Rule faced hostile reactions from their local Liberal supporters.⁴ Sir J. W. Ramsden, M.P. for Yorkshire, Osgoldcross, attempted to explain his position at a meeting of his constituents, but a hostile resolution expressing support for Gladstone was adopted.⁵ Arthur Elliot noted

¹ See, for example, Rodden, p. 46-48; Moore, 'Manchester Liberalism and the Unionist Secession,' p. 31-40; Donald C. Savage, 'Scottish Politics, 1885-6,' in Scottish Historical Review, Vol. 40 (1961), p. 118-124.

² P. C. Griffiths, 'The Caucus and the Liberal Party in 1886,' in History, Vol. 61, No. 202 (1976), p. 187.

³ Griffiths, p. 189-191. Bright for one was indifferent to the action of the National Federation, suggesting that 'Jealousy is the great enemy of union, & Birmingham has been too large & too earnest to please those afflicted with envy.' BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/7/29, Bright to Chamberlain, June 5th, 1886.

⁴ In some cases, Liberal M.P.s uneasy over Home Rule were forced to support Gladstone's bill by the vociferous support given the measure by local party members. For example, see Brodie, p. 45.

⁵ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.1992, Sir J. W. Ramsden to Hartington, May 7th, 1886.

that many of his strongest supporters were now aligned against him based solely on a preference for Gladstone.⁶ Hartington himself was rejected by his local Liberal association; as Sir Thomas Brooks wrote to him, ‘they have begun the contest in earnest on the other side, in fact they seem to have gone mad.’⁷

Liberal opponents of Home Rule also began to organize. In Ulster the vast majority of Liberals were opposed to Home Rule, and in March 1886 they met to declare their opposition to any concession to Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Irish Nationalist party. Once Gladstone announced his proposals, Ulster Liberal Unionists moved quickly, holding a joint meeting with local Conservatives at the Ulster Hall on April 13th, and an Ulster Liberal Unionist Committee was formed by June 4th.⁸ In western Scotland Liberal Unionists had begun to organize in late April, and on May 10th the first formal meeting of the West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter WSLUA) was held.⁹ In Birmingham the crucial meeting of the Liberal association occurred on April 21st, and despite the manoeuvres of Francis Schnadhorst, Chamberlain’s erstwhile chief organizer who was in the process of defecting to Gladstone, Chamberlain was able

⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19512, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 18th, 1886. Indeed, some Liberals recognized that the personality of Gladstone could be used to retain the loyalty of some Liberals who had doubts about the policy of Home Rule. As Stuart Rendel, Liberal M.P. for Montgomeryshire, commented, ‘we must go to the country on the Gladstone ticket, and say as little as possible about Ireland . . .’ See Kenneth O. Morgan, ‘“The Member for Wales”: Stuart Rendel (1834-1913),’ in Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion (1984), p. 158.

⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2017, Sir Thomas Brooks to Hartington, July 2nd, 1886.

⁸ D. C. Savage, ‘The Origins of the Ulster Unionist Party, 1885-6,’ in Irish Historical Studies, Vol. 12, No. 47 (Mar., 1961), p. 198-199 and 204-205; Patrick Buckland, Irish Unionism: 1885-1922 (London, UK: The Historical Association, 1973), p. 6.

⁹ John F. McCaffrey, ‘The Origins of Liberal Unionism in the West of Scotland,’ in Scottish Historical Review, Vol. 50 (1971), p. 56-57; Burness, ‘Strange Associations’, p. 48.

to win the association to his position.¹⁰ In the ensuing election Chamberlain was able to maintain the Birmingham Liberal organization largely intact, though he was unable to prevent Liberal challengers coming forward to stand against Jesse Collings in the Bordesley division and Henry Matthews in the East division.¹¹

However, the extent of the Liberal-Liberal Unionist divide in local Liberal associations in 1886 should not be over-emphasized, and it was certainly not the case that the decisions of such associations in favour of Gladstone were, as one historian suggested, 'unequivocal.'¹² An analysis of the constituency associations of the ninety-four Liberal M.P.s who voted against the Home Rule bill demonstrate that there was no clear and consistent demarcation between Liberal and Liberal Unionist organizations. Of the ninety constituencies that contained some form of local Liberal organization, forty-nine associations opposed the sitting Liberal Unionist M.P., thirty-one supported the sitting Liberal Unionist M.P., eight were hopelessly divided, and two remained formally neutral.¹³ Thus over a third of the Liberal M.P.s who voted against Home Rule still retained the support of their local Liberal association, and only a bare majority were openly opposed by united Liberal associations. These numbers actually understate the degree of ferment at the local level, as an association that took a strong stand on either

¹⁰ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, p. 242-244.

¹¹ On the former case, see BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/11/10, Joseph Chamberlain to Arthur Chamberlain, June 2nd, 1886.

¹² Griffiths, p. 192.

¹³ This analysis is based on the descriptions of the responses of local constituency associations contained in Rodden, *passim*. The four constituencies without a local Liberal association were Hythe (Sir Edward Watkin), Inverness-shire (Charles Fraser-Mackintosh), London University (Sir John Lubbock), and Sutherland (Marquis of Stafford).

side of the issue was almost inevitably faced with resignations from those opposed to the course chosen. In associations that came out in opposition to a sitting Liberal M.P. who had rejected Home Rule, a common result was that a number of officers would resign in protest of the association's actions.¹⁴

This reflects the extent to which the Home Rule question upset traditional loyalties within local Liberal associations, and the degree to which Liberal Unionists continued to exercise influence through Liberal associations at the time of the 1886 general election. Chamberlain's influence over the Birmingham Liberal Association (hereafter BLA) ensured support for each of the city's six Liberal Unionist candidates and, as Powell Williams noted, the supporters of Gladstone in his constituency had assured him of their support.¹⁵ In other cases, such as in Western Derbyshire, the role of landed influence was an important factor,¹⁶ while in Central Edinburgh John Wilson had complete control over the Liberal association, which ensured that it supported his position against Home Rule.¹⁷ However, some local Liberal associations who supported Gladstone nevertheless also endorsed their Liberal M.P. despite his having moved into opposition to Gladstone. In Western Perthshire, where the sitting M.P., Donald Currie,

¹⁴ Rodden, *passim*. A number of local Liberal agents were also lost due to the Home Rule split, including, for example, the former agent for W. E. Forster in Central Bradford. See Kathryn Rix, 'Hidden Workers of the Party: The Professional Liberal Agents, 1885-1910,' in *Journal of Liberal History*, Vol. 52 (2006), p. 8; A. W. Roberts, *The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire, 1885-1895 (With an Epilogue, 1895-1914)* (PhD Dissertation, University of Leeds, 1979), p. 131-132. There were also resignations by Liberals opposed to Home Rule from associations with no Liberal M.P.s opposing Gladstone, such as in the case of Liverpool. See Collins, p. 198.

¹⁵ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/72/5, Powell Williams to Chamberlain, May 16th, 1886.

¹⁶ CH, Lord Edward Cavendish Diary, June 19th, 1886.

¹⁷ Rodden, p. 705.

voted against the Home Rule bill, the local Liberal association voted to support Gladstone's proposals, but also decided against opposing Currie. When a Gladstonian Liberal was run against Currie, he received no support from the local Liberal association.¹⁸ In Bury and Oxfordshire, Woodstock, local Liberals objected to their M.P.'s opposition to Home Rule, but the local Liberal association still gave him their formal endorsement.¹⁹ In Yorkshire, Colne Valley, the local Liberal association supported Home Rule but came to a compromise agreement with its M.P. to support him despite his vote against Home Rule on the basis that he would resign if he could not come around to supporting Home Rule in the future.²⁰ In Great Grimsby John Wintringham continued to serve as Edward Heneage's election agent despite his support for Gladstone.²¹ Nor was this influence limited to constituencies represented by Liberal Unionist M.P.s. Sir John Lubbock was surprised to find himself unanimously reelected as President of the West Kent Liberal Association, despite their disagreement over support for Gladstone and Home Rule.²² Liberal Unionists also continued to exercise influence in Gladstonian Liberal associations. At Oxford, Liberal Unionist members of the Oxford Liberal Association were able to effectively prevent the association from

¹⁸ I. G. C. Hutchison, A Political History of Scotland, 1832-1924: Parties, Elections and Issues (Edinburgh, UK: John Donald Publishers, Ltd., 1986), p. 164-165.

¹⁹ Barbary, p. 171; Rodden, p. 506-507.

²⁰ David Clark, Colne Valley: Radicalism to Socialism, the Portrait of a Northern Constituency in the Formative Years of the Labour Party, 1890-1910 (London, UK: Longman, 1981), p. 6; A. W. Roberts, The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire, p. 138-139; John Sugden, Slaithwaite Notes of the Past and Present (London, UK: John Heywood, 1905), p. 46.

²¹ LA, Lord Heneage Papers, 2 HEN 5/13/41, John Wintringham to J. W. C. Rowe, May 6th, 1886.

²² British Library, Lord Avebury Papers, Add. MS. 62683, Lord Avebury Diary, Apr. 21st, 1886.

bringing forward a Liberal candidate to challenge the Conservative incumbent.²³

A common theme was an unwillingness by both factions to oppose sitting M.P.s belonging to the other side. In Stirling, Henry Campbell-Bannerman knew that a number of local Liberal Unionists who were willing to support him personally would move into active opposition if he transferred to another constituency and another Gladstonian candidate was sent to replace him.²⁴ In Cornwall, there was a significant local Liberal Unionist presence in the three constituencies containing incumbent Liberal Unionist M.P.s, but there was an unwillingness among Liberal Unionists in the Launceston and St. Austell divisions to put forward candidates to challenge the Liberal incumbents.²⁵ No Liberal Unionist candidate was run against Gladstone in Edinburghshire, as it would ‘give great bitterness to the contest.’²⁶ For many local Liberals, the Home Rule division had not yet hardened, and some were still willing to support those who they had helped elect as Liberals less than a year earlier.²⁷ This trend was reflected in the 1886 general election

²³ Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner, dep. 4, fo. 61-66, Philip Lyttelton Gell to Milner, [n.d. - ca. 1886].

²⁴ Hutchison, p. 165; J. A. Spender, *The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, G.C.B.*, Vol. I (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1923), p. 115.

²⁵ Michael Dawson, *Politics in Devon and Cornwall, 1900-1931* (PhD Dissertation, London School of Economics, 1991), p. 29; Peter Hayden, *Culture, Creed and Conflict: Methodism and Politics in Cornwall, c. 1832-1979* (PhD Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 1982), p. 216-217.

²⁶ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/4, Goschen to Bruce, May 30th, 1886.

²⁷ Thus in Cornwall, Bodmin, Leonard Courtney was generally supported by Liberals in Liskeard, which he had represented in Parliament prior to the Third Reform Act, while Liberals in Bodmin were more hostile. See G. P. Gooch, *Life of Lord Courtney* (London, UK: Macmillan, 1920), p. 260. Liberals were particularly willing to continue to support Liberal Unionists who had previously been Liberal ‘elder statesman.’ Thus C. P. Villiers, M.P. for South Wolverhampton and Father of the House from 1890 until his death in 1898, continued to be nominated by local Liberal leaders through the 1895 general election. See Thomas G. Otte, “‘Avenge England’s Dishonour.’ By-Elections, Parliament and the Politics of Foreign Policy in 1898,” in *English Historical Review*, Vol. 121, No. 491 (Apr. 2006), p. 394; Wright, p. 107-108.

results, which were notable for the low degree of turnover.²⁸ For Liberal Unionists, incumbents were far more likely to win election than candidates in constituencies defended by Liberal M.P.s. As Michael Dawson has suggested, ‘Liberal Unionist incumbents might have been in a different party, so much better did they perform than Liberal Unionists who did not enjoy that advantage.’²⁹

Liberals and Liberal Unionists continued to co-exist in the same local associations in some regions after the 1886 because a number of Liberal Unionists did not wish to formalize the Home Rule divide via the creation of separate organizations. In Stirling, the leading local Liberal Unionist resisted entreaties from party headquarters in November 1886 to form a separate association, on the basis that he did not wish to perpetuate the Home Rule divide. In Eastern Fife, the Liberal Unionist Robert Cathcart remained the chair of the local Liberal association until mid-1887, despite the association being firmly Gladstonian.³⁰ In Leicester, local Liberal Unionists had not organized themselves prior to the 1886 general election due to uncertainty over how one of the city’s two Liberal M.P.s would vote on the Home Rule bill. After the election, the Liberal Unionists still hesitated to create a separate association, as they clung to the hope of eventual party reunion and that a separate organization would only increase Liberal

²⁸ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 315.

²⁹ Dawson, p. 30. As Neal Blewett has noted, the swing against the Liberals was 16.6% in constituencies contested by a Liberal Unionist who had formerly been the Liberal M.P. for the constituency, while the swing against the Liberals was only 3.9%, under the national average, in constituencies contested by non-incumbent Liberal Unionists. Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties and the People*, p. 11-12.

³⁰ Hutchison, p. 166.

fratricide.³¹ At Cambridge, Henry Sidgwick opposed the creation of a Liberal Unionist organization on the basis that it would force them closer to the Conservatives, and in Northumberland Thomas P. Dods complained that local Liberal Unionists were reluctant to act, as ‘old associations are difficult to shake off.’³²

The desire of local Liberal Unionists not to entirely separate themselves from their former Liberal colleagues manifested itself in ways other than simply not wishing to form separate organizations. At the 1886 general election, Arthur Pease, who had been defeated in 1885 for Yorkshire, Whitby, decided not to stand again for the constituency as a Liberal Unionist in order to avoid exacerbating Liberal divisions.³³ At the same election, the first action of J. C. Dundas, the Liberal Unionist candidate for York, after nominations was to apologize to Alfred E. Pease, the Liberal incumbent, for the contest.³⁴ There were even instances of continued co-operation between the two Liberal factions. After the first election for the Cheshire County Council in 1889, the lone Liberal Unionist elected, J. J. Evans, acted as an intermediary between the Conservative and Liberal councillors regarding an agreement over the election of aldermen, while there were

³¹ Moore, ‘Liberal Unionism and the Home Rule Crisis in Leicester,’ p. 182.

³² Trinity College Library, Cambridge University (hereafter TCL), Add Ms.c.97²⁵, Henry Sidgwick Diary, Nov. 30th, 1886; DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 217/5, Thomas P. Dods to Grey, Aug. 17th, 1886. Similarly, in March 1887 William Oulton stood for re-election for a Liberal ward committee in Liverpool, despite having become Chairman of the Liverpool and District Liberal Unionist Association in 1886. See Neil Collins, Politics and Elections in Nineteenth-Century Liverpool, (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 198 and 204. In Bolton, the local Liberal association continued to include Liberal Unionists among its members in the late-1880s, as Liberals felt that the association should represent as broad a spectrum of Liberal opinion, and that Home Rule should not be treated as a party question. See Barbary, p. 106.

³³ Anne Orde, Religion, Business and Society in North-East England: The Pease Family of Darlington in the Nineteenth Century (Stamford, UK: Shaun Tyas, 2000), p. 88.

³⁴ Alfred E. Pease, Elections and Recollections (London, UK: Murray, 1932), p. 143.

instances of Liberal Unionist-Liberal municipal co-operation in Birmingham, Bury, Huddersfield, Liverpool, and London.³⁵ Such co-operation could even occur at the parliamentary level. After the April 1889 by-election in Rochester, the chairman of the local Conservative association alleged that five of the twelve members of the local Liberal Unionist committee had abstained from voting, while another Liberal Unionist was a chief supporter of the victorious Liberal candidate.³⁶

However, despite the unwillingness in some quarters to exacerbate the Liberal divide over Home Rule by forming separate organizations, in the years after the 1886 general election the organization division became more definite. Although there was no one event in the post-election years that led to the formation of separate Liberal Unionist organizations, the process of division was largely complete by 1892. The gradual process of separation began during the 1886 general election; Liberal Unionists who stood against Liberal M.P.s engendered bitterness on the part of local Gladstonians towards their

³⁵ J. M. Lee, Social Leaders and Public Persons: A Study of County Government in Cheshire since 1888, (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 64; Barbary, p. 199-200; Asa Briggs, History of Birmingham, Vol. 2: Borough and City, 1865-1938 (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 183; Perks, p. 120; Collins, p. 218; Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, p. 160; John Davis, 'The Progressive Council, 1889-1907,' in Andrew Saint, ed., Politics and the People of London: The London County Council, 1889-1965 (London, UK: The Hambledon Press, 1989), p. 37. As late as the early 1900s, London Progressives de-emphasized their relationship with the National Liberal Federation in an effort to woo Liberal Unionists. See Susan Pennybacker, "'The Millennium by Return of Post': Reconsidering London Progressivism, 1889-1907,' in David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones, eds., Metropolis London: Histories and Representations since 1800 (London, UK: Routledge, 1989), p. 154. Such co-operation was not universal, though. At the first meeting of the Norfolk County Council, the Liberal Unionist Robert Gurdon was elected Chairman over the Liberal Lord Kimberley, and the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists co-operated over the election of aldermen. See John Powell, ed., Liberal by Principle: The Politics of John Wodehouse, 1st Earl of Kimberley, 1843-1902 (London, UK: The Historians' Press, 1996), Kimberley to Monk Bretton, Feb. 8th, 1889, p. 191-192.

³⁶ Times, Apr. 25th, 1889. See also ibid. Apr. 1st, 1889. Similarly, a prominent local Liberal Unionist appeared on the platform at the first meeting of the Liberal candidate for the 1891 by-election in Paisley. See Macdonald, p. 140n.

former colleagues.³⁷ In the months after the election, many ad-hoc local committees of Liberal Unionists were formalized into permanent associations, like the WSLUA did on October 20th, 1886.³⁸ On a national level, the decision to maintain a separate party organization came with the suggestion that Liberal Unionists should withdraw their subscriptions to the Central Liberal Association.³⁹ In November the Liberal Unionist Association issued a circular advising on the formation of local Liberal Unionist associations, and recommended that the time had come for local Liberal Unionists to withdraw their subscriptions from their local Liberal association.⁴⁰ Gladstonian aggression also contributed to the widening divide between local Liberals and Liberal Unionists. In Scotland a key moment was an October 1886 conference of the Scottish Liberal Association, at which Gladstonians ensured the passage of a resolution designed to drive out the Liberal Unionists.⁴¹ In Roxburghshire, a meeting of the local Liberal association in October 1886 degenerated into chaos when a Gladstonian introduced a motion stating that Elliot was not a fit representative of the Liberals of the constituency.⁴² Elliot and his Liberal Unionist allies concluded that the only option was to create a separate Liberal Unionist organization, and on November 24th, the County Liberal

³⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2013, Harcourt to Hartington, June 26th, 1886.

³⁸ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, Oct. 20th, 1886, 35-39.

³⁹ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/22/14, Hartington to Chamberlain, Aug. 1st, 1886.

⁴⁰ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 45.

⁴¹ Hutchison, p. 167.

⁴² NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19512, Arthur Elliot Diary, Oct. 30th, 1886.

Association was formed to represent the Liberal Unionists of Roxburghshire.⁴³

Local separation between Liberals and Liberal Unionists continued in the first months of 1887. The failure of the Round Table Conference ended the last realistic opportunity for Liberal reunion, while the Conservative effort to apply coercion to Ireland created a clear policy division between the two Liberal factions. Tensions between Liberals and Liberal Unionists reached a fever pitch, and at one meeting of Liberal Unionists in London several Liberal Unionist M.P.s had to fight their way out of the hall.⁴⁴ In the spring of 1887, Liberal associations adopted resolutions strongly and unequivocally opposed to coercion, while Liberal Unionist associations passed resolutions stating the exact opposite.⁴⁵ Coercion was the issue that finally divorced a number of Liberal Unionist M.P.s from their Liberal associations, as was the case with Henry Hobhouse in Eastern Somerset and W. C. Quilter in Suffolk, Sudbury.⁴⁶ The National Liberal Federation reflected this divide. At the November 1886 annual conference in Leeds, hope was still expressed for Liberal reunion, but by 1888 there was no reluctance to attack Chamberlain and the Liberal Unionists directly, and no further

⁴³ *Ibid.*, MS. 19487, fo. 286-287, James Hilson to Elliot, Nov. 15th, 1886; *ibid.*, MS. 19512, Arthur Elliot Diary, Nov. 24th, 1886. See also *ibid.*, MS. 19537, fo. 9, Minutes of a Meeting to form the County Liberal Association, Nov. 24th, 1886, and *ibid.*, fo. 38-39, Report by Elliot on the County Liberal Association, Oct. 29th, 1888.

⁴⁴ Goodman, *The Liberal Unionist Party*, p. 146-147.

⁴⁵ See the examples of the local Liberal Unionist associations in Cardiff and Exeter. *Liberal Unionist*, Apr. 13th and 27th, 1887. Coercion also served to rally Liberal forces, and in particular brought Nonconformist supporters of Home Rule into active opposition to the Conservative government. See D. W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914* (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 96-99. See also A. W. Roberts, *The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire*, p. 157-158; Barbary, p. 173-174. Even the BLA passed a motion condemning coercion, a signal of the growing divide in that body between Gladstonians and Liberal Unionists. See Wright, p. 122.

⁴⁶ *The Liberal Unionist*, Apr. 13th and June 8th, 1887.

calls for reunion would be heard.⁴⁷ The growing hostility to Liberal Unionism was reflected in the decision in late-1886 to relocate the Federation's offices from Birmingham to London.⁴⁸

The years that followed saw the final breaks between Liberals and Liberal Unionists on a local level. In March 1888, under the direction of Schnadhorst, Gladstonian Liberals had secured the election of officers opposed to Chamberlain in the constituency caucuses of the BLA, and several prominent erstwhile supporters of Chamberlain returned to the Gladstonian ranks.⁴⁹ Chamberlain responded by creating a separate Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter BLUA), which soon gained the adherence of a majority of the membership of the old Liberal association.⁵⁰ When a Liberal candidate was nominated in 1889 by the local Liberal association to stand against Heneage, the latter suggested that his friends should join the local Conservative-controlled Constitutional Club.⁵¹ One of the last Liberal associations to divide on the issue of Home Rule was that of West Derbyshire which, Hartington could state as late as 1891, had never broken up into Liberal and Liberal Unionist organizations.⁵² However, after the by-election provoked by the death of Lord Edward Cavendish in 1891, the

⁴⁷ National Liberal Federation, Annual Reports and Council Proceedings, Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Annual Reports, 1886-1888.

⁴⁸ Griffiths, p. 196.

⁴⁹ McGill, p. 30. For the results of these elections, see Wright, p. 50.

⁵⁰ Hurst, Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics, p. 45; C. H. D. Howard, ed., A Political Memoir, 1880-1892, by Joseph Chamberlain (London, UK: The Batchworth Press, 1953), p. 281; Marsh, Joseph Chamberlain, p. 300; Wright, p. 114-127.

⁵¹ LA, Lord Heneage Papers, 2 HEN 5/16/77, Heneage to John Wintringham, Nov. 1st, 1889.

⁵² Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/476, Hartington to James, May 23rd, 1891.

Gladstonian members of the association objected to the nomination of a Liberal Unionist, Victor Cavendish, Lord Edward Cavendish's son. Though the Gladstonians were overruled and Cavendish was returned unopposed, the Gladstonians thereafter formed the West Derbyshire Liberal and Radical Association, and secured control over the Matlock Liberal Club. In response, the Liberal Unionists reconstituted themselves as the West Derbyshire Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter WDLUA).⁵³

As the Liberal-Liberal Unionist divide increased at the local level, and despite the reluctance of some Liberal Unionists, party leaders argued that the importance of resisting Home Rule required Liberal Unionists to form their own local associations. As one pamphlet suggested, having defeated Gladstone's first Home Rule bill, 'to refrain from the formation of organisations, which are imperatively necessary if we are to succeed, is to shrink from the fight after winning the first battle.'⁵⁴ The importance of organizing was urged in the party newspaper,⁵⁵ at public meetings of the party,⁵⁶ and through pamphlets.⁵⁷ The central party organization also became involved in the creation of local associations.⁵⁸ In the fall of 1886, Henry Hozier, the Secretary of the Liberal Unionist

⁵³ High Peak News, July 4th, 1891, and Sept. 26th, 1891; Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/38/2/4, H. Brooke Taylor, 'Notes with Reference to the North Derbyshire and West Derbyshire Liberal Associations and the West Derbyshire Liberal Unionist Association,' Sept. 23rd, 1911. The last Liberal association to divide might have been the Bolton Liberal Association, from which the Liberal Unionists did not secede until the 1892 general election. See Barbary, p. 114.

⁵⁴ A Few Reasons Why Liberal Unionists Should Organise (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 145).

⁵⁵ The first issue of The Liberal Unionist contained an article by W. S. Caine on organization. See Liberal Unionist, Mar. 30th, 1887.

⁵⁶ For example, the speech by Hartington at the first meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council. See Times, Mar. 23rd, 1889.

⁵⁷ A Few Reasons Why Liberal Unionists Should Organise (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 145).

⁵⁸ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886,

Association, visited a number of locations to assist in the formation of local associations, as were a number of other prominent Liberal Unionists like Alfred Milner.⁵⁹ In the spring of 1887, a number of organizers were hired and sent to organize new Liberal Unionist associations and look after those already formed, and in June 1887 a head travelling organizer was appointed to supervise the work.⁶⁰ The central party organization also provided suggestions for the structure and operations of local associations. In November 1886, the Executive Committee of the Liberal Unionist Association approved the distribution of a number of recommendations bearing on the formation, structure, and operations of local associations.⁶¹ The party newspaper also published a number of articles and correspondence on the mechanics of creating new local associations.⁶²

In the years after 1886, the scope of Liberal Unionist associations continued to increase. By the end of 1886, associations had been formed for the cities of Liverpool, Manchester, Hull, Bradford, Nottingham, Bristol, and Cardiff, several of which also covered adjacent county constituencies. The West of Scotland (WSLUA) and the East

p. 31.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 39. For example, Hozier was present at the meeting which formally established the WSLUA. See NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, Oct. 20th, 1886, 35-39. Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner dep. 6, fo. 221-222, Milner to Goschen, Oct. 17th, 1886; *ibid.*, dep. 7, fo. 7-10, Milner to Goschen, Nov. 12th, 1886. For another example, see DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 217/5, Thomas P. Dods to Grey, Aug. 17th, 1886.

⁶⁰ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, Mar. 4th, 7th, 8th, and June 17th and 23rd, 1887.

⁶¹ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 44-45.

⁶² See, for example, articles by Robert Bird (Secretary, WSLUA) and Richard Chamberlain in The Liberal Unionist, June 15th, 1887 and Feb., 1888.

and North of Scotland Liberal Unionist Associations (hereafter E&NSLUA) had been formed to cover Scotland, and Ulster had its own separate association.⁶³ In some counties the first stage of local Liberal Unionist organization was a single county-wide association, such as was created in Hampshire.⁶⁴ By the end of 1887, thirty-five branch associations were affiliated with the WSLUA, an area of electoral and organizational strength.⁶⁵ From 1888 to 1891, the total number of Liberal Unionist associations and committees grew from 115 to 221.⁶⁶ The total number of constituencies covered by these organizations was higher than the number of associations and committees, since several of them covered more than one constituency. For example, the 150 organizations in 1889 actually covered over 250 constituencies. Many of the constituencies without associations or committees contained a Liberal Unionist correspondent, an individual that was in contact with the central party organization and who distributed literature, advised on conditions in the constituency, and was also in contact with the local Conservative association. In 1889, of those constituencies in England and Wales without associations or committees, all but twenty-two had a correspondent.⁶⁷ The central party organization continued to be involved in the formation of local associations. When the Oxford Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter OLUUA) was formed on March 28th, 1892, it was done with the

⁶³ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 39-41.

⁶⁴ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 13, fo. 13-16, Northbrook to Wolmer, Aug. 1st, 1886.

⁶⁵ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Secretary's Report, Dec. 1st, 1887, p. 61 (Insert).

⁶⁶ See Table 2A.

⁶⁷ Times, Mar. 23rd, 1889.

assistance of Colonel Newall, the Liberal Unionist Organizing Agent for the Home Counties.⁶⁸ Though the greatest expansion of local Liberal Unionist organization occurred between the 1886 and 1892 general elections, further associations were still formed in later years. For instance, on December 15th, 1894, a meeting was held to form the North Bedfordshire Liberal Unionist Association.⁶⁹

Looking past the first years of the party's existence, it is possible to make some observations regarding the longevity of local Liberal Unionist organization after the turn of the century, thanks to a document in the Arthur Elliot Papers that lists all local Liberal Unionist organizations in England and Wales in June 1903.⁷⁰ According to this document, the most common form of local Liberal Unionist organization remained the association. Of the 490 constituencies in England and Wales, 197 contained a separate Liberal Unionist association dedicated solely to that constituency. A further 83 constituencies were covered by regional associations organized on the basis of a single city or county. The most prominent of these city- or county-based associations was the Birmingham, Aston, and Handsworth Liberal Unionist Association, which covered the seven divisions of Birmingham, as well as the adjacent constituencies of Aston Manor and Staffordshire, Handsworth (though most of these nine constituencies also had their own local associations). Other city associations included the Liverpool and District

⁶⁸ Derbyshire RO, Philip Lyttelton Gell Papers, D3287/116/13/4, Annual Report, Oxford Liberal Unionist Association, 1892-1893.

⁶⁹ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(B), Newspaper Cutting, Supplement to the Bedfordshire Standard, Dec. 21st, 1894.

⁷⁰ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19552, Liberal Unionist Association, List of Branches, Secretaries, and Correspondents, June, 1903. For a discussion on this document, see Appendix B.

Liberal Unionist Association, the Manchester and District Liberal Unionist Association, the Leeds, Pudsey, and Barkston Ash Liberal Unionist Association, and the Bradford Liberal Unionist Association. Counties covered by county-based associations included Hampshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Somerset, and Durham. There were six constituencies which were covered by both local and county-based associations, so that in total 274 constituencies in England and Wales were covered by local Liberal Unionist associations in 1903. Considering that these numbers exclude Scotland and Ireland, it can be concluded that there were in excess of 300 local associations in Britain at this time. This compares favourably to the numbers of local associations in existence during the 1886-1892 Parliament, which suggests that the period between 1895 and 1903 had not seen a significant decline in the number of local Liberal Unionist associations, as had been feared in the immediate aftermath of the 1895 general election and the formation of the coalition government.⁷¹ Indeed, there is evidence that certain associations underwent a small revival after 1895. In Huddersfield, the membership of the local association increased, and a new club opened, prior to the 1900 general election, while the number of Liberal Unionist members on the town council was at its highest from 1896 to 1899.⁷²

In addition to local associations, there were 98 constituencies which were covered by a single Liberal Unionist correspondent, and 40 that contained a joint Unionist

⁷¹ See Chapter 1. However, there were cases of weaker local Liberal Unionist associations ceasing activity after 1895. See T. A. Jenkins, 'Political Life in Late Victorian Britain: The Conservatives in Thornbury,' in *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 23, Pt. 2 (2004), p. 219.

⁷² Perks, p. 354 and Appendix 2.1.

association affiliated with the Liberal Unionist Council. There was a degree of overlap between correspondents and other forms of organization, as in seventeen cases the correspondent was the local contact for a constituency covered by a city- or county-based association, and in a further nine cases the correspondent was the Liberal Unionist contact in a constituency covered by a joint Unionist association. The number of Liberal Unionist correspondents does represent a significant decline over the number of correspondents that were operating in the late-1880s. Overall, of the 490 constituencies in England and Wales, 355 contained some form of Liberal Unionist presence (274 with local associations and 81 with correspondents), and a further 25 had only joint Unionist associations.

Breaking down the geographical location of local Liberal Unionist organization also reveals some significant patterns. Table 2B indicates the distribution of the different types of local Liberal Unionist organization by region.⁷³ The strength of Liberal Unionist organization in the West Midlands stands out, as it is the only region in which every constituency had a Liberal Unionist association or correspondent. Conversely, southern and eastern England, as well as Wales, contained few local Liberal Unionist organizations, which corresponds to the few Liberal Unionist M.P.s from these areas. However, the table also indicates some surprising results. The continued effectiveness of the Metropolitan Liberal Unionist Federation (hereafter MLUF) is demonstrated by the fact that 53 of the 59 constituencies covered by the London County Council contained

⁷³ For a discussion of the regions used, see Appendix B.

Liberal Unionist associations, despite a negligible Liberal Unionist parliamentary presence from the capital. There were also a large number of Liberal Unionist associations in Lancashire, though this is in part a reflection of the scope of city-based associations in Liverpool and Manchester. In contrast, Devon and Cornwall had a low number of Liberal Unionist associations, considering the strength of Liberal Unionism in the West Country. Indeed, Devon and Cornwall is the only region in which there were more Liberal Unionist candidates in the 1900 general election (8) than there were Liberal Unionist associations (6). There were also a larger than normal number of joint Unionist associations in Devon and Cornwall. As such, it appears that, unlike the West Midlands, there was not a significant organization component to Liberal Unionist strength in the West Country.

Two further observations can be made regarding local Liberal Unionist organization in 1903. As Table 2C indicates, exclusive of metropolitan constituencies, local Liberal Unionist associations were more prevalent in borough as opposed to county constituencies, while just over three-quarters of joint Unionist associations were located in county constituencies. This was particularly the case in areas of Liberal Unionist organizational weakness. In Kent, the only two Liberal Unionist associations were in the borough constituencies of Maidstone and Rochester, while in Wales three of the four Liberal Unionist associations were located in borough constituencies.⁷⁴ The table actually understates the preponderance of local associations in borough constituencies, as several

⁷⁴ The borough constituencies were Cardiff District, Caernarvon District, and Carmarthen District. The one county constituency was Southern Glamorganshire.

county constituencies were covered by associations that were primarily city-based.⁷⁵ The inclusion of the metropolitan constituencies would only increase the bias towards urban constituencies. This suggests that over time it was easier to maintain independent Liberal Unionist organization in urban as opposed to rural England and Wales. Second, Table 2A suggests the presence of local organization was imperfectly associated with regions of Liberal Unionist parliamentary strength, a point confirmed by Table 2D. Local Liberal Unionist associations were only marginally more likely to be found in constituencies that had been contested by Liberal Unionist candidates at the 1900 general election, and there was no appreciable difference in the distribution of correspondents. However, joint Unionist associations were much more likely to be found in constituencies that had seen Liberal Unionist candidates, which may indicate that such associations were formed in part to integrate Liberal Unionist and Conservative workers to support Liberal Unionist candidacies. Overall, though, it does not appear that the presence of Liberal Unionist candidates was a primary factor in the continuation of local Liberal Unionist organization past the turn of the century.

Between the central Liberal Unionist Association and the various local associations were a small number of regional associations that spanned a number of counties.⁷⁶ The most prominent of these regional associations were the Midlands Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter MLUA), the MLUF, the WSLUA, the E&NSLUA, and

⁷⁵ For example, Cheshire, Altrincham and Lancashire, Eccles were covered by the Manchester and District Liberal Unionist Association, and the Bootle, Ince, Newton, Ormskirk, and Widnes divisions of Lancashire were covered by the Liverpool and District Liberal Unionist Association.

⁷⁶ These regional associations were larger in scope than those that were city- or county-based.

the Ulster Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter ULUA). These regional associations interacted with local associations in a variety of ways. Like the national Liberal Unionist Association, the regional associations assisted in the formation of local bodies.⁷⁷ In addition to providing financial support directly to local associations, regional associations provided funds to establish or refurbish Liberal Unionist clubs and reading rooms, to pay the salaries of local organizers or secretaries, and to cover a portion of the election expenses of candidates. However, financially self-sufficient local associations were most desirable, and as such from time to time grants would be given with the understanding that no further funds would be forthcoming.⁷⁸ Regional associations could also assist with more unusual expenses; for the 1895 general election, the E&NSLUA contributed £505 towards yachts for use in the isolated constituency of Orkney and Shetland.⁷⁹ Regional associations also participated in the creation and maintenance of the Unionist press: in 1892, the E&NSLUA provided £50 to assist the establishment of a Unionist newspaper in Leith.⁸⁰ Regional associations also involved themselves in more direct electoral matters, including assisting in by-elections, finding candidates, conducting

⁷⁷ See, for instance, NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/18, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the General Committee, Nov. 21st, 1901, p. 88-90.

⁷⁸ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee, May 13th, 1897, p. 535-537; *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee, Jan. 8th, 1892, p. 160-161; *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Dec. 28th, 1894, p. 40-41.

⁷⁹ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee, Oct. 11th, 1895, p. 504-506.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Treasurer's Committee, Nov. 4th, 1892, p. 374-375.

canvassing, and overseeing registration.⁸¹ There would also be periodic conferences held by regional associations, at which delegates from the constituencies represented by the association would meet, though they were primarily designed as a foil for a major address by a leading figure of the Liberal Unionist party. For example, in the fall of 1894 a meeting of Liberal Unionist delegates from northern England was arranged at Durham to coincide with a major speech by Joseph Chamberlain in support of the candidacy of Arthur Elliot, and also to press his programme of social reforms.⁸²

The most active and influential of the regional Liberal Unionist associations was without a doubt the MLUA, which grew out of both the BLUA and the National Radical Union. After its founding, the BLUA had rapidly expanded its membership, increasing to 8500 in April 1891 and 11 476 in April 1892, with a subscription list of almost £1500 in the latter year.⁸³ The association helped to secure Chamberlain's electoral dominance in Birmingham, cemented by the by-election victory in Central Birmingham in April 1889 and the successful defence of every Birmingham constituency in the 1892 general election. The dominance of the BLUA continued through to the First World War – the only close contest during this period was in East Birmingham in the 1906 general election, where the weakness of the Conservative incumbent and his organization had

⁸¹ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/8, Letter from William Jenkins, Dec. 5th, 1903; NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/18, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Organising Committee, Nov. 28th, 1890, p. 244-247; *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/19, Secretary's Report, Dec. 1st, 1887, p. 61 (Insert).

⁸² NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19520, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 25th, Sept. 12th, and Oct. 16th, 1894.

⁸³ Howard, p. 294 and 308-309.

necessitated the intervention of the Liberal Unionist association to save the seat.⁸⁴ By 1892 the BLUA also assisted the Liberal Unionist cause in neighbouring constituencies. When the conflict arose over the candidacy of Austen Chamberlain in Eastern Worcestershire in January 1892, Balfour noted to a local Conservative that the lack of a local Liberal Unionist association was not of vital importance, as the Birmingham Liberal Unionists would assist in any contested election.⁸⁵ After the 1892 general election, Chamberlain sought to formalize his control over his West Midlands ‘Duchy.’ With financial assistance from the 1892 election fund, Chamberlain established the MLUA on July 27th, 1892, effectively supplanting the National Liberal Union, to cover the counties of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Staffordshire.⁸⁶ Chamberlain secured the adherence of existing Liberal Unionist associations through the offer of extensive financial and organizational support. The Lichfield Division Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter LDLUA) decided to affiliate itself with the new MLUA on November 7th, 1892, in order to accept the offer of an Organizing Agent for the constituency for six months. Support from the MLUA allowed the LDLUA to conduct a complete canvass of the constituency for the first time, and by 1895 the former was supporting the latter with free literature, membership cards, canvass cards, and the assistance of a sub-agent.⁸⁷ Not every constituency in Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and

⁸⁴ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 6, p. 783.

⁸⁵ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 1, fo. 4e, Balfour to Windsor, Jan. 5th, 1892.

⁸⁶ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1718a, Chamberlain to James, Oct. 2nd, 1892; Wright, p. 81-82. See also Jenkins, ‘The Funding of the Liberal Unionist Party and the Honours System,’ p. 923.

⁸⁷ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/5, Circular Letter by Lichfield, Apr.,

Staffordshire had a strong local Liberal Unionist association – one Conservative complaint during the crisis over the representation of Warwick and Leamington in 1895 was that the local Liberal Unionist association had only just recently been formed⁸⁸ – but the MLUA ensured a strong Liberal Unionist presence in each constituency, and assisted Chamberlain in maintaining control of his ‘Duchy.’⁸⁹ By the end of 1894, fourteen percent of the electorate of Birmingham itself subscribed to the BLUA, while ten percent of the districts canvassed in the West Midlands subscribed to the MLUA.⁹⁰ There was the occasional difficulty in the West Midlands. There were ongoing problems over relations with the Conservatives, and Chamberlain was also reluctant to force by-elections due to a perceived lack of suitable candidates.⁹¹ The odd complaint was also heard regarding the ineffectiveness of some of Chamberlain’s organizers, like Charles Vince.⁹²

Scotland was covered by two strong and effective regional associations – the WSLUA, with headquarters in Glasgow, and the E&NSLUA, with headquarters in Edinburgh. Of the two associations, the former was generally considered to be more active and effective.⁹³ Both associations had their origins in committees formed prior to

1893; *ibid.*, D615/P(P)/5/1/5, Annual Report, Lichfield Division Liberal Unionist Association, May 3rd, 1895.

⁸⁸ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C286/2, 6th Marquess of Hertford to Akers-Douglas, Mar. 19th, 1895.

⁸⁹ The MLUA even took the organizational lead in constituencies held or contested by Conservatives. See Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics*, p. 65.

⁹⁰ Goodman, *The Liberal Unionist Party*, p. 134; Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics*, p. 65.

⁹¹ Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics*, esp. p. 51n.

⁹² Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 5, p. 284.

⁹³ Burness, *‘Strange Associations’*, p. 77.

the 1886 general election, which were formalized in the months afterward, at which time the WSLUA claimed that it or its affiliated local associations had 2000 members.⁹⁴ By the end of 1888, the association had sixty-six branch associations with an enrolled membership of over 6000, while the E&NSLUA had ninety-four branch associations by the beginning of 1889.⁹⁵ The WSLUA in particular was concerned with creating a representative organization. As of 1889, each branch association was entitled to elect seven representatives to serve on the Executive of the WSLUA, while all branch associations in a constituency were entitled to elect representatives to the central association covering the entire constituency.⁹⁶ The WSLUA also argued in the late 1880s for a more representative central organization in London, in direct contact with regional associations, and was thus a factor in Wolmer's creation of the Liberal Unionist Council.⁹⁷ Later, in 1905, the WSLUA argued for changes in the now Chamberlain-controlled Liberal Unionist Council to make it more effective and give regional associations more say in the central management of the party.⁹⁸ At the same time, the WSLUA guarded its independence from central control. As late as 1909, Robert Bird, the

⁹⁴ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Report by the Executive, Aug 1st, 1886, p. 35 (Insert).

⁹⁵ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Secretary's Report, Dec. 6th, 1888, p. 87 (Insert); The Liberal Unionist, Jan., 1889.

⁹⁶ The Liberal Unionist, Mar., 1889. By 1903, there were two representatives on the Executive from each constituency. See NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, WSLUA Rules and Members, 1903-1904, p. 138 (Insert).

⁹⁷ The Liberal Unionist, Mar., 1889.

⁹⁸ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, Scheme for Reconstitution of the L.U. Executive Committee, 1905, p. 219-221. Chamberlain was able to satisfy the proponents of reforms with a vague promise that 'the organisation of the party was to be promoted with additional vigour.' See ibid., Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Nov. 17th, 1905, p. 215-219.

Secretary of the Association, objected to the appointment of a Liberal Unionist agent for Scotland that would be outside of the association's control.⁹⁹ The WSLUA also strongly emphasized its Liberalism. It argued that a close identification with Conservatism was potentially fatal to the long-term prospects of Liberal Unionism in Scotland, and that, while always emphasizing their support for the Union, a 'forward Liberal programme' should be advanced.¹⁰⁰ Prior to the 1892 general election, the Association drew up a list of fourteen reforms that it desired to be introduced at a forthcoming Liberal Unionist Conference that included national insurance, reform of the House of Lords, women's suffrage, and one man, one vote. Ultimately, little came of these proposals, in part because Hartington did not wish to become saddled with a 'Glasgow Programme.'¹⁰¹ Indeed, the active nature of the two Scotland associations was not without its critics. Just prior to the 1892 general election, Arthur Elliot referred to Colonel Haig, the Organizing Agent for the E&NSLUA, as a 'regular busy body,' resulting from his attempts to interject himself into Elliot's local organization in Roxburghshire.¹⁰² J. M. Trotter, a Conservative, deprecated the same association in 1896 while discussing a potential vacancy in the Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities constituency:

As a matter of electioneering I don't think that the L.U. office (80 Princes St) would be useful at this stage of the proceedings. They don't represent many people & their secretary is an ass. In conservative circles we are

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, Notes on the Proposed Appointment of a Liberal Unionist Agent for Scotland, by Robert Bird, Aug. 6th, 1909, p. 371.

¹⁰⁰ *The Liberal Unionist*, Mar., 1889.

¹⁰¹ Burness, '*Strange Associations*', p. 75.

¹⁰² NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19518, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 17th, 1892.

naturally inclined to depreciate them but the fact is that they are a fifth wheel to the coach in organisation & they are kept going mainly by the contributors of a few wealthy whiskey dealers like John Usher & his partners. We of course consider that their ill gotten gains should either perish with them or come to us!¹⁰³

In a speech to the WSLUA in 1890, Wolmer suggested that their association was one of two particularly effective regional associations, with the other association located in Durham.¹⁰⁴ The cause of Liberal Unionist organization in northern England had been aided by the presence of a number of Liberal Unionist M.P.s and candidates at the 1886 general election, and in February 1887 a meeting was held at Darlington to formally constitute the Northern Counties Liberal Unionist Federation (hereafter NCLUF), which covered Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Durham, and the North Riding of Yorkshire. Strong and effective county-based associations were soon developed in each of the above counties, and after several years it was decided by local organizers that a single umbrella association for the region was no longer necessary, and therefore the NCLUF was allowed to lapse.¹⁰⁵ The most active of the county-based associations in the region was the Durham and North Riding Liberal Unionist Association. From its inception until his retirement in 1909, the Honorary Secretary of the association was the able Jonathan Backhouse.¹⁰⁶ The influence of the 3rd Earl of Durham in the region was

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, MS. 19490, fo. 190-193, J. M. Trotter to Elliot, Apr. 23rd, 1896.

¹⁰⁴ In addition to the BLUA. *Glasgow Herald*, Apr. 17th, 1890.

¹⁰⁵ *The Liberal Unionist*, May, 1889.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19491, fo. 23-24, Jonathan Backhouse to Elliot, July 1st, 1898. In 1900, Backhouse received a knighthood on the recommendation of Hartington, in large part for party services in the north. See CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2852, Jonathan Backhouse to Devonshire, Dec. 28th, 1900; *ibid.*, 340.2853, Jonathan Backhouse to Devonshire, Dec. 29th, 1900.

important, and he was a primary financial contributor to the Association until 1900.¹⁰⁷

His younger brother and heir, Frederick W. Lambton, represented South-Eastern Durham from 1898 until 1910, in succession to Sir Henry Havelock-Allan, son of Major-General Sir Henry Havelock, who was also a major contributor to Liberal Unionist finances in the county.¹⁰⁸ Havelock-Allan was a difficult colleague, as he desired to be restored to the active generals list, and threatened withholding support in order to achieve this.¹⁰⁹

Havelock-Allan also looked down on the Peases of Darlington, one of the leading Quaker families of England, as mere tradesmen, despite the fact that Arthur Pease and his son Herbert Pike Pease had both become Liberal Unionists and held the constituency of Darlington, with one exception, from 1895 through the First World War.¹¹⁰

There was also significant Liberal Unionist electoral presence in the West Country, particularly in the county of Cornwall. Part of the explanation for Liberal Unionist strength there was the continuing weakness of Conservatism, which predated 1886. The very strength of pre-1886 Liberalism had meant that the Liberal Unionist secession had been a significant event, and the defection of prominent local M.P.s like

¹⁰⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3059, 3rd Earl of Durham to Devonshire, Jan. 11th, 1904.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 340.2730, Memorandum by Sir Henry Havelock-Allan, Apr. 7th, 1897.

¹⁰⁹ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 100-103, Sir Henry Havelock-Allan to Wolmer, July 12th, 1890. Hartington's comment was that Havelock-Allan's request was 'out of the question.' See *ibid.*, fo. 98-99, Hartington to Wolmer, July 16th, 1890.

¹¹⁰ Orde, p. 103. As most of the Pease family had remained loyal to Gladstone, Alfred Edward Pease believed that his uncle Arthur had become a Liberal Unionist due to 'the Orange petticoats of his wife.' See M. W. Kirby, Men of Business and Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Quaker Pease Dynasty of North-East England, 1700-1943 (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 58. Another son of Arthur Pease, Arthur Francis, also served as President of the Durham Unionist Association from 1910. Victoria County History (hereafter VCH), Durham Vol. IV: Darlington (2005), p. 102-103.

John St. Aubyn and Leonard Courtney gave cover for many local Liberals to move into opposition to Home Rule. Moreover, Liberal Unionism had a sizeable appeal among Nonconformists, particularly Wesleyans, in Cornwall.¹¹¹ As such, there was a noticeable Liberal Unionist vote in Cornwall, but as one Liberal Unionist candidate noted, it meant that it was necessary to emphasize one's liberalism when addressing voters; placing oneself too close to the Conservatives was a sure vote loser.¹¹² Despite this, Liberal Unionist organization in Cornwall does not compare favourably to that found in other areas of Liberal Unionist electoral strength. The Devon and Cornwall Liberal Unionist Federation (hereafter DCLUF) was only formed in April 1889, and only after prompting by Wolmer and central party organizers. Furthermore, the local associations were not particularly active, and left important activities to the Federation to undertake.¹¹³ The secretary of the Federation explained that this was because central control and organization of canvassing, meetings, etc. was superior, but the experience elsewhere had been that no regional association could effectively organize every constituency under its purview without active local associations working in co-operation.¹¹⁴ By 1903, the DCLUF no longer existed, and as has been noted above, there was a paucity of local Liberal Unionist associations in the two counties.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Hayden, p. 232-233 and 252.

¹¹² LMA, A. V. Dicey Papers, A/NFC109/6a, J. Westlake to Dicey, Oct. 20th, 1890.

¹¹³ The Liberal Unionist, Feb., 1890.

¹¹⁴ See Wolmer's comments, Glasgow Herald, Apr. 17th, 1890.

¹¹⁵ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19552, Liberal Unionist Association, List of Branches, Secretaries, and Correspondents, June, 1903.

In contrast to the West Country, London was a region of negligible Liberal Unionist electoral presence but was covered by a strong regional association. From 1886 onwards, only a few Metropolitan constituencies were contested by Liberal Unionists at any general election, but the MLUF was one of the most active associations in the country, due in part to the significant number of Liberal defectors in 1886.¹¹⁶ The Federation originated in the London Organising Committee, formed in March 1888 with W. S. Caine as Chair, Sir John Lubbock and Richard Chamberlain as members, and John Boraston as Secretary.¹¹⁷ The Committee met each week, and focussed on creating new local associations and reviving those that had temporarily become inactive.¹¹⁸ On April 25th, 1890, the London Organising Committee was formally supplanted by the MLUF, with Boraston as Honorary Secretary, and by this time there were forty-four local associations affiliated with the Federation.¹¹⁹ The growing number of local associations necessitated the division of London into six districts, each with its own agent, an organizational structure that remained past the turn of the century.¹²⁰ The strength of the MLUF was due in part to the presence of a great number of Liberal Unionist leaders in the capital for most of the year, which allowed for public meetings of London Liberal Unionists addressed by figures such as Hartington.¹²¹ Liberal Unionist M.P.s could also

¹¹⁶ Griffiths, p. 195.

¹¹⁷ H. T. Anstruther and Leedham White would be added to the Committee in June 1888.

¹¹⁸ The Liberal Unionist, Nov., 1888.

¹¹⁹ The Liberal Unionist, May, 1890.

¹²⁰ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(A), Circular Letter from the Secretary of the Metropolitan Liberal Unionist Federation, Nov. 20th, 1896.

¹²¹ See, for example, NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19517, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 14th, 1891; *ibid.*,

easily assist with smaller meetings and the activities of local associations. For instance, in 1890, Arthur Elliot co-operated with the Chelsea Liberal Unionist Association in giving a series of lectures on the Irish Question.¹²²

In Ulster, the majority of Liberals had become Liberal Unionists in 1886, but there was also lingering resentment towards the Conservatives regarding the 1885 general election.¹²³ Consequently, although Ulster Liberal Unionists were among the most hostile opponents of Gladstone, the focus of the ULUA was as much on maintaining its independence from the Conservatives as it was combatting the negligible Gladstonian presence in Ireland.¹²⁴ Ulster Liberal Unionists were reluctant to join the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union in the belief that it was a largely Conservative organization, and in 1892 Devonshire was concerned that if he became President of the Irish Unionist Alliance, it might offend some Ulster Liberal Unionists if the alliance was tainted by Orangeism.¹²⁵ Like Ulster Conservatives, the ULUA also was extremely reluctant to take directions from central party headquarters in London.¹²⁶ Unlike other regional associations, the

MS. 19521, Arthur Elliot Diary, May 22nd, 1895.

¹²² NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19516, Arthur Elliot Diary, Jan. 15th, Jan. 15th, and Feb. 4th, 1890.

¹²³ Brian M. Walker, 'The Land Question and Elections in Ulster, 1868-86,' in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr., eds., Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914 (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 253-260.

¹²⁴ Patrick Buckland, Irish Unionism Two: Ulster Unionism and the Origins of Northern Ireland, 1886-1922 (Dublin, Ireland: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), p. 14.

¹²⁵ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 17-18, Hartington to Wolmer, Oct. 5th, 1888; *ibid.*, fo. 170-173, Devonshire to Wolmer, Jan. 30th, 1892.

¹²⁶ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 39-41. This may have been due in part to the 'unique' nature of Ulster elections. As Arnold-Forster's agent commented after the 1892 general election, 'I would not have minded their trying to poll their own dead men, but they were polling ours as well.' See Mary Arnold-Forster, The Right Honourable Hugh Oakeley Arnold-Forster, a Memoir (London, UK: Edwin Arnold, 1910), p. 91.

ULUA did not involve itself with local associations, other than the occasional financial contribution towards registration. Instead, its primary focus was on the propaganda campaign against Home Rule. In 1887 and 1888, it organized visits to Ulster by Chamberlain and Hartington, including mass meetings. It also co-ordinated the dispatch of Ulster speakers to Britain, and nearly every by-election saw Ulster Liberal Unionists addressing meetings on the evils of Home Rule.¹²⁷ The most popular Ulster speaker was T. W. Russell, the Liberal Unionist M.P. for South Tyrone, who was recognised by Conservatives as well as Liberal Unionists as one of the most effective platform orators.¹²⁸ By 1905, the organizational lead for Ulster had been taken over by the newly-formed Ulster Unionist Council, but the ULUA would remain in existence through 1911.¹²⁹

In other parts of the country, Liberal Unionist associations suffered from a variety of problems. In Liverpool, the mostly-Whiggish Liberal Unionist association in the city was generally inactive and not particularly effective, sometimes failing, as in 1892, to find suitable candidates. In general, the association was content to let Archibald Salvidge

¹²⁷ The Liberal Unionist, Dec., 1888. The dispatch of such missionaries was to counter Irish Nationalist propagandists in Britain. See Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 267-268.

¹²⁸ Alvin Jackson, 'Irish Unionism and the Russellite Threat, 1894-1906,' in Irish Historical Studies, Vol. 25, No. 100 (Nov., 1987), p. 378. David Lloyd George had blamed Russell for the narrowness of his victory in his parliamentary contest in 1890. Kenneth O. Morgan, Lloyd George: Family Letters, 1885-1936 (Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press, 1973), Diary, Aug. 11th, 1890, p. 33-34.

¹²⁹ On the formation of the Ulster Unionist Council, see Alvin Jackson, The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1885-1911 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 235-240. On the continued existence of the ULUA, see House of Lords RO, Bonar Law Papers, BL/24/3/56, Carson to Bonar Law, Nov. 18th, 1911.

and the Conservatives take the lead in Liverpool.¹³⁰ The effectiveness of the Manchester Liberal Unionist Association was undermined by a dispersal of Liberal Unionist strength throughout the city's constituencies, which impaired the formation of strong local associations capable of undertaking regular political activity.¹³¹ In Leicester local Liberal Unionists had been slow to form an association, and their organization was crippled in December 1892 when the Mayor of Leicester, Thomas Wright, who formerly had been the leading local Liberal Unionist, defected back to the Gladstonians. Shorn of leadership, the local association was soon dissolved.¹³² The use of city- or county-based associations, such as in Leeds, could also represent insufficient local support for individual constituency associations.¹³³ Robert Bird noted in business centres like Manchester and Liverpool that Liberal Unionist businessmen, unlike men of independent means, 'grudge every half hour given to politics during the day, and . . . decline to attend Committee meetings at night.'¹³⁴

In the first years of the party's existence, the formation of local associations were often preceded by a small informal meeting of prominent local Liberal Unionists, who identified other potential supporters and laid the groundwork for a public meeting at

¹³⁰ P. J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: A Political and Social History of Liverpool, 1868-1939* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1981), p. 130.

¹³¹ Moore, 'Manchester Liberalism and the Unionist Secession,' p. 35. However, it should be noted that as late as 1910 the presence of a significant number of Liberal Unionist electors was detected in South Manchester. See DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 203/4, 4th Earl Grey to Howick, Oct. 3rd, 1910.

¹³² Moore, 'Liberal Unionism and the Home Rule Crisis in Leicester,' p. 191-192.

¹³³ On the weakness of Liberal Unionism in Leeds, see Matthew Roberts, p. 228.

¹³⁴ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Robert Bird to J. Parker Smith, Jan. 5th, 1893, p. 219 (Insert).

which the association would be formally constituted.¹³⁵ In later years, a canvass of the constituency would often precede the formation of a local association, in order to identify and enroll as many supporters as possible.¹³⁶ Most local associations had the same general structure. In addition to a central association, in constituencies of nominal Liberal Unionist strength there would be branch associations.¹³⁷ In urban districts it was suggested that each polling district should have its own committee.¹³⁸ Not surprisingly, Birmingham was a model for Liberal Unionist organization. Each polling district in the city had its own committee, which belonged to a larger divisional association, governed by an elected council, while the councils of the borough constituencies of the city comprised the Grand Committee of the BLUA.¹³⁹ In rural constituencies a similar structure was adopted, with branch association being essential to cover the larger areas of such divisions. In Roxburghshire, there were four branch committees of the County Liberal Association, centred on Jedburgh, Hawick, Kelso, and Melrose.¹⁴⁰ In Staffordshire, Lichfield, there were local committees in each of the twelve districts of the

¹³⁵ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 44.

¹³⁶ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Secretary's Report to the Executive, May 29th, 1896, p. 122 (Insert); *ibid.*, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Dec. 3rd, 1897, p. 202-203.

¹³⁷ Thus the Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association, which was generally inactive and covered a constituency with few Liberal Unionist supporters, had only a central association.

¹³⁸ The Liberal Unionist, Feb., 1888.

¹³⁹ Briggs, p. 184. Similarly, in Bury, there were separate Liberal Unionist committees in each ward for the 1892 general election. See Bury Archives, Bury North Conservative Association (hereafter BNCA) Papers, GCP/C/4/1, List of Liberal Unionist Officers and Party Workers, List of Platform and Reserved Seat Guests to Public Meetings, and List of Ward Committees, 1892 Election.

¹⁴⁰ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19537, fo. 21, District Branch Committees, County Liberal Association, 1891.

constituency by 1895.¹⁴¹ In some divisions, such as Western Derbyshire, there were just agents for each polling district. However, at election time these agents would form local committees to oversee canvassing, the distribution of literature, the holding of meetings, and election-day operations.¹⁴²

The regular operations of the local association would be overseen by a small Executive Committee composed of the leading and most active Liberal Unionists in the constituency, and included the officers of the association. The largely honorary position of Vice-President was given to those members who had subscribed a certain amount to the association's funds. For everyone else there was often a nominal subscription fee for membership, but it was strongly urged by party leaders to allow anyone to join a Liberal Unionist association regardless of subscription.¹⁴³ Indeed, Richard Chamberlain argued that a local association did not need large funds derived from mandatory subscriptions: voluntary work was preferable and payments for services would demoralize members, so that 'in any election the numbers of votes polled will be in the inverse ratio of the money expended.'¹⁴⁴ Thus, for instance, the West Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association had a membership of 3862 in 1907, but derived from them subscriptions of only £20. However, membership without subscription also generally meant membership without

¹⁴¹ Staffordshire Record Office, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/5, Annual Report, Lichfield Division Liberal Unionist Association, May 3rd, 1895.

¹⁴² For example, see Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/38/2/1, "West Derbyshire Joint Unionist Committee Minute Book," Minutes of a Meeting of the Joint Unionist Committee, June 8th, 1892.

¹⁴³ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 44.

¹⁴⁴ The Liberal Unionist, Feb., 1888.

influence. As such, the control over the affairs of the association, including selection of candidate, remained in the hands of the members of the Executive Committee.¹⁴⁵

The most important member of the local association was not the President, but the Secretary or Honorary Secretary, who often doubled as the Election Agent. It was the Secretary who was intimately involved with all matters of organization, including canvassing, supervising registration, electoral preparation, meetings, and the distribution of propaganda.¹⁴⁶ As Richard Chamberlain argued, the Secretary ‘ought to be the life and soul of the organisation, and in proportion as he does, or does not, fulfill this condition, so will the association increase in strength and vigour, or sink into insignificance.’¹⁴⁷

Lewis McIver noted in 1893 that the Secretary of the Liberal Unionist association in South Edinburgh, which he had contested at the 1892 general election, knew ‘every rope – every worker – everything – and one half of the electors’ of the constituency’ and that ‘it would take a year to convert an archangel into a force of precisely equal usefulness.’¹⁴⁸

Traditionally, local agents for each party had been part-time solicitors, but starting in the mid-1880s a new breed of agents began to emerge. The position began to evolve into a full-time occupation, and such agents were keen to emphasize their professionalism.¹⁴⁹

Such an evolution was at least partially reflected in local Liberal Unionist associations.

¹⁴⁵ Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 48-49.

¹⁴⁶ Wolmer suggested that Election Agents could learn about modern organizational techniques by visiting constituencies with by-elections. See UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27, Circular Letter from Wolmer, Nov., 1889.

¹⁴⁷ *The Liberal Unionist*, Feb., 1888.

¹⁴⁸ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/33, Lewis McIver to A. L. Bruce, Aug. 19th, 1893.

¹⁴⁹ Richard Shannon, p. 76-80; Rix, *The Party Agent and English Electoral Culture*; *ibid.*, ‘Hidden Workers of the Party,’ p. 7-9.

After the 1895 general election, Leonard Darwin, the defeated Liberal Unionist candidate for Staffordshire, Lichfield, objected to a particular candidate for Secretary of the local association on the basis that he was a solicitor: 'I should like to do without the Solicitor class as paid agents, as they think of nothing but money, and politics do enter the question with them . . .'¹⁵⁰ However, the trend was not universal. H. Brooke Taylor, a Bakewell solicitor, was the only Secretary and Agent the WDLUA ever had. Moreover, Taylor was an extremely effective political organizer, keeping the Liberal Unionist electoral organisation in top shape, and his efforts and the organization he maintained was credited as an important reason why Victor Cavendish was able to see off a strong Liberal challenge in the 1906 general election.¹⁵¹

In between elections, local associations focussed on two primary objectives. The first was the supervision of the register. At a time when there remained a number of barriers to the exercise of the franchise, it was essential that each party ensure that their supporters were on the register, and to keep a vigilant eye over the claims of their opponents.¹⁵² In the summer of 1894, with a general election a distinct possibility in the following calendar year, Boraston urged local associations to be particularly vigilant in the work of registration, to ensure as many claims and objections as possible in that fall's

¹⁵⁰ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/7, Leonard Darwin to T. Jeffrey Vince, Oct. 18th, 1895.

¹⁵¹ Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/38/4, Charles F. White to Taylor, Feb. 9th, 1906. White was one of the Liberal agents in the division.

¹⁵² Neal Blewett, 'The Franchise in the United Kingdom, 1885-1918,' in *Past and Present*, No. 32 (Dec., 1965), p. 30-43; Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 103-109; Jenkins, 'Political Life in Late Victorian Britain,' p. 209-210; Rix, 'Hidden Workers of the Party,' p. 6.

revision courts.¹⁵³ In constituencies with stronger local associations, such as Western Derbyshire, the Liberal Unionists participated independently in the process of revision. In other constituencies, weaker associations would sometimes work together with the local Conservatives, or simply assist the Conservatives financially and leave the registration work to them.¹⁵⁴ Related to the supervision of the register was canvassing, which was vital to identifying supporters that needed to be placed on the register, while during elections it ensured that the local association knew how they stood and which electors they needed to get to the polls. As Boraston suggested, ‘canvassing is the one essential which is at the very foundation of successful political organisation.’¹⁵⁵

The other main objective between elections was the education of the electorate. Liberal Unionist propaganda activity focussed mainly on literature and public meetings. Local associations would receive leaflets and pamphlets for distribution from the central Liberal Unionist Association and other sources, such as the Irish Unionist Alliance.¹⁵⁶ In addition, literature would be produced at the regional and local level, tailored to local

¹⁵³ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(A), Circular Letter by Boraston, July 23rd, 1894. See also NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/18, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Organising Committee, May 12th, 1899, p. 27-34.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, B28(A), Lord Clifford to W. H. Whiteway-Wilkinson, Feb. 12th, 1895. In the case of Gloucestershire, Thornbury, the local Liberal Unionist association ruled out a direct contribution to the Conservatives to assist with registration expenses after the 1892 general election, but the Liberal Unionist secretary did provide the Conservatives with a list of subscribers who could be approached individually for financial support. See Jenkins, ‘Political Life in Late Victorian Britain,’ p. 218-219. In Ulster, Liberal Unionists formed joint registration associations with the Conservatives in parts of Tyrone, Belfast, and Londonderry. See B. M. Walker, ‘Party Organisation in Ulster, 1865-92,’ in Peter Roebuck, ed., Plantation to Partition: Essays in Ulster History in Honour of J. L. McCracken (Belfast, UK: Blackstaff Press, 1981), p. 203.

¹⁵⁵ The Liberal Unionist, Feb., 1888.

¹⁵⁶ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Organising Committee, Dec. 15th, 1890, p. 236-238.

needs.¹⁵⁷ Such literature would then be distributed throughout the constituency, attempting to reach as many electors as possible. By August 1886, the WSLUA calculated that they had distributed over a million pieces of propaganda.¹⁵⁸ Literature from party headquarters, of course, carried the bias of the issues that headquarters were most concerned with. After Powell Williams had effectively taken control of the party headquarters from 1892, literature supplied in late-1894 and early-1895 emphasized Chamberlain's social programme.¹⁵⁹

During election campaigns, organization activity reached a fever pitch. Canvassing was conducted on a daily basis, allowing organizations to not only measure the popularity of each candidate, but to also gauge changes in public support over the course of a campaign.¹⁶⁰ In 1886, Alexander Craig Sellar distributed 126 000 leaflets in his constituency, while in 1906 Victor Cavendish's campaign published 267 655 separate pieces of literature.¹⁶¹ It was common to hold a half dozen or more public meetings every day during an election campaign, and Cavendish travelled 900 miles over his rural constituency addressing meetings in the 1906 general election.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(A), Seventh Annual Report of the Executive Committee, Somerset Liberal Unionist Association, 1893; NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Oct. 17th, 1902, p. 84-85.

¹⁵⁸ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Report by the Executive, Aug. 1st, 1886, p. 35 (Insert).

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Jan. 11th, 1895, p. 45.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, *ibid.*, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19520, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 13th, 1895.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/27, Craig Sellar to A. L. Bruce, June 10th, 1886; Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/38/1/4, Executive Committee Report, 1905-1906.

¹⁶² See, for example, CH, Muniments Room, Box B, Bundle 27, Mr. Cavendish's Tour, Jan. 8th to Jan. 13th, 1906; Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/38/1/4, Executive Committee Report, 1905-

Historians have emphasized the importance of the Primrose League in explaining Conservative electoral supremacy after 1886.¹⁶³ Some Liberal Unionists, though, shared the disdain felt by Liberals towards the Primrose League. Arthur Elliot commented of a Primrose League ball that it was ‘a funny enough entertainment,’ and that Lord Dalkeith, his successor as Conservative candidate for Roxburghshire, spent too much time talking to Primrose League meetings, while the LDLUA suggested that Liberal Unionists should avoid smoking concerts and other such political entertainments, as they might fall afoul of the Corrupt Practices Act.¹⁶⁴ As late as 1913, Jesse Collings was complaining that Arthur Steel-Maitland, the Conservative M.P. for East Birmingham, was spending too much money on concerts, garden parties, and other such entertainments.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, there is evidence that justified Liberal Unionist concerns over the effectiveness of the Primrose League. After the 1906 general election, H. Brooke Taylor and Victor Cavendish decided that a new organization was needed in Western Derbyshire to disseminate Unionist principles and provide activities and functions for the Unionist rank-and-file. Thus was created the Unionist League, which aimed to include every

1906.

¹⁶³ See, for example, Lynch, p. 54-57; Janet Howarth, ‘The Liberal Revival in Northamptonshire, 1880-1895: A Case Study in Late Nineteenth Century Elections,’ in The Historical Journal, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1969), p. 96; Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 307. For a more nuanced view, see Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, p. 99-102.

¹⁶⁴ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19522*, Arthur Elliot Diary, Apr. 19th, 1899; *ibid.*, MS. 19474, fo. 59-64, Elliot to Minto, Dec. 16th, 1893; Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/51/5, Report of the Proceedings of the Annual Central Committee Meeting, Lichfield Division Liberal Unionist Association, May 4th, 1894.

¹⁶⁵ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 1/4/4/30, Memorandum by Jesse Collings, [n.d. - ca. 1913].

elector in the constituency.¹⁶⁶ The Unionist League was designed to fulfill those functions that have been traditionally ascribed to the Primrose League, despite the fact that the Primrose League itself was ‘formidably organized’ in the constituency, with five habitations and a membership of about 3700.¹⁶⁷ In Bury, while the local Primrose League habitation claimed 2000 members in the late-1880s, it did not play an active role in the constituency, leaving it to local Liberal Unionists to take the lead in organizational and propaganda matters.¹⁶⁸ These cases suggest that, in some instances at least, the Primrose League was not an influential factor in mobilizing Unionist supporters.¹⁶⁹

The leadership of local Liberal Unionist associations, particularly in county constituencies, reflected the continued importance of traditional elites. The office of President was often reserved for a leading local figure. Upon the formation of the DCLUF, for example, Lord Revelstoke was elected President.¹⁷⁰ Alternatively, the position of President was offered to national leaders, to lend prestige to the local association.¹⁷¹ In some cases, a number of the Vice-Presidents might also be from the

¹⁶⁶ Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/38/2/2, Memorandum on Unionist Organization, by H. Brooke Taylor, Sept., 1906. For Taylor’s opinion of the Primrose League, see *ibid.*, D504/112/39, H. Brooke Taylor to Sir Joseph G. Lee, Nov. 8th, 1886.

¹⁶⁷ Pugh, *The Tories and the People*, p. 115-116.

¹⁶⁸ Barbary, p. 190-191.

¹⁶⁹ In Hereford, the victorious Conservative candidate at the 1895 general election had complained that the Primrose League was not as efficient as it could have been. See Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/813, C. W. Radcliffe-Cooke to James, Aug. 11th, 1895.

¹⁷⁰ *The Liberal Unionist*, Feb., 1890.

¹⁷¹ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 52, Hartington to Wolmer, Nov. 11th, 1889. Hartington’s comment on being offered the Presidency of the Sussex Liberal Unionist Association was that he had no objection, but it unfortunately ‘means a speech some day.’

local elites.¹⁷² The involvement of local elites was deemed important to the success of local associations. When the Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter MDLUA) was formed in 1887, it was resolved to send a circular to all landed proprietors asking for their support and their subscriptions.¹⁷³ Large landowners were also still able to exercise a degree of influence in a small number of constituencies.¹⁷⁴ This was particularly the case in Western Derbyshire, where in 1889 H. Brooke Taylor noted that a number of Gladstonian electors had at the same time commented that they would never vote against a Cavendish.¹⁷⁵ In Biggleswade, Luton, the Duke of Bedford offered to pay all of the election expenses of any Liberal Unionist candidate who stood, while in Roxburghshire, Arthur Elliot asked his brother the 4th Earl of Minto to ensure that his new factor, a keen Gladstonian, did not use his position to influence his tenants.¹⁷⁶ Influence could also operate in more subtle ways. In the 1906 general election in Western

¹⁷² For instance, Leonard Darwin suggested in December 1895 that Lord Peel should be asked to become a Vice-President of the LDUA. See Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/5, Leonard Darwin to Lichfield, Dec. 5th, 1895.

¹⁷³ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(B), Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, June 15th and July 13th, 1887.

¹⁷⁴ For the case of the Earl of Camperdown and Warwickshire, Stratford, see Andrew Adonis, Making Aristocracy Work: The Peerage and the Political System in Britain, 1884-1914 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 256. In Chester, the defection of the Duke of Westminster to Liberal Unionism was vital to the Conservative victory over the Liberal incumbent at the 1886 general election. See Lee, p. 36. In Buckinghamshire, Aylesbury, the Rothschilds had for some time been acquiring estates with a view to securing political influence and their conversion to Liberal Unionism in 1886 meant that the constituency was one of the safest Liberal Unionist seats for the entire existence of the party. See Pelling, p. 119. However, such influence was not always sufficient to carry seats. Despite the efforts of the Duke of Westminster in favour of his son Lord Henry Grosvenor, the Liberal Unionists lost Cheshire, Northwich in a notable 1887 by-election. See Stephen Koss, Sir John Brunner: Radical Plutocrat, 1842-1919 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), ch. 5.

¹⁷⁵ Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/112/39, H. Brooke Taylor to Sir Joseph G. Lee, Feb. 16th, 1889.

¹⁷⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19522*, Arthur Elliot Diary, Jan. 5th, 1899; *ibid.*, MS. 19473, fo. 185-186, Elliot to Minto, Apr. 20th, 1892.

Derbyshire, one of Cavendish's supporters commented that his tenants were greatly honoured by the fact that one of the Duke's drags was used to convey them to the polling station.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, the exercise of such influence was not always unproblematic. During the 1889 by-election in Elginshire and Nairnshire, the Duke of Fife repeatedly pestered the Liberal Unionist Agent with suggestions on how the campaign should be conducted.¹⁷⁸ The greatest complication faced by Victor Cavendish in his 1906 election campaign was the Free Trade sympathies of his uncle the Duke of Devonshire; local Liberals suggested in order to be true to the Duke, they should vote against his nephew.¹⁷⁹

Liberal Unionist M.P.s were drawn from local elites, and as such were expected to contribute liberally to any number of causes and clubs in their constituency.¹⁸⁰ Nor could such contributions be limited merely to those organizations which were supportive of the incumbent M.P., as it was expected that M.P.s would contribute to all regardless of affiliation. As Victor Cavendish noted when he agreed to subscribe to a local Methodist Free Church in his constituency, 'I suppose the "old influence in the district" which they wish to revive will take the form of inducing people to vote against me.'¹⁸¹ Of course, such expectations could also be turned against opponents. During the 1906 campaign in

¹⁷⁷ CH, Muniments Room, Box H, Bundle 15, Charles Bowles to Victor Cavendish, Jan. 19th, 1906.

¹⁷⁸ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/360, Duke of Fife to James, Sept. 17th, 1889.

¹⁷⁹ Sheffield Daily Independent, Jan. 18th, 1906.

¹⁸⁰ Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism, p. 220-221.

¹⁸¹ Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/38/4/1, Victor Cavendish to H. Brooke Taylor, Mar. 19th, 1905.

Western Derbyshire, the Liberal candidate, Edward Hinners, refused to subscribe to several local football clubs. In response Taylor put out a pamphlet stating: 'Footballers, Cricketers & all who love our National games. Roll up & support the Right Hon. Victor Cavendish & show that you can appreciate a good sportsman.'¹⁸²

An important focus for any local association was to ensure sufficient funding to undertake the necessary organizational work. There were two general ways of collecting funds locally. First there would be the ordinary subscriptions, collected on a yearly basis from the subscribers to the association. Second, there would be special funds collected for specific purposes that were outside the normal activities of the association. The most common need for special funds was for general elections.¹⁸³ Unsurprisingly, the funds raised by associations tended to swell just prior to election campaigns.¹⁸⁴ Special funds were also raised on occasions for particular organising work, such as the first thorough canvass of a constituency.¹⁸⁵ Like Liberal and Conservative associations, the funds of most Liberal Unionist associations were derived from a few large subscribers.¹⁸⁶ For instance, of the £7375 that was subscribed to the 1895 Election Fund of the WSLUA, £5000 came from just five subscribers.¹⁸⁷ There was the occasional unease about this

¹⁸² CH, Muniments Room, Box J, Bundle 24, H. Brooke Taylor to Victor Cavendish, Dec. 21st, 1905.

¹⁸³ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, May 11th, 1894, p. 343.

¹⁸⁴ See, for example, Table 2E.

¹⁸⁵ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/5, Circular Letter by Lichfield, Apr., 1893.

¹⁸⁶ Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 212-214; Dawson, p. 88; McGill, p. 30; Bernstein, p. 25; Wright, p. 67.

¹⁸⁷ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Subscriptions to the Special Fund for the Election of 1895, Got in between Oct. 15th, 1894 and Oct., 1895, p. 300 (Loose Insert).

dependence on the continued generosity of a few individuals, and a desire for spreading the subscriptions over a larger number of members.¹⁸⁸ The large subscribers could clearly exercise significant influence over the operations of the association. For instance, an experimental canvass undertaken by the MDLUA after the 1892 general was discontinued when Lord Clifford, the largest contributor to the association's funds, stated that he could no longer contribute to the canvasser's expenses.¹⁸⁹ However, having a few large subscribers to a local association could also be an advantage. Since these large subscribers tended to be prominent locally, their names at the top of a list of subscribers assisted in the collection of smaller contributions, and demonstrated the support for the association by the leaders of the community.¹⁹⁰ M.P.s and candidates were also an important contributor to local funds. H. L. W. Lawson, who had unsuccessfully contested the 1902 by-election at Bury for the Liberal Unionists, offered in the following year to pay all of the expenses relating to the revision of the register.¹⁹¹ Indeed, candidates who would pay their own expenses were considered ideal – Jonathan Backhouse suggested in 1898 that H. Crawford Smith should be the candidate for Northumberland, Tyneside in part due to his willingness to cover his own expenses.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, Jan. 20th, 1890, p. 117-121.

¹⁸⁹ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(A), Lord Clifford to W. H. Whiteway-Wilkinson, [n.d. - in bundle of letters from early 1894].

¹⁹⁰ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/18, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee, Jan. 19th, 1905, p. 167-168.

¹⁹¹ Bury Archives, BNCA Papers, GCP/C/1/1, Minute Books, Bury and Elton Conservative and Liberal Unionist Association, July 1st, 1903.

¹⁹² DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 283/6, Jonathan Backhouse to Grey, Nov. 3rd, 1898.

Similar to the situation at the national level, many local associations struggled with insufficient funds in the first years of their existence.¹⁹³ As such, some local associations required subsidies from the central party funds.¹⁹⁴ By the mid-1890s, the improving financial situation of the central party organization allowed funds raised at the local level to remain at the local level.¹⁹⁵ Particularly weak local associations, however, still required financial support to maintain themselves – of the approximately £54 in subscriptions received by the MDLUA in 1904/05, about £20 came from the Liberal Unionist Council.¹⁹⁶ The existing political climate could also impair the ability to raise needed funds. The only general election that the WSLUA failed to raise a substantial fund for was 1906, the lowest point of Unionist electoral fortunes in the party's existence.¹⁹⁷

An important question regarding the party on the local level is whether there was a mass of independent Liberal Unionist voters. Patricia Lynch, in her analysis of three county constituencies, has suggested that the only Liberal Unionists were from local elites who were already upset at their declining influence and the drift of Liberalism towards Radicalism: 'Liberal Unionism had failed as a popular war cry.'¹⁹⁸ Such studies have

¹⁹³ For instance, the financial state of many of the associations under the purview of the E&NSLUA were considered 'unsatisfactory' in 1890. See NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Organizing Committee, Apr. 3rd, 1890, p. 141-142.

¹⁹⁴ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2201, Wolmer to Hartington, Dec. 12th, 1888.

¹⁹⁵ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, June 29th, 1894, p. 351-353.

¹⁹⁶ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27, Statement of Account, Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association, Mar. 15th, 1905.

¹⁹⁷ See Table 2F.

¹⁹⁸ Lynch, p. 48-50. See also Moore, 'Manchester Liberalism and the Unionist Secession,' p. 31-40;

focussed on a small number of constituencies that were not areas of Liberal Unionist electoral strength.¹⁹⁹ In order to better gauge whether there was a Liberal Unionist rank-and-file, it is necessary to analyse as wide a range of constituencies as possible. Moreover, a better guide for such an analysis is the returns for canvassing undertaken by local associations, which is what is used here.

Contemporary Liberals certainly claimed that the Liberal Unionists lacked any grassroots support,²⁰⁰ and some Liberal Unionists agreed with this suggestion. Henry Sidgwick, after attending the December 1886 Liberal Unionist Conference in London, suggested that ‘the impression on my mind was that we were like a regiment of officers without common soldiers with little prospect of finding any “rank and file.”’²⁰¹ Albert Bencke, a Liverpool Liberal Unionist frustrated with the inertia of the Liverpool Liberal Unionist Association, suggest that they ‘are a body of Colonels wanting privates.’²⁰² A military allusion was also used by Alfred Milner in reference to Goschen’s joining the Conservative government in December 1886 after the resignation of Randolph Churchill: ‘your place is with the army that wants a leader, rather than with the leaders who want an

ibid., ‘Liberal Unionism and the Home Rule Crisis in Leicester,’ p. 177-197; A. W. Roberts, The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire, p. 132-133.

¹⁹⁹ For instance, of the three constituencies examined by Patricia Lynch, two were never contested by Liberal Unionists, while the third, Yorkshire, Holmfirth, was only contested by a Liberal Unionist once, at the 1886 general election.

²⁰⁰ For example, see Koss, Sir John Brunner, p. 112.

²⁰¹ TCL, Henry Sidgwick Papers, Add Ms.c.97²⁵, Henry Sidgwick Diary, Dec. 8th, 1886, p. 111-112. See also W. C. Lubenow, The Cambridge Apostles, 1820-1914 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 190.

²⁰² Waller, p. 130.

army . . .²⁰³ Such claims, however, are misleading. Other Liberal Unionists stressed that there was a Liberal Unionist rank-and-file. Unsurprisingly, Joseph Chamberlain laid particular emphasis on this point.²⁰⁴ Other Liberal Unionists also emphasized the presence of Liberal Unionist voters. Sir Henry Havelock-Allan, in discussing the representation of South-Eastern Durham, suggested that there were about 1500 Liberal Unionist electors in the constituency.²⁰⁵ It was also hinted that the reluctance of local Liberal Unionists to disclose their partisan allegiance might impair the ability to discover the true strength of the party. When a requisition of Liberal Unionist voters was drawn up in 1893 to convince Charles Monk to stand again as candidate for Gloucester, it was noted that there were additional Liberal Unionist voters in the constituency who would support him, but would not sign the requisition for business and other reasons.²⁰⁶

The most complete list of canvass returns can be found in the Minute Books of the WSLUA. Covering the period 1893 to 1908, the canvass returns are for a number of different constituencies and districts.²⁰⁷ For each of the seventeen canvasses, the Liberal Unionist vote was tabulated separately, and overall ranged from a low of 9% to a high of 31.7%. In most cases, the Liberal Unionist vote was the lowest of the three parties, but in

²⁰³ Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner dep. 7, fo. 49-52, Milner to Goschen, Dec. 29th, 1886. Harcourt also used a military allusion, in commenting that in the division of the Liberal party, the Liberal Unionists got the officers but no men. Dudley W. R. Bahlman, The Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, 1885-1906 (Hull, UK: The University of Hull Press, 1993), Oct. 2nd, 1887, p. 66.

²⁰⁴ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/12/13, Joseph Chamberlain to Austen Chamberlain, Jan. 27th, 1895; *Ibid.*, JC 5/5/60, Chamberlain to Balfour, Mar. 29th, 1895.

²⁰⁵ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C39/1, Havelock-Allan to Akers-Douglas, Sept. 12th, 1892.

²⁰⁶ TCL, Charles Monk Papers, MONK C6/102, E. Wethered to Charles Monk, Jan. 31st, 1893.

²⁰⁷ See Table 2G.

three cases the Liberal Unionist vote exceeded the Conservative vote, and in two other cases it exceeded both the Conservative and the Liberal vote. These canvass results suggest that there was a small but consistent Liberal Unionist vote in the constituencies under the purview of the WSLUA. The returns also point to two other observations. One constituency, Glasgow, Bridgeton, had two canvass returns listed. In 1893, the Liberal Unionists comprised 14.7% of the voters canvassed, while in 1902 the number had risen slightly to 16.1%. Though the two numbers cannot be exactly compared, considering that in each case only a portion of the constituency had been canvassed, they do suggest that the Liberal Unionist vote had largely held up in the constituency past the turn of the century. There were also three canvass returns dated after the 1903-1904 Tariff Reform split in the Liberal Unionist party. Of these three, two had the lowest percentage of Liberal Unionist voters of the seventeen canvass returns listed. Such numbers are not conclusive, but suggest that the Liberal Unionist rank-and-file may have declined after 1904.²⁰⁸ Evidence from other sources confirms that the canvass returns in the west of Scotland were not aberrations. Canvass returns from the time of the controversy over the representation of Warwick and Leamington support Chamberlain's assertion that roughly 15% of the electorate were Liberal Unionists.²⁰⁹ In Staffordshire, Lichfield, a complete canvass of the constituency had revealed 1446 Liberal Unionist voters among the

²⁰⁸ Of course, the decline might be related to the general decline in Unionist fortunes, though one of the two canvasses was completed after the disastrous 1906 general election.

²⁰⁹ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 6/6/1F/48, C. A. Vince to Chamberlain, [n.d. - but certainly 1895]; *ibid.*, JC 6/6/1F/49-50, Canvass Returns, Apr. 6th, [n.d. - but certainly 1895].

electorate of 9123, or 15.6%.²¹⁰

It is true that the canvass returns cited above were conducted by Liberal Unionist associations in areas of Liberal Unionist electoral strength (the west of Scotland and the West Midlands). However, two sets of canvass returns from constituencies that were not strongholds of Liberal Unionism can be used as a comparison. In late-1893 and early-1894, a partial canvass was conducted in Devonshire, Ashburton, on the instigation of the central party headquarters. The canvass identified eighty-six Liberal Unionists, comprising 6.8% of the total canvassed. Though this percentage is smaller than those in the West of Scotland, it does suggest that a small but noticeable Liberal Unionist vote existed even in areas of party organizational weakness. Of note, only eight of the eighty-six Liberal Unionists were willing to join the local association, which suggests that in areas without active local associations, party supporters were much less willing to be politically involved.²¹¹ In Huddersfield, which had been contested by a Conservative since the formation of the Liberal Unionist party, a canvass just prior to the 1906 general election indicated a total of 541 Liberal Unionist voters, or 3.1% of the overall electorate.²¹² These canvass returns indicate that there was a Liberal Unionist rank-and-file, the size of which not surprisingly varied by the level of local organizational and electoral activity.

²¹⁰ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/5, Annual Report, Lichfield Division Liberal Unionist Association, May 3rd, 1895.

²¹¹ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(A), Reports of Canvassing for the Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association, by J. W. Ellison, Dec. 30th, 1893 through Feb. 28th, 1894.

²¹² Perks, Appendix 6.1.

Another important question revolves around the effectiveness of local Liberal Unionist associations. Conservatives were quick to blame their allies for any perceived organizational shortcomings, criticisms that have been noted by historians.²¹³ No doubt in some cases there were problems with local Liberal Unionists associations. The Liberal Unionists suffered a number of dramatic by-election reverses between the 1886 and 1892 general elections, and one of the most prominent, in Devon, South Molton in November 1891, was blamed on poor organization.²¹⁴ The Earl of Portsmouth, whose succession to the peerage had caused the by-election, publicly defended his conduct and that of the local Liberal Unionist organization, but privately his agent conceded that some of the organizers had not done their work properly.²¹⁵ As Chamberlain noted to A. V. Dicey in April 1892, ‘I am convinced that in almost every case in which Liberal Unionists have lost ground the fault has been with the candidate or his organization.’²¹⁶ Inexperience and stubbornness could also play a role. Before the 1892 general election, Arthur Elliot noted that his agent was not well-acquainted with modern electioneering, but retained him as ‘he means well at all events,’²¹⁷ while in February 1892 Wolmer complained of the unwillingness of Liberal Unionists in the Kirkcaldy Burghs to learn lessons from contests

²¹³ See, for example, Richard Shannon, p. 264; Burness, ‘Strange Associations’, p. 86-87; Hutchison, p. 209-210.

²¹⁴ See, for example, Hampshire RO, 6th Earl of Portsmouth Papers, 15M84/5/9/3/6, Editorial in The Devon and Exeter Gazette, ca. Nov. 17th, 1891.

²¹⁵ Hampshire RO, 6th Earl of Portsmouth Papers, 15M84/5/9/3/6, Letter to the Editor, by 6th Earl of Portsmouth, Nov. 18th, 1891; *ibid.*, Fred Day to the 6th Earl of Portsmouth, Nov. 17th, 1891.

²¹⁶ LMA, A. V. Dicey Papers, A/NFC109/8, Chamberlain to A. V. Dicey, Apr. 5th, 1892.

²¹⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19473, fo. 84-85, Arthur Elliot to Gilbert Elliot, Nov. 23rd, 1888.

in other constituencies.²¹⁸ Similar problems were noted with Liberal Unionist organization across the country during the 1892 general election.²¹⁹ Hugh Elliot, standing for Glasgow, St. Rollox, complained that the organization of the constituency was ‘awful,’ his agent an ‘utter idiot,’ and that by polling day almost half of the constituency had not been canvassed.²²⁰ After its formation in 1892, the OLU had not conducted an independent canvass and took no part in municipal elections, and when Philip Lyttelton Gell complained to Chamberlain of Conservative inactivity, the latter could only cite the lack of activity of local Liberal Unionists and suggest that their weakness left them with little room for complaint.²²¹

Balanced against such problems must be placed those instances of effective local Liberal Unionist associations. The strength of Chamberlain’s organization in Birmingham and the West Midlands has already been noted. In Scotland many of the leading Liberal Unionists had substantial political and organizational experience, which they brought to the two Scottish regional associations.²²² On a local level in Scotland, many Liberal associations were greatly weakened by the defection of valuable and

²¹⁸ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/19, Wolmer to A. L. Bruce, Feb. 25th, 1892.

²¹⁹ TCL, Charles Monk Papers, MONK C6/100, Charles Monk to R. V. Vassar-Smith, Jan. 11th, 1893.

²²⁰ NLS, Minto Papers, MS. 12373, fo. 122-123, Hugh Elliot to Gilbert Elliot, Nov. 23rd, 1888. See also Jenkins, ‘Hartington, Chamberlain, and the Unionist Alliance,’ p. 132.

²²¹ Derbyshire RO, Philip Lyttelton Gell Papers, D3287/115/13/4, Annual Report, Oxford Liberal Unionist Association, 1892-1893; *ibid.*, D3287/116/14/1, Chamberlain to Philip Lyttelton Gell, Sept. 17th, 1894.

²²² Burness, ‘Strange Associations’, p. 49-50. A number of leading Scottish Liberal Unionists had also gained experience as the leaders of the Liberal Church Defence campaign in 1885. See McCaffrey, p. 57-59.

experienced agents to the newly-formed Liberal Unionist associations.²²³ In the 1892 general election, Henry James noted that the Liberal Unionist organization in Bury was ‘working like clock-work,’ while three years later the Marquess of Lorne won South Manchester using innovative electioneering techniques like low-cost direct mail telegrams to voters.²²⁴ In Hereford, the victorious Conservative candidate credited the support of the local women’s Liberal Unionist association.²²⁵ In the 1900 general election, the victory of the Liberal Unionist J. W. Spear in Devon, Tavistock was ascribed in part to his superior organization.²²⁶ The Liberal Unionist organization in Western Derbyshire was kept at peak efficiency, with only minor assistance from the local Conservative association, by H. Brooke Taylor.²²⁷

Liberal Unionists also had valid criticisms of Conservative organization. In 1888, Wolmer passed on to Akers-Douglas complaints he had heard from local Liberal Unionists regarding Conservative organization in Liverpool as well as the Gorton and Eccles divisions of Lancashire.²²⁸ After the 1892 general election, Isabella Tod noted that in Ireland Conservative women did not have the energy to do any organizational work

²²³ Hutchison, p. 168-169.

²²⁴ Cited in Barbary, p. 184; James Moore, ‘Liberalism and the Politics of Suburbia: Electoral Dynamics in Late Nineteenth-Century South Manchester,’ in *Urban History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2003), p. 239n.

²²⁵ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/813, C. W. Radcliffe-Cooke to James, Aug. 11th, 1895.

²²⁶ Paul Lambe, ‘The Politics of Place: Three Devon Constituencies and the 1900 General Election,’ in *Southern History*, Vol. 23 (2001), p. 148-168.

²²⁷ See, for instance, CH, Muniments Room, Box I, Bundle 15, H. Brooke Taylor to Victor Cavendish, Sept. 19th, 1900; Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/112/39, H. Brooke Taylor to Sir Joseph G. Lee, Nov. 8th, 1886; *ibid.*, D504/38/4, Charles F. White to H. Brooke Taylor, Feb. 9th, 1906.

²²⁸ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C482/2, Wolmer to Akers-Douglas, July 27th, 1888.

unless prodded by Liberal Unionist women.²²⁹ Powell Williams complained that poor Conservative organization had almost caused Hampshire, Andover to be lost in a 1901 by-election.²³⁰ In the 1906 general election, the only Unionist seat seriously threatened in Birmingham was the East division, held by the Conservative J. B. Stone. Chamberlain held that the local Conservative organization was entirely defective, and it was only through the intervention of Liberal Unionist workers that the situation was salvaged.²³¹ Nor were Liberal Unionists the only critics of local Conservative association. A leading Conservative in the West Country noted in 1886 that the Conservative organization in Cornwall, Launceston was in such a disorganized state that he could not identify who was the leader of the party there, while in 1890 the poor state of the Conservative organization in Lancashire was discussed at the cabinet level.²³² This is not to suggest that there were endemic problems with local Conservative associations. Rather, the difficulties with local Liberal Unionist associations should not be over-emphasized, and there were clearly a number of such associations that were strong and held up their end of the Unionist alliance. If there is merit in Lady Gwendolyn Cecil's comment that the late 1880s and early 1890s were the 'classic period of Conservative electioneering,'²³³ then it should be added that the Liberal Unionists made their own contributions to such success.

²²⁹ LMA, A. V. Dicey Papers, A/NFC109/11, Isabella Tod to A. V. Dicey, Sept. 30th, 1892.

²³⁰ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1111, Powell Williams to James, Aug. 27th, 1901.

²³¹ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/53, Chamberlain to Boraston, Jan. 15th, 1906.

²³² CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C387/1, Lord Mount-Edgcumbe to Akers-Douglas, June 10th, 1886; *ibid.*, C25/133, W. H. Smith to Akers-Douglas, Dec. 13th, 1890. See also Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, p. 95.

²³³ Cited in Richard Shannon, p. 308.

As at the national level, the Tariff Reform controversy had a major impact on local Liberal Unionist organization. The emergence of the issue greatly unsettled local Liberal Unionist associations, and some local leaders were unsure of the course they should follow.²³⁴ Some constituency associations attempted to steer a middle course between Tariff Reform and Free Trade: in 1904, Henry Cavendish was elected President of the WDLUA largely because no one knew his views on the fiscal question.²³⁵ A number of Liberal Unionists feared that the party re-alignments in consequence of Chamberlain's raising the Tariff Reform question would lead to the extinction of local Liberal Unionism. The Chairman of the Marylebone Liberal Unionist Association believed that the result of the crisis would be that 'we shall cease to exist, one way or another,' while a Cornish Liberal Unionist noted that the party had 'almost entirely vanished' in the county constituencies.²³⁶ A number of local Liberal Unionists who had Free Trade sympathies eventually resigned from their local associations, unwilling to co-operate in the propagation of Tariff Reform. In Staffordshire, Lichfield, Leonard Darwin requested that his name be removed from the list of Vice-Presidents in June 1904, and a week later Lord Lichfield resigned as President of the association at a meeting called to elect representatives to the reformed Liberal Unionist Council.²³⁷ In January 1905, Lord

²³⁴ For example, see CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3012, Lord St. Levan to Devonshire, Oct. 11th, 1903.

²³⁵ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3115, Henry Cavendish to Devonshire, Oct. 9th, 1904. For the situation in Huddersfield, see also Perks, p. 376-377.

²³⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19493, fo. 184-185, F. Pollock to Elliot, Jan. 4th, 1904; CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3191, Lord St. Levan to Devonshire, Feb. 3rd, 1906.

²³⁷ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/8, Leonard Darwin to Lichfield, June 29th, 1904; *Times*, July 7th, 1904.

Belper resigned as President, and Sir Charles Seely, former Liberal Unionist M.P. for West Nottingham, resigned as a Vice-President of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Liberal Unionist Association, while C. H. Seely, the current Liberal Unionist M.P. for Lincoln, also resigned from the association.²³⁸ In Bury, the President of the local Liberal Unionist association publicly stated his intention to support the Liberal candidate at the 1906 general election due to his support for Free Trade, and many rank-and-file Liberal Unionists followed his advice.²³⁹ At the same time, loyalty kept some Liberal Unionists in the party. At the end of 1903, Lord St. Germans, the President of the local Liberal Unionist association in Cornwall, Bodmin, commented that he would continue to support Sir Lewis Molesworth, the incumbent Liberal Unionist M.P., despite his support for Chamberlain, since if Molesworth resigned the seat would certainly be lost to the Liberals.²⁴⁰ Conversely, in a few cases Tariff Reform could lead to a revitalization of local associations. In Paisley, the prospective Liberal Unionist candidate in 1903 was a staunch supporter of Tariff Reform and Chamberlain, and he overhauled the local Liberal Unionist Association to garner working-class support, with his agent claiming a thousand members by 1904.²⁴¹

The Tariff Reform issue also had an impact on local Liberal Unionist finances. In the unsettled political situation, it became increasingly difficult to raise the necessary

²³⁸ *Times*, Jan. 9th, 1905.

²³⁹ Barbary, p. 207-208 and 214. Such defections also undermined Liberal Unionist participation in municipal elections in Bury – the 1906 election was the first since 1887 in which no Liberal Unionist candidate stood. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

²⁴⁰ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3043, Lord St. Germans to Devonshire, Dec. 24th, 1903.

²⁴¹ Macdonald, p. 190.

funds for organizational work.²⁴² In the WSLUA, there was a noticeable and permanent decline in the amount of ordinary subscriptions received from 1904 onwards.²⁴³ Liberal Unionist Free Traders in particular became reluctant to continue to contribute to associations which might be used to promote Chamberlain's Tariff Reform policy.²⁴⁴ At the same time, the financial problems caused by the Tariff Reform controversy also served as an incentive for associations to come out in favour of Chamberlain, as it would ensure funding from the formidable Tariff Reform organization. As one individual commented at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the WSLUA at the end of 1903, they could 'catch cash' if they became Chamberlainites.²⁴⁵

The Tariff Reform controversy did not signal the end of local Liberal Unionist organization, but such associations were fundamentally altered after Chamberlain assumed control over the central party organization in 1904, as he used Liberal Unionist associations to advance his Tariff Reform agenda. In that year, local associations were asked to send representatives to the reformed Liberal Unionist Council, an implicit endorsement of Chamberlain that was often made explicit by the introduction at the same meeting of resolutions in favour of Tariff Reform.²⁴⁶ In Ashburton, the MDLUA, which

²⁴² NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance & Organising Committee, Jan. 8th, 1904, p. 145-146.

²⁴³ See Table 2F.

²⁴⁴ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Organising Committee, Jan. 6th, 1905, p. 189.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, Dec. 9th, 1903, p. 141-142.

²⁴⁶ Such was the case with the LDLUA. See Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/7, Circular Letter from William Jenkins, July 1st, 1904.

had become defunct after the 1895 general election, was revived in 1904. However, the new Association did not include amongst its objects ‘the promotion of those principles which have for many years past been accepted and recognised as progressive Principles’ and ‘the promotion by all legitimate means, of the interests of labour,’ both of which had been among the objects of the original association.²⁴⁷ Instead, the Association worked in favour of Tariff Reform, declaring itself to ‘wholeheartedly’ support Chamberlain, and that it would only support a candidate for the constituency who was entirely supportive of Tariff Reform. Literature distributed by the Association also placed support for Tariff Reform on the same level as opposition to Home Rule.²⁴⁸ There was also a degree of local overlap between Liberal Unionist associations and the Tariff Reform League. Lord Clifford, President of the MDLUA, was also the President of the Devon branch of the Tariff Reform League.²⁴⁹ These local efforts of Liberal Unionist associations matched the priorities of the party leadership. In 1907, Boraston argued that any Liberal Unionist candidate brought forward for Devon, South Molton should be in ‘active support of our policy.’²⁵⁰ In the previous year, Chamberlain had strongly objected to the decision of Liberal Unionists in Hartlepool to give the seat to the Conservatives. However, Chamberlain’s objection was not primarily to the transfer of the seat, but rather that the

²⁴⁷ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(A), Objects, Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association, [n.d.]; *ibid.*, B27, Rules of the Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association, 1904.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, B27, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, Feb. 8th and Mar. 15th, 1905.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, B28(A), Tom Neill to Lord Clifford, July 10th, 1907.

²⁵⁰ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27, Boraston to Lord Clifford, July 17th, 1907.

Conservative selected as a candidate was the leading Free Trader Lord Hugh Cecil.²⁵¹

The emergence of Tariff Reform in 1903 also accelerated the process of local fusion. Isolated cases of local Liberal Unionists and Conservatives joining together to form a single local association occurred as early as the 1890s, but the process did not begin to pick up significant speed until after the turn of the century. There was also the occasional instance where a fused association might split apart again in the future, such as occurred in East Edinburgh in 1899, but in general, when it occurred fusion was final.²⁵² That Tariff Reform had a significant impact on fusion at a local level can be seen by examining the number of divisional and branch Liberal Unionist associations in the west of Scotland.²⁵³ Of the twenty-six constituencies listed, each had a Liberal Unionist association covering the division in 1893 and in 1903/04. However, seven of the constituencies were covered by a Unionist association by 1911/12. The impact of Tariff Reform on fusion becomes even clearer when branch associations in these constituencies are examined. Of the fifteen county and burgh constituencies, nine had more branch Liberal Unionist associations in 1903/04 than in 1893, and in only one case was there more branch Unionist associations in 1903/04 than 1893. However, from 1903/04 to 1911/12, nine of the constituencies saw the number of branch Liberal Unionist associations decline and the number of branch Unionist associations increase. Though local Liberal Unionist organization remained intact in the immediate aftermath of the

²⁵¹ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/56, Chamberlain to Boraston, June 14th, 1906.

²⁵² Hutchison, p. 211.

²⁵³ See Table 2H.

formation of the Unionist government in 1895, the impact of Tariff Reform was a clear impetus towards fusion.

In addition, there were several other factors that moved Liberal Unionists towards joining with the Conservatives. Having active Liberal Unionist and Conservative associations in a constituency led to a degree of overlap and consequent inefficiency. After his experience of defeat in the 1906 general election, Parker Smith concluded that efficiency would be improved by having a single Unionist organization in each constituency, while in January 1909 Sir Jonathan Backhouse resigned as President of the Darlington Liberal Unionist Association in protest at the continued division of Liberal Unionist and Conservative organizations.²⁵⁴ In some cases, such as in Roxburghshire, an agreement to join together at the parish level led within a few years to fusion on the constituency level.²⁵⁵ Finances increasingly became an issue as large contributors did not see the point in subscribing to two associations.²⁵⁶ The two elections of 1910 particularly highlighted the financial question, as the proximity of the two elections placed extra strain on finances. The regular subscriptions to the WSLUA declined sharply in 1909/10 and 1910/11, suggesting the erosion of the Liberal Unionist donor base.²⁵⁷ Certain actions by local Conservatives could also smooth the way to fusion. In Leicester, the

²⁵⁴ Hutchison, p. 226; *Times*, Jan. 22nd, 1909. Such overlap also led to the intermixing of local organizers. In 1905, the Huddersfield LUA hired a Conservative to work on registration. See Rix, “Go Out into the Highways and the Hedges,” p. 215.

²⁵⁵ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19517, Arthur Elliot Diary, Nov. 6th, 1891.

²⁵⁶ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B. Morrison to the Treasurer, Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association, Oct. 18th, 1904.

²⁵⁷ See Table 2F.

Conservative Club was renamed the Constitutional Club in order to attract Liberal Unionists, and the MDLUA was dissolved in the summer of 1906 after the Conservatives had changed the name of their association to the Mid-Devon Unionist Association, allowing Liberal Unionists to join their ranks.²⁵⁸ By the late-1890s the Liberal Unionists were also suffering from a generational divide. Some of the older Liberal Unionists had died off, and many rising political activists no longer understood the need for a separate party. This issue was of particular importance in areas with weaker Liberal Unionist organization, where the activity of the party may have relied on a single individual for whom there was no real replacement. As such, the Liberal Unionists faced a constant problem in winning new recruits to their ranks.²⁵⁹ Both regional associations and the party headquarters had originally been opposed to local fusion.²⁶⁰ By the last years of the party, the attitude shifted to one of resigned acceptance, as Boraston explained in 1911: ‘To sum up, our policy is to accept amalgamation cheerfully where it is an unavoidable necessity, but we discourage it in ordinary cases. Where it takes place the Central Offices of both wings of the party ought to have equal rights and affiliation should take place to both.’²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Moore, ‘Liberal Unionism and the Home Rule Crisis in Leicester,’ p. 187-188; UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27, Lord Clifford to W. H. Whiteway-Wilkinson, July 2nd, 1906.

²⁵⁹ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Report Submitted to the Business Committee for the Fortnight ending Apr. 21st, 1899, p. 284 (Insert).

²⁶⁰ Both Powell Williams and Boraston, for example, had been opposed to the fusion of the two associations in Roxburghshire after the 1892 general election. See NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19518, Arthur Elliot Diary, Nov. 1st, 1892.

²⁶¹ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/22, WSLUA Minute Book, Boraston to W. L. Blench, Mar. 10th, 1911, p. 32 (Insert).

Independent Liberal Unionist constituency associations continued to exist as of 1903²⁶² and, in several districts, local fusion did not occur even when the national parties merged. The agreement on national fusion stipulated that local organizations could decide whether or not to join forces.²⁶³ In Scotland, the E&NSLUA did not agree to fusion with their Conservative counterpart until December 1912, while the WSLUA remained in existence until early 1913.²⁶⁴ The most notable case of holdout was in Birmingham and the West Midlands. The Chamberlains were reluctant to relinquish their control of politics in this area, and there was no significant groundswell of support from either wing of the party in favour of fusion in Birmingham.²⁶⁵ At meetings on April 23rd and May 15th, the BLUA resolved against local fusion, with Charles Vince noting that their association had only been linked to the national Liberal Unionist organization since Chamberlain's takeover of the party in 1904, and that they were not subject to its instructions nor reliant on it for funding. Neville Chamberlain also commented that the Liberal Unionists were the larger wing of the party in Birmingham, and unlike in other places they had no problem drawing new recruits to their organization.²⁶⁶ Though committees were subsequently struck to discuss the possibility of fusion between the two

²⁶² See Table 2B.

²⁶³ The exclusion of fusion on a local level was insisted upon by Joseph Chamberlain at the end of 1911. See Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 6, p. 976.

²⁶⁴ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/18, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the General Committee, Dec. 5th, 1912; *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/22, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Committee Meeting, Mar. 3rd, 1913.

²⁶⁵ For example, in 1909, believing that Collings might be about to vacate his seat, Austen Chamberlain commented that 'we shall not surrender another L.U. seat in B'ham to the Conservatives for anyone.' Cited in Dutton, *'His Majesty's Loyal Opposition'*, p. 144n.

²⁶⁶ *Times*, May 16th, 1912.

local organizations, the issue remained undecided until the outbreak of the First World War postponed any decision. It would not be until after the war that the two wings of the Unionist party fused in Birmingham, bringing an end to the last independent local Liberal Unionist organisation.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Briggs, p. 190-191. Fusion ultimately did nothing to lessen the control of the Chamberlains over Birmingham Unionist politics. As Neville Chamberlain commented after fusion: 'The decision to unite practically places the direction of Unionist politics in Birmingham in my hands. I am not quite sure whether all those present perceived this; I did not mention it.' Cited in VCH, Warwickshire Vol. VII: Birmingham (1964), p. 313.

Chapter 3: Liberal Unionist-Conservative Electoral Relations

The foundation of the alliance between the Liberal Unionist and the Conservative parties was the general agreement, formulated in 1886 and remaining in force until fusion in 1912, that the two parties would never contest seats against the other. However, in practice the electoral pact was only one variable among many that determined which party would contest which seats, and there was considerable variance in the seats contested by Liberal Unionists at each general election. As a result of this variance, disputes arose between the two parties over candidacies. These disputes were particularly acute at a local level, where rank-and-file members of each party were reluctant to see their constituency handed over to the other. Thus the historiographical focus on increasing parliamentary co-operation, especially after 1895, overshadows the continued strains in the Unionist alliance outside Westminster.

When examining how seats were assigned to one party or the other, historians have tended to focus on the electoral pact reached by the two parties in 1886, and formalized in the late-1880s. John France has suggested that the pact was highly advantageous to the Conservative party, as it effectively limited the growth potential of the Liberal Unionists, and ensured that the Conservatives would always be able to contest those seats where it stood the best opportunity for success.¹ Certainly the fact that the

¹ John France, 'Salisbury and the Unionist Alliance,' in Robert Blake and Hugh Cecil, eds., *Salisbury: The Man and his Policies* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press, 1987), p. 224-226. See also Vernon Bogdanor, 'Electoral Pacts in Britain since 1886,' in Dennis Kavanagh, *Electoral Politics* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 175-176; John Davis, *A History of Britain, 1885-1939* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 38; Ian Cawood, 'The Unionist "Compact" in West Midland Politics, 1891-1895,'

Liberal Unionists never won as many seats in later elections as they won in 1886 is suggestive of the conclusion that the electoral pact was biased in favour of the Conservatives. W. C. Lubenow has echoed this argument in his analysis of the 1886 general election, pointing out that, in general, Conservatives were willing to stand aside for Liberal Unionist candidates only in those constituencies which were already safe Liberal seats.² In contrast, Peter Marsh has suggested that the Liberal Unionists struck a good bargain over the electoral pact, as their candidates received essential Conservative support in their campaigns against Gladstonian Liberals, in exchange for only vague indications that Liberal Unionists should vote for Conservative candidates in constituencies without a Liberal Unionist candidate.³ What these arguments have in common is a belief that it was the electoral pact, agreed to and enforced by the leadership of the two parties, that was the primary factor in deciding which party would contest which seat. However, the large number of seats transferred between the two parties over time cannot be understood merely by reference to the electoral pact. Instead, there were a wide range of reasons for seats being contested by a party other than had previously contested the seat, and the ability of central leadership to influence the selection of candidates, and thus enforce the electoral pact, was limited for the duration of the alliance between the two parties.

in *Midland History*, Vol. 30 (2005), p. 92-111.

² Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 301-302.

³ Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government*, p. 111. For example, the central organization of the Liberal Unionist party issued circulars during the 1886 general election, advising Liberal Unionists in seats without Liberal Unionist candidates to vote for the Conservative candidate. BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, *Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886*, p. 28-29.

This chapter will demonstrate that the decline in Liberal Unionist electoral fortune after 1886 was not a natural consequence of the electoral pact. Instead, the primary cause was continued Conservative hostility towards the Liberal Unionists at the local level. Unsurprisingly, examinations of rivalry between the two parties at a local level have focussed on Joseph Chamberlain and the West Midlands, where rivalry over seats provoked well-publicized crises within the Unionist alliance.⁴ This focus on the West Midlands obscures the fact that similar conflicts over representation occurred in constituencies across the country; Chamberlain's situation is known because he was a party leader who threatened personal retirement and a potential disruption of the Unionist alliance over seats in his 'Duchy.' Liberal Unionists in other constituencies who faced local Conservative aggression often had no recourse but to yield and hand over the candidacy to their 'allies.' Thus, the electoral alliance between the two parties was marked by antagonism and strife up until the parties fused.

Once it became clear that a number of Liberals opposed Gladstone's support for Home Rule, it was natural to turn to the question of what would occur in the event of a dissolution. In early February 1886, Goschen approached Salisbury on the possibility of Liberal Unionists not being opposed by Conservatives. While Salisbury insisted that such an agreement could work only if the Liberal Unionists definitely broke with Gladstone, he was willing at that point to give a general understanding.⁵ Negotiations continued in the

⁴ For example, see Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p. 271-273. On local politics in the West Midlands, see Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics*.

⁵ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C18/6, Salisbury to Akers-Douglas, Feb. 9th, 1886]

months that followed between the Conservatives and Hartington and his followers, with Henry Brand, the Hartingtonian Whip, and Alexander Craig Sellar, a leading Liberal Unionist organizer, meeting several times with the Conservative Whip Akers-Douglas to discuss seats.⁶ By May 28th, Hartington was able to inform his followers that the Conservatives had given a clear promise not to oppose any Liberal who voted against the Home Rule Bill.⁷ In contrast, prior to the second reading of the Home Rule Bill, Chamberlain insisted on the necessity of maintaining distance from the Conservatives if he was to be able to maintain his position as a Radical Unionist.⁸ Once the bill was defeated, Chamberlain began negotiations over constituencies, with his primary Conservative contact being Randolph Churchill.⁹ In addition to ensuring that no Conservative opposed the six Liberal Unionist candidates in Birmingham, Chamberlain and Churchill agreed that Chamberlain's brother, who had unsuccessfully contested Worcestershire, Evesham against the Conservative Sir Richard Temple, would not stand again if the Liberal Unionist incumbent in Eastern Worcestershire, G. W. Hastings, was not opposed by a Conservative.¹⁰

Conservative leaders hoped that Home Rule would be treated as a non-party

⁶ *Ibid.*, F.14, Akers-Douglas Diary, May 14th, 15th, and 18th, 1886. See also *ibid.*, C261/2, Henry Brand to Akers-Douglas, May 1st, 1886.

⁷ Richard Shannon, p. 204. The existence of the electoral pact was not confirmed to the rank-and-file of the Conservative party, though, until June 14th, in a speech by Akers-Douglas. See James Allan Klein, *Public Doctrine and Private Practice: A Study of Conservative Party Politics, 1880-1892* (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1987), p. 677.

⁸ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/8/84, Chamberlain to Bunce, Apr. 6th, 1886.

⁹ *Ibid.*, JC 5/14/18, Churchill to Chamberlain, June 19th, 1886.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, JC 5/14/16, Churchill to Chamberlain, June 9th, 1886. See also CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C121/1, Chamberlain to Akers-Douglas, June 9th, 1886.

question, with public meetings including Liberal Unionists, in order to encourage co-operation between the two parties,¹¹ and in some constituencies with Liberal Unionist incumbents, local Conservatives were quick to express their support. In May, Henry James was confidentially informed that the leaders of the Conservative party in his constituency of Bury would support him.¹² Once the dissolution was announced, the Bury Central Conservative Club unanimously resolved not to put forward a Conservative candidate, and if necessary support James against a Gladstonian Liberal. J. Grant Lawson, the Conservative candidate James had narrowly defeated in 1885, even wrote that he would assist James in the forthcoming campaign.¹³ Just prior to dissolution, Liberal Unionists in western Scotland received a communication from their Conservative counterparts that they would support Liberal Unionist candidates, and suggested that representatives from both groups should meet to discuss co-operation.¹⁴ Some local Conservatives also attempted to arrange electoral agreements in their area. Conservatives in Derbyshire, High Peak, where the Conservative candidate had been elected by a mere nine-vote margin in 1885, suggested that the Conservatives in Western Derbyshire would not put forward a candidate to oppose Lord Edward Cavendish, the sitting Liberal Unionist member, if the Liberal Unionists would use their influence to dissuade the

¹¹ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, CLp 1, fo. 278-280, Middleton to Lady Iddesleigh, May 2nd, 1886.

¹² Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/195, V. Ormerod Walker to James, May 7th, 1886.

¹³ Bury Archives, BNCA Papers, GCP/A/1/3/1, Political Committee Minute Books, Bury Central Conservative Club, June 12th, 1886; Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/200, J. Grant Lawson to James, June 14th, 1886.

¹⁴ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, June 1st, 1886, p. 16-17.

Liberals in the High Peak division from putting forward a candidate.¹⁵

In other constituencies, however, the relationship between the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists was much more tense, and the Conservative leadership spent a considerable amount of time dissuading local Conservatives from running candidates against sitting Liberal Unionists.¹⁶ Although most of the conflicts were resolved before polling, on occasion missteps by the central party organization could aggravate local difficulties. In South Manchester, Thomas Sowler, the proprietor of the Manchester Courier, announced his intention to stand as a Conservative candidate, but local Liberal Unionists wanted to have one of Manchester's six seats contested by a Liberal Unionist, and hoped that Sowler would step aside. Balfour agreed with this sentiment, believing that a Liberal Unionist candidate in the South division would encourage Liberal Unionists in other Manchester constituencies to vote for Conservative candidates. Sowler expressed his willingness to stand aside, but the central Liberal Unionist Association in London dithered on sending down a candidate until just prior to polling, by which point Sowler stated that he could not honourably abandon his campaign. Balfour now concluded that forcing Sowler to step aside would result in many Conservative electors abstaining in Manchester seats, which in turn would depress Liberal Unionist turnout in

¹⁵ Derbyshire RO, H. Brooke Taylor Papers, D504/112/39, Taylor to Lord Edward Cavendish, June 9th, 1886. Though the negotiations failed, the Conservative incumbent in the High Peak division was returned by a slightly-larger margin of 161 votes.

¹⁶ For numerous examples, see Richard Shannon, p. 204-206; Lubenow, Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis, p. 294-301; Klein, p. 681 and 684; Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, p. 55.

later contests in the surrounding county seats.¹⁷ In Essex, Romford, James Theobald, who had been defeated by the now-Liberal Unionist John Westlake in 1885, desired to contest the constituency again, regardless of Westlake's intention to seek re-election. Despite an attempt by Churchill to dissuade Theobald and a proposal of arbitration by party leaders, Theobald informed Akers-Douglas that he would only stand aside on the pledge of unified Conservative support for himself at the next election.¹⁸ Such a pledge was not forthcoming from Akers-Douglas, and as a result Theobald refused to abandon his candidacy.¹⁹

A particularly curious case was South St. Pancras, where the incumbent Liberal Unionist, Sir Julian Goldsmid, and his Conservative challenger from 1885, J. Blundell Maple, both wished to stand in 1886. Chamberlain urged the Conservative leaders to prevent Maple from standing in order to save Goldsmid, and by June 20th Salisbury believed that Maple would retire.²⁰ However, all that had been agreed to was that Maple would withdraw if there was no Gladstonian Liberal candidate.²¹ Up to the nomination date of July 1st no such candidate appeared, but at the eleventh hour E. J. Beale was

¹⁷ Robin Harcourt Williams, ed., The Salisbury-Balfour Correspondence: Letters Exchanged Between the Third Marquess of Salisbury and his Nephew Arthur James Balfour, 1869-1892 (Ware, UK: Hertfordshire Record Society, 1988), Memorandum by Balfour, July 2nd, 1886, p. 151-152. Sowler would be defeated by the Gladstonian Liberal incumbent by 335 votes.

¹⁸ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C516/1, James Theobald to Akers-Douglas, June 23rd, 1886. See also Lubenow, Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis, p. 302-303.

¹⁹ Ibid., C516/2, James Theobald to Akers-Douglas, July 4th, 1886.

²⁰ Ibid., C18/11, Salisbury to Akers-Douglas, June 13th, 1886; CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2009, Salisbury to Goschen, June 20th, 1886. See also CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C234/11, Sir Julian Goldsmid to Akers-Douglas, June 22nd, 1886.

²¹ Times, July 5th, 1886.

nominated for the Liberals. With the question of which candidate would stand thus reopened, Goldsmid secured the candidacy for himself by the simple expedient of beating Maple to the Vestry Hall, St. Pancras Road and submitting his nomination paper first. When Maple arrived fifteen minutes later, he discovered that a Unionist candidate had already been nominated, and suddenly found himself unable to secure sufficient signatures for his own nomination papers. Goldsmid was then able to defend his seat and handily defeat Beale.²² Thus, by fifteen minutes, was South St. Pancras made a Liberal Unionist seat, which it remained at every subsequent election until fusion.

Despite the uneasiness of local Conservatives in some constituencies at supporting sitting Liberal Unionists, in others local Conservatives themselves put forward the proposition of a Liberal Unionist candidacy. As W. C. Lubenow notes, it was in seats that were already strongly held by Liberals that Conservatives were most willing to countenance a Liberal Unionist coming forward.²³ In Derbyshire, for instance, it was recognized that it would be 'hopeless' for any Conservative to stand in the mining constituencies of the county, and though the chances of a Liberal Unionist victory instead would not be much improved, such a candidate would at least gain the support of all

²² *Ibid.*, July 2nd, 3rd, and 5th, 1886. Maple would subsequently be elected to Camberwell, Dulwich at an 1887 by-election, after Conservative Central Office intervened to secure him the candidacy. This may have been related to his sizeable financial contributions to the Conservative party. On his death, Maple left a substantial bequest to Richard Middleton, former Conservative party agent. See Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, p. 112-113 and 117; Pinto-Duschinsky, p. 38n.

²³ Lubenow, Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis, p. 301. For the case of Yorkshire, see A. W. Roberts, 'Leeds Liberalism and Late-Victorian Politics,' p. 147. For the case of Wales, see Matthew Cragoe, Culture, Politics, and National Identity in Wales, 1832-1886 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 77. This was not universally the case, however. Paisley Conservatives had hoped to run their 1885 candidate, and only begrudgingly, and with a lack of enthusiasm, acquiesced in the candidacy of the Liberal Unionist J. Parker Smith. See Macdonald, p. 87 and 107.

Conservative electors in addition to however many Liberal votes he could secure.²⁴

Liberal Unionists thus stood in five of the seven county constituencies in Derbyshire, though they were only successful in the two divisions (Chesterfield and Western) which had Liberal Unionist incumbents. Also, putting forward a Liberal Unionist was no guarantee that he would be supported by any local Liberals, as Walter Long noted of T. G. P. Hallet's candidacy in Wiltshire, Westbury. The only way Hallet would gain any support from local Radicals, he argued, would be if Chamberlain came to speak in the constituency.²⁵ In other cases, Conservatives started Liberal Unionist candidates with the goal of splitting the Liberal vote. In Northampton, the Tories put forward a Liberal Unionist candidate in the hope that if he was supported by moderate Liberals, the Radicals would be sufficiently enraged to withhold their votes from Liberal candidates in Northamptonshire, including C. R. Spencer in the Mid division. The manoeuvre was foiled after Spencer's followers communicated to Charles Bradlaugh, one of the Liberal incumbents in Northampton, that they would support him.²⁶ Even when the Conservatives brought forward a Liberal Unionist candidate, there was no guarantee that there would not be local rivalry and unease between the two parties. In Mid Northamptonshire, W. C. Cartwright, who formerly had been the Liberal M.P. for Oxfordshire from 1868 to 1885, was brought to the constituency to stand by local

²⁴ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C554, Sir Henry Wilmot to Akers-Douglas, [n.d.].

²⁵ *Ibid.*, C346/1, Long to Akers-Douglas, July 10th, 1886. Hallet would be defeated by nearly a thousand votes.

²⁶ Peter Gordon, ed., *The Red Earl: The Papers of the Fifth Earl of Spencer, 1835-1910*, Vol. 2 (Northampton, UK: Northamptonshire RO, 1986), J. Becke to Lord Spencer, July 1st, 1886, p. 124-125; *ibid.*, C. R. Spencer to Lady Spencer, July 2nd, 1886, p. 125-126.

Conservatives. Soon Cartwright became annoyed with the situation, however, as he concluded that he had ‘been brought down on a wild goose chase,’ and that the local Conservatives were not sufficiently supportive of his candidacy.²⁷

While in most areas conflicts over representation were resolved prior to voting, in five constituencies Conservatives and Liberal Unionists faced each other directly in the 1886 general election. As noted above, James Theobald in Essex, Romford refused to withdraw, and won with a majority of the vote, with the Liberal Unionist incumbent John Westlake relegated to third place. In Devon, Torquay, local Conservatives balked at supporting the Radical Unionist incumbent Lewis McIver, as despite his Unionism he was supportive of the principle of Home Rule and had received the endorsement of the local Liberal association. The Conservatives ran Richard Mallock, who had been narrowly defeated by McIver in 1885, and in a straight fight was victorious by eighty votes.²⁸ The most notorious case was Hampshire, Petersfield, where the incumbent Liberal Unionist Lord Wolmer was opposed by William Nicholson, who had narrowly lost to Wolmer in 1885. Salisbury was hampered in his efforts to intervene in the contest because Wolmer was his nephew,²⁹ but vetoed the appearance of Sir Richard Webster, the former Conservative Attorney-General, in the division in support of Nicholson on the basis that the Conservative front bench ought to abstain from taking any part in a contest

²⁷ Gordon, *The Red Earl*, C. R. Spencer to Lord Spencer, June 24th, 1886, p. 123-124; *ibid.*, C. R. Spencer to Lady Spencer, July 2nd, 1886; Gordon, *Politics and Society*, June 12th, 1886, p. 97. Cartwright had also been invited by Conservatives in Eastern Northamptonshire and Northampton to contest their constituencies. *Ibid.*, June 4th, 1886, p. 97n.

²⁸ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 302-303.

²⁹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2001, Salisbury to Hartington, June 21st, 1886.

between a Liberal Unionist and a Conservative.³⁰ Two independent Liberal Unionist candidates also stood: W. P. Duff in North Camberwell, where his small vote made no difference in the Conservative candidate's victory, and W. H. Hall in Cambridgeshire, Newmarket, who had supported the now-incumbent Liberal in 1885 and whose 298 votes were only just shy of the 300-vote margin of the Liberal candidate over the Conservative.³¹

In addition to the above open conflicts, there was one seat where a Conservative incumbent gave way to a Liberal Unionist candidate, and thirteen where the Liberal Unionist gave way to a Conservative.³² In some of these cases the Liberal Unionist candidate was forced to retire in the face of Conservative insistence on contesting the seat, since the Liberal Unionist knew that he could not be re-elected in a three-way contest.³³ The most notable example was in Gloucestershire, Stroud, the constituency of Henry Brand, who was prevailed upon to retire and instead contest Cardiff. Brand's Conservative successor was successful in the Stroud division, but Brand himself would be narrowly defeated at Cardiff.³⁴ Not all such Conservative efforts succeeded. In

³⁰ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C18/13, Salisbury to Akers-Douglas, June 18th, 1886.

³¹ *Times*, June 16th, 1886. See also Richard Shannon, p. 206-207.

³² These values differ slightly from France, p. 225, where it is stated that there were fourteen seats in which a Liberal Unionist gave way to a Conservative.

³³ Such was the case in Lincolnshire, Briggs, where Sir H. Meysey-Thompson retired in favour of the Conservative candidate J. M. Richardson, who was subsequently defeated. See CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2722, 4th Earl of Yarborough to Chamberlain, Mar. 14th, 1897. Local Conservatives felt that Meysey-Thompson was insufficiently definite in his opposition to Home Rule. See Rodden, p. 520.

³⁴ Richard Shannon, p. 205. Other examples of Liberal Unionist candidates stepping aside for Conservatives included Robert Bickersteth in Shropshire, Newport, William Harker in Yorkshire, Ripon, and Albert Kitching in Middlesex, Maldon. See Rodden, *passim*.

Peeblesshire and Selkirkshire, the Conservatives had attempted to insist that they would accept any Liberal Unionist candidate other than W. Thorburn, the current candidate. Thorburn, however, successfully insisted that the decision of the Conservatives be overturned, and went on to represent the constituency until his defeat in the 1906 general election.³⁵ Nor was every case of a Liberal Unionist withdrawing the result of overt Conservative pressure, as in several instances the Liberal Unionist retired in the face of a lack of support from Liberals. Henry C. Howard in Cumberland, Penrith offered to resign rather than give a pledge to support Gladstone, and George Salis-Schwabe declined to stand for re-election in Lancashire, Middleton when he realized that he would not have the support of local Liberals.³⁶ In the case of Huddersfield, E. A. Leatham, the Liberal Unionist incumbent, yielded not to the Conservative J. Crosland, but to the Gladstonian Liberal W. Summers, who narrowly emerged victorious. For his action Leatham was contemptuously labelled a ‘fool’ by Chamberlain’s Radical Unionist whip W. S. Caine.³⁷ Two sitting Liberal M.P.s who opposed Home Rule retired for reasons unrelated to the Unionist alliance – Henry Robertson in Merionethshire due to ill-health, and Joseph Ruston in Lincoln due to a strike in his engineering works which alienated a large portion of his constituents.³⁸

After the 1886 general election, means had to be found to maintain close co-

³⁵ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/2, Charles Cooper to A. L. Bruce, June 16th, 1886.

³⁶ Rodden, p. 440-441 and 608.

³⁷ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/10/7, Caine to Chamberlain, Sunday [n.d.].

³⁸ Rodden, p. 576 and 591.

operation between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives on the local level, at a time when the Liberal Unionists were also keen in many places to maintain their separate organization. After a July 1887 by-election in Coventry, in which the Conservative candidate had been narrowly defeated by a margin of sixteen votes, Chamberlain complained to Akers-Douglas that the Conservative candidate had been ‘objectionable’ and entirely the wrong type for a working-class constituency. He inquired whether it would be possible for Liberal Unionists to be consulted in the future prior to the selection of candidates.³⁹ The mechanism to achieve consultation on candidates became Joint Committees, which were formed in most constituencies in the years after the 1886 general election.⁴⁰ Consisting of representatives of both local Liberal Unionists and Conservatives, the primary task of the Joint Committee was the selection of a candidate to contest the constituency. Such committees often co-ordinated the organizing work in the constituency between elections.⁴¹ Consultations over seats also occurred at the national level. On his own initiative, Middleton opened negotiations in 1887 with Henry Hozier, his Liberal Unionist counterpart, on which party were to contest a number of constituencies, a process that continued into 1888.⁴² By the end of that year a formal Candidates Committee had been formed, with representation from regional associations.⁴³

³⁹ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C121/2, Chamberlain to Akers-Douglas, July 12th, 1887.

⁴⁰ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Secretary’s Report, Dec. 3rd, 1889, p. 113 [Insert].

⁴¹ See, for example, the rules of the Joint Committee of Devonshire, Ashburton. See UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28 (B), Draft Rules, Joint Committee, [n.d.]

⁴² CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, CLp 1, fo. 349-351, Middleton to Hozier, May 24th, 1887; *ibid.*, CLp 2, fo. 142-144, Akers-Douglas to Wolmer, Apr. 17th, 1888.

⁴³ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive

Joint Committees were also formed at a regional level. In 1890 the West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter WSLUA) agreed to the formation of a Joint Committee with their Conservative counterparts, with a particular focus on ‘regulating the work of the two Associations so as to secure efficiency without waste of energy.’⁴⁴ Committees were also struck from time to time to discuss the representation of constituencies as issues arose.⁴⁵

Finally, Akers-Douglas and Craig Sellar met in 1887 to formalize the electoral pact between the two parties for use in future elections.⁴⁶ The pact was expressed in a series of resolutions regarding each possible contingency:

1. That no seat held by a Conservative shall be attacked by a Liberal Unionist.
2. That no seat held by a Liberal Unionist shall be attacked by a Conservative.
3. That seats contested at the Election of 1886 by Conservatives shall not be attacked by Liberal Unionists, without the consent of the Whips of both sections of the Unionist party.
4. That seats contested at the Election of 1886 by Liberal Unionists shall not be attacked by Conservatives, without the consent of the Whips of both sections of the Unionist party.
5. That Gladstonian seats uncontested at the Election of 1886 shall be attacked by Conservatives or Liberal Unionists as may seem most advisable, having regard to local circumstances.
6. That in the event of any differences, the question of candidature shall be referred, at the written request of the local organizations, to Mr. Smith and Lord Hartington.

Committee, Aug. 14th, 1888, p. 74-77; *ibid.*, Secretary’s Report, Dec. 6th, 1888 [Insert].

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Organizing Committee, Feb. 3rd, 1890, p. 122-126. See also Burness, ‘*Strange Associations*’, p. 78.

⁴⁵ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, May 12th, 1896, p. 516-518; *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/18, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Organizing Committee, Mar. 19th, 1903, p. 114-116.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, C596, Akers-Douglas to Hozier, [n.d.].

7. That in all cases when the candidate has been decided upon, every effort shall be made to induce the Electors of both sections of the Unionist party to support the candidate.⁴⁷

Despite the formalization of the electoral pact, the Conservative leaders still attempted to work them to their advantage. The resolutions cited above had a postscript that stated that four seats which had been won by Liberals in 1886 who had voted against the Home Rule Bill, but who had subsequently returned to the Gladstonian Liberal party, were not covered by the pact. This opened up these seats to the possibility of Conservative, not Liberal Unionist, candidacies.⁴⁸ During the 1886 general election Salisbury commented that Conservative candidates should always come forward for seats that they had a chance to win,⁴⁹ an attitude he did not abandon after the formalization of the pact. When adjudicating with Hartington the rival claims of Liberal Unionists and Conservatives to the representation of Birmingham, Salisbury commented that he did not believe the pact extended to the question of vacancies, which prompted Hartington to consult Wolmer as to the exact nature of the agreement.⁵⁰ Akers-Douglas also suggested that the Joint Committees should be comprised of representatives of the two parties in proportion to the number of electors of each party in the particular constituency, a stance that was bound to favour Conservatives in most seats.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Conservative

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, O.10, Resolutions [n.d.]. There is also a copy of these Resolutions in the 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers. CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2205A, Resolutions [n.d.].

⁴⁸ The four constituencies were the Swansea District of Boroughs, Gloucestershire, Cirencester, Mid Gloucestershire, and West Edinburgh. Of the four, West Edinburgh would remain contested by Liberal Unionists through to fusion, but the other three were subsequently contested only by Conservatives.

⁴⁹ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 302.

⁵⁰ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 57-60, Hartington to Wolmer, Dec. 8th, 1889.

⁵¹ Richard Shannon, p. 265-266.

leaders publicly portrayed the electoral pact as the key factor in determining which party contested which seats. In 1895, during the crisis over the candidacy in Warwick and Leamington, Balfour stated the electoral pact represented a necessary change from otherwise desirable local freedom to central control that was required to facilitate the Unionist alliance.⁵²

Yet, the number of seats contested by Liberal Unionists at each election casts doubt on the electoral pact as the primary factor in determining which party contested which seats. As can be seen in Table 3A, the 1886 general election saw the most number of Liberal Unionist candidates – 160 – of any general election. From 1886 through 1900, the number of Liberal Unionist candidates declined at each general election, and there was a subsequent decline between the two 1910 general elections. This clearly indicates that it was by no means guaranteed that seats contested by Liberal Unionists at the 1886 general election would be contested by Liberal Unionist candidates at subsequent elections.

The overall numbers demonstrate that a number of Liberal Unionist seats were subsequently contested by Conservatives, but this actually understates the number of seats that were changing hands between the two parties of the Unionist alliance. Over the twenty-six year history of the Liberal Unionist party, there were thirty-four seats that were contested by Liberal Unionists at every general election.⁵³ This number is less than half

⁵² Richard Shannon, p. 403.

⁵³ Of the thirty-four, one, the Carmarthen District, was contested once by a Conservative candidate at a January 1912 by-election.

of the seventy-five seats the Liberal Unionists contested at the December 1910 general election, when they fielded the fewest candidates of any general election. Thus, even in their last general election, over half of the Liberal Unionist candidates were standing in constituencies in which, on at least one previous occasion since 1886, a Conservative candidate had stood. Even more dramatically, over three-quarters of the seats contested by Liberal Unionists in the 1886 general election would on at least one subsequent occasion prior to fusion be contested by a Conservative candidate. A closer examination of the transfer of seats between the 1886 and 1892 general elections illustrates the degree of seat transfer that was occurring. Of the 160 seats the Liberal Unionists contested in 1886, 98 also saw Liberal Unionist candidates in 1892, while no fewer than 54 were transferred to the Conservatives.⁵⁴ On the other hand, twenty seats the Conservatives contested in 1886 were fought by Liberal Unionists in 1892, while Liberal Unionists stood in a further eighteen seats that had been left without candidates in 1886. Even these numbers do not capture the full extent of the transfer of seats between the two parties. Of the fifty-four Liberal Unionist seats in 1886 that were contested by Conservatives in 1892, six had already been contested by Conservatives at by-elections in the interim. Conversely, two seats that shifted from the Conservatives to the Liberal Unionists had seen Liberal Unionist candidates at by-elections. Of the ninety-eight seats the Liberal Unionists fought in 1886 and 1892, two had seen Conservative candidates at intervening by-elections, while five seats the Conservatives fought in 1886 and 1892 had seen Liberal

⁵⁴ The fifty-five includes the three seats that saw both Conservative and Liberal Unionist candidates at the 1886 general election, but were contested by Conservatives alone in 1892.

Unionist candidates contesting by-elections.⁵⁵ Thus, despite the electoral pact, there was significant shifting of candidacies between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists over the period of the Unionist alliance.

There were a number of reasons why the electoral pact was not the primary determinant of candidacies. For one, the pact was ignored in cases where the Conservatives saw advantage to themselves in allowing Liberal Unionists to stand in Conservative seats. Not all Liberal Unionists perceived this willingness; the strongest Liberal Unionist critic of the electoral pact was Evelyn Ashley. Described by Michael Hurst as the ‘unluckiest of Liberal Unionists’,⁵⁶ Ashley had failed to be re-elected for the Isle of Wight constituency in the 1885 general election. Standing as a Liberal Unionist for Northern Dorset in the 1886 general election he was narrowly defeated. In the next two years he was defeated in two by-elections: in 1887 he was the ‘forlorn hope’ to oppose Trevelyan’s return to Parliament as a Gladstonian Liberal for Glasgow, Bridgeton, and in 1888 he was narrowly defeated in the Ayr District of Burghs. Subsequently, he contested Portsmouth at the 1892 and 1895 general elections, but was unsuccessful on both occasions. Despite these repeated setbacks, Ashley retained a strong desire to resume his Parliamentary career, and consistently expressed a hope that a safe Liberal Unionist seat could be found for him.⁵⁷ In time Ashley came to blame the electoral pact

⁵⁵ Calculated from Appendix C.

⁵⁶ Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and Liberal Reunion*, p. 386.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Southampton University Library, A. E. M. Ashley Papers, BR 60/5/7, Anstruther to Ashley, July 26th, 1896.

for his inability to find a safe seat. Writing just before his death, Ashley described the pact as ‘most fatal to me’, and since the pact mandated that no seat held by a Conservative could be contested by a Liberal Unionist, the result was that ‘any Liberal Unionist seeking a seat was driven to attack what might be called a forlorn hope.’ In particular Ashley pointed to several vacancies after 1886 in constituencies in southern England where he had a reasonable chance of success, but, he argued, he was unable to come forward due to the electoral pact.⁵⁸

Another critique of the pact came from Arthur Elliot. In 1892 he had been narrowly defeated for re-election in Roxburghshire, and in 1895 he had lost in Durham by a margin of three votes.⁵⁹ From his defeat in 1892 until he was returned for Durham at a by-election in 1898, Elliot had wished to stand for a number of seats that had become vacant, both Liberal Unionist and Conservative, but for a variety of reasons he had not been allowed to stand.⁶⁰ Over time Elliot became increasingly frustrated at his inability to secure the candidacy for a safe seat, in part because he feared that his political career would be damaged if party leaders felt he was unsuitable for office due to the possibility of being defeated on re-election.⁶¹ Elliot came to believe that the electoral pact was unsuited to the changed conditions after the formation of the Unionist government in

⁵⁸ Southampton University Library, A. E. M. Ashley Papers, BR61/1/2, Private Pamphlet by Ashley, 1906.

⁵⁹ On recount. The original returns had Elliot defeated by a single vote.

⁶⁰ Among the seats discussed as possible for Elliot were South St. Pancras (1896), West Edinburgh (1895), Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities (1896), Warwick and Leamington (1895), Gloucestershire, Cirencester (1892), Liverpool, Exchange, and South Wolverhampton, should C. P. Villiers retire.

⁶¹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19523, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 6th, 1898.

1895, and in particular that ‘a compact which is continually to be waived in favour of Conservative candidatures is a mere bleeding to death of the Liberal Unionist Party, & not worth having.’⁶² In February 1898 Elliot sent a letter to the Times outlining his views, arguing that the compact had become outdated and that constituencies should adopt the best candidate available, regardless of their affiliation.⁶³ Chamberlain strongly criticized Elliot’s letter, but Devonshire expressed some sympathy for Elliot, suggesting that the strongest support for the electoral pact came from Birmingham.⁶⁴

Despite the assertions of Ashley and Elliot, the electoral pact was not the reason they were unable to find seats. The Conservatives were quite willing to hand over Conservative seats to strong Liberal Unionists, but only in cases where there was some benefit to the Conservative party. This was seen most prominently in the case of George Goschen. After the 1886 general election, Hartington expressed the hope that the Conservatives would help find seats for some of their ‘exiles’.⁶⁵ Though he was the most prominent ‘exile’, Goschen at first felt that despite expressions to the contrary, he had not seen evidence that the Conservatives were eager to find him a seat.⁶⁶ Once Randolph Churchill resigned from the Conservative Cabinet on December 20th, 1886, and it became evident that Goschen was wanted to replace Churchill at the Exchequer, the

⁶² Ibid., MS. 19523, Arthur Elliot Diary, Feb. 7th, 1898.

⁶³ Times, Feb. 4th, 1898.

⁶⁴ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19523, Arthur Elliot Diary, Feb. 7th and 9th, 1898. See also ibid., MS. 19475, fo. 3-6, Elliot to Minto, Feb. 10th, 1898.

⁶⁵ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/22/16, Hartington to Chamberlain, Aug. 15th, 1886.

⁶⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19487, fo. 226-227, Goschen to Elliot, [n.d.].

Conservatives suddenly exerted themselves to find Goschen a seat, especially after his first attempt, in Liverpool, Exchange, failed by seven votes. The Conservative M.P.s for Essex, Walthamstow,⁶⁷ Boston,⁶⁸ and Greenwich⁶⁹ all offered to vacate their seats for Goschen, while Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities,⁷⁰ Oxford University, and Camberwell, Dulwich were also suggested.⁷¹ Goschen would eventually be returned on February 9th for the exceedingly-safe Conservative constituency of St. George, Hanover Square, after the resignation of its sitting Conservative M.P., Lord Algernon Percy.

Goschen was not the only Liberal Unionist to benefit from the desire by Conservatives to see them in Parliament. After Goschen's retirement prior to the 1900 general election and his replacement by the Conservative H. Legge, the constituency was again used as a refuge for a Liberal Unionist 'exile' after the 1906 general election, when Legge made way for Alfred Lyttelton, who had been defeated in Warwick and Leamington. Another beneficiary of Conservative assistance was Edward Carson, who prior to the Home Rule split had been a Radical, and in the first years afterwards a Liberal Unionist. While Irish Chief Secretary, Balfour had urged the importance of getting Carson into Parliament, and in 1892 Carson would stand as a Liberal Unionist for one of the two Dublin University seats. However, the University had in the past always been

⁶⁷ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C25/12, Smith to Akers-Douglas, Dec. 30th, 1886; *ibid.*, C363/1, W. T. Makin to Akers-Douglas, Jan. 27th, 1887.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, C55/2, H. J. Atkinson to Akers-Douglas, Feb. 9th, 1887.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, C90/1, T. W. Boord to Akers-Douglas, Jan. 27th, 1887.

⁷⁰ Williams, Reginald MacLeod to Balfour, Jan. 8th, 1887, p. 172-173.

⁷¹ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, CLp 8, Akers-Douglas to Salisbury, Jan. 1st, 1887.

represented by Conservatives, and there was a great deal of unease over a former Radical standing. Balfour would brook no opposition, and wrote a strong letter to Carson for his use, stating that he saw Carson's presence in the House of Commons as 'little short of absolute necessity.' Balfour at this time had significant influence in the selection of candidates in southern Ireland, and though a Conservative was put up to oppose Carson, the latter was comfortably elected in 1892.⁷² In the 1895 general election, the Liberal Unionist Horace Farquhar was elected to West Marylebone, which had previously been a Conservative seat. Devonshire had urged Farquhar's adoption to the Conservatives, and the latter's significant financial contributions to the Unionist cause in London, including donations to the London Municipal Society and covering the election expenses for both Marylebone seats, had been significant factors in the willingness of Conservatives to transfer one of their seats to Farquhar.⁷³ For his part Farquhar wished to enter Parliament in the belief that it would enhance his claims to his long-held ambition for a peerage, which he attained in 1898.⁷⁴ In 1904, failing health and a declining majority in West Belfast caused H. O. Arnold-Forster to express a desire to leave Belfast and sit for a more hospitable English seat. A place for him was promptly found in the safe Conservative constituency of Croydon, where the sitting Conservative M.P., C. T. Ritchie, had been rejected as candidate by his local Conservative association on the basis of his strident

⁷² H. Montgomery Hyde, *Carson*, p. 88-94; Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p. 213.

⁷³ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C169/8, Devonshire to Akers-Douglas, June 28th, 1894; CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2648, Farquhar to Devonshire, Sept. 22nd, 1895.

⁷⁴ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2649, Farquhar to Devonshire, Oct. 5th, 1895.

Free Trade views. Arnold-Forster was much more amenable to Tariff Reform, and despite some uneasiness on the part of local Conservatives, he won the seat at the 1906 general election.⁷⁵

A particularly interesting case of Conservative willingness to support certain Liberal Unionists was that of the African explorer Henry Stanley. In the spring of 1892 he expressed interest in standing as a Liberal Unionist, and hoped to find a Liberal seat where the margin in 1886 had not been more than two hundred votes.⁷⁶ A thorough search for a suitable constituency for Stanley was begun, but as Wolmer noted, ‘it is rather late in the day, and the vast majority of those candidatures still open are chances which I should not think of suggesting to him to undertake.’⁷⁷ After several possibilities fell through, at the last moment the Conservative incumbent in North Lambeth, Charles Fraser, was induced to stand aside, and Stanley came forward for the seat as a Liberal Unionist.⁷⁸ London Conservatives were eager for Stanley to come forward for a metropolitan borough, as it would buttress Conservative claims to be the party of imperialism, which was felt to be vital in what was the imperial capital.⁷⁹ Not all local

⁷⁵ Arnold-Forster, p. 301-302; Frans Coetzee, ‘Villa Toryism Reconsidered: Conservatism and Suburban Sensibilities in Late-Victorian Croydon,’ in E. H. H. Green, ed., An Age of Transition: British Politics, 1880-1914 (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 40-41.

⁷⁶ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/13, Stanley to John Pulerton, June 4th, 1892. Stanley’s decision to stand for Parliament was at the prompting of his wife Dorothy, who hoped that once elected, there would be no further risk of him returning to Africa. See Tim Jeal, Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa’s Greatest Explorer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 423-424.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Acc. 11777/19, Wolmer to Bruce, May 23rd, 1892.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Acc. 11777/13, Dorothy Stanley to Bruce, June 20th, 1892.

⁷⁹ See Alex Windscheffel, ‘“In Darkest Lambeth”: Henry Morton Stanley and the Imperial Politics of London,’ in Matthew Cragoe and Antony Taylor, eds., London Politics, 1760-1914 (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 191-210.

Conservatives were pleased with Fraser's supersession by Stanley, and Fraser made public his opinion that he had been unwillingly forced aside after Stanley's defeat in 1892.⁸⁰ Stanley was then briefly mentioned for Wiltshire, Westbury, but decided to remain as the Liberal Unionist candidate for North Lambeth.⁸¹ In the 1895 general election he defeated the Liberal candidate Charles Philip Trevelyan to claim the seat. Stanley retired at the 1900 general election, and North Lambeth subsequently reverted to Conservative candidates.

Conservatives were thus more than willing to countenance Liberal Unionist candidates standing for Conservative seats if doing so was in their party's interest. The case of Evelyn Ashley further emphasizes this point, since the primary reason he was unable to secure a safe seat was due to a particular animus held towards him by Conservatives.⁸² When Hozier raised the possibility of Ashley again contesting Northern Dorset after his defeat there in 1886, Middleton replied that after making enquiries he had concluded that Ashley would not receive whole-hearted Conservative support in the constituency.⁸³ W. H. Smith was more blunt in writing to Akers-Douglas in 1890 regarding a suggestion that Ashley might stand for Lanarkshire, Partick, stating that such a course would be 'madness.'⁸⁴ Salisbury summed up Conservative attitudes towards

⁸⁰ See correspondence in the *Times*, July 19th, 20th, 21st, and 22nd, 1892.

⁸¹ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/13, Dorothy Stanley to Bruce, Sept. 11th, 1892; Jeal, p. 425-426 and 429.

⁸² One reason cited for Conservative opposition in the case of Ayr District in 1888 was that he was a strong supporter of temperance. Hutchison, p. 209.

⁸³ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, CLp 1, fo. 347-349, Middleton to Hozier, May 11th, 1887.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, C25/119, Smith to Akers-Douglas, Jan. 24th, 1890.

Ashley in 1891 when the latter was made a Privy Councillor. As the appointment had been made on the recommendation of Hartington, Salisbury wrote to the latter that ‘I am consoled as to Ashley by the reflection that everybody will know it is your doing.’⁸⁵ Thus Ashley’s failure to return to Parliament after 1885 was not due to the electoral pact, but rather to the Conservative’s attitude towards him.

An important factor that lessened the importance of the electoral pact in determining candidacies was the inability of central party organizations to always influence local associations in the era of the Third Reform Act. In some areas, local elites and political organizers reigned supreme, and conducted their affairs with a minimum of reference to central party offices. Such power was most famously influenced by Sir Archibald Salvidge over Liverpool, but similar examples could be seen with Sir James Oddy in Bradford and Sir Percy Woodhouse in Manchester.⁸⁶ Unionist political organization in Ireland was notoriously independent-minded, and Akers-Douglas conceded in 1891 that Ireland was a place ‘where at present my writs do not run.’⁸⁷ Universities jealously guarded their electoral privileges, with the result that at times candidates were elected who were considered politically ‘useless’.⁸⁸ The conferring of

⁸⁵ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2272, Salisbury to Hartington, May 16th, 1891.

⁸⁶ Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 101.

⁸⁷ Richard Shannon, p. 327. At the 1900 general election, Irish Unionists, upset at Gerald Balfour’s Irish policy while Chief Secretary, took their revenge by running an independent Unionist against Horace Plunkett in South County Dublin, which succeeded in electing the Nationalist candidate instead, despite the best efforts of Middleton to save Plunkett. *Ibid.*, p. 515.

⁸⁸ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 126-127, Hartington to Wolmer, Aug. 16th, 1891. The ‘useless’ comment was in reference to Professor G. G. Stokes, a Conservative elected for one of the two Cambridge University seats at a by-election in 1887.

patronage was also no guarantee that the receiver would undertake that which the party wanted. In 1890 Schomberg McDonnell and Akers-Douglas hoped that the knighthood granted to the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Greenock, Thomas Sutherland, would induce him to stand at the next election in tandem with a Conservative candidate for the two-member constituency of Southampton, but Sutherland remained the M.P. for Greenock until his retirement prior to the 1900 general election.⁸⁹

The writ of the central Candidates Committee was resisted by regional organizations such as the East and North of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association.⁹⁰ Regional organizations, in turn, had at times limited influence over their territory. Local Conservatives and Liberal Unionists in Dumfries Burghs refused entirely to co-operate with the WSLUA during the 1886 general election, with the result, as the association noted, that the seat was lost.⁹¹ Candidates could even be adopted for constituencies without their knowledge, as happened to H. O. Arnold-Forster in West Belfast. He had been adopted by meetings of local Conservatives, Liberal Unionists, and Orangemen entirely without his knowledge, and once he became aware of the situation, it was too late to withdraw, which, Arnold-Forster suggested, explained ‘the incongruity of my position, as an English candidate for an Ulster seat.’⁹²

Local agreements could also take precedence over the electoral pact. When Sir

⁸⁹ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C24/12, Schomberg McDonnell to Akers-Douglas, Dec. 23rd, 1890.

⁹⁰ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Council, Oct. 17th, 1888, p. 42-44.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Report by the Executive, Aug. 1st, 1886, p. 35 [Insert].

⁹² British Library, Balfour Papers, Add. 49722, fo. 5-10, Arnold Fortser to Balfour, Dec. 27th, 1891.

Thomas Sutherland finally retired as the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Greenock, his place was taken by a Conservative, James Reid, in accordance with a long-standing agreement between the two local party organizations.⁹³ Seats could be transferred from one party to another even against the expressed wishes of the central party organization. Prior to the 1895 general election, local Liberal Unionists and Conservatives in Glasgow, St. Rollox, which had been contested by Liberals in 1886 and 1892, agreed that Faithful Begg, a Conservative, should stand. When he learned that a Liberal Unionist seat was being turned over to a Conservative, Powell Williams insisted that Begg's candidature be suspended, but the WSLUA concluded that they could not interfere in the local arrangements of the constituency.⁹⁴ At the same time, the ability of party leaders to intervene in local party matters was also dependent on their willingness to engage in sometimes-mundane political matters. Regarding the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Stirlingshire, Hartington commented to Wolmer: 'Is there anything I ought to say to Ernest Noel? I have not talked to him about his constituency, because he is such a bore, but he came to me in London with a long story which I forgot.'⁹⁵

The ability of local associations to defy the party organization, and even their local leaders, was demonstrated in Roxburghshire after the defeat of Arthur Elliot at the 1892 general election. In light of Elliot's determination not to stand for the constituency

⁹³ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Report Submitted to the Business Committee for Three Weeks ending June 28th, 1900, p. 339 [Insert].

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Jan. 4th, 1895, p. 42.

⁹⁵ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 126-127, Hartington to Wolmer, Aug. 16th, 1891.

again, local Conservatives and Liberal Unionists resolved that a Conservative candidate should be put forward at the next election. Although senior Liberal Unionists, especially Chamberlain, strongly objected to the decision,⁹⁶ another affront was the decision of the local Liberal Unionist association to merge with the Conservative association. Elliot declared that such a decision would harm the Unionist cause in the constituency and insisted that, as the head of the local Liberal Unionist association, he had the right to convene a meeting of its members and put his views against fusion to them.⁹⁷ Elliot was then politely but firmly informed by a local Liberal Unionist that the decision in favour of amalgamation had been unanimous, and that since fusion had already occurred, there was no longer any local Liberal Unionist association for which Elliot could call a meeting.⁹⁸

An inability of one party to find a candidate for one of their constituencies could also lead to the seat being transferred to the other party if they could find a candidate. This was notably the case in the 1886 general election, where, in line with Salisbury's wish that Conservatives should focus on seats they could win, Liberal Unionists were instead put forward. For example, the 4th Earl of Dunraven had great difficulty in securing a Conservative candidate for Southern Glamorganshire, and the seat was eventually contested by a Liberal Unionist, who was soundly beaten by the incumbent Gladstonian Liberal.⁹⁹ Similar situations arose in different constituencies in subsequent

⁹⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19518, Arthur Elliot Diary, Aug. 9th, 1892.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, MS. 19489, fo. 161-166, Elliot to Charles Cunningham, Nov. 8th, 1892.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, MS. 19489, fo. 171-172, Robert Purdom to Elliot, Nov. 9th, 1892.

⁹⁹ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C185/2, 4th Earl of Dunraven to Akers-Douglas, June 16th, 1886.

elections. After the 1892 general election, Hugh Elliot, the defeated Liberal Unionist candidate for Glasgow, St. Rollox, formally announced his decision not to stand again in July, 1893.¹⁰⁰ Over the next nine months numerous names were put forward as possible Liberal Unionist candidates, including one who briefly agreed to stand before withdrawing.¹⁰¹ In May, 1894 the local Conservatives were given the opportunity to bring forward a candidate, but initially were unsuccessful.¹⁰² Finally, in January, 1895 the local Conservatives announced that Faithful Begg had consented to stand.¹⁰³ In Lanarkshire, Govan, a seat contested by the Liberal Unionists in 1895, the Conservative Robert Duncan came forward as the candidate in 1900, with local Liberal Unionists noting that considering their failure to find a local Liberal Unionist candidate, they were in no position to object to the transfer of the constituency to a Conservative.¹⁰⁴

The Liberal Unionists also gained seats from the inability of Conservatives to find a suitable candidate. In the North-Eastern and North-Western divisions of Lanarkshire, both of which had been contested by Conservatives in 1895, the local Conservatives were unable to find candidates for the 1900 general election. Consequently the WSLUA found a Liberal Unionist to contest the North-Western division, while John Boraston sent down

¹⁰⁰ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Feb. 23rd, 1894, p. 327-329.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Mar. 30th, 1894, p. 334-336.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, May 11th, 1894, p. 341-342.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Jan. 4th, 1895, p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Report Submitted to the Business Committee for Three Weeks ending Apr. 20th, 1900, p. 332 [Insert].

from London a candidate to contest the North-Eastern division, actions for which the Conservatives subsequently expressed their gratitude.¹⁰⁵ In Bury, after the retirement of the Conservative M.P., local Conservatives were unable to find a suitable replacement, and the candidacy fell to the Liberal Unionists.¹⁰⁶ A similar situation transpired in Devonshire, Ashburton in 1905. The Mid-Devon Conservative Association had been unable to find a local Conservative to stand against the Liberal incumbent H. T. Eve, and as the Conservative Central Office did not have a suitable candidate either, they resolved to support a Liberal Unionist candidate.¹⁰⁷ Boraston began a search for a candidate, and on the eve of the general election sent down Captain E. F. Morrison-Bell to stand as a Liberal Unionist.¹⁰⁸ This was no empty concession; although Morrison-Bell was defeated in 1906, he won the seat at a by-election in 1908, and again at the December 1910 general election.

Candidacies could also change hands due to the lack of electoral success of one of the parties. Of the forty-five seats that were contested by Liberal Unionists in 1886 and subsequently transferred to Conservative candidates for 1892 without intervening by-elections, only four had been won by Liberal Unionists in 1886. Conversely, of the sixteen seats fought by Conservatives in 1886 and contested by Liberal Unionists in 1892 without intervening by-elections, only one had been won by the Conservative candidate in

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Report Submitted to the Business Committee for the Week ending Sept. 28th, 1900, p. 349 [Insert].

¹⁰⁶ Barbary, p. 208.

¹⁰⁷ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27, Resolution of the Mid-Devon Conservative Association, [n.d.]; *ibid.*, B27, Boraston to Lord Clifford, Dec. 19th, 1905.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, B27, Boraston to Lord Clifford, Dec. 30th, 1905.

1886. Efforts to change the candidacy from one party to another after a defeat were not always successful. After Sir Henry Havelock-Allan's defeat in South-Eastern Durham in 1892, Lord Londonderry and the Conservatives of the division bowed to pressure from Devonshire and agreed to back Havelock-Allan at the next election. But Londonderry clearly stated that should Havelock-Allan be defeated a second time, the Liberal Unionists of the constituency would have to support a Conservative candidate henceforth.¹⁰⁹ Havelock-Allan regained his seat in 1895 by 114 votes, and thus the constituency continued to be contested by a Liberal Unionist through the January 1910 general election. In 1894, Scottish Liberal Unionists agreed to a Conservative standing in a by-election in Forfarshire, a seat in which the Liberal Unionist incumbent had been defeated in 1892, on the understanding that if the Liberal majority was not reduced, the Liberal Unionists would put forward a candidate at the next election.¹¹⁰ In the event, C. M. Ramsay, the Conservative candidate, actually won the by-election, and remained the candidate until a Liberal Unionist came forward for the seat in 1906.¹¹¹ By-elections could also reverse a decision to transfer the candidacy in a seat. After his defeat in the 1892 general election, Edward Heneage declared his intention not to stand again for Great Grimsby, and the Conservatives were informed that they could arrange a candidate for the

¹⁰⁹ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC. 5/76/59, Londonderry to Chamberlain, Mar. 15th, 1893.

¹¹⁰ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Treasurer's Committee, Oct. 4th, 1894, p. 462-465.

¹¹¹ Rosebery commented that the defeat was a 'slap in the face'. See David Brooks, ed., The Destruction of Lord Rosebery: From the Diary of Sir Edward Hamilton, 1894-1895 (London, UK: Historian's Press, 1986), p. 191.

next election.¹¹² However, when H. Josse, the Liberal victor in 1892, retired suddenly in early 1893, the Conservatives were not yet prepared to bring forward a candidate, and as such Heneage was pressed to stand. Heneage relented, and defeated Henry Broadhurst to regain his seat.¹¹³

Regional considerations could also have an impact on changes in candidacies. In the 1892 general election, Chamberlain sponsored several Liberal Unionist candidates in Welsh seats, primarily on the platform of Disestablishment.¹¹⁴ The strategy failed spectacularly, with every single Liberal Unionist candidate in Wales going down to defeat.¹¹⁵ Their Conservative allies fared little better, winning only two borough constituencies. The defeat effectively ended the Liberal Unionist presence in Wales, where they contested on average less than two seats at the ensuing five general elections, and only won a single contest after 1892.¹¹⁶ All but one of the seats contested by the Liberal Unionists in 1892 were handed over to the Conservatives for the next election.

The actions of candidates themselves in moving from one party in the Unionist alliance to the other would also shift the candidacies of their seats. The most prominent

¹¹² LA, Edward Heneage Papers, 2 HEN 5/19/63, Heneage to John Wintringham, Nov. 25th, 1892.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 2 HEN 5/20/12, Heneage to John Wintringham, Feb. 23rd, 1893; David Hodgkins, 'Railway Influence in Parliamentary Elections at Grimsby,' in *Journal of Transport History*, 3rd ser., Vol. 23, No. 2 (2002), p. 174.

¹¹⁴ Ivor Thomas Rees, 'The Seafaring Preacher: A Note on Captain Thomas Davies, JP (1825-1905),' in *Journal of Welsh Religious History*, Vol. 4 (2004), p. 104-106; Morgan, 'Cardiganshire Politics: The Liberal Ascendancy, 1885-1923,' in *Ceredigion*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1967), p. 325; *ibid.*, 'The Liberal Unionists in Wales,' p. 167.

¹¹⁵ In Cardiganshire, one of the constituencies contested by a Liberal Unionist at the 1892 general election, it was suggested that there were no local Liberal Unionist voters whatsoever. See Pelling, p. 365.

¹¹⁶ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics, 1868-1922* (Cardiff, UK: University of Wales Press, 1963), p. 118-119. The single victory was the Carmarthen District in the 1895 general election.

to do this was Goschen, who resolved to join the Conservatives after the 1892 general election. In announcing his intention to Devonshire, he stated that he had refrained from joining the Conservatives before the election, but felt that his place was now with his former Cabinet colleagues.¹¹⁷ This was formally accomplished by Goschen joining the Carlton Club – proposed by Salisbury and seconded by Balfour.¹¹⁸ After the 1895 general election, two seats were transferred from the Liberal Unionists to the Conservatives due to a change of allegiance on the part of the two sitting Liberal Unionist M.P.s. D. H. Coghill, of Stoke-on-Trent, announced his desire to be considered a follower of Salisbury and Balfour, and George Kemp, of Lancashire, Heywood, was elected to the Carlton Club.¹¹⁹ The Heywood division would be contested once more by a Liberal Unionist, during the 1906 general election, but otherwise the Conservatives subsequently retained the candidacies of both constituencies, even after Coghill and Kemp were no longer themselves candidates.

Seats could also change on the basis of the support of local elites. In Staffordshire, Burton, the Liberals had uncontested returns at the general elections of 1886, 1892, and 1895, though the Conservatives did unsuccessfully contest the seat in an August, 1886 by-election, after the sitting Liberal M.P., Sir M. A. Bass, had been elevated to the peerage as Lord Burton. Burton's conversion to Liberal Unionism after

¹¹⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2506, Goschen to Devonshire, Jan. 8th, 1893.

¹¹⁸ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C238/9, Goschen to Akers-Douglas, Jan. 11th, 1893; *ibid.*, C22/25, Balfour to Akers-Douglas, Jan. 17th, 1893; Spinner, p. 177.

¹¹⁹ *Times*, Feb. 15th, 1896.

Gladstone's retirement greatly enhanced Unionist prospects in the division, and the Conservatives approached the Liberal Unionists and suggested they contest the seat.¹²⁰ Consequently, from the general election of 1900 onwards, the seat was held by the Liberal Unionist R. F. Ratcliff. Yet the desires of local elites were not always sufficient to change the representation of a seat. The Duke of Westminster angled for the retirement of R. A. Yerburgh, the sitting Conservative M.P. for Chester, in favour of the Duke's son Lord Henry Grosvenor, who had been an unsuccessful Liberal Unionist candidate in the 1887 by-election in Cheshire, Northwich. Middleton suggested to Salisbury that Grosvenor would only be accepted if he stood as a Conservative, and the matter was dropped.¹²¹

The party divisions over Tariff Reform after 1903 also caused certain constituencies to change which party contested them. Four Liberal Unionist seats were transferred to the Conservatives at the 1906 general election due to the Free Trade sympathies of their Liberal Unionist M.P.s. In the Falkirk District of Burghs, John Wilson crossed the floor to the Liberals in 1904, and was opposed by a Conservative at the general election. In Southampton and Northumberland, Tyneside, the incumbent Liberal Unionist M.P.s retired before the general election due to their opposition to Tariff Reform, and were replaced by Conservative candidates. Finally, in Lincoln C. H. Seely, the sitting Liberal Unionist M.P., contested the general election as a Free Trader, and was

¹²⁰ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, 5/1/5, T. Jeffrey Vince to Lichfield, Mar. 20th, 1896.

¹²¹ Richard Shannon, p. 268; Koss, Sir John Brunner, p. 102.

opposed by a Conservative. In each case, the transfer of the seat was unsuccessful, as Liberal candidates won each constituency.¹²² Tariff Reform also provided opportunities for Liberal Unionist Tariff Reformers to get into Parliament, including standing for Conservative seats. W. A. S. Hewins, a Professor of Economics and a Liberal Unionist, first stood for Yorkshire, Shipley, a Liberal Unionist seat, in the January, 1910 general election, but subsequently stood twice for Lancashire, Middleton, which Conservatives had always previously contested, before being elected in a 1912 by-election for the Conservative seat of Hereford. Indeed, it is perhaps an ironic commentary on the importance of the electoral pact that Hewins, the last Liberal Unionist ever elected to the House of Commons, did so in a seat that had been contested by Conservatives at every single prior election.¹²³

Considering that seats were transferred from one party to another for a variety of reasons, often local in origin – regardless of the regulations of the electoral pact – it is perhaps not surprising that there was also wide scope for conflict over seats between Conservatives and Liberal Unionists on a local level. The most famous, and most analysed, conflicts occurred in Chamberlain's West Midlands 'Duchy' between 1886 and 1895. In Birmingham, in particular, Chamberlain was eager to guard his electoral advantages, recognizing that a secure electoral base was essential to his place in national politics. Trouble arose there in 1889 on the death of John Bright, who had sat for Central

¹²² The above was calculated from the fates of Unionist Free Traders compiled in Rempel, p. 228-229.

¹²³ In his search for a seat, Hewins had appealed to Bonar Law in January 1912. See Ramsden, *The Organisation of the Conservative and Unionist Party in Britain*, p. 279.

Birmingham. Conservatives, who held only one of Birmingham's seven constituencies, claimed the right to contest the seat, and Randolph Churchill, who had been defeated by Bright in the constituency in 1885, attempted to stand, in line with a previous agreement with Chamberlain. But Chamberlain would not countenance the possibility of a political rival elbowing his way onto his Birmingham turf, and refused to entertain the possibility of anyone other than a Liberal Unionist standing. In the end, Chamberlain got his way, and Bright's son John Albert Bright won the by-election in a landslide, proving for the first time the electoral viability of Chamberlain's Liberal Unionism.¹²⁴ After the by-election, Chamberlain submitted the Conservative's desire for an additional Birmingham seat to arbitration by Salisbury and Hartington, who in 1890 returned a verdict in Chamberlain's favour, although with a suggestion by Hartington that Chamberlain should attempt to take into account the position of the local Conservatives. This Chamberlain's allies did their best to ignore.¹²⁵ When John Albert Bright stepped down just prior to the 1895 general election, the Conservatives of the Central division attempted to secure the seat for themselves by having Lord Charles Beresford stand, and rejected T. Grosvenor Lee, the proposed Liberal Unionist candidate. Chamberlain was able to retain the seat for the Liberal Unionists by substituting Ebenezer Parkes, chairman of the Birmingham

¹²⁴ Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics*, p. 47-50; Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p. 269-271. During the by-election, Powell Williams at first refused to believe the positive canvass returns, commenting that the canvass 'frightens me because it is too good.' See BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 6/2/1/18, Powell Williams to Chamberlain, Apr. 10th, 1889. On Chamberlain's post-by-election confidence, see Williams, Balfour to Salisbury, July 2nd, 1889, p. 289-290. See also R. F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 355-356.

¹²⁵ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/8/147, Bunce to Chamberlain, Nov. 19th, 1890.

Liberal Unionist Association, for Lee.¹²⁶

Problems also occurred outside Birmingham in the West Midlands. There was a brief row in 1890 between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists over who was to contest Staffordshire, Lichfield.¹²⁷ A more serious issue arose in Eastern Worcestershire in early 1892, after the Liberal Unionist incumbent, G. W. Hastings, was expelled from Parliament for fraud, and Austen Chamberlain was invited to stand in the ensuing by-election.¹²⁸ Local Conservatives insisted that the price of their support for Austen was that he give a pledge not to vote for Disestablishment. Joseph Chamberlain replied to Balfour that local Liberal Unionists were furious and prepared to withhold all aid to Conservative candidates in other seats if such an insult to the Chamberlains was allowed to stand.¹²⁹ Balfour intervened with the local Conservatives to get the pledge dropped,¹³⁰ and Austen Chamberlain was returned at the by-election unopposed.

The most serious conflict was in Warwick and Leamington in the spring of 1895. The conflict between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives over who would contest the constituency in succession to the retiring Speaker provoked a national crisis, as the conflict coincided with concerns by backbench Conservative M.P.s over Chamberlain's

¹²⁶ Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics*, p. 56; Briggs, p. 188.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹²⁸ Austen Chamberlain had been originally adopted as the Liberal Unionist candidate for Hawick Burghs in 1888, but the constituency was marginal and geographically distant, and he was eager to enter Parliament before the next general election. David Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain: Gentleman in Politics*, (Bolton, UK: Ross Anderson Publications, 1985), p. 18-19.

¹²⁹ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 6/6/1C/3, Chamberlain to Balfour, Jan. 18th, 1892.

¹³⁰ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 1, 4e, Balfour to Windsor, Jan. 5th, 1892.

vote for the Welsh Disestablishment Bill on April 1st.¹³¹ The result was a series of attacks on Chamberlain in the Conservative press, including an anonymous attack by George Curzon in the New Review, that greatly upset Chamberlain, who said that ‘he was prepared to stand anything from the Gladstonians, but “to be stabbed in the back by his friends” was more than he could stand.’¹³² He even hinted he was contemplating retirement.¹³³ Salisbury, Balfour, and other leading Conservatives did what they could to soothe Chamberlain, though Salisbury expressed disbelief that Chamberlain could be so offended by newspaper articles.¹³⁴ A solution to the crisis was found by having George Peel, the prospective Liberal Unionist candidate retire from the contest, replaced by Alfred Lyttelton, who would be victorious in the ensuing by-election.¹³⁵

An important factor to note in these controversies was that they were in large part due to pressure generated from below. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, Chamberlain’s position in Birmingham was insecure in large part because his Liberal Unionist followers still had significant sympathies for the Liberals, including a continued belief in the possibility of Liberal reunion, and viewed their new allies with as much suspicion as their former compatriots. Up to 1895, Chamberlain had to tread carefully to keep his Liberal Unionist followers in line, and needed to demonstrate that Liberal Unionism was not ‘the

¹³¹ Morgan, Wales in British Politics, p. 151.

¹³² CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2606, Wolmer to Devonshire, Apr. 16th, 1895.

¹³³ See, for example, NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19490, fo. 94-95, Chamberlain to Elliot, Apr. 5th, 1895.

¹³⁴ Andrew Roberts, Salisbury: Victorian Titan, (London, UK: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), p. 597-598.

¹³⁵ Conservative willingness to accept Lyttelton may have been in part due to the belief that he would not act as a Radical. See Pelling, p. 192.

Trojan horse for bringing reaction to the seats of power in the citadel of reform.¹³⁶ Thus Chamberlain had to rebuff Conservative attempts to increase their Parliamentary representation in the city. Moreover, Conservative attacks did not come from the Conservative leadership, as Chamberlain himself understood.¹³⁷ Instead, it was the Conservative rank-and-file causing most of the problems, as they chafed under the restraints of the Unionist alliance, which required them to forgo contesting many constituencies in Chamberlain's 'Duchy'.¹³⁸ The ability of the Conservative leadership to bring their foot soldiers into line was always limited, as Balfour conceded to James:

We all realise our own particular difficulties more clearly than the difficulties of our friends, and I sometimes think that the almost impossible position of the Conservative Leaders is not sufficiently understood by those who do not see the inside working of the Party. We have no powers of control over localities: we have always encouraged them to choose their own Candidates, and manage their own affairs: we have no bribes to offer them, and no threats wherewith to intimidate them. Our sole weapon is that of persuasion, and, human nature being what it is, we ought not to be surprised that particular constituencies, keenly alive to their own claims & wants, should turn an unwilling ear to suggestions in favour of a policy based upon wider considerations, which they only imperfectly grasp; and, when the element of personal rivalry and bitterness comes in – as it unfortunately has both at Hythe and Warwick, the disease becomes almost too deep-seated to be cured by any surgical operation which we in London are able to perform.¹³⁹

The controversies over representation in the West Midlands were mirrored in

¹³⁶ Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics*, p. 40-42; Roger Ward, *City-State and Nation: Birmingham's Political History, c. 1830-1940* (Chichester, UK: Phillimore, 2005), p. 127.

¹³⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2608, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Apr. 19th, 1895.

¹³⁸ For example, Conservative leaders in Western Staffordshire had some problems convincing the Conservative rank-and-file to support the Liberal Unionist incumbent H. A. Bass in the late 1880s. See J. P. D. Dunbabin, 'Expectations of the New County Councils, and Their Realization,' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1965), p. 365.

¹³⁹ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/721, Balfour to James, Apr. 14th, 1895.

other constituencies. In Hythe, the retirement of the eccentric M.P. and railway entrepreneur Sir Edward Watkin prior to the 1895 general election resulted in a dispute over whether a Conservative or a Liberal Unionist should follow him, which was caught up in the contemporaneous conflict over Warwick and Leamington.¹⁴⁰ The central question was over Watkin's political allegiance, as both Conservatives and Liberal Unionists claimed him as one of theirs, yet as the Earl of Radnor noted, 'no one (not even himself) knew what his [Watkin's] politics were; excepting that he would vote for anyone or anything to get support for his Channel Tunnel.'¹⁴¹ In 1893 Akers-Douglas noted that he had never considered Hythe to be a Liberal Unionist seat, suggesting that as an independent Watkin had received Conservative support in the 1885 general election, and that in recent years he had received the Conservative whip.¹⁴² But Boraston argued that Watkin had identified himself as a Liberal Unionist in his 1886 election address, and had received Liberal Unionist whips until he came into conflict with Edward Heneage over Great Grimsby in February 1890. Watkin again received Liberal Unionist whips after the 1892 general election, until the Great Grimsby by-election in March 1893. Moreover, Boraston pointed out that the Constitutional Year Book for 1895 classified Watkin as a Liberal Unionist.¹⁴³ In the midst of this confusion, local Conservatives took it upon

¹⁴⁰ Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government*, p. 237; David Hodgkins, *The Second Railway King: The Life and Times of Sir Edward Watkin, 1819-1901* (Merton Priory Press, 2002), p. 653-654. On Watkin's conflicts with Heneage, see *ibid.*, 'Railway Influence in Parliamentary Elections in Grimsby,' p. 173-174.

¹⁴¹ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C440/4, 5th Earl of Radnor to Akers-Douglas, Apr. 4th, 1895.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, CLp 3, fo. 236-238, Akers-Douglas to A. H. Gardner, Mar. 3rd, 1893.

¹⁴³ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 6/6/1E/5, Boraston to Devonshire, Mar. 1st, 1895.

themselves to nominate Sir Bevan Edwards to stand at the next election. When this unilateral move was contested by Liberal Unionists, an offer of arbitration was made. According to the Conservatives, the offer was for arbitration by party leaders in London, but the Liberal Unionists argued that all which was offered was to convene a public meeting to ratify Edwards' nomination, which they felt would see the Liberal Unionists out-voted. The different views on the arbitration offer were, in Salisbury's phrase, 'in hopeless disagreement' with each other,¹⁴⁴ but Devonshire complained that Akers-Douglas, who supported the nomination of Edwards, 'seems to have been acting in a very astounding manner.'¹⁴⁵ At one point Powell Williams hoped to end the controversy over Hythe by having Alfred Lyttelton stand as a Liberal Unionist,¹⁴⁶ but the necessity of Lyttelton standing for Warwick and Leamington left the Liberal Unionists without an obvious standard-bearer for Hythe that both parties could rally behind. In the end, local Liberal Unionists suppressed their unease over Edwards, and he was elected over his Liberal rival by a margin of 463 votes, with the constituency remaining a safe Conservative seat down to the First World War.¹⁴⁷

In Liverpool, local Liberal Unionists were upset at what they felt was a lack of respect from and consultation with their local Conservative counterparts. Wolmer wrote to Akers-Douglas that 'unless they were treated with more consideration and unless they

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, JC 6/6/1E/6, Salisbury to Devonshire, Mar. 5th, 1895.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, JC 5/22/85, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Mar. 3rd, 1895.

¹⁴⁶ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2596, James to Devonshire, Dec. 22nd, 1894.

¹⁴⁷ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/804, H. Lewis to James, July 15th, 1895.

got a quid pro quo they certainly would not support your sitting Members in the event of an election.¹⁴⁸ Wolmer suspected, and Akers-Douglas agreed, that the root of the problem was a lack of tact by some Conservatives.¹⁴⁹ There was, in fact, more to the problems at Liverpool. The Conservatives complained the organizational effort of their Liberal Unionist counterparts was lacking, while the latter remained uneasy over Conservative policy. More importantly, during the 1892 general election, Liverpool Orangemen suspected that an important reason for the failure of J. C. Bigham, the Liberal Unionist candidate in the Exchange division, were jealous Conservative officials, who did not encourage plural voters to cast a ballot for Bigham.¹⁵⁰

After the Conservatives lost Rochester in an 1889 by-election, local Liberal Unionists suggested that their candidate should be run in the next general election, a notion rejected outright by their Conservative counterparts.¹⁵¹ Similarly, in Manchester, local Liberal Unionists put in a claim to contest the North division at the 1892 general election, but this was rejected out of hand as the seat was a Conservative one and Middleton argued yielding to such a ‘demand’ would set a dangerous precedent for other borough seats, and ‘already the number of L.U. candidates are fully equal if not more than equal to the value of their support out of Parliament.’¹⁵² Indeed, Middleton was determined that the Liberal Unionists not receive more seats than they were entitled to. In

¹⁴⁸ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C482/2, Wolmer to Akers-Douglas, July 27th, 1888.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, CLp 2, fo. 217-218, Akers-Douglas to Wolmer, Aug. 4th, 1888.

¹⁵⁰ Waller, p. 129-131.

¹⁵¹ See the correspondence in the *Times*, Apr. 18th, 25th, and 27th, 1889.

¹⁵² CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, CLp 1, fo. 429-431, Middleton to Balfour, Aug. 14th, 1889.

1894, with the impending retirement of the Conservative incumbent for Warwickshire, Stratford, Archibald Flower, a leading local Liberal Unionist, was seen as the natural successor. Middleton, however, declared that 'I am dead against giving up the seat to anyone but a Conservative,' and ultimately the Conservative Victor Milward would stand in 1895.¹⁵³ A suggestion by the Liberal Unionists that they should contest North Kensington on the retirement of the sitting Conservative M.P. was similarly dismissed.¹⁵⁴ Conversely, Bradford Conservatives attempted to put forward a candidate of their own for the Central division of the city for the 1892 general election, despite the constituency having been identified by Conservative party headquarters as one in which a Liberal Unionist should stand. Local Conservatives ultimately gave way and acquiesced in the candidacy of the Liberal Unionist Marquis of Lorne, but they were not as active in supporting Lorne's campaign as they were in the other two divisions in the city, both of which were contested by Conservatives.¹⁵⁵ After the defeat of Parker Smith in Paisley in 1886, local Conservatives claimed the right to contest the seat at the following general election, which was rejected by local Liberal Unionists. However, when Liberal Unionists could not find a suitable candidate, and in the absence of any agreement between the two local parties, the matter was submitted to the national leadership of both

¹⁵³ Roland Quinault, *Warwickshire Landowners and Parliamentary Politics, c. 1841-1923* (PhD Dissertation: Oxford University, 1975), p. 312. Milward was Chairman of the East Worcestershire Conservative Association, who had been forced to yield to Liberal Unionist claims in favour of Austen Chamberlain for that seat in 1892. When Milward died in 1901, Flower was again suggested as a candidate, but was passed over for another Conservative.

¹⁵⁴ Richard Shannon, p. 269.

¹⁵⁵ A. W. Roberts, *The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire*, p. 229-230.

parties, which decided in favour of the Conservatives.¹⁵⁶

Such problems existed north of the border in Scotland too. Goschen complained that the local Liberal Unionists were ‘jealous [of the] way in which the loaves and fishes are guarded by our Conservative friends in Scotland, and it is reasonable they should remember that their possession of them at the present moment is due to Liberal Unionists, with whom it would only be reasonable to share some portion.’¹⁵⁷ In November, 1887, the prospect loomed of a by-election in West Edinburgh after the incumbent, T. R. Buchanan, left the Liberal Unionist party to return to the Liberals. The Scottish Conservative agent warned Akers-Douglas that local Conservatives would object to the Liberal Unionists putting forward Thomas Raleigh, who had stood as a Radical candidate in South Edinburgh in 1885, to oppose Buchanan.¹⁵⁸ Raleigh was ultimately defeated by only forty-six votes, the only time the Liberal Unionists failed to carry the seat from 1886 to 1912. In the following year conflict arose over who should contest Elgin Burghs, and Salisbury and Hartington were asked to arbitrate.¹⁵⁹ In Glasgow, College, the local Conservatives selected Sir John Stirling-Maxwell to contest the seat at the 1892 general election without any consultation with the Liberal Unionists, and the WSLUA lamented publicly that this sort of behaviour had caused unrest in Birmingham and elsewhere. Moreover, the National Union of Conservative Associations for Scotland noted that the

¹⁵⁶ Macdonald, p. 108-109.

¹⁵⁷ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C25/26, Smith to Akers-Douglas, Oct. 17th, 1888.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, C361/1, Reginald MacLeod to Akers-Douglas, Nov. 3rd, 1887.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, CLp 2, fo. 314-315, Akers-Douglas to Reginald MacLeod, Dec. 31st, 1888.

relations between the Liberal Unionists and Conservatives in Dundee were more strained than anywhere else in Scotland, while some local Liberal Unionists were believed to be hostile to the Conservative candidate for Paisley in 1892.¹⁶⁰

Conflict was particularly rife in Ulster, where almost all Liberals had become Liberal Unionists in the spring of 1886. However, they still resented the Conservatives for their part in eliminating every Ulster Liberal M.P. during the 1885 general election, and refused to subscribe to any electoral agreement regarding seats.¹⁶¹ This reflected the significant social and cultural divide that separated the Liberal Unionists and Conservatives of Ulster. The Conservatives were identified with the Orange Order and landlords, while the Liberal Unionists appealed in particular to Presbyterian tenant farmers, and were much more reform-minded, particularly under the leadership of Thomas Lea and T. W. Russell, and emphasized economic over sectarian issues.¹⁶² Consequently, Conservative and Liberal Unionist candidates often opposed each other at elections, such as at North Belfast in 1900. Conflicts over seats also became matters for

¹⁶⁰ Burness, 'Strange Associations', p. 83-85; Macdonald, p. 141.

¹⁶¹ Thomas MacKnight, Ulster as it is, or Twenty-Eight Years' Experience as an Irish Editor, Vol. II (London, UK: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1896), p. 157-160.

¹⁶² Alvin Jackson, The Ulster Party, p. 111; Graham Walker, 'Thomas Sinclair: Presbyterian Liberal Unionist,' in Richard English and Graham Walker, eds., Unionism in Modern Ireland: New Perspectives on Politics and Culture (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1996), p. 26-27; Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 253-256. As Isabella Tod suggested, Irish Liberal Unionists 'are the descendants of those who fought and suffered for liberty, and against ascendancy.' Cited in Heloise Brown, 'An Alternative Imperialism: Isabella Tod, Internationalist and "Good Liberal Unionist,"' in Gender & History, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Nov. 1998), p. 367. This divide was also reflected in the Ulster press. As James Anderson has noted, during the First Home Rule Crisis, Liberal Unionist newspapers were much less militantly sectarian, and rejected armed resistance to Home Rule. See James Anderson, 'Ideological Variations in Ulster during Ireland's First Home Rule Crisis: An Analysis of Local Newspapers,' in Colin H. Williams and Eleonore Kofman, eds., Community Conflict, Partition and Nationalism (London, UK: Routledge, 1989), p. 149-153. Russell would eventually leave the Liberal Unionist party after 1900 to conduct an independent agitation on behalf of tenant farmers before ultimately returning to the Liberal party.

discussion by party leaders, such as the case of West Belfast in 1889,¹⁶³ and when another conflict emerged over North Tyrone prior to the 1895 general election both sides referred the matter to Balfour and Chamberlain respectively. The latter noted that ‘relations between the Landlord Orange Party and the Tenant & Lib. Unionist sections are very much strained,’ and that Liberal Unionist requests to contest additional seats should be met, lest significant numbers of Liberal Unionists break away from the Unionist alliance.¹⁶⁴

After the 1886 general election, there were no cases in England of official Conservative and Liberal Unionist candidates contesting seats against each other. However, there were cases of unofficial candidates standing, illustrating the extent to which local partisans were willing to ignore the electoral pact if sufficiently aggrieved. In North St. Pancras, which had been won by a Conservative in 1886, J. Leighton stood as an independent Liberal Unionist at a by-election in 1890 after the incumbent’s succeeded to the peerage as Lord Lamington. The outcome was considered doubtful,¹⁶⁵ and with an official Conservative candidate in the field, Wolmer visited the constituency in an attempt to dissuade Leighton from standing. The returning officer refused to turn Leighton’s nomination papers over to Wolmer, and Leighton went to the polls with the Liberal and Conservative candidates.¹⁶⁶ The Liberal candidate won by a narrow margin of 108 votes,

¹⁶³ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C482/4, Wolmer to Akers-Douglas, Aug. 20th, 1889.

¹⁶⁴ BUL, JC. 5/5/57, Chamberlain to Balfour, May 25th, 1894. See also Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party*, p. 215-216.

¹⁶⁵ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2228, Chamberlain to Hartington, Mar. 2nd, 1890.

¹⁶⁶ *Times*, Mar. 1st, 1890.

but this far exceeded Leighton's total of twenty-nine. Leighton would stand twice more in North St. Pancras but his presence would never affect the outcome.

More intriguing was the 1898 Great Grimsby by-election. In 1895 the Liberal candidate, George Doughty, had defeated the Liberal Unionist incumbent Edward Heneage, but in 1898 Doughty crossed the floor to the Liberal Unionists, and resigned his seat in order to win re-election under the new banner. Publicly Doughty stated that his decision was due to his no longer supporting Home Rule, and historians have generally seen his defection as part of a growing Liberal and Nonconformist dissatisfaction with Home Rule.¹⁶⁷ However, in reality Doughty's action was much more self-serving, as Arthur Elliot noted.¹⁶⁸ Doughty had originally been a Liberal Unionist supporter of Heneage, but had converted to Home Rule in order to defeat him and capture the seat. After 1895, it had fallen to the Conservatives to contest the seat, and they put forward Robert Melhuish, a strong local candidate, for the next election. Faced with a stiff contest against a Conservative, Doughty decided to revert to Liberal Unionism in an attempt to drive the Conservative candidate from the field. By resigning, Doughty forced the issue, and the Conservative party leadership endorsed Doughty at the by-election. In essence, Doughty used the electoral pact to his own advantage by crossing not to the

¹⁶⁷ *Times*, July 15th, 1898. See also D. W. Bebbington, 'Nonconformity and Electoral Sociology, 1867-1918,' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Sept., 1984), p. 650; Pelling, p. 212; Otte, p. 414-415 and 423; David W. Gutzke, 'Rosebery and Ireland, 1898-1903: A Reappraisal,' in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. 53, No. 127 (May 1980), p. 90; Paul Nicholls, *Khaki and the Confessional: A Study of a Religious Issue at the 1900 General Election in England* (Melbourne, Australia: The History Department, University of Melbourne, 2000), p. 64; Hodgkins, 'Railway Influence in Parliamentary Elections at Grimsby,' p. 174.

¹⁶⁸ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19523, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 25th, 1898.

Conservatives but to the Liberal Unionists. Doughty's action outraged some local Conservatives, however, and despite the blandishments of headquarters, Melhuish insisted on standing as an Independent Conservative.¹⁶⁹ Doughty won a crushing victory over Melhuish and the Liberal candidate, with the former garnering only 204 votes. Doughty would remain as the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Great Grimsby, with a single exception of a narrow defeat in January 1910, until his death in 1914. Doughty's creative use of the electoral pact meant Great Grimsby remained a Liberal Unionist seat until fusion.

Conflicts on a Parliamentary level invariably spilt over into municipal politics. In the early years of the Unionist alliance, it was not at all easy to convince Liberal Unionist voters to back Conservative candidates at the municipal level. In Liverpool, Conservatives limited Liberal Unionists to a single councillor, while in 1892 Liberal Unionists supported the Liberal candidate in the Exchange ward against a Conservative.¹⁷⁰ As usual there was conflict in Birmingham. After the tussle over the Central division in the spring of 1889, Conservatives retaliated later that year by refusing to back Austen Chamberlain's attempt to win a seat on the town council and, his father argued, by the Conservative Birmingham Daily Gazette actually suggesting that Conservatives should support Austen's Gladstonian opponent.¹⁷¹ With the Unionist

¹⁶⁹ Times, Aug. 1st, 1898.

¹⁷⁰ Waller, p. 129, 154.

¹⁷¹ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/65/16, Chamberlain to Smith, Oct. 25th, 1889; CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2220, Chamberlain to Hartington, Oct. 14th, 1889.

alliance having broken down in this contest, Austen was defeated by a mere eleven votes.¹⁷² In Bury, there were a number of disputes between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives over municipal politics, which culminated with dissident Conservatives running against several Liberal Unionist candidates in the 1888 municipal election.¹⁷³ Unionist municipal politics in London were initially complicated by an unwillingness among some Liberal Unionists to support Conservatives.¹⁷⁴ This led to the creation of an umbrella organization embracing all Unionists to contest elections to the London County Council. However, Conservatives were insistent that this organization, the London Municipal Society, would be controlled by them, and manoeuvred to ensure that it was Salisbury, not Chamberlain, who spoke at the first public meeting of the society.¹⁷⁵ Chamberlain complained the Conservative organizers had played ‘a dirty trick’ on him, but the Conservatives secured their goal of controlling Unionist municipal politics in London.¹⁷⁶

The formation of the Conservative and Liberal Unionist coalition government in

¹⁷² Ward, p. 113.

¹⁷³ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/16, James to Chamberlain, [n.d.]; Barbary, p. 198. After the 1887 municipal elections, local Conservatives complained publicly that Gladstonian Liberal victories had been achieved through the support of Liberal Unionists. See *ibid.*, p. 176.

¹⁷⁴ Ken Young, *Local Politics and the Rise of Party: The London Municipal Society and the Conservative Intervention in Local Elections* (Leicester, UK: Leicester University Press, 1975), p. 50-51; John Davis, *Reforming London: The London Government Problem, 1855-1900* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 188. There were also rifts on the London County Council between Liberal Unionists, willing to co-operate on some measures with the Progressive majority, and hardline Conservatives who simply wanted the entire County Council project to fail. See *ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁷⁵ Young, p. 61-66. Earlier, some Conservatives had been concerned lest the London Municipal Society become ‘a Liberal Unionist lodge.’ See John Davis, *Reforming London*, p. 194.

¹⁷⁶ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/701, Chamberlain to James, Nov. 17th, 1894.

1895 did not dampen conflict on the constituency level.¹⁷⁷ In 1898, a vacancy occurred in Birmingham, Edgbaston on the death of the Liberal Unionist M.P., George Dixon. Chamberlain resolved that the by-election should be contested by a Conservative, but this sparked outrage among rank-and-file Liberal Unionists. A meeting of the Liberal Unionist association for Edgbaston on February 2nd, 1898 heard speaker after speaker condemn the plan to hand the seat over to the Conservatives, with one wondering when the breaking of the electoral pact would end, and another suggesting that the Conservatives had not kept faith with them. Chamberlain was forced to make the issue one of confidence in his leadership, arguing that rejection of the proposal meant rejection of him. Despite Chamberlain's challenge, opposition remained, one member arguing that having voted for a resolution of condolence on Dixon's passing, he could not vote for a resolution that would undo his work. Nevertheless, Chamberlain's challenge allowed him to carry the day, and the association voted 84 to 29 to appoint a committee to confer with their Conservative counterparts regarding a Conservative candidate.¹⁷⁸ Once the Conservatives had selected Sir Francis Lowe to stand, the Edgbaston Liberal Unionists voted 55 to 17 to endorse his candidacy, even while reiterating its displeasure at the situation.¹⁷⁹ There was also a dispute between local Liberal Unionists and Conservatives over the candidacy for Worcestershire, Droitwich after the 1906 general election, which

¹⁷⁷ It has been more commonly assumed that local Liberal Unionist-Conservative conflicts over seats ended with the formation of the 1895 coalition. See, for example, Self, p. 61.

¹⁷⁸ *Times*, Feb. 3rd, 1898; Ward, p. 146.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Feb. 8th, 1898. In light of the bitterness created over the selection of Sir Francis Lowe, Birmingham Conservatives decided not to contest the next set of School Board elections, as they felt they could not count on Liberal Unionist support. See Briggs, p. 189.

was ultimately resolved in favour of the former when the Liberal Unionist John Lyttelton stood in the January 1910 general election.¹⁸⁰

Conflicts continued to occur outside of Chamberlain's 'Duchy'. In the 1898 by-election in Wiltshire, Cricklade, held after the resignation of Alfred Hopkinson, the Liberal Unionist incumbent, local Liberal Unionists were upset that a Conservative was brought forward instead, and the Liberal candidate emerged victorious.¹⁸¹ In 1902, a by-election occurred in the safe Conservative seat of Hampstead. Lord Charles Beresford initially came forward as the candidate, and had already been endorsed by the local Liberal Unionists when the Conservative Central Office sent Thomas Milvain to stand. When the Conservative association met, they endorsed Milvain by a two-thirds majority vote. This action upset some Liberal Unionists, and though they recognized that Hampstead was a Conservative seat, and that as such the Conservatives had the right to put forward their candidate, they remained resentful of how Milvain's candidacy had transpired. The local Liberal Unionist association moved to support Milvain by a single vote, that of the chairman, and another vote on a proposal that Liberal Unionists should abstain from the contest was defeated, again by a single vote.¹⁸² Beresford thus withdrew and Milvain won the seat by a comfortable margin. In December 1903, unrest occurred in

¹⁸⁰ Pelling, p. 196. Chamberlain had also been concerned about Conservative restlessness over the seat prior to the 1906 general election. See BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/23, Chamberlain to Boraston, Dec. 22nd, 1904.

¹⁸¹ Otte, p. 398-400. There had previously been some friction between local Liberal Unionists and Conservatives in the early 1890s. See Hopkinson, p. 166.

¹⁸² Frans Coetzee, For Party or Country: Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Popular Conservatism in Edwardian England (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 35-36.

Shropshire, Ludlow over the succession to R. J. More, the recently-deceased Liberal Unionist M.P. Liberal Unionists claimed the right to contest the seat on the basis of the electoral pact, but of their proposed candidates, Le Roy Lewis withdrew and the Conservatives objected to Bruce Ismay as not being a local man. The solution was to have Rowland Hunt stand as a Liberal Unionist, both because Hunt was from the constituency and because, as Hunt had to that point been a Conservative, he was thoroughly acceptable to local Conservatives. Thus the Liberal Unionists could only avoid further unrest through the adoption of what was in effect a Conservative in Liberal Unionist clothing.¹⁸³

In Paisley, John Moffat, adopted as the prospective Liberal Unionist candidate in 1902, caused increasing unrest in 1904 and 1905 due to his strong views in favour of Tariff Reform. In particular, he attacked Balfour and the Conservatives for not completely adopting Chamberlain's views, and by February 1905 was publicly declaring that Balfour was unfit for office. The local Conservative Association subsequently withdrew its endorsement of Moffat's candidature, creating an open breach between the Liberal Unionist Association he controlled and its nominal Conservative allies. Under increasing pressure, and after Chamberlain himself intervened against him, Moffat was forced to resign as candidate, and declared his intention to join the Liberals, while being replaced as candidate by another Liberal Unionist, J. A. D. Mackean.¹⁸⁴ Another conflict

¹⁸³ *Times*, Dec. 4th, 5th, 7th, and 28th, 1903. Despite the expedient of having Hunt stand as a Liberal Unionist, he was still opposed by a prominent local Conservative, the Evangelical Lord Forester, on the basis of Hunt being Catholic. See *VCH, Shropshire Vol. III* (1979), p. 348.

¹⁸⁴ Macdonald, p. 191-193.

occurred at the end of 1909 at Portsmouth, where the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists had each nominated a candidate to stand for the two-member constituency, in opposition to the two Liberal incumbents. However, in November 1909 one of the Liberal incumbents died, and the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists argued over which of their candidates should contest the expected by-election. The situation caught the attention of the party leadership, and Sir Saville Crossley was sent down to discuss the problem with the local Liberal Unionist association.¹⁸⁵ Eventually both stepped aside so that Beresford could contest the by-election instead. However, Bertram Falle, the prospective Liberal Unionist candidate, ensured that he, not the Conservative candidate, would stand alongside Beresford at the next general election by writing to Beresford to express his support for Beresford's candidacy, who replied with thanks and stated that he looked forward to contesting the general election with Falle.¹⁸⁶ The January 1910 general election was called before the Portsmouth by-election could occur, and both Beresford and Falle were subsequently elected.

Although conflicts over seats were fought by both parties, the overall trend was for the Liberal Unionists to contest fewer seats over time, though this decline was not the result of a general Liberal Unionist willingness to hand over seats to their Conservatives allies, but rather was due to the political realities that Liberal Unionist candidates faced in their constituencies. In most Liberal Unionist seats, the Conservative party formed the

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Nov. 15th, 1909.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Nov. 18th, 1909.

larger part of the Unionist alliance, and thus, regardless of any formal requirement for consultation on candidacies via Joint Committees, Conservatives had an effective veto on candidate selection. Most Liberal Unionist candidates were not in a position where they could ignore indications that Conservative workers and electors would not support them at an election, and thus when confronted with local Conservative unwillingness to support their candidature, they were left with little option but to retire.

The means by which local Conservatives could impose their will regarding candidacies was through a strong local Conservative organization. However, it could be difficult to maintain effective Conservative associations in constituencies that already had Liberal Unionist M.P.s, a problem recognized both by Conservative party organizers and Liberal Unionist leaders.¹⁸⁷ Still, Conservative organizers urged their local counterparts to maintain effective local associations. As Middleton argued regarding Suffolk, Sudbury, represented by the Liberal Unionist W. C. Quilter, no Liberal Unionist could be elected without an effective local Conservative organization supporting him.¹⁸⁸ Yet the corollary was that a Conservative organization strong enough to elect a Liberal Unionist was also strong enough to remove the Liberal Unionist. Indeed, Akers-Douglas noted that one important reason to maintain effective Conservative associations in Liberal Unionist seats was in case of the Unionist alliance breaking down, necessitating

¹⁸⁷ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, CLp 2, fo. 76-78, Akers-Douglas to Capt. Boyle, Feb, 15th, 1888; British Library, Balfour Papers, Add. 49769, fo. 55-56, Hartington to Balfour, June 11th, 1890.

¹⁸⁸ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, CLp 1, fo. 356-358, Middleton to Akers-Douglas, July 9th, 1887.

Conservative candidacies against sitting Liberal Unionist M.P.s.¹⁸⁹ Though this eventuality did not come to pass, strong Conservative associations were utilized by local Conservatives to impose their will on their Liberal Unionist allies.

Conservatives used their organizational superiority in some constituencies to prevent Liberal Unionist candidates from standing. When a vacancy occurred in one of the Conservative seats held in the two-member constituency of Brighton in November, 1886, Goschen was approached to stand, but as a Liberal Unionist. The local Conservative association, however, insisted that any candidate had to contest the seat as a Conservative. Goschen declined, and another Conservative won the by-election.¹⁹⁰ When another vacancy arose in Middlesex, Brentford at the same time, Middleton informed Hozier that he could not believe that any Liberal Unionist would wish to stand for so thoroughly a Conservative seat.¹⁹¹ The following year, Sir George Baden-Powell, Conservative M.P. for Liverpool, Kirkdale, urged Akers-Douglas that if a vacancy occurred in Liverpool, Walton, a Conservative and not a Liberal Unionist should stand, due to the constituency containing large numbers of Conservative electors who could never be brought to support a Liberal of any stripe.¹⁹² In the late 1880s, Conservatives in Oxfordshire, Woodstock became increasingly disillusioned with their Liberal Unionist M.P., F. W. Maclean, and rumblings were heard that he would not be supported by local

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, CLp 2, fo. 76-78, Akers-Douglas to Capt. Boyle, Feb, 15th, 1888.

¹⁹⁰ Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and Liberal Reunion*, p.63.

¹⁹¹ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, CLp 1, fo. 303-305, Middleton to Hozier, Nov. 30th, 1886.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, C436/1, Sir George Baden-Powell to Akers-Douglas, Aug. 19th, 1887.

Conservatives at the next election.¹⁹³ In 1889 Middleton suggested to Wolmer that Maclean might have to change seats at the next election to solve the problem in the Woodstock division.¹⁹⁴ Ultimately, Maclean would take a patronage appointment in 1891, clearing the way for G. H. Morrell, a Conservative, to succeed him as candidate.¹⁹⁵

In some situations, local Conservatives would nominate a Conservative candidate without reference to local Liberal Unionists, as occurred in Argyll in 1901.¹⁹⁶ A similar situation occurred in Bury, where James' acceptance of a peerage to coincide with his appointment as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the 1895 Unionist government necessitated finding a candidate to replace him. Even though James stated he had found a Liberal Unionist to take his place.¹⁹⁷ It would not be until after the general election, in which Kenyon had been successful, that the Conservative would agree to the formation of a Joint Committee to oversee future candidacies.¹⁹⁸ In certain cases the Conservatives aimed merely to remove a particular Liberal Unionist candidate, and were willing to

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, C525/1, 11th Viscount Valentia to Akers-Douglas, Nov. 27th, 1888. See also Pugh, The Tories and the People, p. 109.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, CLp 1, fo. 427-429, Middleton to Wolmer, Feb. 2nd, 1889.

¹⁹⁵ In other cases, Liberal Unionists could be effectively prevented from contesting a seat if the local Conservatives felt that a contest was not worth the effort and expense. See A. W. Roberts, The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire, p. 232.

¹⁹⁶ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Books, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Aug. 30th, 1901. Similarly, Randolph Churchill's abortive candidacy for Central Bradford was announced before local Liberal Unionists had been consulted. See A. W. Roberts, The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire, p. 269-270.

¹⁹⁷ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/85, James to Chamberlain, June 29th, 1895; Bury Archives, BNCA Papers, GCP/A/1/3/1, Political Committee Minute Books, July 1st, 1895. Victoria Barbary, however, has suggested that Kenyon's subsequent election campaign was conducted within the framework of Liberal Unionist ideology, thus making his candidacy palatable to Liberal Unionists. See Barbary, p. 192-197.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, GCP/C/1/1, Minute Books, Executive Committee, Dec. 22nd, 1898.

accept another Liberal Unionist instead. In Northern Ayrshire, the incumbent Liberal Unionist M.P., Hugh Elliot, was forced by local circumstances to stand down prior to the 1892 general election.¹⁹⁹ After his removal, the Conservatives allowed Thomas Cochrane, another Liberal Unionist, to stand and he held the constituency until his defeat in the January 1910 general election.

Another example of objections to particular candidates was seen in Devonshire, Ashburton prior to the 1892 general election. In 1886, the seat was unsuccessfully contested by a Liberal Unionist candidate, R. B. Martin. Afterwards, Richard Dawson, another Liberal Unionist, was selected to stand against the Liberal incumbent at the next election. However, many local Conservatives were not enthusiastic about Dawson's candidacy. At a meeting held at the local Constitutional Club in 1891, only about forty Conservatives showed up, when many more should have been in attendance. The absences were ascribed to either indifference or outright opposition to Dawson. In light of the lack of Conservative support for his candidacy, and considering that the Conservative organization in the constituency was far stronger than the Liberal Unionist association, Dawson felt he had no choice but to withdraw.²⁰⁰ Dawson's decision upset some local Liberal Unionists, and led to the temporary retirement of at least one official of the local Liberal Unionist association, but in light of the views of the Conservatives

¹⁹⁹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19483, fo. 166-169, Hugh Elliot to Arthur Elliot, July 16th, 1892.

²⁰⁰ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B27, Richard Dawson to W. H. Whiteway-Wilkinson, Sept. 14th, 1891.

nothing could be done but support whatever candidate they selected.²⁰¹

In addition to pressure over candidacies prior to elections, there were occasions of Liberal Unionist candidates complaining of insufficient Conservative support, both in terms of votes and organization, at the polls. After his defeat in Central Edinburgh in 1900, Arthur Conan Doyle laid the blame squarely at the feet of the Secretary of the local Conservative association. He urged that the man not only be dismissed but punished, and complained, ‘to think of all our efforts being neutralised by such a man!’²⁰² After Henry Stanley’s defeat in North Lambeth in 1892, his wife Dorothy accused the Conservatives of providing inadequate support, arguing that the local Conservative association ‘did not strain every nerve for us,’ and that ‘Conservative voters were sleepy and indifferent and would not face the rain to come and vote.’ Her personal opinion was that Conservative voters, finding that a Liberal Unionist was contesting the seat, were less interested than previously in the outcome of the contest.²⁰³ Hartington noticed these concerns in 1889. Reflecting on the poor run of Liberal Unionist by-election results, he noted that among the causes of different defeats were local jealousies regarding candidates and rival organizations.²⁰⁴ Such concerns were not without foundation. The chairman of the Conservative association in Central Bradford admitted after the 1886 general election that the Liberal Unionist defeat in that constituency had been due in part to a reluctance on the

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, B28 (B), Richard Dawson to W. H. Whiteway-Wilkinson, Dec. 14th, 1891.

²⁰² NLS, Arthur Conan Doyle Papers, Acc. 6001, Arthur Conan Doyle to Bruce Low, [n.d.].

²⁰³ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/13, Dorothy Stanley to Bruce, July 6th, 1892. John Sugden, Liberal Unionist candidate for Yorkshire, Colne Valley, also complained of a lack of Conservative support. See A. W. Roberts, *The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire*, p. 230-231.

²⁰⁴ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/22/46, Hartington to Chamberlain, Oct. 13th, 1889.

part of Conservatives to support a Liberal Unionist.²⁰⁵

At times even local Conservative leaders could not prevent the Conservative rank-and-file from acting against Liberal Unionist candidates. After his defeat in Roxburghshire at the general election of 1892, Arthur Elliot believed that the local Conservative leaders had fully co-operated with his campaign and had provided all the assistance they could. However, he argued that the same could not be said for some of the Conservative workers, who desired that the seat be represented by a Conservative.²⁰⁶ These sentiments came into the open after the 1892 election, when Elliot summoned a public meeting to discuss his defeat. Some Conservatives feared that Elliot had called the meeting to gain an endorsement for himself as candidate in the next election, which was not what Elliot had intended.²⁰⁷ Of the thirty-two Conservative parish associations in the constituency, twenty-four were willing to have Elliot remain as candidate, but six were opposed to him.²⁰⁸ As Elliot noted in his diary, it was ‘quite clear to me, that many of the Tory county gentlemen, don’t want me as a candidate again . . . [I] suppose they want a Conservative.’²⁰⁹ Elliot refused to stand again without the unanimous support of local Conservatives, and consequently declined the candidacy. The Conservative Earl of Dalkeith thereafter contested and won the seat at the 1895 general election.

An important issue that divided Liberal Unionists and Conservatives at the local

²⁰⁵ A. W. Roberts, *The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire*, p. 149.

²⁰⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19473, fo. 219-222, Arthur Elliot to Minto, Nov. 11th, 1892.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, MS. 19473, fo. 223-228, Arthur Elliot to Minto, Nov. 14th, 1892.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, MS. 19489, fo. 145-148, Charles Balfour to Elliot, Nov. 5th, 1892.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, MS. 19518, Arthur Elliot Diary, Oct. 27th, 1892.

level was the question of Disestablishment. This most prominently occurred in the controversy over Austen Chamberlain's candidacy for Eastern Worcestershire in January, 1892. Writing to local Conservatives, Arthur Balfour had urged that the maintenance of the Union took precedence over all other issues, including opposition to Disestablishment, an issue which he acknowledged was central to the beliefs of the Conservative party. Enforcing a pledge on Liberal Unionists not to vote for Disestablishment was thus to be avoided.²¹⁰ Writing to Wolmer on the controversy, Balfour commented that he believed that 'the Church Question should be left in the background as not within the region of immediate practical politics, and that no allusion should be made to it in one way or the other.'²¹¹ In the case of Eastern Worcestershire the demand for a pledge on Disestablishment was dropped, but elsewhere local Conservatives continued to use the issue as a litmus test for determining whether they would accept a particular Liberal Unionist candidate.²¹²

In some constituencies, Liberal Unionists were able to resist a pledge on Disestablishment owing to the strength of Liberal Unionism in their constituencies. J. Westlake, who would be the Liberal Unionist candidate in Cornwall, St. Austell in the 1892 general election, suggested to A. V. Dicey that Conservative weakness in his constituency left them in no position to dictate terms, and that local politics required him

²¹⁰ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/5/10A, Balfour to Colonel Milward, Jan. 30th, 1892.

²¹¹ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 1, 4b-4d, Balfour to Wolmer, Jan. 1st, 1892.

²¹² For example, one local Conservative newspaper in 1886 argued that only those Liberal Unionists who were opposed to Disestablishment should not face a Conservative candidate. See Klein, p. 678.

to be strongly in favour of Disestablishment, which coincided with his own private opinion.²¹³ In places where Conservatives dominated, however, they were able to require Liberal Unionist candidates to pledge not to vote for Disestablishment. In 1889, Charles Adeane was interested in standing as a Liberal Unionist for Cambridgeshire, Newmarket, a seat that had been contested unsuccessfully by both a Conservative and an independent Liberal Unionist in the 1886 general election. Adeane noted to Hartington that although he was opposed to Disestablishment in England, he was in favour of it in Wales, and when he first discussed his candidacy with local Conservatives he stated that he wished to remain uncommitted on the issue. However, the constituency contained a large Church party who would not accept Adeane's proposed stance, so he had no choice but to pledge not to vote for Disestablishment if he was to have any chance at receiving the support of the local Conservatives. Adeane also noted that Michael Biddulph, the Liberal Unionist incumbent in Herefordshire, Ross had also been required by Conservatives in his constituency to pledge not to vote for Disestablishment in exchange for their support.²¹⁴ In 1886, one of the Conservative James Theobald's conditions for retiring from the contest with the Liberal Unionist incumbent John Westlake was that the latter would guarantee that he would not vote for Disestablishment in the next Parliament. The absence of such a pledge, in addition to a lack of assurances that Theobald would have the reversion of the seat at the next election, caused him to go to the polls, resulting in the

²¹³ LMA, A. V. Dicey Papers, A/NFC109/6a, J. Westlake to Dicey, Oct. 20th, 1890.

²¹⁴ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/343, Charles Adeane to Hartington, June 14th, 1889. Ultimately the Newmarket division would be contested by a Conservative at the 1892 general election.

defeat of Westlake.²¹⁵ Conservatives also successfully forced Sir Henry Havelock-Allan to repudiate Disestablishment in exchange for their support in his attempt to secure re-election in South-Eastern Durham.²¹⁶ T. Grosvenor Lee, who had originally been put forward as the Liberal Unionist candidate to replace the retiring John Albert Bright in 1895, was vetoed by local Conservatives due to his views on Disestablishment.²¹⁷ After the 1892 general election, Lord Londonderry was interested in having a Liberal Unionist stand for Durham, which had been gained by the Gladstonian Liberals. Hedworth Lambton was approached, but was rejected by local Conservatives on the basis that he would not pledge to vote against Disestablishment.²¹⁸ Londonderry then invited Arthur Elliot, who felt Disestablishment was not in the field of practical politics, to stand. In Shropshire, Wellington, the narrow margin of A. H. Brown's re-election in 1892 was due primarily to Conservative abstention in the face of his continued support for Disestablishment.²¹⁹ In Wales, Conservative resentment at Chamberlain's efforts to run Disestablishment-supporting nonconformist Liberal Unionist candidates in the 1892 general election contributed to the subsequent effective extinction of Welsh Liberal Unionism.²²⁰ As late as 1905, Conservative pressure on Disestablishment cost Chamberlain a potential Tariff Reformer candidate, who instead ended up in the Liberal

²¹⁵ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C516/1, James Theobald to Akers-Douglas, June 23rd, 1886.

²¹⁶ Rodden, p. 411-412.

²¹⁷ Ward, p. 170.

²¹⁸ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19518, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 14th, 1893.

²¹⁹ Pelling, p. 193.

²²⁰ Morgan, 'The Liberal Unionists in Wales,' p. 167.

camp.²²¹

Nor was concern over the issue of Disestablishment limited to the rank-and-file of the Conservative party. When discussing the possible elevation to the peerage of Sir John St. Aubyn, the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Cornwall, St. Ives, Salisbury noted to Hartington that the only thing that could derail the honour was if the local Conservatives would not support St. Aubyn's successor, and it was the Church question over which difficulties most often arose.²²² The issue was addressed, St. Aubyn received his peerage, and the St. Ives division was passed to his Liberal Unionist successor, T. B. Bolitho, without a contest. When Horace Farquhar was being considered for the candidacy for one of the Conservative Marylebone seats, Salisbury inquired as to Farquhar's opinions on religious issues. Devonshire was able to reassure the Conservatives that Farquhar would not pose any problem on that front.²²³

Contrary to Balfour's opinion expressed during the controversy over Austen Chamberlain's candidacy, there are indications that it had earlier been Conservative party policy that Disestablishment should be used as a test question against Liberal Unionist candidates. Writing to the Conservative agent in Scotland, Akers-Douglas commented in 1887 that 'I feel quite certain that we as a party ought not to take any prominent part in

²²¹ The lost candidate was David Davies, grandson of the David Davies that had voted against the First Home Rule Bill but had been defeated at the 1886 general election. The younger David Davies favoured Tariff Reform and opposed Home Rule, but his 'fanatical commitment to Calvinistic Methodism' was incompatible with Conservative qualms regarding the issue of Disestablishment. See Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Montgomeryshire's Liberal Century: Rendel to Hooson, 1880-1979,' in *The Welsh History Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (June, 1992), p. 99-100; *ibid.*, 'The Liberal Unionists in Wales,' p. 168.

²²² CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2131, Salisbury to Hartington, May 23rd, 1887.

²²³ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C169/8, Devonshire to Akers-Douglas, June 28th, 1894.

support of any Unionist candidate who pledges himself to Disestablishment.²²⁴ In many seats, a decision by local Conservatives to not take ‘any prominent part’ in supporting a Liberal Unionist candidate would have all but guaranteed defeat, and thus would have made it practically impossible for such a Liberal Unionist candidate to avoid yielding to Conservative views on Disestablishment if he wished to remain the candidate. Historians have noted that religious views divided the Liberal Unionist party, which contained not only prominent politicians like Chamberlain publicly committed to Disestablishment, but also leading defenders of the Anglican Church, such as Lord Selborne.²²⁵ While such a divide certainly existed, the action of local Conservatives in enforcing pledges on Liberal Unionist candidates not to support Disestablishment may have affected the balance of forces within the Liberal Unionist party on this issue.

Lord Salisbury had suggested both at the time of the 1886 general election and afterwards that Conservatives should stand in those seats which they had a reasonable chance of victory.²²⁶ However, an analysis of the transfer of seats between the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists suggests that the desire to win seats was not a primary factor in the ambition of local Conservatives to displace Liberal Unionist candidates. Considering the number of Liberal Unionist seats that were transferred to the Conservatives, Arthur Elliot once commented that ‘I do not think there has ever been a case where a sitting Liberal Unionist member has lost the seat, & where it has

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, CLp 2, fo. 33-34, Akers-Douglas to Reginald MacLeod, Nov. 5th, 1887.

²²⁵ Green, p. 7-8.

²²⁶ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 302.

afterwards been won by a Conservative.²²⁷ Elliot was exaggerating, but only slightly, as can be shown by a comparison of the 1886 and 1892 general elections. Of the fifty-four seats that were contested by Liberal Unionists in 1886, and subsequently fought by Conservatives in 1892, eleven had been won by the Liberal Unionists, along with two held by the Conservatives.²²⁸ Of these, and excluding the three Liberal Unionist-Conservative contests, the Conservatives were only able to hold three.²²⁹ In addition, the Conservatives managed to gain three seats that the Liberal Unionists had lost in 1886, and the Conservatives thus won nine of the fifty-five seats the Liberal Unionists contested in 1886, a decline of four on the total the Liberal Unionists had won.²³⁰ Although the Conservatives won fewer seats in total at the 1892 general election as compared to 1886, their 16.7% winning percentage in seats acquired from the Liberal Unionists was still significantly lower than their 56.9% winning percentage in all seats contested by the Conservatives. This speaks not only to the fact that the Conservatives kept possession of their strongest seats in 1886, as Lubenow has noted,²³¹ but that the Conservatives were more than willing to regain the candidacies of seats from the Liberal Unionists that were, at best, marginal. Of the three seats that the Conservatives gained in 1892 that the Liberal Unionists had lost in 1886, two, Perth and Northumberland, Hexham, would never be

²²⁷ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19474, fo. 17-20, Arthur Elliot to Minto, Feb. 25th, 1893.

²²⁸ The eleven includes Hampshire, Petersfield.

²²⁹ Of the seven losses, three had been lost by Liberal Unionist candidates at by-elections, and Conservative candidates failed to regain them at the 1892 general election.

²³⁰ Calculated from Appendix C.

²³¹ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 301.

won by a Conservative candidate again for the duration of the Unionist alliance.

The general inability of the Conservatives to win seats which had earlier seen Liberal Unionist candidates was reflected in the long-term trends as well. Of the fifty-four seats Liberal Unionists contested in 1886 that were fought by the Conservatives in 1892, thirty would in fact never be won by a Conservative candidate at any subsequent election. An additional three of the fifty-four would only be won when the seats were contested again by Liberal Unionist candidates. In particular regions the fate of the transferred seats was particularly bleak. The virtual abandonment of Wales by the Liberal Unionists after 1892 did nothing to add to the number of seats the Conservatives won. All four of the Northumberland county divisions were contested by Liberal Unionists at the 1886 general election, of which three were handed over to the Conservatives from 1892, with the exception being Northumberland, Tyneside, in which Liberal Unionists continued to stand through the 1900 general election. Other than a single Conservative victory in the Hexham division in 1892, which was overturned on petition and lost at the ensuing by-election, the only Unionist victory in the county divisions of Northumberland was by the Liberal Unionist H. Crawford Smith in the Tyneside division in 1900.²³² After his retirement due to his Free Trade sympathies, the division was contested by Conservatives at the next three general elections, but in common with the other three county divisions, it was lost by sizeable margins.

A similar situation existed in the county divisions of Derbyshire. Of the seven

²³² N. G. Clayton, the successful Conservative candidate for Northumberland, Hexham at the 1892 general election, was unseated for excessive treating at his home. See Pelling, p. 333.

county divisions, five were contested by Liberal Unionists, and two by Conservatives, at the 1886 general election. Of the five, three were transferred to the Conservatives by 1892, and the fourth to the Conservatives by 1895. However, this did not significantly improve Conservative representation in the county. As Alfred Barnes, the Liberal Unionist who had won the Chesterfield division in 1886 but had been defeated in 1892, noted in 1894, only a Cavendish could hope to safely carry his old constituency, and that a Conservative would poll fewer votes than he had as a Liberal Unionist.²³³ Barnes' prediction turned out to have been accurate, as his Conservative replacement as candidate in the Chesterfield division lost by a larger margin in the considerably improved political climate of 1895 than he had lost by in 1892. The Liberal margin over the Conservative in the division continued to grow through the January 1910 general election, so that the seat became a safe Liberal constituency. In the Mid and North-Eastern divisions, which also saw Liberal Unionist candidates in 1886, Conservative candidates were defeated, often by large majorities, in each subsequent election. Only in the Southern division did the Conservatives experience any success in a Derbyshire county seat fought by a Liberal Unionist in 1886, winning the constituency in 1895 and 1900. However, by far the safest Unionist seat among the county divisions of Derbyshire was the Western division, contested by the Liberal Unionists at every election. Thanks in large part to the Cavendish influence, the seat was held by a member of the family, standing as a Liberal Unionist, at every election from 1886 through the First World War.

²³³ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2547, Alfred Barnes to Devonshire, Mar. 10th, 1894.

The extent of the fealty to the Unionist alliance demonstrated by the leaders of the two parties was never matched by their respective partisans at a local level, as there was sustained conflict between both parties over which was to put forward candidates for their seats. In many cases, local Conservatives, who in most constituencies were by far the larger of the two parties, were able to force Liberal Unionist candidates to retire in favour of Conservative candidates, regardless of whether such action was desired or even approved by party leaders. Other than in Cornwall, where a negligible Conservative presence left them in no position to claim seats, it was only in the West Midlands where such advances by local Conservatives were consistently deflected. This was due in large part to Chamberlain seeing Liberal Unionist representation in the area as a crucial component of his power base in national politics, and as such he was willing to transform local disputes over representation into crises that threatened the Unionist alliance, necessitating a retreat on the part of Conservatives. Regarding the 1886 Home Rule crisis, A. B. Cooke and John Vincent have commented that ‘the more a man cared about the fate of Ireland, the more certainly he would be excluded from the counsels of those who guided Unionist intentions.’²³⁴ Perhaps a similar comment could be made regarding proximity to the Unionist leadership and loyalty to the Unionist alliance.

²³⁴ Cooke and Vincent, p. 19.

Chapter 4: Liberalism vs. Unionism

In an article discussing Liberal Unionist voting patterns in the House of Commons after 1886, in relation to the Liberals and the Conservatives, John D. Fair identifies no fewer than ten points which historians have identified as the most crucial to the eventual amalgamation of the Liberal Unionists with the Conservatives, ranging from the first appeals for an alliance from Churchill and Salisbury in early 1885 to the formation of the coalition Unionist government a decade later.¹ However, a focus on finding the key turning points tends to obscure the consistent struggle by individual Liberal Unionists to reconcile their Liberalism with their Unionism. Many Liberal Unionists retained core liberal beliefs for years, even decades, after they formally left the Liberal party, and struggled to reconcile these beliefs with their wholehearted defence of the Union and the alliance with the Conservatives such a defence required. Different Liberal Unionists had different turning points regarding when they had to decide between their Liberalism and their Unionism. For some, particular issues beyond Ireland had such a resonance with their Liberalism that they abandoned Unionism. Such conflicts were not resolved by the formation of the 1895 coalition government, but rather increased, particularly over the issues of imperialism and education. The persistence of such conflicts demonstrates that many Liberal Unionists never came to feel completely comfortable in the Unionist alliance, or ever identified themselves with the Conservative party. However, long-term

¹ John D. Fair, 'From Liberal to Conservative: The Flight of the Liberal Unionists after 1886,' in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Winter, 1986), p. 293-294.

processes, including the changing complexion of the Liberal Unionist party in the House of Commons, tended to increase the strength of Unionism within the party. Ultimately, the final turning point would be reached in 1903, when Liberal Unionists would have to make a final decision regarding Liberalism or Unionism. The policy of Free Trade was a basic element of Victorian and Edwardian Liberalism, and to oppose it was to finally make a definitive break with their Liberal heritage. Some Liberal Unionists could not make such a break, and thus left the party. Those who remained had essentially chosen Unionism over Liberalism, and it was only from this date that the Liberal Unionists began to truly meld into the Conservatives.

From the moment of the Liberal split over Home Rule, Liberal Unionists were keen to emphasize that they had not sacrificed their Liberalism in supporting the Union. As Edward Heneage suggested to his election agent in January 1887, ‘I deny that we are Dissident Liberals, we are consistent Liberals . . .’² Chamberlain in particular emphasized the importance of Liberal Unionist candidates stressing their Liberalism if they were to win converts to their cause.³ This concern was reflected on the local level by Liberal Unionist M.P.s. W. C. Quilter, the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Suffolk, Sudbury, continued to print his propaganda on the yellow paper of the Liberal party, and the local press printed his election addresses from 1885 and 1892 side-by-side to demonstrate that

² LA, Edward Heneage Papers, 2 HEN 5/14/1, Heneage to John Wintringham, Jan. 4th, 1887.

³ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 8, fo. 34-35, Chamberlain to Wolmer, June 19th, 1892. See also LMA, A. V. Dicey Papers, A/NFC109/11, Isabella Tod to Dicey, Sept. 30th, 1892.

he had not altered his political principles in becoming a Liberal Unionist.⁴ Such a preoccupation was also reflected in the political manoeuvres of the Liberal Unionist party. After the 1886 general election, the Liberal Unionists in the House of Commons resolved to sit on the Opposition benches, despite their general support for the Conservative government, in order to reflect their claim to be ‘the true Church of Liberalism.’⁵ In 1890, after the O’Shea divorce scandal divided the Irish National party and harmed the cause of Home Rule, Chamberlain wondered about the party issuing a manifesto to their ‘fellow Liberals’ suggesting that they return to ‘the ancient ways.’⁶ Liberal Unionists were also keen to emphasize their distance from the Conservatives, especially during the first years of the party’s existence. When a member of the Executive Committee of the West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association (hereafter WSLUA) attended a Primrose League meeting in November 1886, the association communicated to the press that the member had attended entirely on his own, and not as a Liberal Unionist representative.⁷ This emphasis on Liberalism was also not merely undertaken for electoral purposes, as many Liberal Unionists genuinely felt that they were still Liberal despite their separation from the Gladstonians. For instance, two Cornwall Liberal Unionist M.P.s, Leonard Courtney and T. B. Bolitho, retained a reputation

⁴ P. F. Clarke, with Kevin Langford, ‘Hodge’s Politics: Agricultural Labourers and the Third Reform Act in Suffolk,’ in Negley Harte and Roland Quinault, eds., Land and Society in Britain, 1700-1914: Essays in Honour of F. M. L. Thompson (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 132-133.

⁵ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2029, Craig Sellar to Hartington, July 28th, 1886.

⁶ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/432, Chamberlain to James, Nov. 30th, 1890; Vincent, The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, Dec. 6th, 1890, p. 866.

⁷ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, Nov. 22nd, 1886, p. 40-44.

among their constituents for being Liberal on most questions, while in the House of Lords, Liberal Unionist peers co-operated with Lords Kimberley and Ripon, two prominent Liberals, over reforms to the Indian Councils.⁸ This was also reflected in the ranks of the Liberal Unionist party outside Parliament. E. E. Bowen, who had stood against Arthur Balfour at Hertford in 1880, left the Liberals over the Home Rule question, but remained opposed to the Tories for the rest of his life, while Henry Sidgwick, even when he voted for the Conservative candidate, did so despite the fact that he agreed with the Liberals on many important policy questions.⁹

Hartington's decision to decline Salisbury's two offers of the premiership in 1886 were related to the desire to retain a reputation for Liberalism.¹⁰ However, after Churchill's resignation at the end of 1886, Goschen was drafted into the Conservative cabinet as the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Goschen's addition not only provided a first-rate replacement for Churchill, but also helped address the lack of Conservative front-bench talent in the House of Commons.¹¹ Goschen's Liberal Unionist colleagues saw the benefits of Goschen joining the government, with Derby suggesting that 'for the country, it is clear gain to have a financier at the Exchequer instead of a madman.'¹² In many ways

⁸ Hayden, p. 230. Bolitho's 1892 election address included support for shorter Parliaments, One Man One Vote, and the Direct Veto. See Pelling, p. 163. Regarding the Indian Councils, see R. J. Moore, 'The Twilight of the Whigs and the Reform of the Indian Councils, 1886-1892,' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1967), p. 400-414.

⁹ Lubenow, *The Cambridge Apostles*, p. 188-190.

¹⁰ In declining the offers of the premiership Hartington was acting in accordance with the wishes of the bulk of his followers. See Vincent, *The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby*, p. 835-836.

¹¹ See, for instance, NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19487, fo. 257-258, Buchanan to Elliot, July 16th, 1886; *ibid.*, MS. 19512, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 20th, 1886.

¹² CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2092, Derby to Hartington, Jan. 5th, 1887.

Goschen was a natural fit for the Conservative government – his unease with Liberalism long predated the Home Rule crisis, and he was generally seen as the most ‘Conservative’ of the Liberal Unionists.¹³ However, some Liberal Unionists feared that Goschen’s action would be seen as reflecting the integration of the party with the Conservatives. Arthur Elliot feared that it would go far to undermine the independent position of the Liberal Unionists, while Alexander Craig Sellar believed that it was a ‘blow,’ however necessary it may have been for the greater cause of the Union.¹⁴ Lord Camperdown suggested that Hartington needed to make a public speech to explain that Goschen joining the Conservative government did not mean a more general coalition between the two parties, that the Liberal Unionists remained independent, and that Goschen was acting on his own.¹⁵

The continued Liberalism of Liberal Unionists was also reflected in the clubs. Tensions between Liberals and Liberal Unionists were strongest in the avowedly political clubs, but even in such cases a break between the two sides was often neither quick nor complete. Though Liberal Unionists had seceded from the Eighty Club in early 1887, they continued to frequent the Manchester Reform Club until after the 1892 general election.¹⁶ At the National Liberal Club, though Chamberlain and Hartington withdrew in

¹³ Henry Fowler, a leading Liberal, commented that ‘I rejoice that the ablest Tory in the House of Commons has at length joined his own party.’ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/31/3, Henry Fowler to Chamberlain, Jan. 5th, 1887. See also Spinner, p. 125, 129, and 132. Gladstone himself commented in July 1886 that Goschen ought to join the Conservatives. Bahlman, July 19th, 1886, p. 42.

¹⁴ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19512, Arthur Elliot Diary, Jan. 3rd, 1887; *ibid.*, MS. 19488, fo. 10-11, Sellar to Elliot, Jan. 5th, 1887.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, MS. 19488, fo. 15-17, Camperdown to Elliot, Jan. 4th, 1887.

¹⁶ Moore, ‘Manchester Liberalism and the Unionist Secession,’ p. 36.

1888, other Liberal Unionists, such as John Lubbock and Leonard Courtney, remained members.¹⁷ In other clubs Liberals and Liberal Unionists managed to co-exist. At Brooks's, several candidates for membership were blackballed by the rival factions, including Lord Wolmer and Lewis Harcourt. After the intervention of Lord Granville, members were convinced to not blackball for political reasons, in order to avoid paralysing the club.¹⁸ Subsequently, in 1891, Arthur Elliot and other Liberal Unionists defeated an attempt by some of the Gladstonian managers of the club to alter the rules in their favour.¹⁹ Liberals and Liberal Unionists thus remained together in Brooks's, although, as one Gladstonian commented, it was at some expense to the club's political reputation.²⁰ At the City Liberal Club, a significant portion of the members remained Liberal Unionists as late as 1899.²¹ Liberals and Liberal Unionists also did more than just belong to the same club; they continued to fraternize at dinners and other events. In April 1888, Lord Granville presided at a dinner at the Devonshire Club to Chamberlain, while in February 1889 Chamberlain spoke at the Glasgow Liberal Club at a dinner held by both factions, and Lubbock attended celebrations of the Gladstones's golden wedding

¹⁷ *Times*, Dec. 13th, 1888; British Library, Avebury Papers, Add. MS. 62683, Avebury Diary, Nov. 17th, 1891. Lord Derby chaired the club's shareholders' meeting in 1888. See Vincent, *The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby*, p. 809.

¹⁸ Angus Hawkins and John Powell, eds., *The Journal of John Wodehouse, First Earl of Kimberley, for 1862-1902* (London, UK: Royal Historical Society, Camden Fifth Series, Volume 9, 1997), Feb. 10th, 1887, p. 374; NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19515, Arthur Elliot Diary, Mar. 19th, 1889.

¹⁹ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19517, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 3rd and July 7th, 1891

²⁰ Pease, p. 250-251.

²¹ H. C. G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists: The Ideas and Politics of a Post-Gladstonian Elite* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 38.

anniversary in 1889 and Gladstone's retirement in 1894 at the National Liberal Club.²²

However, some Liberal Unionists began to feel increasingly uncomfortable as the partisan divisions became more rigid and the logic of the alliance with the Conservatives played out. With some the pressure was too much to bear, and in consequence there were a number of Liberal Unionists who returned to the Liberal party between the 1886 and 1892 general elections.²³ Perhaps the most prominent was Sir George Otto Trevelyan, who had resigned from Gladstone's cabinet with Chamberlain in March 1886 in opposition to Home Rule, but was subsequently defeated for re-election in the Hawick District of Burghs. His defeat was not without its redeeming aspects, as by the fall of 1886 he felt that his absence from Parliament saved him from the necessity of open co-operation with the Conservatives.²⁴ By the time Trevelyan joined Chamberlain in the Round Table Conference in January 1887, his loyalty to the Liberal Unionists was already in question.²⁵ It quickly became apparent that Trevelyan's top priority was to rejoin the Liberals, regardless of matters of principle regarding the Irish Question.²⁶ By the summer of 1887 his return to the Liberal party was complete, and he was selected as the

²² Howard, p. 280 and 284-285; British Library, Avebury Papers, Add. MS. 62683, Avebury Diary, July 26th, 1889; Mark Patton, *Science, Politics and Business in the Work of Sir John Lubbock: A Man of Universal Mind* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), p. 218. Similarly, in August 1887 the Leeds Liberal Club decided to take a subscription to *The Liberal Unionist*. See A. W. Roberts, *The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire*, p. 156.

²³ See Table 4A. There were also defections on a local level. For the case of Liverpool, see Collins, p. 213 and 217.

²⁴ TCL, Henry Sidgwick Papers, Add Ms.c.97²⁵, Henry Sidgwick Diary, Sept. 29th, 1886.

²⁵ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19488, fo. 22-29, Camperdown to Elliot, Jan. 8th, 1887; *ibid.*, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, Jan. 22nd, 1887.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, MS. 19488, fo. 34-37, Elliot to Sellar, Jan. 25th, 1887.

Gladstonian candidate for the August 2nd by-election in Glasgow, Bridgeton, in which he defeated the Liberal Unionist candidate Evelyn Ashley.

Trevelyan was hardly the only Liberal Unionist to return to the Liberal party over Irish policy. The first was C. R. M. Talbot, who had voted against the first Home Rule Bill in June 1886, but came to accept Gladstone's explanations regarding future plans, was again adopted as the official Liberal candidate for Mid Glamorganshire, and was re-elected unopposed as a supporter of Gladstone.²⁷ Two more Liberal Unionists followed in April 1887, after the Conservative government introduced a Crimes Bill for Ireland. A. R. Winterbotham and Sir H. H. Vivian, both objecting to coercion, voted for a Gladstonian amendment to the bill on April 18th, signalling their secession from Liberal Unionist ranks.²⁸ However, they had been long seen as lukewarm in their commitment to Liberal Unionism – as early as August 3rd, 1886 Lord Cranbrook noted that Winterbotham was 'fawning' over Gladstone, while Vivian had worked for a compromise between the rival Liberal factions in May 1886 and had withdrawn from the central Liberal Unionist Association during the 1886 general election when it announced that it would oppose all Gladstonian Liberal candidates.²⁹ Later in 1887, T. R. Buchanan announced his support

²⁷ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 287.

²⁸ Hurst, *Joseph Chamberlain and Liberal Reunion*, p. 354. Coercion for Ireland was a contentious issue that furthered the divide between Liberals and Liberal Unionists, and thus was a key impetus for wavering Liberal Unionists to abandon the party. Trevelyan, for instance, had denounced the imposition of coercion.

²⁹ Nancy E. Johnson, *The Diary of Gathorne Hardy, later Lord Cranbrook, 1866-1892: Political Selections* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1981), Aug. 4th, 1886, p. 619; Bahlman, May 16th and 17th, 1886, p. 37; Morgan, 'The Liberal Unionists in Wales,' p. 164. However, their return to Liberal ranks did not mean that they were entirely trusted by their new colleagues. When a peerage was under discussion for Vivian in 1893, Lord Kimberley commented that he had no objection, but that he 'doubt[ed] his remaining long on our side.' See Powell, Kimberley to Gladstone, May 2nd, 1893, p. 207.

for Home Rule and resigned his seat for West Edinburgh. Standing for re-election as a Liberal, he defeated the Liberal Unionist candidate by the narrow margin of forty-six votes.³⁰

Still, not every case of a Liberal Unionist returning to the Liberal party was due specifically to Ireland. Some Liberal Unionists were particularly committed to specific policy agendas that were increasingly incompatible with the policies associated with their Conservative allies. The most prominent example of such a case was the return of W. S. Caine to the Liberal party in 1890. Caine's primary interest in politics was temperance, and he was the President of the National Temperance Federation. Goschen's 1890 budget introduced compensation to owners for licenses which were not renewed,³¹ and temperance advocates were strongly opposed to the measure; in a struggle between his support for temperance and his opposition to Home Rule, Caine choose the former. His continued votes against the Conservative government over the measure rendered his position as a Liberal Unionist whip increasingly untenable, and after a division on June 19th Hartington complained to Caine that he was advising members to vote in one lobby while he himself went into the other lobby. He requested he resign as whip. Caine complied, and four days later he resigned his seat as well.³² He stood for re-election as an independent Liberal in the ensuing by-election in Barrow-in-Furness, but came bottom of the poll; an official Liberal candidate came first. Caine's return to the Liberal party

³⁰ *Times*, Feb. 20th, 1888.

³¹ Spinner, p. 143-144.

³² John Newton, *W. S. Caine, M.P.: A Biography* (London, UK: J. Nisbet, 1907), p. 220.

would be completed in 1892, when he was returned as the Liberal candidate for East Bradford. Writing to Chamberlain just before the 1892 general election, Caine commented on the basis for his defection, stating that ‘the bondage of the Tory alliance had become unbearable & their attack on the whole Temperance movement, which I could never subordinate to anything, gave me emancipation.’³³ Caine’s resignation over the issue of temperance was also not an isolated incident, as it was reflected, to a certain degree, at the local level. Although there was only one resignation, a number of members of the WSLUA were troubled by the support of the Liberal Unionist party for the government’s compensation proposals. In Cornwall, Bodmin one of Courtney’s agents returned to the Liberal party over the issue of temperance.³⁴

Other issues provoked Liberal Unionists to return to the Liberals. In March 1890, James Caldwell, Liberal Unionist M.P. for Glasgow, St. Rollox, resigned the Liberal Unionist whip over the issue of education.³⁵ In 1891 he was expelled from the local Liberal Unionist association, and in the following year, after he had joined the Liberal party, he was removed as a Vice-President of the WSLUA.³⁶ The defection of Liberal Unionists like Caldwell and Caine reflected that, for some Liberal Unionists, their position in opposition to Home Rule was outweighed by their commitment to Liberal policies on other questions. As Caine suggested, ‘nine tenths of what I want in politics I

³³ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/10/11, Caine to Chamberlain, Mar. 27th, 1892.

³⁴ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Secretary’s Report, Nov. 18th, 1890, p. 129 (Insert); Hayden, p. 226. See also Hawkins and Powell, June 24th, 1890, p. 392-393.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Secretary’s Report, Nov. 18th, 1890, p. 129 (Insert).

³⁶ Burness, ‘Strange Associations’, p. 77; NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Consulting Committee, Jan. 11th and 21st, 1892, p. 162-164.

must get from the recognized Liberal party.’³⁷

However, the movement between the 1886 and 1892 general elections was not entirely in one direction. One sitting Liberal M.P., Sir E. Cowell-Stepney, crossed the floor to the Liberal Unionists in 1891 shortly before his retirement prior to the 1892 general election, while C. C. Lacaita resigned his seat in 1888 after losing faith in Home Rule.³⁸ Arnold White, who had unsuccessfully contested Tower Hamlets, Mile End in 1886, left the Liberal party at the end of 1887 over its Irish policy, and subsequently contested unsuccessfully Northumberland, Tyneside as a Liberal Unionist at the 1892 and 1895 general elections.³⁹ In London, several Liberals who had sat for Metropolitan constituencies in the 1860s and 1870s crossed over to the Liberal Unionists after 1886.⁴⁰ At a local level, Lord Robartes, a prominent Liberal supporter in Cornwall, St. Austell, crossed to the Liberal Unionists prior to the 1892 general election, having fallen out of sympathy with Home Rule.⁴¹

The movement of M.P.s to and from the Liberal Unionist party between the 1886 and 1892 general elections reflected the extent to which the parliamentary party was unstable, as M.P.s had to reconcile their Liberalism and their Unionism. This instability continued for as long as the party existed, as illustrated in Table 4A.⁴² From the 1886

³⁷ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/10/11, Caine to Chamberlain, Mar. 27th, 1892.

³⁸ Morgan, ‘The Liberal Unionists in Wales,’ p. 164-165; Hutchison, p. 166.

³⁹ G. R. Searle, ‘Introduction,’ in G. R. Searle, ed., Efficiency and Empire, by Arnold White, p. viii. For the case of R. P. Blennerhassett, see Barbary, p. 191.

⁴⁰ Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, p. 54n.

⁴¹ Hayden, p. 227.

⁴² Note that the data is limited to English, Welsh, and Scottish constituencies.

general election to the December 1910 general election, Liberal Unionist M.P.s were involved in twenty-seven of the forty-three instances where an M.P. left the party he was elected to represent. This is only slightly fewer than the number of Liberal M.P.s involved, and more than double the number of Conservative M.P.s involved.

Considering the much smaller Liberal Unionist caucus as compared to the two main parties during this period, Liberal Unionists were significantly more likely to be involved in a floor-crossing than any other party.⁴³ Two further points warrant mention: during no parliamentary session were more Conservative M.P.s involved in floor-crossing than Liberal Unionist M.P.s; and from 1886 to December 1910 only a single Liberal M.P. crossed directly to the Conservative party.⁴⁴ This indicates that the Liberal Unionist parliamentary caucus was significantly less stable than their Conservative allies, and that their Liberal identity accounted for a portion of this instability.

During the early years of the party existence, there was a significant Liberal heritage among those who stood as Liberal Unionist candidates. At the 1886 general election, just under 70% of Liberal Unionist candidates had on at least one prior occasion stood as a Liberal candidate. At the 1892 general election, the percentage of Liberal Unionist candidates with prior experience as Liberal candidates declined, but still constituted a majority.⁴⁵ Nor were those with Liberal experience simply the survivors of

⁴³ In comparison only five of the instances of floor-crossing involved the various permutations of Labour.

⁴⁴ This was Richard Rigg, elected for Westmorland, Appleby in the 1900 general election, and who crossed to the Conservatives before resigning in 1904. See Table 4A.

⁴⁵ See Table 4B.

the original Liberal Unionist caucus from 1886, as at the 1892 general election the party attracted several former Liberals to stand as Liberal Unionists for the first time.⁴⁶

Moreover, Liberal experience was not limited to having stood as a Liberal candidate.

Alexander Cross, John Sugden, E. B. Willyams, and T. B. Bolitho had all been involved in local Liberal associations prior to standing as Liberal Unionist candidates.⁴⁷

After the 1892 general election resulted in the return to office of Gladstone with a minority Liberal government dependent on the support of the Irish Nationalists, the issue of Home Rule once again came to dominate the political landscape, and the struggle against the Second Home Rule Bill in 1893 drew the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives closer together. In the House of Commons, Liberal Unionist voting patterns moved generally into line with Conservative voting patterns. As John D. Fair has suggested, ‘it was the first Gladstone [Home Rule] bill which effected the great separation within the Liberal Party; it was the second which brought about a lasting union with the Conservatives.’⁴⁸ A similar movement occurred in the House of Lords, where 1893 was the first year in which Liberal Unionist peers voted with the Conservatives

⁴⁶ Among the former Liberal candidates who stood as Liberal Unionists for the first time in 1892 were Arthur Pease (Darlington), J. C. Bigham (Liverpool, Exchange), and Alfred Hopkinson (South-West Manchester).

⁴⁷ Cross had been the President of the Glasgow Central Liberal Association, Sugden had been a prominent member of the local Liberal association in Colne Valley, Willyams had stood against W. Bickford-Smith for the Liberal nomination for Cornwall, Truro in 1885, and Bolitho had been the President of the St. Ives Liberal Association. See McCaffrey, p. 56; Clark, p. 20; Hayden, p. 189; Rodden, p. 620.

⁴⁸ Fair, ‘From Liberal to Conservative: The Flight of the Liberal Unionists After 1886,’ p. 291-314; *ibid.*, ‘Party Voting Behaviour in the British House of Commons, 1886-1918,’ in *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 5 (1986), p. 69-72.

more often than they voted with the Liberals.⁴⁹ This closer relationship between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives was symbolized by the role played by Chamberlain in leading the opposition in the House of Commons to the Second Home Rule Bill.⁵⁰ Chamberlain was the most prominent critic of Gladstone's measures, and his strong and effective speeches helped rally the Unionist opposition.⁵¹ He also emphasized his unequivocal opposition to Home Rule in any form, which went some way towards reassuring his colleagues that his Unionism could be trusted.⁵² The close co-operation between the two parties continued after Gladstone's retirement in early 1894, and as Rosebery's government became increasingly unstable, it became generally understood that the two parties would join together to form a coalition government if it should fall. The increasingly close relationship of the two parties came to be symbolized by a banquet held by the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations on June 14th, 1895 in honour of Devonshire and Chamberlain.⁵³

However, the extent of Liberal Unionist-Conservative rapprochement should not be overstated. Although the two parties were drawing closer together, there were still significant tensions. As has already been discussed, conflicts remained over the

⁴⁹ Gregory D. Phillips, 'The Whig Lords and Liberalism, 1886-1893,' in The Historical Journal, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1981), p. 167-173. See also Adonis, p. 19-20.

⁵⁰ Jenkins, 'Hartington, Chamberlain and the Unionist Alliance,' p. 131.

⁵¹ See, for example, NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19474, fo. 17-20, Elliot to Minto, Feb. 25th, 1893; ibid., fo. 31-34, Elliot to Minto, July 29th, 1893; ibid., MS. 19518, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 30th and July 21st, 1893.

⁵² See, for example, LMA, A. V. Dicey Papers, A/NFC109/27a, Dicey to his Sister, Mar. 14th, 1893.

⁵³ Richard Shannon, p. 403.

representation of specific constituencies.⁵⁴ 1894 also saw disagreements between Liberal Unionist and Conservative peers in the House of Lords over some of the domestic bills passed by the Liberal government in the House of Commons, with Devonshire and Salisbury taking different stances on several issues.⁵⁵ Contributing to the tensions in the House of Lords may have been ongoing questions regarding the leadership of any future Unionist government. Devonshire had not given up his ambition to be Prime Minister, and the reasons for declining to accept Salisbury's two offers in 1886 had largely dissipated with the increased co-operation between the two parties. In January 1895, at a conference between Devonshire and Chamberlain, the former insisted that he would join a coalition government only in the first place, and the latter received sufficient guarantees as to social policy to accept a Devonshire premiership.⁵⁶ However, the resignation of Rosebery on June 22nd, 1895 disrupted Devonshire's ambitions. The Queen sent for Salisbury to form a government, and he moved quickly to form a coalition, but did not repeat his earlier offers to serve under Devonshire. Salisbury's haste in forming a cabinet prevented any efforts by Devonshire to assert his claims to the premiership.⁵⁷ Devonshire could only complain that Salisbury was 'extraordinarily precipitate in his arrangements and assumes off-hand that everybody will take office which they do not want.'⁵⁸

⁵⁴ See Chapter 3.

⁵⁵ Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government*, p. 231-232; CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2545, Wolmer to Devonshire, Feb. 26th, 1894.

⁵⁶ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1747, Chamberlain to James, Jan. 9th, 1895.

⁵⁷ Richard Shannon, p. 406-408.

⁵⁸ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1757, Devonshire to James, June 25th, 1895.

In the first months of Rosebery's government, the new Prime Minister had attempted to win back some Liberal Unionists to the Liberal fold, at major speeches at the City Liberal Club and at Manchester and Birmingham. Rosebery hoped that with Home Rule defeated a second time and with Gladstone retired, some of the Liberal Unionist rank-and-file could be wooed, even if the party leadership could not.⁵⁹ Rosebery's efforts were an utter failure. As T. W. Russell suggested, it was 'nonsense' to suggest that any Liberal Unionist would return to the Liberals now that Rosebery was the leader.⁶⁰ Indeed, emphasizing the degree to which the issue of Home Rule united Liberal Unionists, the period between the 1892 and 1895 general elections would be the only session in which no sitting Liberal Unionist M.P. crossed the floor to the Liberal party between 1886 and 1910.⁶¹ In addition, Rosebery's public speeches on the Liberal Unionists provided an opening for Chamberlain to advance his claims that the cause of social reform was better served by a Unionist government.⁶²

Though there was no significant movement of Liberal Unionists back to the Liberals at this time, there was movement in the opposite direction. T. H. Bolton, the Liberal M.P. for North St. Pancras, left the Liberal party in June 1893 over the 2nd Home Rule Bill, and subsequently joined the Liberal Unionists.⁶³ Clement Higgins, the Liberal M.P. for Mid Norfolk, proclaimed himself a Liberal Unionist in February 1895 over

⁵⁹ Brooks, p. 9-11.

⁶⁰ Richard Shannon, p. 391n.

⁶¹ See Table 4A.

⁶² Brooks, p. 11.

⁶³ Times, June 12th and 14th, 1895.

Liberal policy towards the House of Lords, and resigned his seat the following month, thus granting the Liberal Unionists an important by-election win in April 1895.⁶⁴ Another Liberal M.P., W. H. Grenfell, did not join the Liberal Unionists, but resigned his seat at Hereford due to his objection to certain aspects of the 2nd Home Rule Bill, as well as other policies of the government.⁶⁵ Another Liberal Unionist catch was Alfred Lyttelton. Lyttelton had long had concerns over Home Rule, but as a nephew of Gladstone, Lyttelton had hesitated to leave the Liberal party while Gladstone was still the leader.⁶⁶ Gladstone's resignation in 1894 opened the way for Lyttelton to seek a seat in Parliament as a Liberal Unionist.⁶⁷ Lyttelton would ultimately be used as the compromise Liberal Unionist candidate for Warwick and Leamington in April 1895. Nor were the defections from the Liberal party limited to the House of Commons. Lord Burton, who formerly had been a Liberal M.P. prior to being elevated to the peerage in Gladstone's resignation honours in August 1886, had long been uneasy over Home Rule, but only felt able to formally cross to the Liberal Unionists once Gladstone had retired.⁶⁸

Though Rosebery's efforts to win over Liberal Unionists failed, a few Liberal

⁶⁴ Hawkins and Powell, p. 403n; *Times*, Feb. 7th and Mar. 30th, 1895. On the impact of the April 1895 by-election in Mid Norfolk, see Brooks, Apr. 24th, 1895, p. 11.

⁶⁵ *Times*, Aug. 3rd, 1893. The subsequent by-election would be won by the Conservative candidate, C. W. R. Cooke.

⁶⁶ In 1891, Lyttelton had been offered the Liberal candidacy in a safe seat, but had declined. Edith Lyttelton, *Alfred Lyttelton: An Account of his Life* (London, UK: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), p. 174.

⁶⁷ Lubenow, *The Cambridge Apostles*, p. 152; and Lyttelton, p. 212-217. Salisbury, though, was not impressed with the Liberal Unionists' capture of Lyttelton, suggesting that 'he is only a Courtney with better manners & great personal popularity.' CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C18/42, Salisbury to Akers-Douglas, Apr. 16th, 1895.

⁶⁸ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/589 and M45/590, Lord Burton to James, Feb. 25th and Mar. 9th, 1893.

Unionists became concerned about the increasingly-close relationship between their party and the Conservatives, and the imminent possibility of a coalition government being formed between the two parties. Sir Thomas Bazley, a one-time Liberal M.P. for Manchester who had become a prominent local Liberal Unionist, as well as serving as the president of the Liberal Unionist association in Gloucestershire, Cirencester, left the party at the end of 1894, as he ‘declined to be dragged by Mr. Chamberlain into the Conservative party.’⁶⁹ George Pitt-Lewis, who had retired as the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Devon, Barnstaple at the 1892 general election, rejoined the Liberal party shortly before the 1895 general election, arguing he had not joined the Liberal Unionist party to become a ‘hewer of wood and drawer of water for Toryism.’⁷⁰ Later, Pitt-Lewis would suggest that the Liberal Unionists had resolved in 1886 never to accept office under a Conservative government, and that they had broken this pledge in 1895.⁷¹ When the 1895 coalition government was formed, a leading Lanarkshire Free Church minister left the Liberal Unionists to support the Liberal candidate in Lanarkshire, Partick, arguing that the formation of the coalition had ended the Liberal component of Unionism, while after the 1895 general election James Grahame, a leading Liberal Unionist figure in the west of Scotland, declared that under no circumstances would he co-operate with the

⁶⁹ *Times*, Dec. 6th, 1894.

⁷⁰ Rodden, p. 549.

⁷¹ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/4/1A, Chamberlain to T. Canning Baily, Sept. 19th, 1902. However, it seems that a primary motivation for Pitt-Lewis’ return to the Liberal party had been the failure to secure patronage for himself from the Liberal Unionists. See Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/558, Henry Matthews to James, June 21st, 1892; *ibid.*, M45/563, Devonshire to James, July 13th, 1892; *ibid.*, M45/710, Devonshire to James, Dec. 21st, 1894.

Conservatives.⁷² Such views were not shared by all Liberal Unionists. As one Liberal Unionist worker suggested, the formation of the 1895 coalition government offered those who had sacrificed so much since 1886 a place to come in from the cold.⁷³

After Salisbury had formed his coalition government in 1895 he dissolved Parliament for a general election. Though the Liberal failures in office, and the direction of recent by-elections, had pointed to the probability of the Liberals being unable to return to power with a working majority, there was little belief in the Unionists achieving substantially more.⁷⁴ Thus the scale of the Unionist victory in the 1895 general election came as a surprise to almost everyone. For only the third time since 1832, the Conservatives by themselves held a majority of seats in the House of Commons. When the Liberal Unionist seats were added, the Unionist government had an overwhelming majority. The Liberal party, weakened by infighting, had suffered a devastating defeat, highlighted by the shocking defeat of William Harcourt at Derby on the first day of the polls.⁷⁵ So great was the Unionist victory that Chamberlain was prompted to comment to James that ‘I hope our majority will not engender splits.’⁷⁶ Unfortunately for the Unionists, that was precisely what was to ensue. The post-1895 in-fighting in the Liberal party prevented it both from recovering from the disaster of 1895 and from providing an

⁷² Burness, ‘*Strange Associations*’, p. 124; Hutchison, p. 167.

⁷³ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/766, Richard Horton-Smith to James, July 2nd, 1895.

⁷⁴ Richard Shannon, p. 406-407.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Brooks, July 14th, 1895, p. 269. On Harcourt’s defeat, see Patrick Cassidy, ‘Temperance and the 1895 General Election in the Constituency of Derby,’ in *Midland History*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 2008), p. 97-114.

⁷⁶ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1766, Chamberlain to James, July 18th, 1895.

effective opposition to the Unionist government in the House of Commons. Moreover, with the threat of Home Rule having been apparently seen off, there no longer was a single issue around which the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists could subsume other policy differences.⁷⁷ Unionist backbenchers felt free to give vent to whatever grievances they had, whether over policy or patronage. The situation was not helped by the declining quality of the Conservative Whips' Office, as Akers-Douglas was promoted to ministerial office and his replacement did not command the same respect from party backbenchers.⁷⁸ Nor was the leadership of the two parties exempt from criticism. Lord Salisbury's health was in decline, and his general unwillingness to impose his views on his colleagues helped contribute to a lack of focus on the part of the government.⁷⁹ Devonshire too was showing the signs of age, and his political activity was increasingly sporadic, leading Lansdowne in the early days of the Boer War to reject an accusation from Salisbury that he had ignored a Cabinet decision in the following terms: 'I was quite unaware of any such decision, but our decisions are very often impalpable, and perhaps I ought to have been able to construct one from materials afforded by Devonshire's yawns and casual interjections around the table.'⁸⁰ Balfour's leadership in the House of Commons was also depreciated.⁸¹ Chamberlain was the only Unionist leader whose reputation improved after

⁷⁷ Blake, '1783-1902,' p. 24. In the 1895 general election, the Conservative Sir Edward Clarke believed that the narrowness of his re-election for Plymouth was due in part to Liberal Unionists returning to the Liberal fold as a result of Home Rule receding from view. See Sir Edward Clarke, *The Story of my Life* (London, UK: John Murray, 1918), p. 317.

⁷⁸ Richard Shannon, p. 424.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 435-436.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 501.

⁸¹ See, for example, NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19523, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 16th and July 17th,

1895, but that did little to endear him to the masses of the Conservative party. The displacement of Balfour by Chamberlain remained an impossibility, and criticisms of Chamberlain were still made in the language of past Liberal Unionist-Conservative conflicts, with some Conservatives seeing the Boer War as essentially a Liberal Unionist war.⁸² These problems were reflected in the fact that within a year of taking office, the Unionist government was forced to withdraw its centerpiece legislation on education due to party unrest in a parliamentary session that has been labelled ‘disastrous’ and a ‘debacle’ by historians.⁸³

The period after 1895 was thus more conducive to a re-emergence of conflicts among a number of Liberal Unionists between their Liberalism and their Unionism. Far from marking the completion of Liberal Unionist-Conservative integration, the period from 1895 to 1903 saw Liberal Unionists leave the party over a variety of issues. One of the most prominent issues to unsettle the Liberal Unionist party was the rise of imperialism and jingoism in the late-1890s, culminating in the Boer War.⁸⁴ Though

1896.

⁸² Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner dep. 4, fo. 190-192, Philip Lytellton Gell to Milner, July 22nd, 1898; *ibid.*, fo. 195-196, Philip Lytellton Gell to Milner, Sept. 15th, 1899.

⁸³ Richard Shannon, p. 443; Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government*, p. 247-254. The political apathy was also reflected on a local level in party organisation. See NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Secretary’s Report to the Executive, May 29th, 1896, p. 122 (Insert). In the case of Warwick and Leamington, the chair of the local Liberal Unionist Association resigned prior to the 1900 general election over dissatisfaction with the Unionist government. See Nicholls, p. 284.

⁸⁴ Though the Boer War was the most important flashpoint regarding imperialism, the overall imperial policy of the Unionist government also came in for criticism. In June 1896, John P. Thomasson, the former Liberal M.P. for Bolton who had moved to the Liberal Unionists after 1886, left the party in opposition to the government’s African policy, while in the 1898 by-election in Lancashire, Southport, the chairman of the Southport LUA came out in support of the Liberal candidate over the perceived failure of the government’s Far Eastern policy. See Barbary, p. 129; Otte, p. 420.

Chamberlain was the leading figure in the rise of the new imperialism, and most Liberal Unionists supported the Boer War, there were significant exceptions.⁸⁵ The most notable Liberal Unionist critic of the rising tide of imperialism was Leonard Courtney. Courtney had long been an independent-minded M.P., and he was already beginning to drift out of the party mainstream by the mid-1890s, a movement exacerbated by the circumstances under which he was prevented from becoming Speaker of the House of Commons in 1895.⁸⁶ But it was his staunch opposition to jingoism that drove Courtney from the Liberal Unionists.⁸⁷ As tensions increased in South Africa in the summer of 1899, Courtney was one of the harshest critics of the government's policy, and in September he attended a public meeting of the Manchester Transvaal Committee, at which John Morley gave a rousing anti-war speech.⁸⁸ Courtney continued his outspoken criticism of the government after the Boer War began, becoming President of the South African Conciliation Committee on November 1st, 1899.⁸⁹ Not surprisingly, Courtney's actions provoked a hostile response from the Liberal Unionist party. By the spring of 1900, the central party organization was working to oust Courtney from his constituency, and by June the local Liberal Unionist association had rejected Courtney as their candidate and

⁸⁵ For an example of Liberal Unionist propaganda during the Boer War that accused Liberals of being pro-Boers, see Readman, 'The Conservative Party, Patriotism, and British Politics,' p. 118.

⁸⁶ G. Michael Bates, *Leonard Courtney: The Empire and the State* (PhD Dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1983), p. 161-174. In 1896, Courtney had also been among those Unionist M.P.s to call for a withdrawal of the Education bill. See J. E. B. Munson, 'The Unionist Coalition and Education, 1895-1902,' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Sept., 1977), p. 619.

⁸⁷ On Courtney's anti-imperialism, see Bates, p. 185-187.

⁸⁸ Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 178.

⁸⁹ On Courtney's Pro-Boer activities, see Bates, ch. 8.

selected Sir Lewis Molesworth to stand instead.⁹⁰ By this point Courtney was already moving back to the Liberal party. He was offered the Liberal candidacy for South Manchester at the 1900 general election, but decided not to stand.⁹¹ Courtney would run for Parliament one more time, unsuccessfully, as the Liberal candidate for West Edinburgh in 1906, before he was raised to the peerage by the Campbell-Bannerman government.

Though Courtney was the only sitting Liberal Unionist M.P. to leave the party over the Boer War, he was not the only Liberal Unionist to do so. John Albert Bright had replaced his father as M.P. for Central Birmingham in 1889, but his Unionism had never been absolute, voting against the government on the Report of the Parnell Commission.⁹² Moreover, he had never been comfortable as an M.P., repeatedly threatening retirement before finally doing so just prior to the 1895 general election.⁹³ The Boer War saw Bright move back to the Liberals, as he chaired the September 5th, 1899 meeting of the Manchester Transvaal Committee, and his name was suggested for the Liberal candidacy for Lancashire, Rossendale at the 1900 general election before he decided to stand, unsuccessfully, for the Montgomery District.⁹⁴ Bright ultimately returned to Parliament

⁹⁰ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19524, Arthur Elliot Diary, Mar. 16th, 1900; Hayden, p. 243-244.

⁹¹ Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism, p. 183.

⁹² Hurst, Joseph Chamberlain and West Midland Politics, p. 56n.

⁹³ See, for example, BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/7/71, J. A. Bright to Chamberlain, July 25th, 1892. Bright's attitude led Powell Williams to exclaim in exasperation: 'How came John Bright to have such a son?' Ibid., JC 6/2/7/10, Powell Williams to Chamberlain, June 2nd, 1895.

⁹⁴ Clarke, Lancashire and the New Liberalism, p. 178 and 240. Bright's movement back to the Liberals effectively began with the Armenian agitation of 1896. See Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 331.

as one of the two Liberal M.P.s for Oldham in 1906. Lord Durham also left the Liberal Unionist party over the Boer War, but for different reasons than Courtney or Bright. Durham's criticisms were focussed on the poor management of the war by the government:

Their [the government's] light-hearted manner of drifting into war and of initiating the conduct of the war, and their apparent inability to embody the feeling of the nation in its patriotic desire to bring this war to a speedy and successful conclusion, have convinced me that they have neither the capacity nor the vigour which are required to place our Empire in that condition of security which its position demands. I thought I was supporting a strong Government; I find it is the weakest Government, with the largest majority, of modern times.⁹⁵

Durham resigned his position as President of the Durham and North Riding Liberal Unionist Association, and by 1900 he had returned to the Liberal party, with his son Hedworth Lambton standing unsuccessfully for the Liberals at Newcastle-upon-Tyne.⁹⁶ Opposition to the Boer War also manifested itself among Liberal Unionist intellectuals. On his deathbed, Henry Sidgwick condemned the war as breaking 'our traditional sympathy with nationalities struggling for freedom,' and Goldwin Smith wrote to James Bryce that he would support Home Rule if it was the only way of stopping jingoism.⁹⁷

There was also unease over the war in Liberal Unionist ranks beyond those who

⁹⁵ *Times*, Feb. 27th, 1900.

⁹⁶ *Times*, Sept. 24th, 1900.

⁹⁷ Christopher Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism: University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy, 1860-86* (London, UK: Allen Lane, 1976), p. 237. See also G. K. Peatling, 'Victorian Imperial Theorist? Goldwin Smith and Ireland,' in Peter Gray, ed., *Victoria's Ireland? Irishness and Britishness, 1837-1901* (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 2004), p. 31.

formally left the party. Before the war Arthur Elliot was opposed to conflict, suggesting that it would be a 'ghastly failure on the part of the Government, and of Chamberlain and Milner in particular,' if war broke out, and was especially critical of the role of the jingoist press in stoking the desire for war.⁹⁸ Elliot expressed his views publicly in a letter to the Times on September 27th, which caused a great deal of trouble in his Durham constituency.⁹⁹ Once war began, Elliot put his concerns aside and supported the war effort.¹⁰⁰ Like Lord Durham, Lord Bedford was also critical of the performance of the government in the early stages of the war.¹⁰¹ However, unlike Durham, Bedford ultimately remained with the Liberal Unionist party.

The other major issue to divide Liberal Unionists between 1895 and 1903 was education. A major problem confronting Salisbury's government after 1895 was that denominational schools, which educated a significant number of British children, were increasingly in dire financial straits, as, unlike Board schools, they were not supported by the local rates. However, the prospect of having their taxes used to support Church of England schools, including religious instruction, was anathema to all Nonconformists. Education reform was thus intimately linked to religion, and stoked Conservative-Liberal Unionist divisions, due to the significant number of Nonconformist Liberal Unionists – with Chamberlain the most prominent. When rate-aid for denominational schools was

⁹⁸ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19522, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 29th, 1899; *ibid.*, MS. 19491, fo. 63-67, Elliot to Devonshire, Sept. 7th, 1899.

⁹⁹ Times, Sept. 27th, 1899; NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19491, fo. 115-116, Col. Rowlandson to Elliot, Nov. 2nd, 1899.

¹⁰⁰ See BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/22/108, Devonshire to Chamberlain, Dec. 31st, 1899.

¹⁰¹ The Annual Register, 1900, p. 14-15.

contemplated for the 1896 education measure, Chamberlain commented that it would ‘unite every Dissenter in the United Kingdom & every Liberal Unionist, with a spark of Liberalism left, in an unbending resistance.’¹⁰² Such views were substantiated by the actions of local Liberal Unionists. At the 1896 Annual General Meeting of the WSLUA, the suggestion of rate-aid for denominational schools was denounced as ‘establishing Popery legislatively.’¹⁰³ Divisions within the Unionist parties in the House of Commons ultimately contributed to the withdrawal of the measure.¹⁰⁴

However, legislative action regarding education could not be long postponed. The financial situation of denominational schools continued to deteriorate, and Conservative Churchmen continued to press for rate-aid to save their schools. As Salisbury commented to Devonshire in 1900, ‘I cannot accept any measure which aids nondenominational religion out of the public funds – and refuses the same aid to denominational religion.’¹⁰⁵ In addition, there was a clear argument to be made from the perspective of improved education and national efficiency for rescuing denominational schools. Finally, many Conservatives were unwilling to countenance concessions to Chamberlain’s views on such a core issue as Anglican schooling, especially considering that ‘Joe’s war’ had meant that there was insufficient funds at the national level to provide support to denominational schools.¹⁰⁶ Thus in 1901 the Unionist government

¹⁰² CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2670, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Dec. 15th, 1895.

¹⁰³ Burness, *‘Strange Associations’*, p. 148. See also Nicholls, p. 59-60.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Shannon, p. 443.

¹⁰⁵ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2818, Salisbury to Devonshire, Jan. 21st, 1900.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Shannon, p. 546-547.

again took up the issue of education. Although the Duke of Devonshire, as President of the Board of Education, and John Gorst were responsible for education, it was Balfour who steered the measure through the House of Commons in 1902.¹⁰⁷

The Education Act of 1902 abolished the existing school boards and brought all schools, including denominational schools, under the management of local authorities, which provided rate-aid to them all. The reaction of Nonconformists was immediate and overwhelmingly hostile. Nonconformists immediately began mass protest meetings, objecting most fiercely to rate-aid, seeing it as nothing more than an attempt by the Church of England and their Conservative allies to eliminate Nonconformity. A particular aspect of the Nonconformist campaign against the 1902 Education Act was passive resistance, whereby Nonconformists refused to pay the portion of their rates that would be used to support denominational schools. As D. W. Bebbington has noted with respect to the 1902 Education Act, 'Nonconformity was stirred more deeply and more unanimously on a public issue than ever before or since.'¹⁰⁸

Chamberlain, as the leading Nonconformist in the Unionist government, was acutely aware of the offence Nonconformists would take to the 1902 Education Act, and attempted to warn his colleagues of the political difficulties the measure would create.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 546. On the efforts of the Unionist government to grapple with education, see Munson, *passim*.

¹⁰⁸ Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 141-147. The largest swings against the Unionist government in by-elections between the 1900 and 1906 general elections occurred between May 1902 and May 1903, when the Education Bill was the leading political issue. Neal Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties and the People*, p. 24-28.

¹⁰⁹ British Library, Balfour Papers, Add. 49774, fo. 7-12, Chamberlain to Balfour, Aug. 4th, 1902.

Chamberlain was particularly concerned at losing the support of Liberal Unionist Nonconformists. As he warned to Selborne in November 1901, 'if you were to promote the Bill giving Rate Aid to denominational Schools I think you would lose Birmingham & the Birmingham influence, whatever that may be worth, to the Unionist Party.'¹¹⁰ Once the act was passed and the opposition to it was in full force, Chamberlain could only express his frustration at what had transpired to Devonshire:

The political future seems to me – an optimist by profession – most gloomy. I told you that your Education Bill would destroy your own Party. It has done so. Our best friends are leaving us by scores & hundreds & they will not come back. . . . We are so deep in the mire that I do not see how we can get out. . . . I wonder how much mischief the opposition will be able to do when they at last seize the opportunity which we have so generously presented to them.¹¹¹

Some Conservatives were inclined to dismiss Chamberlain's opposition to the Education Act as simply another attempt to impose his will on his allies, and there were certainly a number of Liberal Unionists who supported the measure.¹¹² However, Chamberlain's fears were justified. Nonconformists did compose a significant portion of the Liberal Unionist rank-and-file. Contemporary surveys suggested that upwards of one-third of Wesleyans and London Nonconformists had deserted the Liberal party over Home Rule, and many had found their way into the Liberal Unionist party.¹¹³ Sir George

¹¹⁰ Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 9, fo. 124-125, Chamberlain to Selborne, Nov. 1st, 1901.

¹¹¹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2890, Chamberlain to Devonshire, Sept. 22nd, 1902.

¹¹² Richard Shannon, p. 548. Even Austen Chamberlain was more supportive of the bill than his father. Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p. 28. See also Fitzroy, Jan. 20th, 1902, p. 72. In some cases, the movement from Liberalism to Liberal Unionism was accompanied by a transition from Nonconformity to Anglicanism, as in the case of Herbert Pike Pease. See Kirby, p. 126; Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (Brighton, UK: The Harvester Press, 1980), p. 39.

¹¹³ Bebbington, 'Nonconformity and Electoral Sociology,' p. 640-645.

Hayter Chubb, the leading organizer of the Nonconformist Unionist Association, estimated in 1893 that half the members of local Liberal Unionist associations were Nonconformists, which was especially the case in the West Country, where the agent of the Devon and Cornwall Liberal Unionist Federation commented in 1890 that ‘our Nonconformist supporters, who are specially numerous, are as devoted and hearty as can be desired.’¹¹⁴ As the 1902 Education Act made its way through Parliament, evidence emerged of Liberal Unionist defections on a local level. Reports from local agents were, according to James, ‘black as night,’ and Powell Williams was reported to be ‘despondent’ at the defections from the ranks of the Liberal Unionists.¹¹⁵ One report from Devon stated that the Education Act would affect the votes of a number of Liberal Unionists, who would either vote Liberal or abstain at the next election, and accurately predicted that F. B. Mildmay’s votes against the government would save him his seat, unlike his Liberal Unionist colleague in the Tavistock division.¹¹⁶ In neighbouring Cornwall, the Liberal M.P. for the St. Austell division claimed that the issue had driven a number of local Liberal Unionists back to the Liberal party, which was substantiated by the actions of Charles Menhinnick, a Liberal Unionist member of the County Council since its creation, who returned to the Liberals over education.¹¹⁷ At the Parliamentary

¹¹⁴ Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 93 and 96.

¹¹⁵ Bernard Holland, *The Life of Spencer Compton, Eighth Duke of Devonshire*, Vol. II (London, UK: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), p. 283. Liberal Unionist defections over education contributed to the by-election defeat of H. L. W. Lawson in Bury in 1902. See Barbary, p. 211-212.

¹¹⁶ British Library, Balfour Papers, Add. 49774, fo. 15-16, Edward Windeatt to Boraston, Aug. 15th, 1902.

¹¹⁷ Hayden, p. 259. Similarly, in Warwickshire, Stratford, the Treasurer of the local Liberal Association in 1905 was a former Liberal Unionist who had left the party over education in 1901. See Quinault,

level, Cathcart Wason, Liberal Unionist M.P. for Orkney and Shetland, left the party in the summer of 1902, citing education as one of the reasons for his secession.¹¹⁸ The Education Act also helped to reunite the Liberal party after the divisions of the Boer War, and spurred them to greater attacks on Liberal Unionists at both national and municipal levels.¹¹⁹ The issue remained salient through the 1906 general election: H. Brooke Taylor attributed the narrowness of Victor Cavendish's re-election for Western Derbyshire first and foremost to Nonconformists inspired by their opposition to the Education Act.¹²⁰

The Education Act also generated divisions within Birmingham itself. At the end of September 1902, a resolution was unanimously carried at a large meeting of Birmingham Liberal Unionists that roundly condemned the Education Act, and one of Chamberlain's leading supporters declared that they were prepared to turn out the government over the issue.¹²¹ Faced with defections in his Birmingham base, Chamberlain convened a meeting on October 9th to argue his case. Through his arguments he was able to rally most local Liberal Unionists to his side,¹²² but there were still several defections. William Ansell stood as an independent candidate at a municipal

Warwickshire Landowners and Parliamentary Politics, p. 328.

¹¹⁸ Times, July 30th, 1902; Pelling, p. 383. Pace Green, p. 8.

¹¹⁹ Stephen Koss, Nonconformity in Modern British Politics (London, UK: B. T. Batsford, 1975), p. 46. On the former, see A. G. Gardiner, Life of George Cadbury, (London, UK: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1923), p. 79-80; on the latter, see DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 284/9, John R. Colston to Grey, Nov. 7th, 1902.

¹²⁰ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3183, H. Brooke Taylor to Devonshire, Jan. 19th, 1906. The first passive resister to be charged had been a Primitive Methodist Sunday school teacher in the constituency. Koss, Nonconformity in Modern British Politics, p. 51. See also Hayden, p. 273.

¹²¹ Ward, p. 150.

¹²² Amery, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol. 5, p. 102-106.

by-election in January 1903 on his opposition to the Education Act, and was only narrowly defeated. T. Grosvenor Lee, who had been the proposed Liberal Unionist replacement for John Albert Bright in Central Birmingham in 1895 before being vetoed by the Conservatives, left the Liberal Unionists over the education issue, and stood as the Liberal candidate in the Central division at the 1906 general election.¹²³ Though Chamberlain had managed to limit the damage to his Liberal Unionist base in Birmingham, he remained uneasy at the electoral implications of the Education Act.¹²⁴ Indeed, at least one contemporary believed that Chamberlain initiated the Tariff Reform campaign in 1903 in order to regain the initiative and recover his own political position.¹²⁵

Other issues also provoked Liberal Unionist division. One such issue was the place of Lord Rosebery within the political party system. After his 1896 resignation of the leadership of the Liberal party, Rosebery adopted a posture of detachment from the Liberals, hoping to encourage a reconstruction of the party on the basis of Liberal Imperialism and a reduced emphasis on Home Rule. Rosebery planned to encourage Liberal Unionists to return to a reconstructed Liberal party. Addressing the City Liberal Club on July 19th, 1901, Rosebery called on Liberal Unionists to rejoin the Liberals ‘with a clean slate . . . disembarrassed from some entangling alliances.’¹²⁶ Publicly Liberal

¹²³ Ward, p. 151 and 170-171.

¹²⁴ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, p. 536-538.

¹²⁵ Rempel, p. 22-23.

¹²⁶ Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists*, p. 70-71. See also Hutchison, p. 176.

Unionists welcomed Rosebery's suggestions regarding the removal of Home Rule from the Liberal platform and his emphasis on imperialism.¹²⁷ Privately, Liberal Unionist leaders were generally dismissive of Rosebery. Chamberlain thought that Rosebery was 'a pretentious humbug' and that his policy was 'no policy at all – except to steal Lib. Unionist ideas and attack Lib. U. leaders.'¹²⁸ However, unlike in 1894, there were a few Liberal Unionists who left the party to fall into line with Rosebery. The most prominent defector was Lord Heneage, who resigned as a Vice-President of the Liberal Unionist Council in January 1902. Heneage argued that the time had come for Liberal Unionists to either join the Conservatives, or 'assist Lord Rosebery in reconstructing a constitutional Liberal party which will eschew and repudiate all anti-English and Home Rule heresies.'¹²⁹ The importance of Heneage's defection was dismissed by other Liberal Unionists: James suggested that it was a case of Rosebery bagging a low-flying bird at a shoot.¹³⁰ Yet Heneage was not alone in his defection, as the Duke of Sutherland, H. C. Howard, Arnold White, and Albert Bencke all joined Rosebery.¹³¹ The Liberal Imperialist organizer for Scotland also assisted Cathcart Wason when he stood as an Independent Liberal at the 1902 by-election that followed his secession from the Liberal

¹²⁷ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Secretary's Report, Nov. 24th, 1899, p. 313 (Insert); *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, Minutes of a Meeting of the Business Committee, Mar. 7th, 1902, p. 64.

¹²⁸ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1124, Chamberlain to James, Jan. 2nd, 1902.

¹²⁹ *Times*, Jan. 14th, 1902.

¹³⁰ *Times*, Mar. 22nd, 1902.

¹³¹ Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists*, p. 98; Rodden, p. 436-437; Searle, 'Introduction,' in Searle, ed., *Efficiency and Empire*, by Arnold White, p. xxvi-xxvii; Waller, p. 181. See also Nicholls, p. 65. Other Liberal Unionists, though tempted by Rosebery's calls, held back due to 'the dead mantle of Home Rule' still being associated with the Liberal party. See Sugden, p. 45.

Unionist party.¹³²

Irish policy similarly caused significant defections from the Liberal Unionists. T. W. Russell, the Liberal Unionist M.P. for South Tyrone, was the leading voice for Presbyterian tenant farmers in Ulster, and was a consistent advocate of land reform, including compulsory sale. Such views brought Russell into conflict with more traditional elements in Irish politics, including both Conservative and Liberal Unionist landlords. However, Russell had the support of Chamberlain, and as long as the threat of Home Rule seemed real, he was at least tolerated, as seen in the offer of office to Russell in 1895. However, by 1900 the declining threat of Home Rule and Chamberlain's withdrawal of support gave renewed confidence to conservative elements in Ireland to resist Russell's call for land reform, and Russell lost office in the Cabinet reconstruction following the general election of 1900.¹³³ As Russell now argued that Home Rule had been effectively defeated, Presbyterian tenant farmers could vote on the basis of economic as opposed to sectarian issues.¹³⁴ From this point on, Russell began a movement out of the Liberal Unionist party. In November 1900 he began a campaign for land reform, and by 1902 'Russellite' candidates were contesting by-elections against recognized Unionist candidates in Ulster. The threat of Russell prompted organizational improvements by Ulster Unionists, and the likelihood of a Liberal victory at the next

¹³² Hutchison, p. 229.

¹³³ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2842, Devonshire to Lord Cadogan, Oct. 30th, 1900.

¹³⁴ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p. 297; J. R. B. McMinn, 'Liberalism in North Antrim, 1900-1914,' in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 89 (May 1982), p. 19.

general election compelled Protestant voters, who might have otherwise sympathised with Russell and land reform, to return to official Unionist candidates. At the 1906 general election, most ‘Russellite’ candidates were defeated, though Russell himself narrowly retained his own seat, and afterwards he moved back into the Liberal party.¹³⁵

A particularly unique defection was that of the Earl of Portsmouth. Prior to his accession to the peerage in 1891, Portsmouth had sat as the M.P. for Devon, South Molton, and as such had been one of the original members of the Liberal Unionist party. However, by the 1900 general election, he had fallen out with the Unionist government over his strident opposition to perceived Ritualism in the Church of England. His anti-Ritualism led him by 1901 to rejoin the Liberal party, and he briefly served as Under-Secretary of War after 1906. In December 1909, however, he announced that he could not support Lloyd George’s budget, and left the Liberal party again. By 1911, he was the President of the South Molton Conservative and Unionist Association.¹³⁶ Portsmouth thus managed to switch parties three times over the course of his political career.

In the first years after the Liberal-Liberal Unionist split over Home Rule, it is not surprising that the former would severely criticize the latter, and advance arguments that the Liberal party was the only truly ‘Liberal’ party. These arguments focussed on the claim that there were no differences between Liberal Unionists and Conservatives, and

¹³⁵ Alvin Jackson, ‘Irish Unionism and the Russellite Threat,’ p. 376-404. Russell’s movement out of the Liberal Unionist party was presaged by individuals like Reverend James Armour of Antrim, who left the party in the early 1890s after he concluded that the Liberal Unionists had become ‘mere circus riders in the Tory hippodrome.’ See Flann Campbell, The Dissenting Voice: Protestant Democracy in Ulster from Plantation to Partition (Belfast, UK: The Blackstaff Press, 1991), p. 344.

¹³⁶ Hampshire RO, 6th Earl of Portsmouth Papers, 15M84/5/9/3/8, Newspaper Cuttings.

that a vote for a Liberal Unionist was a vote for a Conservative government. As James Bryce put it in 1892, the difference between a Liberal Unionist and a Conservative was the same as the difference between an alligator and a crocodile.¹³⁷ One method to advance such an argument was to suggest that the Liberal Unionists had policy differences with Liberals on a number of issues other than Home Rule, and that Home Rule had merely been the excuse for moderate Liberals to leave the Liberal party, with which they had increasingly felt out-of-step.¹³⁸ Another method was to emphasize the two-party nature of the British political system, and that the Liberal Unionists had made their choice between the two main parties, and that their pretensions to be a separate party were just that. As H. H. Asquith commented just after the 1892 general election, the Liberal Unionists were ‘an accidental and ephemeral combination, which was born the day before yesterday, which will be forgotten the day after tomorrow.’¹³⁹ Liberals also highlighted certain beliefs that Liberal Unionists held prior to 1886 that might be uncomfortable to them in light of their alliance with the Conservatives, such as regarding the House of Lords.¹⁴⁰ Finally, the defection of certain Liberal Unionists back to the Liberal party was used to demonstrate that those who remained Liberal Unionists had

¹³⁷ Hayden, p. 230. Similarly, a Liberal heckler at an 1891 campaign meeting in Paisley declared that the difference between the two parties was that ‘the one’s an open Tory, an’ the other’s a cloaked Tory.’ See Macdonald, p. 139.

¹³⁸ In one speech, for instance, Harcourt cited the 1881 resignation of the Duke of Argyll as symbolic of the divisions between certain whigs and the Liberal party prior to 1886. See Goodman, The Liberal Unionist Party, p. 144.

¹³⁹ Cited in Michael Bentley, The Climax of Liberal Politics: British Liberalism in Theory and Practice, 1868-1918 (London, UK: Edward Arnold, 1987), p. 99.

¹⁴⁰ Robinson Library, Charles Philip Trevelyan Papers, CPT 38, What Liberal Unionists when they were Liberals thought of the House of Lords, 1895.

forfeited their Liberalism in their alliance with the Conservatives.¹⁴¹ What is notable about Liberal critiques of Liberal Unionists was that they continued after 1895. During the 1900 general election, William Harcourt used the defection of Lord Durham to argue that the Liberal Unionists were indistinguishable from the Conservatives.¹⁴² Harcourt returned to this theme a year later, suggesting that the Liberal Unionists had advanced no Liberal policies regarding education, temperance, or finance.¹⁴³ Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the leader of the Liberal party after 1898, made similar criticisms. In 1902 he commented that third parties do not last in Britain, and that as for the claims of the Liberal Unionists to be distinct, he replied that ‘we know into which lobby they have gone.’¹⁴⁴ George Pitt-Lewis also reiterated the complaints he had made of Liberal Unionism in 1902, suggesting that a Liberal Unionist candidate was a ‘Tory under a cloak.’¹⁴⁵ The fact that the Liberals felt it necessary to continue to make the case after 1895 that the Liberal Unionists were not true Liberals at least suggests that the Liberals were concerned that the case still had to be made, and that the Liberal Unionists still retained some reputation for Liberalism.

It is true that there were forces at work that undermined the Liberal nature of the

¹⁴¹ For instance, the defections of Sir Thomas Bazley and George Pitt-Lewis were used in such a manner in Liberal propaganda at the 1895 general election. See Robinson Library, Charles Philip Trevelyan Papers, CPT 38, A Farce and a Fraud, 1895.

¹⁴² Times, Sept. 26th, 1900.

¹⁴³ Times, July 12th, 1901.

¹⁴⁴ Times, Jan. 14th, 1902. Campbell-Bannerman also used the Liberal Unionists to criticize the supporters of Rosebery via a ‘slip of the tongue’ in which he referred to the Roseberyite Liberal Imperial Council as the Liberal Unionist Council. See Matthew, The Liberal Imperialists, p. 58-59.

¹⁴⁵ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/4/1A, Chamberlain to T. Canning Baily, Sept. 19th, 1902.

Liberal Unionist party. After 1895, the Liberal Unionists found it increasingly difficult to draw new recruits with a Liberal background into their ranks. Though the Liberal party remained divided after 1895, the Liberal Unionists were not a significant beneficiary of such dissensions.¹⁴⁶ Between the 1895 and 1900 general elections, one Liberal M.P. did cross the floor to the Liberal Unionists, but that was largely due to a desire to force the declared Conservative candidate from the field in his constituency.¹⁴⁷ In 1902, H. L. W. Lawson, a former Liberal M.P., joined the Liberal Unionist party, having come to oppose Home Rule.¹⁴⁸ However, these adhesions to the Liberal Unionist cause were the exceptions. As Home Rule faded as a political issue, the party found it increasingly difficult to gain new recruits, and on a local level there were few Liberals joining the Liberal Unionists after 1895.¹⁴⁹ This was also reflected at the national level. The 1895 general election was the first time that a majority of Liberal Unionist candidates did not have prior electoral experience as Liberals. The number dropped to less than a quarter in 1900, and to 15% in 1906.¹⁵⁰ Many of the new Liberal Unionist candidates had no past connections with the Liberal party, and their selection as candidates did not reference the question of Liberal heritage.¹⁵¹ The lack of Liberal heritage could also be a source of

¹⁴⁶ On Liberal Unionist hopes of gaining Liberal converts due to Liberal divisions, see BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/46/94, James to Chamberlain, Oct. 24th, 1896.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Times*, Feb. 3rd, 1902. Lawson had previously been the Liberal M.P. for West St. Pancras from 1885 to 1892 and Gloucestershire, Cirencester from 1893 to 1895.

¹⁴⁹ NLS, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute Book, Report Submitted to the Business Committee for the Fortnight ending Apr. 21st, 1899, p. 284 (Insert).

¹⁵⁰ See Table 4B.

¹⁵¹ For the case of W. L. Boyle, see Norfolk RO, W. L. Boyle Papers, MC 497/1, Boraston to Boyle, Jan. 27th, 1898, Jan. 16th, 1899, and Feb. 10th, 1899. There was still the occasional exception to this trend – C.

friction with older Liberal Unionists. Arthur Elliot, in particular, felt some antagonism towards those Liberal Unionists who had only joined the party after the hard work of establishing it had been completed.¹⁵² In some cases, candidates who desired to stand for the Unionists did not have a particular preference in terms of whether they came forward as a Conservative or a Liberal Unionist, which served to further weaken the Liberalism of newer Liberal Unionists.¹⁵³

At the Cabinet level, after 1900 those Liberal Unionists who had ties to the pre-1886 Liberal party were beginning to move off the political stage. For instance, Balfour had attempted to force Lord James to retire, only to be thwarted by Devonshire,¹⁵⁴ but when Balfour became Prime Minister in 1902, both James and Jesse Collings were retired, in order to make way for new faces. Both were upset at their treatment, and Collings in particular felt that the loss of Liberal Unionists with Liberal credentials would hurt the party among the rank-and-file. Collings complained there was no longer any Liberal Unionist in the government, with the exception of the Chamberlains, that ‘if we mentioned his name on a platform we should not have to explain who he is.’¹⁵⁵ Of the Liberal Unionists promoted to replace those retiring, Austen Chamberlain was associated with his father, Alfred Lyttelton had only become a Liberal Unionist in 1895, and H. O.

Morgan Richardson, the Liberal Unionist candidate for Cardiganshire at the 1906 general election, had once been a Liberal. See Morgan, ‘Cardiganshire Politics,’ p. 328.

¹⁵² NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19522, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 21st, 1898.

¹⁵³ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/8, Chamberlain to Boraston, May 4th, 1899.

¹⁵⁴ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2838, Devonshire to Balfour, Oct. 20th, 1900.

¹⁵⁵ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1181, Collings to James, Aug. 12th, 1902. Devonshire’s response to Colling’s letter was that ‘I am sorry that he thinks that he would have to explain on a platform who I am.’ *Ibid.*, M45/1187, Devonshire to James, Aug. 18th, 1902.

Arnold-Forster, though he had been a Liberal prior to the Home Rule divide in 1886, had practically no public profile.¹⁵⁶ Nor were the new Liberal Unionists particularly effective as ministers. Both Lansdowne and Arnold-Forster endured problematic tenures at the War Office, while the former was also considered ineffective as the Unionist Leader in the House of Lords in succession to Devonshire.¹⁵⁷ Lyttelton's time at the Colonial Office was overshadowed by the legacy of his predecessor,¹⁵⁸ and Selborne's appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty was marked by criticisms of his personal relationship to Salisbury and Balfour.¹⁵⁹ Of the second generation of Liberal Unionist ministers only Austen Chamberlain had a significant public profile, though his relative inexperience meant that he exerted little influence in Balfour's cabinet.¹⁶⁰

Tariff Reform became the final issue to challenge the loyalties of Liberal Unionists, and provoked the most significant secession from the party ranks. Though Joseph Chamberlain was the leading advocate of Tariff Reform, there was a sizeable minority within the party who continued to support Free Trade, even notwithstanding the opposition to Chamberlain from leading Liberal Unionists such as the Duke of Devonshire and Lord James. Of the sixty-seven Liberal Unionists M.P.s elected in 1900,

¹⁵⁶ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19476, fo. 122-125, Elliot to Minto, Feb. 11th, 1904.

¹⁵⁷ Adonis, p. 31-35. See also Vincent, Crawford Papers, Oct. 8th, 1897, p. 43 and Nov. 2nd, 1900, p. 62-63.

¹⁵⁸ Doubts over his suitability for office contributed to Lyttelton's breakdown during the by-election necessitated by his acceptance of office. See Lyttelton, p. 287-288.

¹⁵⁹ See Vincent, Crawford Papers, Mar. 5th, 1905, p. 79-80. On Lyttelton and Arnold-Forster, see also Michael Bentley, Politics without Democracy: Great Britain, 1815-1914: Perception and Preoccupation in British Government (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 295.

¹⁶⁰ Dutton, Austen Chamberlain, p. 35.

nineteen showed sympathies with Free Trade in 1903 and afterwards. In addition, eight Liberal Unionist M.P.s would ultimately leave the party to join the Liberals on the issue.¹⁶¹ Secessions were also not limited to sitting Liberal Unionist M.P.s, as a number of former Liberal Unionist M.P.s, such as T. B. Bolitho and W. Cameron Gull, also left the Liberal Unionists and rejoined the Liberal party.¹⁶² There were also secessions on a local level. In Paisley, for instance, a number of Liberal Unionists returned to the Liberals over the issue of Tariff Reform, including a Vice-President of the local Liberal Unionist association.¹⁶³ Two leading Liberal Unionist organizers, J. C. Haig, former agent for the East and North of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association, and T. Jeffrey Vince, former secretary of the Midlands Liberal Unionist Association, both left the party over Tariff Reform and began working for the Unionist Free Traders.¹⁶⁴ Tariff Reform also drove a number of Liberal Unionist academics, such as Frederic Maitland and Sir Frederick Pollock, back to the Liberals, and by 1906, Unionist academics were in the minority.¹⁶⁵ Goldwin Smith, a bitter critic of Chamberlain, complained that Chamberlain was a 'plunger' who had not bothered to think through the implications of his call for

¹⁶¹ Calculated from Rempel, p. 225-226 and 228, as revised by Appendix C.

¹⁶² Hayden, p. 275; Dawson, p. 273. Though he did not join the Liberals, Alfred Hopkinson later confessed to having voted Liberal in 1906 on the issue of Free Trade. See Hopkinson, p. 50.

¹⁶³ Hutchison, p. 220.

¹⁶⁴ Staffordshire RO, 3rd Earl of Lichfield Papers, D615/P(P)/5/1/8, J. C. Haig to Lichfield, July 8th, 1904, *ibid.*, T. Jeffrey Vince to Lichfield, July 25th, 1904. Other Liberal Unionists also assisted in the organization of local Free Trade organizations, such as John St. Loe Strachey in Surrey and Arthur Elliot at Cambridge, while the Liberal Unionist and Quaker Thomas Hodgkin headed the North of England Free Trade Association. See Anthony Howe, Free Trade and Liberal England, 1846-1946 (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 261.

¹⁶⁵ Harvie, p. 237-238; Lubenow, The Cambridge Apostles, p. 192-193.

Tariff Reform before launching his campaign.¹⁶⁶

Despite the early wishes of some of Chamberlain's supporters, Tariff Reform quickly became a partisan issue. To Liberals, Free Trade was a vital component of their ideology and identity as Liberals, and as such Chamberlain's Tariff Reform campaign quickly rallied the disparate elements of the Liberal party together to fight for Free Trade.¹⁶⁷ The importance of Free Trade to Liberalism was reflected in the actions of those Liberal Unionists who rejected Tariff Reform. The conflict over Tariff Reform essentially represented the supreme conflict between the Liberalism and the Unionism of Liberal Unionists, and a minority placed their Liberalism ahead of their Unionism in fighting for Free Trade.¹⁶⁸ One Liberal Unionist peer, in writing to Devonshire in support of Free Trade, commented that he still considered himself a Liberal, and agreed with his father's position, who used to say he was a Liberal Unionist with an emphasis on Liberal.¹⁶⁹ Other Unionists also recognized that Liberalism was an important motivating factor in the actions of those Liberal Unionists who supported Free Trade. For instance, according to J. S. Sandars, Balfour's Private Secretary, Elliot was 'a Liberal Unionist whose Unionism was little more than skin-deep.'¹⁷⁰ Some of the Liberal Unionists who

¹⁶⁶ DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 269/1, Goldwin Smith to Grey, July 2nd, 1903.

¹⁶⁷ Bernstein, p. 53-54.

¹⁶⁸ Though not every Liberal Unionist Free Trader was primarily motivated by Liberalism. Sir John Jones Jenkins, former Liberal Unionist M.P. for the Carmarthen District, was also a prominent tinplate owner who returned to the Liberals largely due to Chamberlain's attacks on the tinplate industry. See Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, p. 215.

¹⁶⁹ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3150, 2nd Baron Monk Bretton to Devonshire, Aug. 22nd, 1905.

¹⁷⁰ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 5, p. 151.

crossed to the Liberal party had earlier been uneasy with the policies of the Unionist government after 1895. For example, Edward Hain had been unsatisfied with certain aspects of the 1902 Education Act, and J. W. Wilson had objected to the education and temperance policies of the government.¹⁷¹ Liberal Unionists who crossed to the Liberals had to be prepared to endorse Liberal policies. Richard Cavendish, though standing formally as a Free Trader for Lancashire, North Lonsdale at the 1906 general election, had to declare that he would support the new Liberal government and would vote in favour of Liberal amendments on education and licensing as the price for the support of the local Liberal association.¹⁷²

The differences between Liberal Unionist and Conservative Free Traders also point to the importance of Liberalism to the former. In comparison to the nineteen Liberal Unionist Free Traders, there were sixty-four Conservative Free Traders.¹⁷³ However, in terms of the total caucuses of the two parties, 28.36 % of the Liberal Unionist M.P.s elected in 1900 supported Free Trade, while only 19.1% of Conservative M.P.s supported Free Trade. The contrast is more marked in examining those Free Traders who crossed the floor to the Liberals. Nine Conservative M.P.s crossed to the Liberals over Free Trade, in contrast to eight Liberal Unionists, which amounted to

¹⁷¹ Dawson, p. 60-61; Gardiner, p. 80. Similarly, Lord Northbrook, who left the Liberal Unionist party over Tariff Reform, had earlier approved of the death duties in Harcourt's 1894 budget and had disliked the 1902 Education Act. See Bernard Mallet, *Thomas George Earl of Northbrook, G.C.S.I.: A Memoir* (London, UK: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), p. 239-240. T. W. Russell, after falling out with the Unionist government over Irish policy, also supported Free Trade. See Howe, p. 255.

¹⁷² CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3128, Richard Cavendish to Devonshire, Feb. 16th, 1905; *ibid.*, 340.3178, Richard Cavendish to Devonshire, Jan. 5th, 1906.

¹⁷³ Calculated from Rempel, p. 225-226, as revised by Appendix C.

11.94% of the Liberal Unionist caucus, but only 2.69% of the Conservative caucus.

Liberal Unionists were more likely to oppose Tariff Reform, and much more likely to cross to the Liberals over the issue. As Neal Blewett has noted, the Unionists most likely to join the Liberals were those who had sympathies with Liberals on questions other than Tariff Reform.¹⁷⁴ The actions of the Unionist Free Traders also reflected this difference between the Liberal Unionist and Conservative Free Traders, as the former were consistently more favourable to co-operation with the Liberals. For instance, after the Valentine compact between Chamberlain and Balfour after the 1906 general election, Liberal Unionist Free Traders were in favour of repudiating Balfour's leadership, but were overruled by their Conservative counterparts. Two years later, Liberal Unionist Free Traders were also in favour of supporting Winston Churchill at the by-election in North-West Manchester.¹⁷⁵ Conservative Free Traders, however, were much less willing to break with their party. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the most senior Conservative Free Trader, consistently opposed any action that would see the Unionist Free Traders move into open antagonism with Balfour and sever their connection with the Conservative party.¹⁷⁶ As James stated to Lord Cromer in January 1909, these differences were due in large part to the fact that though Conservative members of the Unionist Free Trade Club were generally hostile to the Liberals, many of the Liberal Unionists were 'still . . .

¹⁷⁴ Neal Blewett, 'Free Fooders, Balfourites, Whole Hoggars: Factionalism within the Unionist Party, 1906-10,' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1968), p. 115.

¹⁷⁵ Rempel, p. 173 and 183-184.

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/1288, Hicks Beach to James, Nov. 12th, 1903.

Liberals in many respects,' and as such were more open to discussions with the Liberals.¹⁷⁷

A significant minority of the Liberal Unionist party opposed Tariff Reform, and some left to join the Liberals, but the majority of the party acquiesced in Chamberlain's policy. Some Liberal Unionists became enthusiastic converts to Tariff Reform, and actively assisted Chamberlain. H. O. Arnold-Forster, for instance, quickly embraced Tariff Reform, became an important supporter of Chamberlain and produced propaganda to support the Tariff Reform movement and, in 1904, argued for Chamberlain's return to the Cabinet.¹⁷⁸ Lord Selborne, meanwhile, had expressed support for Imperial Preference as early as 1891.¹⁷⁹ Nor was this support limited to Parliament. Chamberlain was able to take control of the Liberal Unionist party organization in part due to the ability to mobilize Tariff Reform supporters at a local level to reject Liberal Unionist Free Trader M.P.s and adopt resolutions favourable to Chamberlain.¹⁸⁰ Former Liberal Unionist M.P.s, even those with a Liberal background, such as H. T. Anstruther, moved to support Chamberlain.¹⁸¹ Those Liberal Unionists not at first whole-hearted supporters of Tariff

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, M45/1525, James to Lord Cromer, Jan. 12th, 1909.

¹⁷⁸ Barnes and Nicholson, Amery to Milner, June 20th, 1903, p. 46-47; British Library, Arnold-Forster Papers, Add. 50340, Arnold-Forster Diary, Oct. 17th, 1904, p. 90-91.

¹⁷⁹ NLS, A. L. Bruce Papers, Acc. 11777/19, Wolmer to Bruce, Mar. 8th, 1891.

¹⁸⁰ See Chapter 1. For an example of the support of an important local organizer, see NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19483, fo. 12-13, Jonathan E. Backhouse to Elliot, May 29th, 1903. Chamberlain also inquired into the views of Birmingham Liberal Unionists on Free Trade prior to his May 15th, 1903 speech, and was assured that there were few doctrinaire Free Traders. See Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 5, p. 178.

¹⁸¹ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 4/11/18, H. T. Anstruther to Mrs. Chamberlain, Sept. 15th, 1907.

Reform allowed themselves to get carried along by Chamberlain's campaign. Alfred Lyttelton, for example, initially mistrusted Chamberlain's economic arguments, but admitted that 'I have always had a sneaking fondness for a striking instrument in dealing with foreign tariffs.'¹⁸² There were also a number of Liberal Unionist M.P.s who supported Free Trade but swallowed their objections to Tariff Reform and remained in the party. Some may have done so out of loyalty: Jesse Collings, a long-time supporter of Chamberlain, was described in April 1903 as being a thorough Free Trader.¹⁸³ Others did so in order to avoid attacks on their constituencies by Tariff Reformers. F. B. Mildmay had supported Free Trade through the 1906 general election, but in 1909 he finally bowed to pressure from the Confederates, an extreme Tariff Reform organization that aimed to purge the Unionists of all Free Traders, and endorsed the party programme on Tariff Reform at the January 1910 general election.¹⁸⁴ However, regardless of the different reasons why Liberal Unionists remained in the Liberal Unionist party to support Tariff Reform, the act of doing so represented a fundamental and final break with Liberalism, as it was no longer possible to claim a Liberal identity while opposing Free Trade.

After Chamberlain assumed control of the Liberal Unionist party in 1904, the party became primarily about Tariff Reform. This was reflected in the candidates of the Liberal Unionist party at the final three general elections before fusion in 1912; the

¹⁸² Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers M45/1232, Lyttelton to James, June 4th, 1903.

¹⁸³ Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, Vol. 5, p. 178. But see Paul Readman, 'Jesse Collings and Land Reform, 1886-1914,' in *Historical Research*, Vol. 81, No. 212 (May 2008), p. 302-304. By June 1903, Collings was urging Tariff Reform on Devonshire. See Fitzroy, June 26th, 1903, p. 139-140.

¹⁸⁴ Rempel, p. 198.

primary criteria for their selection was that they were fervent Tariff Reformers.¹⁸⁵ The ideological leanings of candidates, in the direction of Conservatism or Liberal Unionism, were immaterial as long as the candidate supported Tariff Reform.¹⁸⁶ Thus E. F. Morrison-Bell, Liberal Unionist candidate for Devon, Ashburton from 1906 through the two 1910 general elections, was a supporter of Chamberlain and the full Tariff Reform programme, while in Cornwall, Camborne, the Liberal Unionist candidate at the January 1910 election was Chamberlain's nephew, and at the December 1910 general election it was Dr. G. Coates, 'an expert in tariff reform.'¹⁸⁷ After Chamberlain opened the Tariff Reform campaign in 1903, the Liberal Unionists gained several recruits from Liberal ranks, particularly Liberal Imperialists, including the Duke of Sutherland, Sir Edward Reed, Sir Charles Tennant, and T. A. Brassey.¹⁸⁸ Perhaps the most prominent convert to Liberal Unionism at this time was H. J. Mackinder, geographer and Liberal Imperialist, who had unsuccessfully contested Warwick and Leamington as a Liberal in 1900 and forfeited his chances at a cabinet position in a future Liberal government by becoming a

¹⁸⁵ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/37, J. Saxon Mills to Chamberlain, Oct. 24th, 1905; Derbyshire RO, Philip Lyttelton Gell Papers, D3287/116/3/1, Victor Russell to Gell, Jan. 26th, 1905. Thus when Leo Amery met George Lloyd, a 'keen Tariff Reformer,' in 1906, he advised Lloyd to see Boraston regarding standing for Parliament. See Barnes and Nicholson, Dec. 15th, 1906, p. 57. Lloyd would ultimately be elected as a Liberal Unionist for Western Staffordshire at the two 1910 general elections.

¹⁸⁶ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/3/60, Mr. Lampson to Chamberlain, May. 17th, 1906. Similarly, in the summer of 1906, Chamberlain also suggested to a number of young Conservative peers that they might join the Liberal Unionists, primarily to strengthen's Chamberlain's arguments in favour of reforming the Conservative party organization and thus secure the Conservative Central Office for Tariff Reform. See Dutton, 'Unionist Politics and the Aftermath of the General Election of 1906,' p. 875.

¹⁸⁷ Dawson, p. 274; Hayden, p. 287 and 291.

¹⁸⁸ Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists*, p. 101. Reed was the Liberal M.P. for the Cardiff District.

Liberal Unionist in 1903.¹⁸⁹ In each of the above cases the reason for joining the Liberal Unionists had little to do with Home Rule or objections to general Liberal policy. Instead, these individuals joined the Liberal Unionists in line with their conversion to Tariff Reform. So complete was Mackinder's conversion to Tariff Reform that Leo Amery and Leo Maxse wished him to lead the campaign to convert the country to Tariff Reform.¹⁹⁰ Thus the influx of new Liberal Unionists, either as candidates or as converts from the Liberal party, reinforces the notion that the Liberal Unionist party was no longer concerned with Liberalism, as such new recruits were concerned first and foremost with Tariff Reform above all other issues.

The emergence of the Tariff Reform controversy in 1903 marked the final struggle among members of the party to reconcile Liberalism with Unionism. Those who remained in the party had sacrificed their Liberalism to their Unionism by supporting Tariff Reform. Thus, for example, Liberal Unionists raised no objections to the Conservative attacks on the Liberal government's education proposals after the 1906 general election.¹⁹¹ Liberal Unionism had ceased to represent anything distinctly Liberal, and as such the path to fusion was eased. When the issue of Home Rule emerged again after the 1910 general elections, the argument was not that the Liberal Unionists might gain converts from Liberal ranks, but that they should join together with the Conservative

¹⁸⁹ Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 169-171.

¹⁹⁰ Semmel, p. 170-171.

¹⁹¹ Ramsden, The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, p. 27.

party to improve the overall party organization.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Times, May 10th, 1912.

Chapter 5: Liberal Unionist Identity

Historiographical discussion on the ‘Liberalism’ and identity of Liberal Unionism has focussed on the extent to which the Liberal Unionists were able to affect Conservative policy, particularly when the latter was in power.¹ However, by concentrating on the external impact of Liberal Unionism, the question of how the Liberal Unionists created their own identity and justified their action in rejecting Home Rule and seceding from the Liberal party has been overlooked. Indeed, the process of forming a coherent identity was all the more important because ideologically there was little to unite the party beyond opposition to Home Rule.² In the first years of the party’s existence, Liberal Unionists constructed an identity that concentrated on two main aspects: that they had placed the national interest over personal and political self-interest, and that it was the traditions of their Liberalism that propelled them to oppose Home Rule and support the Conservatives. Liberal Unionists thus attempted to construct a unique identity for themselves, one that interacted with elements of Liberalism and Conservatism, but remained distinct from both. They then utilized existing narratives regarding the basis of working-class enfranchisement to explain why the Irish could not be given self-government in the form of Home Rule. In all of these efforts, the position of John Bright as a Liberal Unionist was key, not only for what he said and wrote, but also for his value

¹ Catherine B. Shannon, ‘The Ulster Liberal Unionists and Local Government Reform, 1885-98,’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 71 (1973), p. 407-423; Peter Davis, ‘The Liberal Unionist Party and the Irish Policy of Lord Salisbury’s Government, 1886-1892,’ in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1975), p. 85-104; France, p. 219-251; Goodman, *The Liberal Unionist Party*, ch. 8.

² Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the First Home Rule Crisis*, p. 272.

in party propaganda.

An important component of Liberal Unionist identity was the argument that the party's opposition to Home Rule placed the national interest ahead of their own self-interest. Instead of being beholden to narrow partisan interests, Liberal Unionists argued that they had sacrificed their political careers in their devotion to the Union, unlike their former Liberal colleagues, and that their actions were reflective of what was best for the British people.³ As the Warden of Merton College stated at a dinner held by the Oxfordshire Liberal Unionist Association in 1888, the duty of Liberal Unionists was 'to raise the level of British statesmanship once more above opportunism, above time-serving, above popularity-hunting.'⁴ Arguing that they represented the national interest was necessitated in part by Gladstone's efforts to suggest that the British people supported the cause of Home Rule, and that only isolated elites concerned solely with their own welfare were opposed to his policy, the famous 'classes versus the masses' declaration in his Midlothian address of May 3rd, 1886.⁵ Liberal Unionists countered Gladstone's claims with the assertion that they represented all shades of political opinion, and that a party that included the most prominent Radical of the day could hardly be seen as beholden to narrow self-interest.⁶ Indeed, as Jonathan Parry notes, those Liberals who opposed Home Rule embodied the Liberal tradition of national governance by individuals

³ See, for example, the arguments of the Earl of Camperdown, in The Liberal Unionist, June 22nd, 1887.

⁴ The Liberal Unionist, Feb. 1888.

⁵ Times, May 4th, 1886.

⁶ Is Home Rule a Class Question? (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 28).

of detachment, intellect, and character, and who felt that the Gladstonian embrace of Home Rule represented the triumph of passion and populism over rationality and reasoned parliamentary debate.⁷ An identification with the supposed ‘national interest’ was an important reason for the Liberal split, and thus remained a key component of the subsequent Liberal Unionist identity.

When Liberal Unionists identified themselves with the national interest, they were utilizing a particular conception of the ‘nation.’ In one respect it was particularly focussed on the English; the tendency of certain Liberal Unionists to use ‘English’ and ‘British’ interchangeably was a matter of some offence to their Scottish supporters.⁸ However, it was felt that the success of England, both in the past and in the future, was tied up with the development of the United Kingdom as a unified political entity. To grant self-government to Ireland, and thus run the risk of Irish independence, would threaten to undo the integration of the British state. The fortunes of England were bound up with the British state; to undermine one would be to undermine the other.⁹ For Liberal Unionists, the particular focus of their definition of the nation was the Imperial Parliament at Westminster. A single Parliament for all of the United Kingdom was the

⁷ Jonathan Parry, The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 305-309.

⁸ Donal McCartney, W. E. H. Lecky: Historian and Politician, 1838-1903 (Dublin, Ireland: The Lilliput Press, 1994), p. 132; Christopher Harvie, ‘Ideology and Home Rule: James Bryce, A. V. Dicey and Ireland, 1880-1887,’ in English Historical Review, Vol. 91, No. 359 (Apr., 1976), p. 309.

⁹ D. George Boyce, ‘The Marginal Britons: The Irish,’ in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, eds., Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920 (London, UK: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 234; Tom Dunne, ‘La Trahison des Clercs: British Intellectuals and the First Home-Rule Crisis,’ in Irish Historical Studies, Vol. 23, No. 90 (Nov. 1982), p. 163-166.

best means by which good government and reforms could be administered. According to The Liberal Unionist, ‘the policy of Lord Hartington, Mr. Chamberlain, and the Liberal Unionists is still to adopt every means of remedying Irish grievances through a united and Imperial Parliament.’¹⁰

Perhaps the most prominent invocation of the Liberal Unionist identification with the national interest came from Joseph Chamberlain in the summer of 1887. Tory Democrat Lord Randolph Churchill’s resignation left Chamberlain fearful of the reactionary potential of the Conservative party, while the failure of the Round Table Conference reduced the prospects for Liberal reunion. Chamberlain thus cast about for a new political combination that would be moderate in complexion and would also allow him to continue to play a leading political role.¹¹ He remained closely allied with Churchill, and argued that the time had come to form a new centre party that would exclude both extreme Gladstonians on the left and reactionary Tories on the right.¹² But Chamberlain’s proposal was not presented merely in terms of the new party’s position on the political spectrum. He argued that the new party would rise above the old political loyalties and could be trusted to defend the national interests. Reasonable men of all

¹⁰ Liberal Unionist, Apr. 20th, 1887. As Biagini has noted, there was a growing belief in the minds of Radicals like Chamberlain that a strong imperial government was the only way to ensure needed social reforms designed to improve the material conditions of the British people, including the Irish. Such views played a role in pushing Radicals like Chamberlain to oppose Home Rule. See Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 220-238.

¹¹ To Reginald Brett Chamberlain commented: ‘The old combination is irretrievably smashed. I hardly know what new ones may be possible in the future.’ See Maurice V. Brett, Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, Vol. 1: 1870-1903 (London, UK: Ivor Nicholson & Watson Limited, 1934), Chamberlain to Reginald Brett, Dec. 23rd, 1886, p. 129.

¹² Foster, p. 338-339.

stripes would be attracted to the party, and would uphold the Union while at the same time pursuing progressive social reforms.¹³

Ultimately, nothing came of Chamberlain's proposals. In August 1887 the Conservative government proclaimed the National League, which further isolated Chamberlain from his supposed allies, while in the long-term the relative success of the Conservative government in office mitigated against suggestions for another dramatic party realignment. At the same time, Hartington, who would have been a key figure in any new centre party, was lukewarm at best to Chamberlain's idea, and Churchill's increasingly erratic behaviour greatly lessened his value to Chamberlain as a political ally.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the rhetoric of the 'national interest' remained prominent in the speeches and publications of the Liberal Unionist party, even though it was transferred to the alliance between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives. A leading advocate of closer relations between the two parties under the umbrella of Unionism was the intellectual A. V. Dicey. He argued that the Conservative government was already national and above party politics, and that the two parties should join together to form a single organization dedicated to acting in the national interest. In early 1889 he suggested that the merged party would 'aim at securing, not the success of this faction or of that, but the vital interests of the whole nation.' Moreover, 'the national party . . . , just because it is a national party, ought to accomplish many reforms which will never be properly

¹³ G. R. Searle, Country Before Party, p. 33-37; Peter Fraser, 'The Liberal Unionist Alliance: Chamberlain, Hartington, and the Conservatives, 1886-1904,' in English Historical Review, Vol. 77, No. 302 (1962), p. 61-62; Marsh, Joseph Chamberlain, p. 275-276.

¹⁴ Searle, Country Before Party, p. 36-37.

carried out by the ordinary method of party conflict which creates a factitious demand for change, resisted by a factitious semblance of uncompromising opposition.¹⁵ Dicey's arguments for immediate fusion between the two parties were hotly debated by party loyalists, many of whom wished to maintain their independence from the Conservative party.¹⁶

The leaders of the party frequently deployed the rhetoric of the national interest. After the Parnell divorce case damaged the cause of Home Rule at the end of 1890, Chamberlain renewed his call for a National party, and called on moderate Gladstonians to cross to the Liberal Unionist party. Out of the wreckage of the 'Union of Hearts,' Chamberlain hoped 'that there may arise a truly national party – a party of progress in the best sense, which may attach to itself, no doubt, all those members of the Gladstonian party who recognise that they have been led astray . . .'¹⁷ Hartington himself made use of the rhetoric of the national interest, even when he did not go so far as others in support of further party realignment or immediate fusion. Speaking in 1889, he rejected suggestions that the two parties should join together in the near future, but noted:

I can't doubt that all that is taking place from day to day – the common labours in which we are engaged, the common interests which we are learning to feel and to defend – are laying the foundation at some not very

¹⁵ The Liberal Unionist, Jan., 1889. See also Dicey's articles in the same newspaper, dated Apr. 20th, 1887 and July 27th, 1887.

¹⁶ See, for example, letters to the editor on this subject in The Liberal Unionist, Feb., Mar., and Apr., 1891. To Liberal Unionists Dicey suggested that they should associate themselves more freely with Conservatives at public meetings and emphasize points of agreement. For the objections of one prospective Liberal Unionist candidate to such suggestions, see LMA, A. V. Dicey Papers, A/NFC109/6a, J. Westlake to Dicey, Oct. 20th, 1890.

¹⁷ The Liberal Unionist, Jan. 1891.

distant time of the formation of a still greater national party, which shall know no other bond than the bond of devotion to Imperial interests – which shall be bound together by no other bond than the bond of common effort to raise and elevate the condition of our countrymen all over the United Kingdom.¹⁸

The efforts of the Liberal Unionists to identify themselves with the national, as opposed to Gladstonian narrow and sectional, interests was clearly not unique. As Jon Lawrence has noted, Conservatives in this period also presented themselves as the defenders of the rights of the people, such as with respect to drink, in contrast to the moralism of the Liberal party.¹⁹ Yet, for Conservatives, their movement into outright opposition to Home Rule had brought them to power, a turn of events that was unexpected when the Third Reform Act was passed in 1884.²⁰ In contrast to the clear benefit the Conservatives derived from the Home Rule split, the Liberal Unionists had been forced to break with their former allies, and bring an end to their prominent positions within the Liberal party. This was particularly notable for Chamberlain and Hartington, both of whom had been seen as leading successors to Gladstone on his imminent retirement. Among the Liberal Unionists were also a number of strong parliamentary performers, with significant Cabinet experience or expectations of imminent promotion, and it was generally believed that despite being numerically inferior to the Conservatives, the Liberal Unionists possessed much greater frontbench talent.

¹⁸ *The Liberal Unionist*, Oct. 1889.

¹⁹ Lawrence, 'Class and Gender in the Making of Urban Toryism,' p. 634-638. See also Klein, p. 676-677; Windscheffel, *Popular Conservatism in Imperial London*, p. 55-56.

²⁰ Richard Shannon, p. 144-145.

Still, the Liberal Unionists did not attempt to form a coalition government with the Conservative party prior to 1895, but rather offered general support to the Conservative government while remaining out of office. Thus, the Liberal Unionists could argue they had not opposed Home Rule for partisan advantage, and had also sacrificed their careers for their principles. At an 1887 banquet to honour Alexander Craig Sellar, Hartington noted that Craig Sellar had placed his conscientious convictions ahead of his personal self-interest as he certainly would have been in line for promotion had he remained in the Liberal ranks.²¹ Leonard Courtney summed up the feeling of many Liberal Unionists that they comprised a ‘noble army of martyrs.’²²

In this regard, the ultimate Liberal Unionist ‘martyr’ to the cause of the Union was Hartington himself. Twice in 1886, in July and December, Salisbury had offered the post of Prime Minister to Hartington as part of a coalition government. On both occasions Hartington had refused, a stance supported by most of his Liberal Unionist colleagues. Hartington feared that a Liberal Unionist at the head of a coalition government composed mostly of Conservatives could no longer plausibly claim to be a Liberal, and that the Liberal Unionist party would almost certainly disintegrate if he coalesced with the Conservatives.²³ Though his refusal of Salisbury’s offers made good political sense, Liberal Unionists made a virtue of Hartington’s necessity, using it as the clearest possible

²¹ *The Liberal Unionist*, June 1st, 1887. Craig Sellar had in fact been offered the post of Surveyor General of Ordnance by Gladstone in February 1886. NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19487, fo. 215-216, Craig Sellar to Elliot, Feb. 8th, 1886.

²² *The Liberal Unionist*, Mar. 30th, 1887.

²³ See, for example, CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2075, Bright to Hartington, Dec. 28th, 1886.

demonstration that Liberal Unionists were willing to put the interests of the nation ahead of political advancement. Liberal Unionists lauded Hartington's leadership qualities and willingness to sacrifice office to ensure the continued existence of the Union at a banquet held to honour him in 1887.²⁴ Hartington's past services to the Liberal party were also incorporated into a narrative of his sacrifices for the good of the nation. Jesse Collings, at the 1887 Liberal Unionist Conference, noted that Hartington had played a central role in reorganizing and reinvigorating the Liberal party after Gladstone's first retirement in 1874, and then had selflessly stepped aside in Gladstone's favour upon the latter's return in 1880.²⁵

A practical example of the benefit to Liberal Unionists of emphasizing their sacrifices for the national interest can be seen in the case of Henry James, M.P. for Bury and Hartington's key lieutenant. At first, local Liberals had been strongly opposed to James' action in voting against Collings' amendment, which defeated the Conservative government in January 1886 and brought Gladstone back to power, as it was seen as not only an expression of opposition to Home Rule, but of opposition to the Liberal leader. The Bury Gladstone Club on January 28th adopted a resolution censuring James for his vote by an overwhelming majority.²⁶ As Gladstone began to form his government, he offered James the Lord Chancellorship or the Home Secretaryship to induce him to join

²⁴ *Times*, Aug. 6th, 1887. Even Gladstonians were willing to recognize Hartington's 'honesty of purpose.' See Hawkins and Powell, Apr. 17th, 1886, p. 366.

²⁵ *The Liberal Unionist Conference and Banquet*, 1887.

²⁶ Hereforeshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/150, Arthur F. Bentley [Chairman, Bury Gladstone Club] to James, Jan. 28th, 1886.

his government and support Home Rule. James, however, felt bound by his previous declarations against Home Rule, and in deference to his convictions declined Gladstone's offers. Once these offers and the grounds for declining them became publicly known, there was a complete change in the opinion in Bury towards James. As Walter Brierley of the Bury Liberal Association commented to James:

A great chance of feeling is taking place in the minds of the Electors regarding what has been so much discussed. [-] Nearly everybody now approves the course you took; seeing as they now do, the great sacrifice you have been called upon to make to principle and honour. Such righteousness never can go unrewarded, and when you come, you will find how warm the people's hearts will be towards you.²⁷

The fact that James had so clearly sacrificed political advancement and his self-interest in order to remain true to his beliefs rallied to his side even those Liberals who favoured Home Rule. James would remain Liberal Unionist M.P. for Bury until his elevation to the House of Lords in 1895.

Liberal Unionists attempted to portray themselves as above politics by depicting themselves as not being beholden to party organization, or the 'caucus.' As Lawrence has suggested, there was significant unease over the rise of party organization after the Second Reform Act, particularly as it was seen as substituting wire-pullers and elite control for genuine popular and independent politics.²⁸ Liberal Unionists played on this

²⁷ Herefordshire RO, Lord James of Hereford Papers, M45/156, Walter Brierley to James, Feb. 2nd, 1886. See also Barbary, p. 169-170. See also Bahlman, Jan. 30th, 1886, p. 19.

²⁸ Jon Lawrence, 'The Dynamics of Urban Politics, 1867-1914,' in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor, eds., *Party, State and Society* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1997), p. 93-95. But see Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p. 20-23; James Owen, 'Triangular Contests and Caucus Rhetoric at the 1885 General Election,' in *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 27, Pt. 2 (2008), p. 215-235.

unease by suggesting they had asserted their independence of party organization by opposing Home Rule, while their Gladstonian rivals were instead subjected to strict party control that placed loyalty ahead of principle. Such claims were aided by the fact that the National Liberal Federation sided solidly with Gladstone in 1886, and in subsequent years increasingly sought to impose a policy agenda on the party leadership, epitomized by the Newcastle Programme. During the 1886 general election, Chamberlain contrasted the merits of his colleague W. S. Caine with the Gladstonian Liberal J. S. Ainsworth, both candidates for Barrow-in-Furness. He stated that Caine ‘asked you to give him some kind of independence, some right to exercise his own judgement, upon the new proposals which might be brought before the House of Commons,’ while Ainsworth, in contrast, was pledged merely to vote however the party whips demanded.²⁹ Chamberlain made these claims despite the fact that he himself was perhaps the archetypical caucus wire-puller, having founded the National Liberal Federation and organized Liberal and later Liberal Unionist forces in Birmingham. In the spring of 1895, during the dispute over candidates for Warwick and Leamington, Chamberlain argued publicly that the dispute illustrated that local Unionists were independent forces and not under the control of the

²⁹ *Times*, June 25th, 1886. Similarly, E. A. Leatham, the Liberal M.P. for Huddersfield who voted against the Home Rule Bill but did not stand for re-election in 1886, wrote a scathing public letter urging Liberal voters ‘to give your vote against any one who is ready, like Mr. Summers [the Liberal candidate for Huddersfield], at the bidding of an imperious autocrat in London, to trample every principle of Liberalism under foot.’ Cited in Perks, p. 98. Such critiques also utilized the language of anti-clericalism, a key theme in 19th-century liberalism. As one Liberal Unionist in Paisley suggested, ‘to bow to the decision even of . . . a leader with a united cabinet, would be sheer popery in politics; but to bow to a leader who spoke ex cathedra without the authority of his united cabinet would that Vaticanism against which Mr. Gladstone so earnestly and eloquently appealed.’ See Macdonald, p. 85. See also Wright, p. 14-15.

caucus, in contrast to the Liberals.³⁰

However, the Liberal Unionist national interest and above-party rhetoric had some drawbacks. The Liberal Unionists celebrated the support given to their cause by those outside of politics, particularly intellectuals. The issue of Home Rule had riven academia, and a significant number of intellectuals and scientists, including A. V. Dicey, Henry Sidgwick, Goldwin Smith, John Tyndall, and Lord Kelvin, had moved into the Liberal Unionist camp.³¹ Hartington commented that the support of academics was valuable precisely because of their generally non-partisan nature, and in the party's first years their contributions to propaganda were particularly appreciated.³² Nevertheless, in some cases the advocacy of non-partisanship and the placement of the national ahead of party interest led to a withdrawal from active politics. Though intellectuals were leading propagandists for the Liberal Unionist party in the late 1880s, by the early 1890s many had withdrawn from political activities, realizing that in future politics would be carried on by professionals.³³ Lord Kelvin, for instance, soon became disillusioned with party politics, believing that the party system itself was the cause of so many problems in

³⁰ Brooks, p. 85.

³¹ On the opposition of some scientists to Home Rule, see Greta Jones, 'Scientists Against Home Rule,' in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, eds., Defenders of the Union: A Survey of British and Irish Unionism since 1801 (London, UK: Routledge, 2001), p. 188-208. It was estimated in 1892 that there were 500 Liberal Unionist electors at Oxford University, while in the St. Andrews District, it was believed that the fact that one-third of the electors were from St. Andrews University was a great benefit to the Liberal Unionist candidates. See Pelling, p. 123n and 392. See also TCL, Henry Sidgwick Papers, Add Ms.c.97²⁵, Henry Sidgwick Diary, July 10th, 1886.

³² The Liberal Unionist, July 13th, 1887; McCartney, p. 120; Dunne, p. 138.

³³ Harvie, p. 232.

Parliament.³⁴ Nor was it simply those Liberal Unionists outside the formal structure of the party who withdrew into non-partisanship. Alfred Milner, who as Goschen's secretary had played such an important role in the formation of the Liberal Unionist party organization in 1886, had by the end of the decade withdrawn from politics. In 1893 he commented to a correspondent that he was no partisan, and that 'my interests do not run on the lines of Party and if I can help, in however small a way, to carry out the objects I have at heart, I do not care two straws how the politicians are labelled who execute them.'³⁵ A similar path was followed by Albert Grey, who had been defeated as the Liberal Unionist candidate for Northumberland, Tyneside, and who had also assisted in the formation of the party organization. Within several years Grey had come to the conclusion that the Liberal Unionist and Conservative parties should merge, and by 1892 he too had withdrawn from partisan politics.³⁶

Even as some Liberal Unionists took the logic of non-partisan to the point of leaving politics, others took the criticism of party to the extent of believing that party resistance to Home Rule would ultimately be futile. A. V. Dicey was almost unique among Liberal Unionist intellectuals in basing his opposition to Home Rule on an optimistic view of the future of democracy. Henry Sidgwick was far more typical,

³⁴ Harold Sharlin, *Lord Kelvin: The Dynamic Victorian* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), p. 217. Kelvin was hardly alone in his critical view of the party system. See Dunne, p. 147-148. Hartington, though, concluded that Kelvin was 'not a very wise man except in sciences.' Bodleian Library, MS. Selborne 4, fo. 50-51, Hartington to Wolmer, Nov. 2nd, 1889.

³⁵ Bodleian Library, MSS. Milner, dep. 28, fol. 139, Milner to Parkin, Dec. 15th, 1893.

³⁶ DUL, 4th Earl Grey Papers, 206/6, Grey to Craig Sellar, [n.d.], *ibid.*, 181/2, Chamberlain to Grey, June 7th, 1892.

believing that Home Rule was an inevitable and disastrous violation of property rights.³⁷ Despite this enduring pessimism, it was important to continue resistance to the measure. Millicent Garrett Fawcett agreed with Sidgwick when the latter commented that though the Unionist cause may be hopeless, it was their ‘duty not to show helplessness.’³⁸ This pessimism was also found among Liberal Unionist politicians. Birmingham M.P. George Dixon was ‘gloomy about the future’ in April 1887, and Chamberlain’s diplomatic assignment in the United States in that year allowed him to escape what he saw as an almost hopeless political situation.³⁹ Hartington was prone to bouts of pessimism regarding the resistance to Home Rule. As the Crimes Bill was being debated in March 1887, he came to see ‘almost insuperable difficulties’ in keeping out Gladstone and preventing Home Rule, causing Queen Victoria to write George Goschen about picking up Hartington’s spirits.⁴⁰ In November of that year, Hartington commented to Arthur Elliot ‘that if we are to go in for any Home Rule scheme at all, we might as well take up the Gladstone plan at once, & that he would himself propose to go further in the way of separation, than that scheme, if we are to adopt any Home Rule plan.’⁴¹

While Liberal Unionists attempted to portray themselves as above politics and acting in the national interest, they were at the same time eager to refute Gladstonian

³⁷ Harvie, p. 226-227.

³⁸ TCL, Henry Sidgwick Papers, Add. Ms. c.97, Sidgwick Journal, May 14th, 1888

³⁹ Johnson, Apr. 22nd, 1887, p. 664-665.

⁴⁰ Johnson, Mar. 7th, 1887, p. 658-659. See also Esther Simon Shkolnik, Leading Ladies: A Study of Eight Late Victorian and Edwardian Political Wives, (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987), p. 366-367; NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19513, Arthur Elliot Diary, Feb. 27th, 1887.

⁴¹ Ibid., Nov. 5th, 1887. Though, as Lord Derby noted, Hartington was ‘constitutionally apt to be despondent.’ Vincent, The Diaries of Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, Apr. 14th, 1889, p. 842.

taunts that they were mere Tories, and that they remained within the liberal (and Liberal) tradition of progress and reform. For many Liberals, Gladstone had come to embody liberalism and progress. He was able to portray Home Rule as yet one more battle between the forces of liberty and the forces of reaction, with the Liberal Unionists choosing to side with reaction.⁴² To counter the Gladstonian argument, Liberal Unionists suggested that it was the Liberals who had abandoned the traditions of progress and reform. This position was most forcefully articulated by Chamberlain in the spring of 1887 when he suggested that ‘Ireland blocks the way.’ Chamberlain argued that by making Home Rule the first order of business for any future government, Gladstone had pushed into the indefinite future any number of needed reforms. How, he suggested, could the British people countenance the postponement of reforms at the demands of the Irish minority? He condemned those Gladstonian Liberals who had ‘laid on the shelf the entire Liberal programme of a few months ago, in order to clear the way for the propagation of a new dogma, formerly accounted to be a poisonous heresy, but now suddenly elevated to the position of a cardinal article of the Liberal creed.’⁴³ Other Liberal Unionists expanded on Chamberlain’s criticisms. Henry Hobhouse and Lord Northbrook both argued that emphasis on Home Rule was postponing needed local government reform in Ireland.⁴⁴ Ernest Myers referred to the Gladstonians as ‘pseudo-

⁴² Graham D. Goodlad, ‘Gladstone and his Rivals: Popular Liberal Perceptions of the Party Leadership in the Political Crisis of 1885-1886,’ in Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid, eds., Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 178-183.

⁴³ ‘Ireland Blocks the Way.’ By the Rt. Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P. (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 51).

⁴⁴ The Liberal Unionist, Feb. 1888, and Apr. 1888.

Liberals,' and that strenuous efforts must be undertaken to ensure that the policy of Home Rule did not become identified with Liberalism.⁴⁵ Emerson Dawson suggested in 1889 that the Liberal party had adopted Home Rule due to the influence of rhetoric and emotion, as opposed to the Liberal tradition of governing by logic and discussion.⁴⁶ Editorial notes in The Liberal Unionist at various times condemned Liberal support of parliamentary obstructionism as injurious to representative government, criticized Liberals for not supporting electoral equality with respect to the over-representation of Ireland at Westminster, and, in the aftermath of the Parnell divorce scandal, argued that the Liberals had taken the side of clerical intolerance and obscurantism, parting with the traditional Liberal support for religious equality.⁴⁷ One correspondent to the party newspaper went so far as to suggest that many Gladstonian M.P.s for rural constituencies were reliant for their majorities on the newly-enfranchised, who were by their nature the most ignorant and uneducated voters, thus reflecting the degree to which the Liberals no longer represented intellectual and sensible opinion in the country.⁴⁸

A particular criticism Liberal Unionists made of Home Rule was that it would involve surrendering other Liberal principles. It has already been noted that many Liberal Unionist intellectuals felt that Home Rule would result in unacceptable interference with property rights and representative government. Lord Derby, meanwhile, commented that

⁴⁵ Ibid., Nov. 1887.

⁴⁶ Ibid., July 1889. See also Dunne, p. 150-151.

⁴⁷ Ibid., July 1890, Mar. 1891, and May 1891.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Jan. 1890.

a Home Rule Ireland would be essentially Conservative, and would impose a system of Denominational Education, which had traditionally been anathema to many Liberals.⁴⁹ However, the most common critique was that a Home Rule Ireland would violate possibly the most sacred component of the Liberal creed in the late-19th century: Free Trade. A number of Liberal Unionists argued that a Home Rule Ireland would impose tariffs on British imports in order to protect nascent domestic industries and raise needed revenue.⁵⁰ The Duke of Argyll had argued even before the Home Rule split that an independent Ireland would adopt a comprehensive tariff policy.⁵¹ When the Second Home Rule Bill was being debated in 1893, Leonard Courtney put forward a proposal that Ireland be given the power to levy tariffs, in order to highlight that the Irish greatly desired such power, and to illuminate the degree to which Home Rule would subvert other aspects of Liberalism.⁵²

Liberal Unionists argued that they embodied an authentic Liberalism, and that in contrast to the Gladstonians, who were willing to postpone Liberal reforms for the sake of Home Rule, Liberal Unionists continued to support reasonable reforms. As the party newspaper argued, one of the purposes of the party was the ‘Just Reform of

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Feb. 1889. Similarly, Isabella Tod was concerned that a Home Rule Parliament would not be sympathetic to women’s issues. See Armour, p. 79.

⁵⁰ See, for example, CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2064, Marquess of Lorne to the Secretary of the Liberal Unionist Association, Nov. 30th, 1886.

⁵¹ McCaffrey, p. 54n.

⁵² Bates, p. 121 and 157-158. Liberal Unionists were not alone in worrying that a Home Rule Ireland would impose tariffs. During Cabinet debates on the First Home Rule Bill, William Harcourt argued that Ireland would make commercial treaties with other countries that might include tariffs. See Patrick Jackson, ed., *Loulou: Selected Extracts from the Journals of Lewis Harcourt (1880-1895)*, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), Mar. 31st, 1886, p. 135-136. See also Howe, p. 132-133.

Grievances.’⁵³ Hartington argued that it would be ‘a great misfortune if the opponents of the Union were allowed to identify their cause with the cause of progress and reform,’ and that the achievement of the reforms desired by the people would be best accomplished through a party and a government that was committed, first and foremost, to the maintenance of the authority of the Imperial Parliament in London.⁵⁴ Liberal Unionists went so far as to use the old Liberal slogan of ‘Peace, Retrenchment, Reform’ on their propaganda.⁵⁵

Liberal Unionists were particularly eager to portray their policy towards Ireland as Liberal. In 1887 the Gladstonians focussed their criticisms of the Conservative government on the question of coercion in Ireland, and in particular argued that it was due to the support of the Liberal Unionists that the Conservatives were able to impose coercion. Gladstone himself believed it would be the issue of coercion that would lead him back to power.⁵⁶ Liberal Unionists responded that coercion as it applied to the situation in Ireland was actually in line with the tradition of Liberalism. A pamphlet produced during the 1886 general election suggested that the choice was not between coercion and Home Rule, but rather between two different types of coercion, in that the National League used coercion to ensure compliance with its dictates. Coercion as

⁵³ The Liberal Unionist, Aug. 3rd, 1887.

⁵⁴ Times, Aug. 6th, 1887, and Mar. 23rd, 1889.

⁵⁵ See, for example, The Work of the Unionist Government (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 182). This emphasis was replicated on a local level. In Paisley, Liberal Unionists were as eager as Liberals to place themselves within the radical heritage of the city. See Macdonald, p. 86.

⁵⁶ Martin Pugh, The Making of Modern British Politics, 1867-1939, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 42. For an example of the use made by coercion by local Liberals against a sitting Liberal Unionist M.P., see Koss, Sir John Brunner, p. 94.

applied by the British government only prevented ‘the liberty to do wrong,’ while the coercion of the National League ‘destroys the liberty to do right.’⁵⁷ Liberal Unionists were also eager to move the debate beyond the question of coercion, and emphasized that they were committed to reforms for Ireland. Whereas Conservatives criticized the administration of relief in Ireland,⁵⁸ Liberal Unionists like Leonard Courtney and Henry James believed that the unrest in Ireland demonstrated the continued need for remedial legislation, and that it was only the Imperial Parliament that could undertake to implement such reforms.⁵⁹ Liberal Unionists argued for a constructive land policy in Ireland, in the best traditions of Liberalism, for Ireland.⁶⁰ After the fall of Parnell, Liberal Unionists argued that the government should use the opportunity to pass further reforms in an effort to win the loyalty of the Irish.⁶¹ The most consistent advocate of reforms for Ireland was T. W. Russell, who represented the Presbyterian tenant farmers of Ulster, and who invariably took a liberal line on the Irish land question, such as objecting to excessive evictions in 1888.⁶² Russell’s presence within the Liberal Unionist party ensured that the party leadership remained in touch with liberal opinion in Ireland, and

⁵⁷ The Liberal Unionist, July 1888. See also Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 241-242.

⁵⁸ Virginia Crossman, “‘The Charm of Allowing People to Manage their Own Affairs’: Political Perspectives on Emergency Relief in Late Nineteenth-Century Ireland,” in D. George Boyce and Alan O’Day, eds., Ireland in Transition, 1867-1921 (London, UK: Routledge, 2004), p. 193-208.

⁵⁹ Bates, p. 109-111; Barbary, p. 172.

⁶⁰ The Liberal Unionist, Apr. 20th, 1887.

⁶¹ Ibid., Dec. 1890 and Jan. 1891.

⁶² The Liberal Unionist, Nov. 1888.

helped to prevent a purely reactionary Unionist policy for Ireland.⁶³

The Liberal Unionist tried to show that their support for the Conservative government was consistent with their liberal principles, in that the government had adopted a number of reform measures between 1886 and 1892 that genuine liberals should support. They suggested that the 1888 extension of the Ashbourne Act, which increased the funds available to tenant farmers to purchase their farms, embodied the spirit of the long-standing Liberal policy of increasing the number of owners of the land.⁶⁴ This reform, as well as the Land Act of the previous year, were placed within a legacy of sixty years of reforms for Ireland.⁶⁵ The party newspaper suggested that C. T. Ritchie's 1888 Local Government Act was in the best traditions of Liberal policy, and that it was the most important piece of legislative reform since 1833.⁶⁶ Goschen's performance as Chancellor of the Exchequer was widely praised by Liberal Unionists, placing it within the legacy of sound Liberal financial management by suggesting that, next to Gladstone, he had been the most successful Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁶⁷ A 1889 pamphlet praising the efforts of the Conservative government suggested that it had 'passed measures of reform more democratic even than those of the Liberal Governments of Mr. Gladstone.' In particular, the pamphlet highlighted the government's accomplishments under the headings of Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform, trumpeting the peaceful foreign

⁶³ Catherine B. Shannon, *passim*.

⁶⁴ Reasons Why Liberals Support the Land Purchase Bill (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 157).

⁶⁵ The Liberal Unionist, Sept. 1889.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Apr. and Aug., 1888.

⁶⁷ Ibid., May 1889.

policy of Lord Salisbury, the reduction of the national debt, and no fewer than twenty-four separate pieces of reforming legislation.⁶⁸ By 1891 Hartington would claim that the Conservative government had dealt with almost every social reform raised by the Liberals. Chamberlain would suggest in the same year that he had ‘in the last five years seen more progress made with the practical application of my political programme than in all my previous life.’⁶⁹

Like their Conservative allies, Liberal Unionists emphasized the importance of the Empire in explaining their opposition to Home Rule. Granting self-government to Ireland, it was feared, would lead to the disintegration of the Empire. Instead of just saving the status quo, however, Liberal Unionists also suggested that the Empire illustrated the benefits that could result from continued British rule in Ireland. The argument was advanced that British rule allowed for reform and improvement in its colonies, and the example of India in this regard was commonly utilized. James Froude argued to the Liberal Union Club in 1891 that the condition of Ireland would be greatly improved if the measures adopted in India since 1857 were transported to Ireland.⁷⁰ Thus, for Liberal Unionists the imperial argument against Home Rule was linked to the

⁶⁸ *The Work of the Unionist Government* (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 182).

⁶⁹ BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 5/20/73, Chamberlain to R. W. Dale, May 1st, 1891. Chamberlain’s public comments on the reform record of the Conservative government were at times almost too complimentary for Lord Salisbury’s comfort. As Lord Wolmer reminded Chamberlain during the 1892 general election, such compliments caused Salisbury to be ‘deluged with remonstrances from the more Tory of his followers.’ See BUL, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 11/30/13, Wolmer to Chamberlain, June 19th, 1892. See also *ibid.*, JC 5/67/17, Salisbury to Chamberlain, June 22nd, 1892. See also Readman, ‘Jesse Collings and Land Reform,’ p. 305-311 for the influence of Collings on Unionist land policy.

⁷⁰ *The Liberal Unionist*, Jan. 1891. See also Patton, p. 183, on Lubbock’s view of the Empire as a positive global force for progress.

importance of reform.

Not surprisingly, Liberal Unionist propaganda revolved around the Irish Question, and the reasons why Home Rule could not be granted to Ireland. During the 19th-century, as L. Perry Curtis, Jr. and Michael de Nie note, discussions of Ireland and the Irish were coloured by particular stereotypes of the Irish, which reflected the belief that the Irish were less human and civilized than the English, as illustrated in the numerous graphic images of the Irish as apes.⁷¹ However, as Curtis has also suggested, the simianized portrayal of the Irish was in decline by the 1890s.⁷² For the most part, Liberal Unionist propaganda did not utilize these traditional Irish stereotypes to explain why they could not be given self-government in the form of Home Rule. Instead, the explanations Liberal Unionists forwarded linked with existing British narratives regarding ‘character’ and the ability to exercise self-government.⁷³ More specifically, Liberal Unionist arguments related to the perceived qualities necessary for the franchise, through relating the Irish to the ‘unrespectable’ poor or the ‘residuum’ – those elements of the working-class who had been excluded from the scope of the Second Reform Act in 1867. Thus, Liberal Unionist propaganda of the Irish reflected W. C. Lubenow’s observation that in 1886 ‘the party system revolutionized the Home Rule issue by domesticating it, by making it a creature of

⁷¹ L. Perry Curtis Jr., Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature, Rev. Ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), and Michael de Nie, The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

⁷² Curtis, p. 57 and 143.

⁷³ Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 247. As Jonathan Parry has suggested, ‘most Liberals on both sides thought primarily about how to uphold particular English values with which they had long been associated.’ Jonathan Parry, The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830-1886 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 385.

parliamentary politics, and by so containing it for thirty years.’⁷⁴

A critical issue in the debates surrounding granting the vote in the Second Reform Act was the difference between the ‘respectable’ and ‘unrespectable’ working-class. As Keith McClelland notes, there were certain social, political, and moral qualities that were desired in those men to whom the franchise would be extended. A crucial quality of the ‘respectable’ working-class man was independence, whereby the male breadwinner was regularly employed and able through his wages to support his family.⁷⁵ However, there was more to these qualities than the economic position of the working-class man, as ‘character’ was also deemed essential. Attributes of honesty, frugality, and obedience to the law were all integral to the conception of the ‘respectable’ working-class. José Harris summarizes the difference as between the ‘regularly-employed, rate-paying working man (possessed of a house, a wife, children, furniture, and the habit of obeying the law)’ and those who were ‘the “intemperate”, the “profligate”, [and] the “naturally incapable”.’⁷⁶ These differences were perhaps most famously expressed by John Bright, when he introduced the concept of the residuum in 1867, arguing that the ‘intelligent and honest working man’ would benefit the most by the exclusion of those in a state of ‘almost helpless poverty and dependence.’⁷⁷ Such concepts remained salient after the 1860s. The distinction between the residuum and the industrious working-class was at the heart of the

⁷⁴ Lubenow, *Parliamentary Politics and the Home Rule Crisis*, p. 285.

⁷⁵ Hall, McClelland, and Rendall, ch. 2.

⁷⁶ José Harris, ‘Between Civic Virtue and Social Darwinism: the Concept of the Residuum,’ in David Englander and Rosemary O’Day, eds., *Retrieved Riches: Social Investigation in Britain, 1840-1914* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1995), p. 74-75.

⁷⁷ Hall, McClelland, and Rendall, p. 97-98.

‘crisis’ over the condition of the London poor in the 1880s.⁷⁸ Regarding the Trafalgar Square riots of February 8th, 1886, which occurred in the middle of the parliamentary crisis over the First Home Rule bill, the Daily Telegraph argued that most of the rioters ‘were not genuine industrious working men, but members of the “rough” class.’⁷⁹ Liberals explained their electoral failures in London after 1885 by ascribing characteristics of the ‘residuum’ on Conservative voters, while as late as 1906 a leading Conservative could blame the ‘residuum’ for the sweeping Liberal victory at the recent general election.⁸⁰

The Liberal Unionist on several occasions stated that there was no racial component to the opposition to Home Rule, and Liberal Unionist intellectuals, such as A. V. Dicey and W. E. H. Lecky, were particularly adamant that the case against Home Rule did not require recourse to racism.⁸¹ Nonetheless, there were a few occasions when Liberal Unionists did refer to some of the older racial stereotypes. Isabella Tod, an Ulster Liberal Unionist, wrote that a Home Rule Ireland would be dominated by the Celtic way of life, and that the ‘dangers of merely Celtic life are an intensifying and stereotyping of that narrowness, and adherence to tradition, and indifference to the rest of the world,

⁷⁸ Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 288-289. See also Harling, p. 225-227.

⁷⁹ Brodie, p. 16.

⁸⁰ Windscheffel, Popular Conservatism in Imperial London, p. 80; CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C425/11, Earl of Pembroke to Akers-Douglas, Feb. 5th, 1906. Similarly, a critic of Bank Holidays condemned them for making no distinction between the ‘respectable and orderly poor’ and the ‘drunken, cursing rabble.’ See Patton, p. 229.

⁸¹ The Liberal Unionist, Apr. 27th, 1887 and Aug. 1888; McCartney, p. 145.

which makes all improvement so slow as it is.’⁸² At the 1891 party conference, a delegate from Ireland commented that ‘the Englishman was naturally a law-abiding animal, and the Irishman was naturally a law-breaking animal.’⁸³ In 1887 a suggestion was made in the party newspaper that one means to reduce rent in Ireland was through emigration, an echo of Salisbury’s infamous ‘Manacles and Manitoba’ speech of 1886.⁸⁴ A pamphlet produced by the Liberal Unionists, entitled ‘Home Rule or Temperance: Which is the Cure for Ireland’s Discontent?’, contrasted the common argument of Irish Nationalists – that Ireland was becoming increasingly impoverished – with evidence of increased consumption of liquor and beer in Ireland. The pamphlet suggested that these figures clearly demonstrated that ‘during the period in which the Irish population were said to be gradually becoming poorer and less able to pay their rents and meet their liabilities, they were each year consuming more and more beer and spirits.’ It concluded that the savings in rent that had occurred through the Land Act of 1881 had gone straight to pub owners, and that Ireland would gain more benefits by sobering up than it would by receiving Home Rule.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Liberal Unionist propaganda did not regularly employ the traditional simianized stereotype of the Irish. A cartoon issued by the party at the end of 1887 depicted Parnell as a zoo-keeper, without any simianization, while it was the Liberal

⁸² The Liberal Unionist, June 1st, 1887. Similarly, Goldwin Smith suggested that the Irishman’s ‘political instincts are those of the tribesman, not those of the citizen.’ See John Davis, A History of Britain, p. 35. For a revisionist interpretation of Goldwin Smith’s attitudes towards the Irish, see Peatling, p. 27-36.

⁸³ Report of the Liberal Unionist National Conference, 1891, p. 48.

⁸⁴ The Liberal Unionist, June 8th, 1887. For Salisbury’s ‘Manacles and Manitoba’ speech, see Andrew Roberts, p. 383-385.

⁸⁵ Home Rule or Temperance: Which is the Cure for Ireland’s Discontent? (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 98). See also The Liberal Unionist, Sept. 1887.

leaders Lords Rosebery and Spencer who were depicted as boa-constrictors, able to swallow the most calumnious lies of the Irish Nationalist press. Similarly, a poster produced during debates over the Second Home Rule Bill, in which an Irishman was depicted as sitting simultaneously on chairs representing Westminster and a Dublin parliament, did not resort to simianization.⁸⁶

Instead, the reasons the Liberal Unionists gave for opposing Home Rule for Ireland were largely based in existing discourses on what type of individual ought to be given the franchise. A common Liberal Unionist critique revolved around the economic status and industriousness of the Irish tenantry. During the Plan of Campaign, it was often stated by Liberal Unionists that many of the Irish tenants who refused to pay their rents were actually capable of doing so.⁸⁷ It was argued that there was a general perception among the Irish peasants that they could obtain the land they worked without having to pay for it, and as Lord Derby argued at the 1887 Liberal Unionist Conference, strong efforts needed to be made in Ireland in order to dispel this dangerous notion. Moreover, as the Duke of Argyll suggested at the same conference, the prevalence of secret societies and boycotting interfered with free labour and trade.⁸⁸ British rule in Ireland was also justified on the basis of the need to instil the quality of self-help among the Irish, which was believed to be entirely absent. Liberal Unionists argued that the

⁸⁶ The Liberal Unionist, Jan. 1888; UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, B28(A), Poster on Retention of Irish Members, [n.d.]. Nor did Liberal Unionist intellectuals, with the partial exception of Goldwin Smith, make systematic use of racial stereotypes. See Dunne, p. 166-172; Patton, p. 177.

⁸⁷ The Country Labourer and the Irish Land Question (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 250), The Liberal Unionist, Apr. 6th, 1887.

⁸⁸ Report of the 1887 Liberal Unionist Conference and Banquet, p. 4-5, 21.

expenditure of the 1886 to 1892 government on public works in Ireland, which included improved transportation and education, was aimed at creating conditions that would allow the Irish to improve their lives through their own exertions.⁸⁹ The policy of voluntary land purchase, which Liberal Unionists helped push the Conservative government to adopt, would promote social order and contentment in Ireland, as ownership of the land by Irish peasants would inevitably promote ‘thrift and industry.’⁹⁰ This was contrasted to what would occur, it was believed, in a Home Rule Ireland. Instead of promoting what was described as ‘patient industry’, a Home Rule Ireland would resort to protection to raise funds. This would inevitably cause an economic collapse and reduced wages in Ireland, thus causing thousands of Irishmen to migrate to England to compete with English workers for employment.⁹¹ The problem of Irish emigration was particularly emphasized by Liberal Unionist speakers in Scotland, due to its proximity to Ireland.⁹² Thus, the Irish would pose a threat to the English working-class comparable to the threat posed by the residuum in English cities.

Liberal Unionists also focussed their criticisms of the Irish on the basis of their

⁸⁹ What the Unionist Government is Doing for Irish Industry (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 94).

⁹⁰ Reasons Why Liberals Support the Land Purchase Bill (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 157), Why Liberal Unionists Should Support the Land Purchase Bill (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 232).

⁹¹ Home Rule and the Labour Market (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 23), Working Men and the Liberal Unionists (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 254); Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 258; TCL, Henry Sidgwick Papers, Add Ms.c.97²⁵, Henry Sidgwick Diary, July 17th, 1886. Gladstonian Liberals felt it necessary to argue the opposite; during the April 1895 by-election in Mid Norfolk, ultimately won by the Liberal Unionist candidate, Sidney Buxton, a junior minister in Lord Rosebery’s government, argued that Home Rule would keep Irish workers in Ireland and out of the British labour market. See Brooks, p. 77.

⁹² McCaffrey, p. 68-69; Luddy, p. 222.

education. It was repeatedly emphasized that there was a higher percentage of illiterate voters in Ireland than in any other portion of the United Kingdom. According to one analysis of the 1886 general election, while only one out of every seventy-four voters was illiterate in England and only one out of every sixty-four in Scotland, one out of every five voters in Ireland had declared himself illiterate. Due to the provisions of the Ballot Act, an elector who declared himself illiterate had to record his vote in the presence of agents of each candidate. Thus the Liberal Unionist critique of illiteracy in Ireland was not merely one regarding their education and their desire for self-improvement, but also because such voters were the most susceptible to influence and manipulation.⁹³

The unwillingness of the Irish peasantry to embrace self-improvement was contrasted with other groups in Ireland. When Hartington and Goschen visited Dublin in 1887, it was celebrated that the reception committee was composed of the best classes of Ireland, including lawyers, merchants, professors, doctors, and men of property.

However, when John Morley and Lord Ripon visited Ireland in 1888, it was noted that most of the members of local governments in Ireland, many of whom came from the same groups who comprised the Hartington-Goschen reception committee, did not attend their reception.⁹⁴ It was concluded that the educated middle-class, which formed the backbone of nationalist movements in other countries, gave no support to the Home Rule cause.⁹⁵

⁹³ The Liberal Unionist, June 1892.

⁹⁴ Ibid., Mar. 1888

⁹⁵ Ibid., Dec. 1887. This argument was advanced from the earliest stages of the Home Rule debate. See W. E. H. Lecky's letter to the Times, Jan. 13th, 1886.

The ‘better classes’ were also compared to the poor backgrounds of many Irish Nationalist M.P.s. As one Liberal Unionist pamphlet suggested, there was a clear distinction between the ‘education and commerce’ of the better classes of Ireland, who opposed Home Rule, and the ‘bankruptcy and illiteracy’ of the supporters of Home Rule.⁹⁶ This dichotomy was repeated in references to the Protestants of Ulster. Industry, self-sufficiency, and progress was said to be thriving in Ulster, in stark contrast to the situation in the Catholic south, and that the prosperity of Ulster would be gravely threatened by granting Home Rule to Ireland.⁹⁷ The greater number of official positions in Ireland filled by Protestants were attributed to their intelligence, not bigotry, and the industriousness that did exist in Ireland was attributed to the loyal classes.⁹⁸ In depictions of Ireland, Ulster represented the respectable working-class, worthy of inclusion within the boundaries of British citizenship, but constantly threatened by the larger Catholic Irish residuum.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Unionists v. Nationalists in Ireland (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 110).

⁹⁷ Report of the 1887 Liberal Unionist Conference and Banquet, p. 24. As Isabella Tod suggested, ‘Protestantism [was] more favourable to the industrial virtues than Catholicism,’ while during debates on the First Home Rule Bill, Robert Bickersteth argued that the Protestants of Ulster constituted a ‘powerful minority representing by far the greater part of the property, education, and the intelligence of the country, representing all the interests which made for stability and progress of a civilized community who were resolutely opposed to change.’ See Armour, p. 80; Rodden, p. 110. See also Biagini, British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, p. 250.

⁹⁸ The Liberal Unionist, July 1890 and July 1892.

⁹⁹ Concern over the threat the Catholic majority posed to the Protestant minority in Ireland predated the Home Rule crisis for a number of future Liberal Unionists. During debates on the Third Reform Bill, Liberal members of the Proportional Representation Society argued that a uniform franchise and single-member constituencies would spell the end of minority representation outside Ireland. A majority of the Liberal M.P.s who belonged to the society would subsequently become Liberal Unionists, including John Lubbock, Leonard Courtney, and Albert Grey. See Andrew Jones, The Politics of Reform, 1884 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 102-103.

The perceived apathy of the Irish peasantry was also emphasized by Liberal Unionists. Irish tenants were believed to be meekly following the orders of the National League in withholding rent. Joseph Chamberlain, in a speech in 1887, suggested ‘the National League stood between [the Irish peasant] and his intentions and conscience’.¹⁰⁰ The Irish peasant had been, as one pamphlet indicated, ‘brutalised and demoralised’ by the Irish land system, which left them without any capacity for self-government.¹⁰¹ One boycotted Irish Liberal Unionist complained that though many Irish were sympathetic to his plight, none were willing to challenge the supremacy of the National League.¹⁰² Moreover, the only way the Irish Nationalists could mobilize the Irish people to care at all about the struggle for Home Rule was to attach the land question to the issue.¹⁰³ This last critique was not limited to the supporters of Home Rule, but also to the Unionists of Ireland. Hartington complained at the 1891 Liberal Unionist Conference that there was widespread apathy amongst the Unionist minority in Ireland, and that they needed to exert themselves in order to defend themselves.¹⁰⁴ By referencing the perceived apathy of the Unionists of Ireland, the Liberal Unionists constructed them as requiring British rule to defend them, even as they were incorporated into British citizenship.

An important theme of the Liberal Unionist critique of the Irish was that of their

¹⁰⁰ The Liberal Unionist, Apr. 20th, 1887.

¹⁰¹ Dialogue Between a Radical Nonconformist, John, and a Home Ruler, William (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 11). As Isabella Tod commented, ‘the conditions of free democracy do not exist in Ireland.’ Cited in Brown, p. 366.

¹⁰² The Liberal Unionist, Dec. 1890.

¹⁰³ Ibid., Nov. 1888.

¹⁰⁴ Report of the 1891 Liberal Unionist Conference and Banquet, p. 119-120.

dependence, and in particular, that the Irish Nationalists were simply the pawns of Fenians and Irish-Americans. Chamberlain once commented that Home Rule would never be satisfactory to ‘American agitators, who have furnished the sinews of war,’¹⁰⁵ and the party newspaper noted that the Land League and National League had received a total of £254 898 from American sources between 1879 and 1886.¹⁰⁶ In late 1890 the Dublin Correspondent of The Liberal Unionist commented that the National League was objecting to the raising of a fund in the United States to assist famine victims in Ireland, simply because the fund would not be under its control.¹⁰⁷ By depicting the efforts of the Irish Nationalists as relying on funds from the United States, Liberal Unionists suggested that a Home Rule Ireland would remain dependent on those who were strongly opposed to any British influence over Ireland, and thus would not act in the best interests of Britain as a whole.¹⁰⁸ This linked with Bright’s formulation of the residuum, in which if the dependent poor were given the vote, they would be unable to resist the temptations of wealthy individuals to cast their votes as they were instructed to, and thus would pollute the national polity.¹⁰⁹

The prevalence of crime in Ireland was also given as a reason to deny Home Rule.

¹⁰⁵ Ireland Blocks the Way (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 51). Chamberlain also used such rhetoric to justify the alliance with the Conservatives, commenting that he would rather be allied with ‘English gentlemen’ than ‘the subsidised agents of a foreign conspiracy.’ See Briggs, p. 185.

¹⁰⁶ The Liberal Unionist, May 4th, 1887.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., Nov. 1890.

¹⁰⁸ Ireland Blocks the Way (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 51). See also Gervas Huxley, Victorian Duke: The Life of Hugh Lupus Grosvenor, First Duke of Westminster, p. 160-161

¹⁰⁹ Harris, p. 75. Similarly, Henry James used his background as the architect of the Corrupt Practices Act to argue that Irish voters needed to be able to cast their ballots free of intimidation from Parnell and his allies, which was not currently the case. See Barbary, p. 166.

It was suggested that the recourse of the Irish tenant farmer to crime when times were bad was a natural outcome of the lack of desire to pay their rent.¹¹⁰ The role of the National League was condemned as encouraging the Irish tenantry to pursue their selfishness by any means.¹¹¹ The Plan of Campaign was far worse than any activity of a trade union, as it constituted a systematic violation and degradation of the law in Ireland.¹¹² To the Liberal Unionists, the only solution to the prevalence of crime in Ireland was a continuation of firm and just British rule. The suppression of crime was ‘a simple matter of common morality and common humanity,’¹¹³ and that only the Parliament at Westminster, as the ‘safeguard of our liberties, the guardian of progress and of social order’ could ensure the ultimate suppression of crime in Ireland.¹¹⁴ In contrast, to grant Home Rule to Ireland would hand the island over to those who were responsible for crime and outrages.¹¹⁵ Although portraying the Irish as prone to crime linked with existing Irish stereotypes, it also linked to debates regarding fitness for the franchise. Just as the supposed prevalence of crime among the residuum was a basis for denying the vote, so did the recourse of the Irish to crime demonstrate their unfitness for Home Rule.

Unsurprisingly, Liberal Unionists recognized the potency of anti-Catholicism in their arguments, particularly in attracting the support of Nonconformists.¹¹⁶ Liberal

¹¹⁰ The Country Labourer and the Irish Land Question (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 250).

¹¹¹ The Liberal Unionist, May 18th, 1887.

¹¹² The Plan of Campaign (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 48).

¹¹³ Liberal Unionist Association (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 177).

¹¹⁴ Report of the 1887 Liberal Unionist Conference and Banquet, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ What the Parnellites Practice (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 19).

¹¹⁶ Bebbington, ‘Nonconformity and Electoral Sociology,’ p. 648-649.

Unionists depicted the situation in Ireland as part of a larger struggle in Catholic Europe to rid itself of clerical domination.¹¹⁷ Catholic bishops and priests were often depicted as shadowy figures who wielded enormous influence over their followers, and claimed to be above the rule of British law.¹¹⁸ Their religion, it was argued, rendered the Irish Catholics superstitious and unable to be swayed by reason. One Liberal Unionist pamphlet contrasted the ‘splendid lessons of self-government, self-organisation, self-respect, courage, and independence’ which Englishmen had learned from the Nonconformist Churches, while ‘the Irishman instead has been held firm in the grip of the Roman Catholic Church, which, whatever we may think of its doctrines, certainly renders men less fit to be true and capable citizens, and makes them of necessity narrow and intolerant.’¹¹⁹ Henry James condemned Irish priests for interfering with individual liberty, and the party newspaper suggested that an ecclesiastical despotism at the hands of the ‘episcopal junta at Maynooth’ would be even worse than an armed insurrection in Ireland.¹²⁰ Central to its criticism of the sway of the Catholic Church in Ireland was the Liberal Unionist belief that it rendered the Irish incapable of proper citizenship, and thus incapable of self-government.

The morals of the Irish came in for much criticism. The frequent reference made

¹¹⁷ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p. 242.

¹¹⁸ *The Liberal Unionist*, Apr. 6th, 1887.

¹¹⁹ *Dialogue Between a Radical Nonconformist, John, and a Home Ruler, William* (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 11).

¹²⁰ *The Liberal Unionist*, May 1891, Aug. 1891, and Nov. 1891. See also McCartney, p. 123. Even some Gladstonians feared that Catholic mobs would run riot in a Home Rule Ireland. See Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p. 252-253.

to the drinking habits of the Irish, while clearly linked to a traditional stereotype,¹²¹ was primarily presented, as in the pamphlet 'Home Rule or Temperance,' as a question of character.¹²² Notice was made of the public efforts of Irish women in support of the Nationalist cause, with the suggestion that 'have not the Irish people themselves followed the example of Arab heroes, and taken their wives to battle with them, placing them in the van, and humbly contenting themselves with fighting from behind their shelter?' It was suggested that 'in the present topsy-turvy condition of things in Ireland it would seem that the men have become women and the women men.'¹²³

But the moral degeneracy of the Irish was most graphically illustrated by the fall of Parnell in 1891. His affair with Kitty O'Shea, Liberal Unionists argued, did not stir any particular outrage amongst his Irish supporters. It was only when it was made clear by the Liberal party that the cause of Home Rule would be grievously harmed by his continued leadership of the Irish Nationalist party that Irish opposition to Parnell appeared and he was deposed.¹²⁴ As one Liberal Unionist pamphlet suggested, the Irish had 'shown utter indifference to all accepted canons of the Moral Law.'¹²⁵ The Dublin Correspondent of the party newspaper commented that the Irish had been 'condoning the immorality they now taunt him [Parnell] with.'¹²⁶ An address by Irish Liberal Unionist

¹²¹ Ibid., Mar. 1888 and Dec. 1890.

¹²² Home Rule or Temperance: Which is the Cure for Ireland's Discontent? (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 98).

¹²³ The Liberal Unionist, Dec. 1887.

¹²⁴ Ibid., Jan. 1891.

¹²⁵ The Present Position of the Home Rule Question.

¹²⁶ The Liberal Unionist, Jan. 1891.

women made clear the link between public and private morality, in that Parnell, who had sanctioned so many offences against the law, had himself broken one of the most basic laws of morality.¹²⁷ The Irish as a whole were thus implicated in Parnell's moral failings, and this was used to justify continued British rule. As Hartington commented, the fall of Parnell clearly demonstrated the importance of keeping Ireland under the influence of British opinion, as the Irish had only been forced to account for the moral failings of their leader through the pressure of British public opinion.¹²⁸ It was not possible to grant self-government to those who had shown their indifference to basic morality.

An important factor in the ability of Liberals Unionists to claim a position above party politics and in line with the traditions of Liberalism, and at the same time associate the Irish with those elements of the working-class who should not be granted the franchise, was the position of John Bright. One of the last significant political acts of the veteran Radical M.P. prior to his death in 1889 was to vote against the Home Rule Bill in 1886 and join the nascent Liberal Unionist party. Bright played an important role both during the First Home Rule Crisis, and in the first years of the Liberal Unionist party, as they struggled to assert their identity.¹²⁹ In the months leading up to the decisive vote on the First Home Rule Bill, Gladstone made a number of attempts to win the support of Bright, including at several face-to-face meetings.¹³⁰ This was in stark contrast to

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, Mar. 1891.

¹²⁸ *Report of the 1891 Liberal Unionist Conference and Banquet*, p. 119.

¹²⁹ Of note, all sections of the Liberal Unionist party, Whig as well as Radical, made use of Bright's adhesion to the party to justify their political position, *pace* Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p. 381.

¹³⁰ British Library, Bright Papers, Add. 43385, fos. 342, 344-347, and 352-353, Gladstone to Bright, Mar. 19th, Apr. 11th (through an intermediary), May 12th, and May 14th, 1886. See also Ramm, Gladstone to

Gladstone's treatment of Bright's Birmingham colleague, Joseph Chamberlain.¹³¹

Chamberlain was also eager to secure Bright's support, arguing that no one but him could bring about a compromise solution to avoid a split in the Liberal party. Indeed, in the fluid political situation of the spring of 1886, Chamberlain felt that Bright's support of his position was vital if he was to maintain his position in Birmingham.¹³² Bright's ultimate decision to cast a vote against the First Home Rule Bill would have a decisive impact on the outcome of the Second Reading. On May 30th, Chamberlain convened a meeting of his supporters, who held the balance in the House of Commons, to decide what course to pursue in the upcoming vote. Many were tempted to abstain, and thus allow the measure to pass, but the critical moment came when Chamberlain read a letter from Bright announcing his intention to vote against the measure. The meeting resolved to follow Bright's example, and the Home Rule bill was defeated little more than a week later.¹³³

Bright continued to play an important role in the ensuing general election. In particular, a speech Bright gave at Birmingham on July 1st was widely seen as a decisive moment in the election campaign.¹³⁴ One London Liberal Member of Parliament noted

Lord Granville, Mar. 25th, 1886, p. 438.

¹³¹ H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone: 1875-1898* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 116.

¹³² British Library, Bright Papers, Add. 43387, fos. 202-204, Chamberlain to Bright, May 15th, 1886; Roland Quinault, 'John Bright and Joseph Chamberlain,' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Sept. 1985), p. 641-642.

¹³³ Cooke and Vincent, p. 428-429. Henry Robertson, the Liberal M.P. for Merionethshire who voted against the First Home Rule Bill but did not stand again in the 1886 general election due to ill-health, stated that he had been undecided until he received advice from Bright. See Rodden, p. 580.

¹³⁴ John Morley described the speech as 'the heaviest and most telling attack' of the election. John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, Vol. II (London, UK: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1906), p. 582. Lord Cranbrook suggested that Bright's speech showed that Gladstone had 'lost his head.' Johnson, July 2nd, 1886, p. 611.

that Bright's speech to his Birmingham constituents undid all of his own efforts to convince his electors of the merits of Home Rule.¹³⁵ Albert Grey, the Liberal Unionist candidate at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, had thirty thousand copies of Bright's speech printed and distributed to his constituents.¹³⁶ So great was Bright's influence that Sir Thomas Brooks, the election agent for Hartington in his Lancashire constituency of Rossendale, had written to Bright to ask for his help against the fierce Gladstonian opposition he faced. In contrast, he believed assistance from Chamberlain would have no positive impact, suggesting that Bright's prestige exceeded that of his Birmingham colleague in 1886.¹³⁷

After the 1886 general election, Bright's public political role declined, and his last major public political act was to chair a banquet in honour of Hartington on August 5th, 1887. Despite his declining public role, Bright's support was still actively solicited. When the Conservative government introduced its Coercion Bill, the Conservative Leader in the House of Commons, W. H. Smith, wrote to Hartington asking him to see if Bright would speak in the House on the matter, arguing that it 'would be of the greatest possible value in the Country – if he only said a few words' in support of the Government.¹³⁸ Later, Bright's vote against a Liberal amendment to the Coercion Bill helped ensure the

¹³⁵ Goodlad, p. 165-166. See also J. Becke to Lord Spencer, July 5th, 1886, in Gordon, The Red Earl, p. 127-128.

¹³⁶ Goodlad, p. 167. See also NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19512, Arthur Elliot Diary, June 25th, 1886. Conservatives also referenced Bright's speeches during the 1886 election campaign. See A. W. Roberts, The Liberal Party in West Yorkshire, p. 145.

¹³⁷ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2017, Sir Thomas Brooks to Hartington, July 2nd, 1886. Pace Marsh, Joseph Chamberlain, p. 256.

¹³⁸ CH, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.2118, W. H. Smith to Hartington, Apr. 7th, 1887.

survival of the government.¹³⁹ In May 1888, when illness confined Bright to bed, Lord Cranbrook noted that his loss would be a great setback to the Unionist cause, and one Conservative suggested that a declaration on Bright's views on the Union should be obtained from him, so that on his death it could be placarded across the country as the 'Last Words of John Bright to British Workmen.'¹⁴⁰ Despite his declining public role, Bright remained in the public eye through the publication of a wide range of letters to various correspondents opposing Home Rule and criticizing Gladstone's actions. The Liberal Unionist organization put many of Bright's public speeches and letters on Home Rule in their leaflets and pamphlets, and indeed while Bright was alive pamphlets about him were as common as pamphlets on any other Liberal Unionist leader, including Hartington and Chamberlain.¹⁴¹ The party newspaper also repeatedly published correspondence between Bright and others containing his views on Home Rule and his critiques of Gladstonian Liberalism.¹⁴²

John Bright played a crucial role in the effort to portray Liberal Unionism as

¹³⁹ George Macaulay Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1913), p. 459. See also Johnson, Mar. 1st, 1887, p. 655-656.

¹⁴⁰ Johnson, May 29th, 1888, p. 705; CKS, 1st Viscount Chilton Papers, C552, C. Williams to Akers-Douglas, Feb. 26th, 1889. During the 1892 election campaign, Chamberlain invoked Bright's name frequently in addressing Birmingham audiences, while Bright was used in pamphlets produced by the Irish Unionist Alliance in 1894. See Quinault, 'John Bright and Joseph Chamberlain,' p. 644; Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Franchise Reform, "First Past the Post" and the Strange Case of Unionist Ireland,' in E. H. Green, ed., *An Age of Transition: British Politics, 1880-1914* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 98. See also Macdonald, p. 141.

¹⁴¹ For examples of Liberal Unionist pamphlets on Bright, see *Mr. John Bright on Home Rule* (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 31), *Mr. John Bright and the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon* (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 33), *Mr. Bright's Election Address* (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 37), *Mr. Bright's Reply to Mr. Gladstone* (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 40), and *Mr. John Bright and Mr. Chamberlain on the Position of the Liberal Unionists* (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 41).

¹⁴² For examples from *The Liberal Unionist*, see Apr. 20th, May 4th, May 18th, June 15th, and Sept. 1887.

motivated by a desire to serve the best interests of the British people. By the 1880s, the perception of Bright as a potentially destabilizing demagogue had given way to an image of Bright as reflective of the people. Bright had, in essence, been institutionalized, brought into the ranks of the political elites just as the working-class had been brought into the constitution. Thus Bright became the ‘Tribune of the People’, a living symbol of the ‘democratization’ of British society. By assuming this role, Bright was placed above party politics. Such a ‘Tribune’ appealed to, and was sustained by, the people, not by a particular political identification.¹⁴³

Bright used his position as the ‘Tribune of the People’ to parry Gladstone’s claim that the opponents of Home Rule were motivated by narrow class interests. He suggested that his interests in the issue were no different from the interests of a peer or a humble agricultural labourer or factory worker. Each had an interest in the maintenance of the Union, and thus a peer was equally capable of speaking to the national interest when opposing Home Rule as anyone else.¹⁴⁴ In Bright’s articulation, the source of the opposition to Home Rule was not relevant. What mattered was the fact that opposition to Home Rule was based on what was best for the nation, since the maintenance of the Union was manifestly in the interests of the people. The aristocracy, by looking beyond their narrow interests, were able to serve the people by opposing Home Rule. Bright also

¹⁴³ Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 140-145. Bright, of course, was not the only 19th-century politician to be used in such a way. From the 1860s, Free Traders often utilized a ‘cult of Cobden’ in support of their efforts to combat protectionism. See Howe, p. 141-152.

¹⁴⁴ *Times*, Aug. 6th, 1887.

commented that his support for the 1887 Coercion Bill was based on the merits of the measure, and felt that it did not matter whether it was introduced by a Conservative or a Liberal government.¹⁴⁵ Bright turned Gladstone's linking of himself with the 'masses' on its head during the 1886 election. He argued that Gladstone had concealed his views on Home Rule from the people prior to the flying of the Hawarden Kite in December of 1885, and that during the current election he was concealing the fact that a critical component of his Home Rule plan was a Land Purchase Bill, a measure that would benefit a small group of Irish landlords at the expense of the British people.¹⁴⁶ Thus Bright was able to suggest that Gladstone's views on Home Rule were not a reflection of the moral will of the people, but rather of his own thoughts in isolation from the wider public. So telling was this blow that Gladstone felt compelled to write immediately to Bright and argue he had never concealed his opinions on Ireland from the electorate.¹⁴⁷

Bright used the alliance between the Irish Nationalists and the Gladstonian Liberals to argue that Gladstone had placed the narrow interests of this sectional group ahead of the national interest. As a result, Gladstone had forfeited the right to speak for the people. Moreover, Gladstone had surrendered his own independence in his alliance with the Irish Nationalists, as he was now at the mercy of their whims. Parnell could in essence dictate terms to Gladstone, so dependent was Gladstone on Parnell for support.

¹⁴⁵ The Liberal Unionist, May 4th, 1887.

¹⁴⁶ Times, July 2nd, 1886.

¹⁴⁷ Gladstone to Bright, July 2nd, 1886, in Bright Papers, British Library, Add. 43385, fl. 355-357. This argument would be repeated by other Liberal Unionists in later years. See The Liberal Unionist, June 1891.

Bright suggested that the virulent propaganda issued by the Liberals against himself and Chamberlain only revealed ‘the depth of degradation into which the Liberal party is being rapidly forced by its alliance with the promoters and leaders of the rebel movement in Ireland.’¹⁴⁸

Leading Liberal Unionists did not hesitate to use Bright’s reputation to defend themselves from accusations that they were not acting in the national interest by their refusal to support Home Rule. As Lord Selborne asked an audience in 1886: ‘Is Mr. Bright to be reckoned as a man actuated by the spirit of power and class? Is he dependent upon class?’¹⁴⁹ George Goschen, in refuting Liberal attacks that the Liberal Unionists wished to maintain class privilege and ascendancy in Ireland, resorted to the use of John Bright: ‘Is that the cause on the side of which John Bright is now? Does he support class privilege and class ascendancy?’¹⁵⁰ Even after Bright’s death in 1889 Liberal Unionists would continue to use his reputation as a defence against Liberal attacks. In 1891, Sir Henry James countered Gladstone’s claim that Liberal Unionism represented a mere faction by asking whether John Bright, the ‘Tribune of the People’, could be part of a mere faction.¹⁵¹ In the same year the party newspaper invoked Bright’s name to counter Gladstone’s reference to the Liberal Unionist party as ‘that unhappy, unfortunate, ill-starred, abortion of a party.’¹⁵² Thus the utilization of the image of John Bright, and his

¹⁴⁸ Times, Oct. 14th, 1887.

¹⁴⁹ Times, May 6th, 1886.

¹⁵⁰ Times, Nov. 5th, 1887.

¹⁵¹ Report of the 1891 Liberal Unionist Conference and Banquet, p. 8.

¹⁵² The Liberal Unionist, Apr. 1891.

place within a narrative of the ‘people’, was of vital importance to the efforts by Liberal Unionists to portray themselves as being above partisan politics and narrow self-interest.

Bright’s long identification with Radical causes enabled Liberal Unionists to assert the importance of independence with respect to party organization. Bright explained to Hartington that the independence of Members of Parliament to act as they felt most appropriate was an essential foundation of Britain’s representative institutions.¹⁵³ He argued that the response of Gladstone’s followers in supporting Home Rule showed that they were willing to discard their principles and vote however their leader and their party organization wanted them to. In a letter to fellow Radical and Liberal Unionist W. S. Caine during the 1886 election, Bright commented:

The action of our clubs and associations is rapidly engaged in making delegates of their members, and in insisting on their forgetting all principles if the interests of a party or the leader of a party are supposed to be at stake. What will be the value of party when its whole power is laid at the disposal of a leader from whose authority no appeal is allowed? At this moment it is notorious that scores of members of the House of Commons have voted with the Government who in private have condemned the Irish Bills. Is it wise for a Liberal elector or constituency to prefer such a member, abject at the feet of a Minister, to one who takes the course dictated by his conscience and his sense of honour?¹⁵⁴

In another letter to Radical and Liberal Unionist Peter Rylands, Bright suggested bitterly:

Honesty and capacity in a member are with some of small value in comparison with the suppleness which permits and enables him to ‘turn his back upon himself’ when a great political leader changes his mind and

¹⁵³ *Times*, Apr. 27th, 1886.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, June 24th, 1886.

course.¹⁵⁵

For Bright, the actions of Gladstone's followers in supporting Home Rule demonstrated clearly that they had forfeited their independence, and had become mere dependents of the caucus. Despite this surrender, Bright argued that the actions of the Liberal Unionists, in rejecting the attacks of the Liberal party organization and asserting their right to defend their principles regardless of party, had done much to redeem the honour of the Liberal party. They had demonstrated the value of continued independence in politics, in that it was only those Liberals who were prepared to risk exile at the hands of the caucus who were willing to stand up and oppose policies that were against the best interests of the British people.

Bright was also a living link to the great reform movements of the mid-19th century, and his movement into the Liberal Unionist party was seen as a clear demonstration of the continued fidelity of the Liberal Unionists to liberalism. Bright himself played on his link to the past, arguing that his support for the Conservative government was based in part on the fact that it had been elected by household suffrage, while Liberals noted that Bright's opinions carried particular weight among older Liberals who could recall Bright's earlier political campaigns.¹⁵⁶ As Sir John Lubbock argued:

Mr. Bright during his long and illustrious career has been associated with all the triumphs of the Liberal party, triumphs to which we look back with so much satisfaction and to which his wisdom and eloquence have so greatly contributed. And yet we have heard Mr. Bright's claim to be a

¹⁵⁵ *Times*, June 25th, 1886.

¹⁵⁶ *The Liberal Unionist*, Apr. 20th, 1887; Goodlad, p. 165-166.

Liberal and a Radical decried and sneered at. Surely those who have abandoned, whether with good reason or not, the old principles of the Liberals party, cannot with a very good grace question our title to the name we have always been proud to bear.¹⁵⁷

Bright emphasized his decades of membership in the Liberal party, and was able to ask why Gladstone had ‘no patience with Liberals of even longer standing than himself.’¹⁵⁸ Thus Bright could also subtly bring up Gladstone’s past as a Tory and a Peelite, and question whether with such a background he was well-advised to be passing judgement on who best adhered to liberal principles.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, Liberal Unionists attempted to identify Bright with some of the reforming legislation passed by the 1886 to 1892 government, arguing, for example, that the Conservatives had carried out John Bright’s policy on land purchase in Ireland.¹⁶⁰

Bright also contributed to Liberal Unionist efforts to associate the Irish with those elements of the working-class who did not deserve to be given the vote. As noted above, Bright had originally introduced the concept of the ‘residuum’ in 1867, and was a link to the agitation that contributed to the Second Reform Act. Bright placed significant emphasis on the distinction between the Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. The Protestants of Ulster had demonstrated industry, self-sufficiency, and a desire to improve their lot in life through their own exertions. In contrast, the Catholics had resorted to

¹⁵⁷ Times, Aug. 6th, 1887.

¹⁵⁸ Mr. Bright on the ‘Dual Partnership’ (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 64).

¹⁵⁹ A similar point was made by C. P. Villiers, who as the Father of the House could speak directly of Gladstone’s Tory background. See Wright, p. 105.

¹⁶⁰ What the Unionist Government has done for the Irish Tenant (Liberal Unionist Pamphlet No. 192); Barbary, p. 191.

crime and rebellious agitations in an attempt to secure political rights and reduced rent, and were less politically informed and less industrious than the Protestant Irish.¹⁶¹ Bright also noted on a number of occasions that Gladstone ignored the case of Ulster in his construction of Home Rule,¹⁶² and that the Irish Nationalist party did not have the best interests of the British people at heart:

I think that the Irish vote should no longer be a factor in the British Parliament, and for this reason - that there is no reliance to be placed upon it, and that the Irish vote is not guided by considerations of what is best for Great Britain, but by considerations of what is best for the ends they have set themselves in view.¹⁶³

By their actions, the Catholic Irish, according to Bright, had demonstrated that they were unfit to receive self-government in the form of Home Rule.

Frequent references to John Bright by Liberal Unionist orators and propaganda allowed the party to exude a sense of unity that may have been more apparent than real. Liberal Unionists were brought together solely on the issue of Ireland, and on most other issues there was no consensus position within the party. Even on Ireland, there were differing views on what approach should be taken. During the 1886 general election, the election addresses of Liberal Unionist candidates in Glasgow highlighted their opposition to Gladstone's Home Rule bill, but remained silent on any possible alternative, while subsequently Hartington on several occasions objected to Chamberlain making public detailed plans for local government reform in Ireland, on the basis that there was no

¹⁶¹ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, p. 246-147.

¹⁶² *The Liberal Unionist*, June 15th, 1887.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, Oct. 4th, 1887.

Liberal Unionist agreement on what should be done.¹⁶⁴ Emphasizing the importance of Bright's support of the Liberal Unionist party was a means by which their Liberal heritage could be brought to the public's attention, without having to go into details regarding which aspects of the Liberal heritage they favoured in particular.¹⁶⁵

Ultimately, the Liberal Unionists would achieve a degree of success in their efforts to assert a unique identity for the party. Liberal Unionists were able to make an important and unique contribution to the Unionist coalition's assertion to be acting in the national interest, as opposed to a narrow-minded and sectional Liberal party. The Liberal Unionists also maintained, at least in part, the perception of being Liberal, the clearest indication of which was the fact that the Liberals felt it necessary to publicly argue that the Liberal Unionists were not Liberal up to Chamberlain's launching of his tariff reform campaign in 1903. The party also helped to integrate the Irish demand for Home Rule into British domestic politics by relating the question to earlier debates on the extension of the franchise. In all of these efforts the position of John Bright was important, even after his active political career had come to an end. In November 1888, with Bright confined to his bed with his final illness, George Goschen could rebut a Liberal attack that the Liberal Unionists had forsaken the people in their alliance with the Conservatives

¹⁶⁴ Burness, 'Strange Associations', p. 58; Jenkins, 'Hartington, Chamberlain, and the Unionist Alliance,' p. 115-117.

¹⁶⁵ Bright thus played a similar role to the myth of Disraeli or Gladstone as charismatic leader in unifying disparate political parties. See Richard Shannon, p. 2-5, Eugenio F. Biagini, Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 7.

with a simple retort: ‘We have John Bright on our side.’¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Times, Nov. 1st, 1888.

Conclusion

At the final meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council on May 12th, 1912, Austen Chamberlain stated that fusion was merely a ‘business proposition’, arguing that the recent Conservative organizational reforms provided a unique opportunity to achieve fusion on reasonable terms with an improved partner, and that fusion was the best means of ensuring that Liberal Unionists retained influence in the Unionist party as a whole. Lord Lansdowne noted that with a renewed struggle over Home Rule imminent, it was necessary to combine all Unionist energies into a single body to ensure the defeat of the measure.¹ The arguments for Liberal Unionism had thus come full circle: whereas the party was formed independent of the Liberals and Conservatives to help ensure the defeat of Gladstone’s two Home Rule measures, the party was disbanded to help ensure the defeat of Asquith’s Home Rule measure.

However, despite the formal end of the party, echoes of the Liberal Unionists remained for years afterwards. In December 1912, Lord Selborne blamed the ‘present flabbiness’ in the Unionist party on the Conservative as opposed to the Liberal Unionist segment.² During the First World War, Walter Long related to Andrew Bonar Law complaints from some Conservatives that former Liberal Unionists held an undue number of party posts and had received honours in excess of their proportion of the united party,

¹ Times, May 10th, 1912.

² Selborne to Andrew Bonar Law, Dec. 19th, 1912, in D. George Boyce, ed., The Crisis of British Unionism: Lord Selborne’s Domestic Political Papers, 1885-1922 (London, UK: The Historians’ Press, 1987), p. 93.

while in 1922 a Unionist M.P. who had entered politics as a Liberal Unionist in 1907 declared that he had never quite been a Conservative.³

That such echoes remained of the Liberal Unionist party long after its formal demise should not be surprising, in light of the arguments advanced in this dissertation. By taking the party seriously, and making extensive use of Liberal Unionist sources, it has been possible to reconstruct the history of the party, and restore it to its place in late-Victorian and Edwardian politics. In contrast to the general dismissal by most historians of the importance of the party, this dissertation has demonstrated that the Liberal Unionists remained a significant political force into the 20th-century, and retained a large degree of independence. An important component of this independence was the continued existence of the party organization. At both a national and a local level, the party organization continued right up to fusion in 1912. Crucially, the formation of the 1895 Unionist coalition government, though it posed challenges to the party organization, did not represent the end either of the organization's existence or effectiveness. Indeed, by the Edwardian period the national organization of the Liberal Unionist party was seen in many quarters as superior to that of the Conservative party, and the position of the national organization was seen as important enough to warrant Chamberlain's efforts to seize control of it, in order that it could be utilized by him to push forward his Tariff Reform agenda. Meanwhile, the number of local associations did not seem to

³ House of Lords RO, Bonar Law Papers, BL/52/2/46, Long to Bonar Law, Jan. 24th, 1916; Hutchison, p. 227. Also, in 1913 an objection to Herbert Pike Pease succeeding Lord Balcarras as Unionist Chief Whip was that he was a former Liberal Unionist. See Philip Williamson, ed., The Modernisation of Conservative Politics: The Diaries and Letters of William Bridgeman, 1904-1935, Feb. 18th, 1913, p. 69.

significantly decline after 1895, and while the effectiveness of such local associations was mixed, they did cater to a small yet distinct Liberal Unionist rank-and-file among the electorate.

The continued existence of independent Liberal Unionist organizations point to the fact that 1886 did not represent Liberal Unionists moving completely from the Liberals to the Conservatives. Instead, the organizational independence of the Liberal Unionist party reflected the position of the Liberal Unionist party within late-Victorian and Edwardian politics, as an ally of the Conservatives, but not entirely engulfed by them. Into the 20th-century, the Liberal Unionists still had a measure of distance from the Conservatives, even after they joined with them in the 1895 coalition government. Many Liberal Unionists never felt comfortable with aspects of Conservative party policy, and opposition to Home Rule did not mean that Liberal Unionists automatically discarded their views on other issues to accommodate their Conservative allies. Issues such as the Boer War and education demonstrated that even after 1895, some Liberal Unionists were willing to diverge from the Conservatives on particular issues. This measure of distance from the Conservatives is most dramatically illustrated at the local level, regarding the representation of seats. Contrary to the assumptions of historians, the electoral pact was not the final word on which party would contest which seats, and there was significant room for local deviation from the formal structure of the pact. As such, there were a series of acrimonious disputes between local Liberal Unionists and Conservatives over the representation of seats, which were far more common than the traditional focus on

Chamberlain's 'Duchy' of the West Midlands would suggest. Such disputes were a common component of the Unionist alliance right up until the two parties merged.

The corollary of the imperfect alliance between the Liberal Unionists and Conservatives was the continued influence of liberalism, both in the ideological and party sense, among many Liberal Unionists. The 1886 schism in the Liberal party was incomplete, and for several years Liberals and Liberal Unionists continued to co-operate at a local level, to the point of inhabiting the same local associations. Despite the severing of such formal ties by the early 1890s, many Liberal Unionists continued to identify with liberal ideas, and were keen to emphasize their Liberal heritage and views. Indeed, a critical component of the identity Liberal Unionists forged for themselves was that they remained true Liberals even though they rejected Home Rule and were co-operating with the Conservatives, by rationalizing their position through the use of traditional Liberal rhetoric, especially regarding earlier debates over the qualifications for the franchise. This continued identification with Liberal ideas kept open a path for some Liberal Unionists to retreat back to the Liberal party if the alliance with the Conservatives proved too much of a strain. Although a number of Liberal Unionists returned over Irish policy, others left the party for reasons unrelated to Home Rule, having come to the conclusion that they could no longer reconcile their Liberalism with their Unionism, and that the latter would have to be sacrificed to the former.

Finally, as the above comments have suggested, the formation of the Unionist coalition government in 1895 should not be seen as a watershed moment in the history of

the Liberal Unionist party, especially in terms of the movement of the party towards fusion with the Conservatives. In contrast to the suggestions of some historians, 1895 did not signal the beginning of organization collapse, nor did it initiate a period of closer and more tranquil relations with the Conservative party. Instead, if a single year is to be identified as the point at which the Liberal Unionist party began to move towards the Conservatives, it should be 1903, and the launching of the campaign for Tariff Reform by Chamberlain. This campaign forced all Liberal Unionists to decide between their Liberalism and their Unionism. A number of Liberal Unionists chose the former, and left the party. Those that remained had prioritized their Unionism instead, leaving them better able to integrate with the Conservatives. The consequences of Chamberlain's takeover of the party organization were also significant. As noted, Chamberlain transformed the organization into a vehicle to promote Tariff Reform, thereby fundamentally and permanently transforming the nature and purpose of the party's existence. At a local level, it was only after Chamberlain's takeover that Liberal Unionist associations entered a period of sustained decline. Overall, the consequences of the events of 1903 and 1904 were, for the first time, to create real momentum for fusion at a local and national level.

When fusion finally came in 1912, it ended the formal existence of the Liberal Unionist party, but not its legacy. It is perhaps appropriate that this legacy was most sustained in Birmingham, where Austen and Neville Chamberlain retained control over the party organization in the interwar period. Notably, when the two party organizations

in Birmingham fused, it was agreed that the new association would drop ‘Conservative’ and ‘Liberal Unionist’ labels.⁴ Candidates in Birmingham were thus representatives of the Birmingham Unionist Association, and were not formally elected as Conservatives, leading to Neville Chamberlain’s comment in 1937 that he had become the leader of the Conservatives despite never having been elected as one himself.⁵

⁴ Briggs, p. 190-191.

⁵ Ramsden, The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, p. 355-356.

Appendix A: Contributors to the 1900 Liberal Unionist Election Fund

‘Confidential

L.U. Fund 10.X.03.
1900
& since.

	£	
Avebury, Ld.	500	
Bolitho, T. B.	500	
Bedford, D. of	5000	+ Beds (2) seats,
Burton, Ld.	5000	(1 unopposed)
Biddulph, Ld.	2000	
Brown, Sir A. H.	2000 1000	
Brocklebank	500	
Currie, Sir D.	500	
Durning-Lawrence	5000	
Gamble, Sir D.	500	
Glover, Sir J.	500	
Henderson, Sir A.	3000	
Rothschild, Ld.	5000	
Sutherland, Sir T.	500	
Seely, Sir C.	1000	
Williams, J. C.	500	
Wolverton, Ld.	1000	
Wills, Sir F.	1000	
Waechter, Sir M.	1000	

Source: Chatsworth House, 9th Duke of Devonshire Papers, Box O, Bundle 34, L.U. Fund, Oct. 10th, 1903.

Note: This document may have been the enclosure mentioned by Anstruther in his letter to Devonshire of October 11th, 1903 regarding Liberal Unionist finances. See Chatsworth House, 8th Duke of Devonshire Papers, 340.3011, Anstruther to Devonshire, Oct. 11th, 1903.

Appendix B: A Note on Liberal Unionist Local Organization, 1903

The document used in the discussion on the size and location of local Liberal Unionist organizations in June 1903 is a printed list of associations and correspondents, published by the Liberal Unionist Association and marked 'Strictly Private and Confidential'. Details are given for each constituency in England and Wales; for Scotland and Ireland, only the two regional associations are listed for each.¹ The list is further broken down into the following regions: London, Outer London, the Home Counties, the Eastern Counties, the Midland Counties (with a separate indication of those counties that fall under the purview of the Midlands Liberal Unionist Association), the Western Counties, the North-Western Counties, the North-Eastern Counties, and Wales. Within each region constituencies are listed by county, with county and borough divisions grouped together. The primary purpose of the list is to provide contact information for the head of the Liberal Unionist organization for each constituency, so a name and address is given in each constituency with some form of organization. In the vast majority of cases, the document also identifies the type of organization present in the constituency. However, there are a small number of cases where, though a name and address is given, no type of organization is indicated.² Each such case has been counted as a correspondent in the calculations of the different types of organization. There were

¹ The East and North of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association and the West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association for Scotland, and the Liberal Union of Ireland and the Ulster Liberal Unionist Association for Ireland. The three English University constituencies are also not listed.

² Two examples would be the Mid and South-Eastern divisions of Durham.

also a small number of instances where a single correspondent covered two or three divisions.³ In such cases, the affected constituencies have been counted as containing a separate correspondent for each in the calculations. One caveat with the document is that it obviously gives no indication of the vitality of each local Liberal Unionist organization. Associations in the West Midlands, for example, were significantly more active than those to be found in Liverpool or Manchester. Nevertheless, the document does reflect the existence of at least a minimal level of Liberal Unionist organization in the constituencies of England and Wales, which suffices for the analysis undertaken of the extent and location of these organizations.

The document appears to have come into the possession of Arthur Elliot in late 1903, and was used by him as part of an effort to determine the sympathies of local Liberal Unionist associations with regard to the Tariff Reform question in general, and to Chamberlain's attempt to reform the Liberal Unionist Council in particular. Beside a number of London associations, Elliot has written 'LUC' or 'no', presumably with respect to their allegiance to the reformed Liberal Unionist Council. According to a separate handwritten note on the first page, the contact names have been updated to January 1st, 1904, and a total of twelve entries have been altered, in handwriting, in some manner. One such change, for Sussex, Chertsey, added a correspondent where there had been none on the original list; this correspondent has not been counted in the calculations.

For the regional analysis of the distribution of local Liberal Unionist organizations

³ An example would be E. T. Sharp, the Liberal Unionist Correspondent for the three divisions of Kingston-upon-Hull.

contained in Table 2B, the regions used were largely based on those found in Henry Pelling's Social Geography of British Elections, 1885-1910, which were in turn based on the work of the geographer C. B. Fawcett, whose regions were based on the 1911 census.⁴ The regions used in Table 2B differ from Pelling's regions in two respects. First, Pelling includes a Peak-Don region of just twelve constituencies. This region was removed, and of its constituencies five county divisions of Yorkshire (Barnsley, Doncaster, Hallamshire, Holmfirth, and Rotherham) as well as the five borough divisions of Sheffield were added to the Yorkshire region, while two county divisions of Derbyshire (North-Eastern and Chesterfield) were assigned to the East Midlands. Second, Staffordshire, Leek was moved from the East Midlands Region to the West Midlands Region, and North-Western Staffordshire, as well as the borough constituencies of Hanley, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Stoke-on-Trent, were moved from the Lancastria Region to the West Midlands Region. This was done so that the constituencies belonging to the West Midlands region correspond exactly to the constituencies covered by the Midlands Liberal Unionist Association.

⁴ Pelling, p. 3-4. For maps of Pelling's regions as they pertain to this analysis, see *ibid.*, p. xi-xii, xiv, xvi-xxii, xxvi-xxvii. The one difference between Pelling's regions and Fawcett's regions was that the latter had included the metropolitan constituencies in the South-East region. Pelling's definition of the London region was those constituencies covered by the London County Council.

Appendix C: Constituencies Contested by Liberal Unionist Candidates, 1886-1912

An important basis for any discussion on the parliamentary Liberal Unionist party is the identification of Liberal Unionist candidates at every general election and at by-elections. However, there are a number of factors that have acted against the accurate identification of every Liberal Unionist M.P. and candidate. As there is no central party archive for the Liberal Unionists, there are no records from party organizers of seats contested and M.P.s elected. Newspapers are also uncertain sources for party labels. Even in the 1886 general election, the Times identified one candidate variously as a Conservative and a Liberal Unionist.¹ Particularly after the 1895 general election, and the increasingly close relationship between the Liberal Unionists and Conservatives, candidates came to be identified in the press as ‘Unionists’ alone. Other obstacles to identification also became more acute after the 1895 general election. Fusion between local Liberal Unionist and Conservative associations made it difficult to identify which wing of the Unionist alliance certain candidates belonged to. From 1906 onwards, there was also increased interchange of candidates between the two parties, as former Conservative candidates stood as Liberal Unionists, or vice versa. This was often dictated by local circumstances. For instance, the Earl of Kerry unsuccessfully contested Westmorland, Appleby as a Conservative candidate at the 1906 general election, but when his brother-in-law Victor Cavendish succeeded as Duke of Devonshire in 1908,

¹ The candidate was P. Westerna, in South Monaghan. Times, July 9th and 15th, 1886.

Kerry replaced him as Liberal Unionist M.P. for Western Derbyshire.² Another case was Charles McArthur, who had sat as the Liberal Unionist M.P. for Liverpool, Exchange from 1897 to 1906. At a 1907 by-election and again at the January 1910 general election, McArthur stood as a Conservative for Liverpool, Kirkdale. In this case, the change of allegiance was due to the fusion of the Liverpool Liberal Unionist and Conservative organizations in 1907.³

In confronting this problem, the most comprehensive secondary source for election results in Great Britain during this period, F. W. S. Craig's British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918, used the party labels attached to candidates by the Constitutional Year Book, an annual reference work published by the Conservative party, for all questionable cases. For those instances where some uncertainty remained, an asterisk was added to the party label.⁴ However, the use of the Constitutional Year Book is not unproblematic. As outlined below, primary research has indicated cases in which the party label in that work was inaccurate. Moreover, it did not necessarily correspond with official Conservative party lists of M.P.s and candidates. In 1895, Edward Watkins was claimed by Akers-Douglas as a Conservative, despite the fact that he had been listed as a Liberal Unionist in the Constitutional Yearbook. Finally, in rare cases the classification of candidates could change between different editions of the Constitutional

² On Kerry's candidature for Westmorland, Appleby, see A. K. Connell, 'Blue Sky over North Westmorland: Appleby's Liberal Decade,' in Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society, 3rd ser., Vol. 6 (2006), p. 205-206.

³ Waller, p. 154.

⁴ Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918, p. xvii.

Year Book. In the 1891 edition, J. Leighton was listed as an Independent Liberal Unionist at the 1890 by-election in North St. Pancras, but later editions listed him simply as an Independent.

As such, an attempt was made to devise a complete list of constituencies contested by Liberal Unionists from 1886 to 1912, within the limits of the sources available. Four printed sources were consulted: in addition to the work by Craig cited above and the 1887 to 1913 editions of the Constitutional Year Book,⁵ John Vincent and Michael Stenton's McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book: British Election Results, 1832-1918 and Brian M. Walker's Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922 were utilized.⁶ These works were supplemented by primary sources. Although there is no central Liberal Unionist archive, there are a number of sources available that assist in identifying Liberal Unionist candidates. In the Austen Chamberlain Papers is a document produced by the Liberal Unionist Association in early 1887 discussing the formation and activities of the party organization in 1886, and which includes a list of Liberal Unionist candidates at the 1886 general election.⁷ Memoranda, a monthly newsletter published by the central party organization, carried lists of successful Liberal Unionist candidates for the 1900 and two 1910 general elections.⁸ In the W. L. Boyle Papers, there is a complete

⁵ For each general and by-election, the edition of the following year was consulted as to party labels.

⁶ John Vincent and Michael Stenton, eds., McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book: British Election Results, 1832-1918, 8th Ed. (Brighton, UK: The Harvester Press, 1971).; Brian M. Walker, ed., Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922 (Dublin, UK: Royal Irish Academy, 1978).

⁷ BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 17-23.

⁸ Memoranda, Vol. 8, Oct.-Nov. 1900, p. 185-187; ibid., Vol. 18, Feb. 1910, p. 145-148; ibid., Vol. 19, Jan. 1911, p. 6-11.

list of attendees at a dinner on July 10th, 1901 to Liberal Unionist M.P.s and candidates at the previous general election.⁹ In addition, the papers of Liberal Unionist politicians and local organizations were helpful in resolving particular cases, and the papers of the West of Scotland and East and North of Scotland LUAs were especially useful in identifying Liberal Unionist candidates in Scotland.

Using these sources, the following chart of Liberal Unionist candidates was compiled for all general and by-elections from 1886 to 1912. Only those constituencies which had at least one Liberal Unionist candidacy are included in the chart. For each constituency listed, the party affiliation of each Unionist candidate, LU or C, is given, while a ‘-’ indicated an election in which no Unionist candidate stood, and a ‘/’ indicated two Unionist candidacies at the same election. Two-member borough constituencies have been listed twice, though no assumptions should be drawn from which of the two seats a given party label is assigned. For by-elections, a comma separates different by-elections for the same constituency in the given interval between general elections.¹⁰ Although the use of the above sources allowed for the resolution of a number of uncertain candidacies, there were several remaining cases which could not be definitively resolved. In such cases, similar to the method in Craig’s work, an asterisk was added to the party label to indicate the uncertainty. For Irish constituencies, Unionist candidates other than Liberal Unionists are labelled ‘U’, the same identification used by Walker.

⁹ Norfolk RO, W. L. Boyle Papers, MC 497/1, Seating Plan, Liberal Unionist Association Dinner to M.P.s and Candidates, July 10th, 1901.

¹⁰ The listed by-elections include vacancies caused by ministerial appointment.

The most significant adjustment from Craig's work is with a set of Unionist candidates who stood in 1906 or afterwards. For the two elections of 1910, these candidates had been claimed as Conservatives by the Constitutional Year Book, while Memoranda had identified them as Liberal Unionists. Craig had concluded that 'it is apparent that the Liberal Unionists claimed as their candidates all their members irrespective of their actual local sponsorship,' and labelled them as 'C*.'¹¹ However, there is evidence to suggest that these M.P.s were in fact Liberal Unionists. One of them, Arthur Strauss, the former Liberal Unionist M.P. for Cornwall, Camborne, stated earlier in his 1906 election address for North Paddington that he stood as a Liberal Unionist.¹² The papers of the Mid-Devon Liberal Unionist Association also clearly indicate that E. F. Morrison-Bell, another of this set of candidates, was sent down to the constituency on the eve of the 1906 general election by Boraston to stand as a Liberal Unionist.¹³ The Conservatives themselves recognized Morrison-Bell as a Liberal Unionist; J. S. Sanders noted to Akers-Douglas just after the December 1910 general election that Morrison-Bell's victory represented a gain for the Liberal Unionists.¹⁴ As such, these candidates have been identified as Liberal Unionists.¹⁵

¹¹ Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918, p. xvii.

¹² Times, Jan. 17th, 1906. Strauss would be elected for the constituency in both of the 1910 general elections.

¹³ UP, 9th Lord Clifford of Chudleigh Papers, Boxes B27, B28(A), and B28(B).

¹⁴ CKS, 1st Viscount Chilston Papers, C478/10, J. S. Sanders to Akers-Douglas, [n.d.].

¹⁵ This involved shifted shifting nine, eleven, and fourteen candidacies in the 1906, January 1910, and December 1910 general elections respectively from the Conservatives to the Liberal Unionists. The changes for 1906 were for those candidates identified as Liberal Unionists in either of the 1910 elections, and identified as Conservatives in 1906 by Craig.

Several particular cases warrant further mention. Brian Walker lists Edward Carson as a Unionist at every election from 1892 to December 1910, in contrast to F. S. L. Lyons, who labelled Carson as a Liberal Unionist.¹⁶ In the chart below, Carson is labelled ‘LU*’ in the 1892 general election, as a significant cause for Conservative objections to his candidacy was his liberal heritage. However, in all subsequent elections he is labelled ‘U,’ and he is not considered a case of a Liberal Unionist to Conservative change of allegiance for the purposes of Table 4A. George Kemp was elected as a Liberal Unionist for Lancashire, Heywood at the 1895 general election, and held the seat until his retirement at the 1906 general election, though in the interim he had crossed to the Liberals over the issue of Free Trade. Kemp was also listed as present at the 1901 dinner to Liberal Unionist M.P.s and candidates, and historians have generally considered him to be a Liberal Unionist.¹⁷ However, according to the Times Kemp became a Conservative in 1896 as a result of joining the Carlton Club,¹⁸ and was listed as a Conservative at the 1900 general election.¹⁸ As such, Kemp’s party label for 1900 is ‘C*’, and he has been included as a case of LU to Conservative change of allegiance for the purposes of Table 4A, and he has also been considered as a Conservative for the calculations regarding Unionist Free Traders in chapter four. Finally, the Russellite candidates that stood for seats in Ulster from 1902 to 1906 have not been considered to be

¹⁶ Walker, Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, p. 406.

¹⁷ See, for example, Rempel, p. 225.

¹⁸ Times, Feb. 15th, 1896.

Liberal Unionists.¹⁹

¹⁹ The Russellite candidates joined the reconstituted Ulster Liberal Association after the 1906 general election. McMinn, p. 23.

English Counties

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Bedfordshire, Biggleswade	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C*	
Bedfordshire, Luton	C		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU		C	C
Buckinghamshire, Aylesbury	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU	
Buckinghamshire, Buckingham	C	C, C	C		C		C		C		C		LU	
Cambridgeshire, Newmarket	C/ Ind LU		C		C		C	C	C		C		C	
Cheshire, Crewe	C		C		C		C		C		C*	C	C*	
Cheshire, Northwich	LU	LU	C		C		C		LU		LU		C*	
Cornwall, Bodmin	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU	
Cornwall, Camborne	LU		LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU	
Cornwall, Launceston	-		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		C*	
Cornwall, St. Austell	-	LU	LU	-	LU		-		LU	-	LU		-	
Cornwall, St. Ives	LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Cornwall, Truro	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C*	
Cumberland, Cockermouth	LU		C		C		C		C	C	C		C	
Cumberland, Eskdale	C		LU		LU		C		C		C		C	
Derbyshire, Chesterfield	LU		LU		C		C		C		C		C	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Derbyshire, Mid	LU		C		C		C		C	C	C		C	
Derbyshire, North-Eastern	LU		C		C		C		C	C	C		C	
Derbyshire, Southern	LU	C	-		C		C		C		LU		LU	
Derbyshire, Western	LU	LU	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU	LU	LU		LU	
Devon, Ashburton	LU		C		C		C	C	LU	LU	LU		LU	
Devon, Barnstaple	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	-	C*	C*
Devon, South Molton	LU	LU	C		LU		-		-		LU		LU	
Devon, Tavistock	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Devon, Torquay	C/LU		C		C		C		C		C		LU	
Devon, Totnes	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Dorset, Eastern	C	C	C		C		C	C	C		C	C	C*	-
Dorset, Northern	LU		C		C		C	C	C		C		C	
Durham, Barnard Castle	-		C		C		C	C	C		LU		LU	
Durham, Chester-le-Street	-		LU		LU		C		C		C		-	
Durham, Houghton-le-Spring	C		C		C		C		LU		C		-	
Durham, Mid	-	C	C		C*		C		-		-		-	
Durham, North-Western	-		LU		C		C		C		C		C	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Durham, South-Eastern	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		C	
Essex, Maldon	C		C		C		C		C		LU		LU	
Essex, Romford	C/LU		C	C	C	C	C		C		C		C	
Essex, Walthamstow	C		C		C	C	C		C		C	C	LU*	
Gloucestershire, Cirencester	LU		C	C, C	C		C		C		C		C	
Gloucestershire, Forest-of-Dean	LU	C	C		-		C		-		C*		C	C
Hampshire, Petersfield	LU/C		C		C	C	C		C		C		C	
Herefordshire, Ross	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU	
Hertfordshire, Hitchin	C		C		C		C		C		LU		LU	C
Hertfordshire, Watford	C		C		C		C		C		LU		LU	
Lancashire, Clitheroe	-		LU		-		-	-	Ind C		C		C	
Lancashire, Eccles	C	C	C		C		C		C		C*		C	
Lancashire, Heywood	C		LU		LU		C*		LU		C		C	
Lancashire, Lancaster	C		LU		C		C		C		C		C	
Lancashire, Leigh	C		C		C		C		LU		C		C	
Lancashire, Middleton	C		C		C	C	C		C		C		LU	LU
Lancashire, Newton	C	C	C		C	C	C		C		LU		LU	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Lancashire, North Lonsdale	C		C		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Lancashire, Rossendale	LU	LU	C*		-	C	-	-	C		C		C	
Leicestershire, Bosworth	C		C		C		-		LU		C		C	
Leicestershire, Loughborough	C		C		C		LU		C		C		C	
Lincolnshire, Spalding	C	C	LU		LU		LU		LU*		C		C	
Middlesex, Harrow	C		C		C	C, C	C		LU		C		C	
Norfolk, Mid	LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Norfolk, North-Western	C		C		C		LU		C		C		C	C
Norfolk, Southern	LU		LU		LU	C	C		C		C		C	
Northamptonshire, Eastern	LU		C		C		C		C		C		C	
Northamptonshire, Mid	LU		C	-	C		C		C		C		C	
Northumberland, Berwick-upon-Tweed	LU		C		C		-		C		C		C	
Northumberland, Hexham	LU		C	C	C		LU		C	C	C		C	
Northumberland, Tyneside	LU		LU		LU		LU		C		C		C	

[illegible]

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Yorkshire (WR), Pudsey	LU		LU		LU		C		LU	C	C		C	
Yorkshire (WR), Rotherham	LU		LU	-	-	C	C		-		C	-	C	
Yorkshire (WR), Shipley	-		LU		LU		LU		-		LU	-	-	
Yorkshire (WR), Skipton	LU		LU		LU		LU		C		C		C	
Yorkshire (WR), Sowerby	-		LU		C		C	C	C		C		-	
Yorkshire (WR), Spen Valley	LU		C		C		C		C		C		C	

English Metropolitan Boroughs

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Bethnal Green, North-East	LU		C		C		C		C		C		C	
Camberwell, North	C/ Ind LU		C		C		C		C		C		C	
Hackney, Central	C		C		C		C		C		LU*		C	
Islington, East	C		C		C		C		C		C		C*	
Islington, West	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C*	
Lambeth, North	C		LU		LU		C		C/Ind C		C		C	
Marylebone, West	C		C		LU	C	C		C		C		C	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Paddington, North	C	C	C		C		C		LU/Ind C		LU		LU	
St. George, Hanover Square	C	LU	LU		C		C		C	LU	LU		LU	
St. Pancras, North	C	C/ Ind LU	C		C		C		C		C		C	
St. Pancras, South	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU	
Shoreditch, Haggerston	LU		C		C		C		C	C	C		C	
Tower Hamlets, Bow and Bromley	C		C		C	C	C		C		C		LU	
Tower Hamlets, Mile End	C		C		C		C	LU	LU		LU		LU	

English Provincial Boroughs

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Barrow-in-Furness	LU	C	C		C		C		C		C		C	
Bath (1)	LU		LU		LU		LU		C		C		C	
Birmingham, Bordesley	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Birmingham, Central	LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Birmingham, Edgbaston	LU		LU		LU	C	C		C		C		C	
Birmingham, North	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Birmingham, South	LU		LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU	LU
Birmingham, West	LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Bradford, Central	LU		LU	-	LU		LU		C		LU		C	
Bradford, West	LU		C		C		C		C		C		C	
Bristol, East	C	C	-	-	-		C		LU		C		C	-
Bristol, North	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C*	
Burnley	LU	C, -	LU	C	C		C		C		C		C	
Bury	LU		LU		C		C	LU	C		C		C	
Cambridge	C		C		C		C		LU		LU		LU	
Cheltenham	C		C		C		C		C		LU		LU	C
Croydon	C	C	C	C, C	C		C		LU	C	C		C	
Darlington	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU	
Derby (1)	LU		LU	-	C		C		C		C		C	
Dewsbury	C	LU	C		C		C	C	C	C	C		C	
Durham	C		C		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU	
Gateshead	-		LU	LU	LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		C*	
Gloucester	C		LU		LU		LU		C		C		C	
Great Grimsby	LU		LU	LU	LU	LU/ Ind C	LU		LU		LU		LU	
Halifax (1)	-		-		-	LU	LU		LU	-	-		C	
The Hartlepoons	LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		-		C	C	C	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Hereford	C		C	C	C		C		C		C		C	LU
Hythe	LU		LU		C	C	C		C		C		C	
Kingston upon Hull, West	C		LU*		-		C		LU	C	LU		C	
Leeds, West	C		C	-	C		LU		C		C		C	
Leicester (1)	LU		-	-	-		-		-		C		-	
Lincoln	C		C		LU		LU		C		C		C	
Liverpool, Exchange	C	LU	LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		C		C	
Liverpool, Scotland	LU		C		C		C		C		C		C	
Manchester, South	C		C		LU	LU	LU		C		C		-	C
Manchester, South- West	C		LU		C		C		C		LU		LU	
Middlesborough	-		LU		C		C		C		C		C	
Morpeth	-		-		C		C		LU*		C		-	
Newcastle-under- Lyne	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C*	
Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1)	LU		-	LU	C		C		C		C		C	
Northampton (1)	LU		C		C		C		C		C		C	
Nottingham, West	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C*	
Penryn and Falmouth	C		C		C		C		C		LU		LU	
Peterborough	LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C*	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Portsmouth (1)	LU		LU		LU		C		C		LU		LU	
Reading	C		C		C	C	C	C	C		LU	-	C	
Salford, West	C		C		C		C		C		LU		C	
Sheffield, Attercliffe	LU		C	C	-		-		C	C/Ind C	C		C	
Southampton (1)	C		C		LU		LU		C		C		C	
South Shields	-		C		C		C		C*		LU	LU	-	
Stockport (1)	C		C	C	C		C		C		C		C*	
Stoke-on-Trent	C	LU	C	-	LU		C		C		C		C	
Sunderland (1)	LU		LU		-		C		C		Ind C		C	
Wakefield	C		C		LU		LU	C	C		C		C	
Walsall	-	C	C	C	C		C		C		LU		LU	
Warwick and Leamington	LU		LU	LU	LU		LU	LU	LU		C		C	
Wolverhampton, East	C		-	-	C		-		LU	LU	LU		C*	
Wolverhampton, South	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		C		C	
York (1)	LU		-	-	-	C, C	C		C		C		-	

Welsh Counties

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Anglesey	C		LU		C		-		C	-	C		-	

Scottish Counties

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Aberdeenshire, Eastern	C		C*	C*	LU		LU		LU	-	LU		C*	
Aberdeenshire, Western	C		C		C		C		C		C*		C	
Ayrshire, Northern	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C	C
Ayrshire, Southern	LU		LU		LU		LU		C		C		C	
Banffshire	LU		Ind C	C	C		LU		C	C	C		-	
Berwickshire	LU		C	C	C		C		C		C		C*	
Bute	C	C, C	C		C		C	LU	C		C		C	
Caithness	LU		LU		LU		C		C		C		Ind C	
Clackmannanshire and Kinross-shire	LU		LU	-	C	C	C		LU		C		-	
Dumfriesshire	LU		LU		LU		LU		C		C		C	
Edinburghshire	-		C	-	LU		LU		C		C		C	
Elginshire and Nairnshire	LU	LU	LU		C		C		C		C*		-	
Fife, Eastern	LU		C	-	C		C		C		C		C	
Fife, Western	-	LU	LU		LU		C*		C		C		-	
Forfarshire	LU		LU	-, C	C	C	C		LU	C	C		C	
Haddingtonshire	LU		C		C		C*		LU		C		C	C
Inverness-shire	LU		LU	C	C		C		C		C		-	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Lanarkshire, Govan	C	LU	C		LU		C		C		C	-	C	C
Lanarkshire, Mid	LU	C	C	C	C		C		C		C		C	
Lanarkshire, North-Eastern	LU		C		C		LU	LU, C	LU		C		C	C
Lanarkshire, North-Western	C		C		C	C	LU		C		C		LU	
Lanarkshire, Partick	LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Lanarkshire, Southern	C		C		C		C		C		C		LU	
Linlithgowshire	C		C	C	C		C		C		LU		C	
Orkney and Shetland	LU		LU		LU		LU	LU	C*		LU		-	
Peeblesshire and Selkirkshire	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Perthshire, Eastern	LU	C	C		C*		C*	-	C		C		C	
Perthshire, Western	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		C		C	
Ross and Cromarty	LU		LU		LU*		C*		C		LU		-	LU
Roxburghshire	LU		LU		C		C		C		C		C	
Stirlingshire	LU		LU		C		C		C		C		C	
Sutherland	LU		LU	-	LU		LU		LU		C		LU	

Scottish Burghs

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Aberdeen, North	-		LU		-	-	C		C		LU		LU	
Aberdeen, South	-		LU	-	LU		LU		LU	C	C		LU	
Ayr District	LU	LU, C	C		C		C	C	C		C		C	
Dumfries District	C		LU	-	C		C		C	C	C*		C	
Dundee (1)	LU	LU, -	LU		LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU	
Dundee (2)	LU		C	-	C		C		C		C		C	
Edinburgh, Central	LU		LU		-		LU		LU		LU		C	
Edinburgh, East	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU	LU	LU		C*	LU
Edinburgh, South	LU		LU		LU	C	LU		LU	LU	LU	C*	C	
Edinburgh, West	LU	LU	LU	LU	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU	
Elgin District	-		C*	-	LU		C	C	C		LU		-	
Falkirk District	LU		LU		LU		LU		C		C		C	
Glasgow, Blackfriars and Hutchesontown	LU		C		LU		C		C		C		C	
Glasgow, Bridgeton	C	LU	C	-	C	C	C		C		C		C	
Glasgow, Camlachie	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Glasgow, Central	C		C		C		C		C	C	C		C	
Glasgow, College	LU		C		C		C		C		C		C*	
Glasgow, St. Rollex	LU		LU		C		LU		LU		LU		LU	LU
Glasgow, Tradeston	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU/ Ind C		LU		LU	LU

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Greenock	LU		LU		LU		C		C		LU		C	
Hawick District	LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		-	
Inverness District	LU		LU		LU	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU	
Kirkcaldy District	LU	LU	C*		C		LU		C		C		-	
Leith District	-	Ind LU/ LU/ Ind LU	LU	LU	C		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Montrose District	LU		LU		LU	C	LU		C	C	C		C	
Paisley	LU	C	C		C		C		LU		C		C*	
Perth	LU		C		C		C		C	-	C		C	
St. Andrews District	LU		LU		LU		LU	LU*	LU		LU		LU	
Stirling District	LU		LU	-	C		LU		-	C	C		-	
Wick District	LU		LU		LU	LU	C		C		C		C	

Irish Constituencies

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Antrim, North	U	U/Ind U	U		U	U	U		U		LU		LU	
Armagh, Mid	U	U	U		U	U, U/LU	U		U		U		U	
Belfast, West	U		LU		LU		LU	LU	LU/ Ind LU		U		U	
Belfast, North	U	U	U		U	U/Ind U	U/ Ind LU	U	U	U	U		U	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Carlow	-	-	LU		U		-		-	-	-		-	
Donegal, North	U	-	LU		-		-	-	-		-		-	
Donegal, East	U		LU		LU		U		-		U		-	
Donegal, South	U	LU	U		U		-		-		-		-	
Down, West	U	U	U		U	U	U	LU/ Ind U	U	U/Ind U, U/Ind U	U		U	
Down, South	LU		LU		LU		-	-	LU		U		U	
Dublin, Dublin Harbour	-		-		-		-		LU		-	-	-	
Dublin, St. Stephen's Green	LU	U	LU		LU	LU, U	U	U	U		U		U	
Dublin, South	LU		U		U		U/Ind U		U		U		U	
Fermanagh, South	U		LU		U		U		-		U		-	
Londonderry City	U		U		U	LU	U	U	U		U		U	
Londonderry, South	LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU		LU	
Longford, South	-	-	LU		-		-		-	-	-		-	
Monaghan, South	U		LU		U		-	-	-		-		-	
Tyrone, Mid	U		U		LU		-		-		U		U	
Tyrone, East	LU		U		U		U		U	U	U		U	
Tyrone, South	LU		LU		LU		LU/ Ind U		LU		LU		LU	
Wexford, North	-	-	U		LU		-		-		-		-	

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
Wexford, South	-		LU	-	-		-		-		-		-	
Wicklow, West	U		LU		-		-		-		-	-	-	

University Constituencies

Constituency	1886	BE	1892	BE	1895	BE	1900	BE	1906	BE	J 1910	BE	D 1910	BE
London University	LU		LU		LU	LU/ Ind LU	LU		LU		LU		LU	
Oxford University (1)	C		C		C	LU	LU		LU		LU		LU	
Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities	C	C, C, C	C		C	C, C	C		C		LU		LU	
Dublin University (1)	U	U	U		U	LU/U	LU	U/U	U		U		U	
Dublin University (2)	U	U, U/U, U	LU*/U		U	U	U		U		U		U	

Appendix D: Elected Liberal Unionist M.P.s, 1886-1912

Agnew, Sir Andrew Noel, Bart. - Edinburgh, South (1900-1906). Died 1928

Amery, Leopold Charles Maurice Stennett - Birmingham, South (LU 1911-1912, Con. 1912-1918); Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Con. 1918-1945). Died 1955.

Anson, Sir William Reynell - Oxford University (LU 1899-1912, Con. 1912-1914). Died 1914.

Anstruther, Henry Torrens - St. Andrews District (1886-1903). Died 1926.

Anstruther-Thomson, William - St. Andrews District (LU 1906-J. 1910 and D. 1910-1912, Con 1912-1918). Assumed the name Gray in lieu of Thomson in 1904. Died 1938.

Arnold-Forster, Rt. Hon. Hugh Oakeley - Belfast, West (1892-1906); Croydon (1906-1908). Died 1908.

Arrol, Sir William - Ayrshire, South (1895-1906). Died 1913.

Barclay, James William - Forfarshire (Lib. 1872-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1907.

Baring, Francis George Baring, Viscount - Winchester (Lib. 1880-1885); Bedfordshire, North (1886-1892). Succeeded as 2nd Earl of Northbrook in 1904. Died 1929.

Barnes, Alfred - Derbyshire, East (Lib. 1880-1885); Derbyshire, Chesterfield (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1901.

Bass, Hamar Alfred - Tamworth (Lib. 1878-1885); Staffordshire, Western (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1898). Died 1898.

Beaumont, Henry Frederick - Yorkshire (WR), Southern (Lib. 1865-1874); Yorkshire (WR), Colne Valley (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1913.

Bickford-Smith, William - Cornwall, Truro (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Assumed the additional name of Bickford by Royal Licence, 1868. Died 1899.

Biddulph, Michael - Herefordshire (Lib. 1865-1885); Herefordshire, Ross (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1900). Created 1st Baron Biddulph in 1903. Died 1923.

Bigham, John Charles - Liverpool, Exchange (1895-1897). Created 1st Baron Mersey in 1910, 1st Viscount Mersey in 1916. Died 1929.

Bolitho, Thomas Bedford - Cornwall, St. Ives (1887-1900). Died. 1915.

Boyle, William Lewis - Norfolk, Mid (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1918.

Bright, Rt. Hon. John - Durham City (Lib. 1843-1847); Manchester (Lib. 1847-1857); Birmingham (Lib. 1857-1885); Birmingham, Central (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1889). Died 1889.

Bright, John Albert - Birmingham, Central (1889-1895); Oldham (Lib. 1906-J. 1910). Died 1924.

Brown, Sir Alexander Hargreaves, Bart. - Wenlock (Lib. 1868-1885); Shropshire, Wellington (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1906). Died 1922.

Buchanan, Thomas Ryburn - Edinburgh (Lib. 1881-1885); Edinburgh, West (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1888, Lib. 1888-1892); Aberdeenshire, Eastern (Lib. 1892-1900); Perthshire, Eastern (Lib. 1903-J. 1910). Died 1911.

Burn, Charles Rosdew - Devonshire, Torquay (LU D. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1923). Adopted the surname of Forbes-Leith of Fyvie in lieu of Burn in 1925. Died 1930.

Caine, William Sproston - Scarborough (Lib. 1880-1885); Barrow-in-Furness (Lib. 1886, LU 1886-1890); Bradford, East (Lib. 1892-1895); Cornwall, Camborne (Lib. 1900-1903). Died 1903.

Caldwell, James - Glasgow, St. Rollox (LU 1886-1892, Lib. 1892); Lanarkshire, Mid (Lib. 1894-J. 1910). Died. 1925.

Calley, Thomas Charles Pleydell - Wiltshire, Cricklade (J. 1910-D. 1910). Died 1932.

Campbell, Richard Frederick Fotheringham - Ayr District (Lib. 1880-1886, LU 1886-1888). Died 1888.

Campion, William Robert - Sussex, Lewes (LU 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1924). Died 1951.

Cavendish, Lord Edward - Sussex, Eastern (Lib. 1865-1868); Derbyshire, Northern (Lib.

1880-1885); Derbyshire, Western (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1891). Died 1891.

Cavendish, Richard Frederick - Lancashire, North Lonsdale (LU. 1895-1906). Died 1946.

Cavendish, Victor Christian William - Derbyshire, Western (1891-1908). Succeeded as 9th Duke of Devonshire in 1908. Died 1938.

Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. Joseph - Birmingham (Lib. 1876-1885); Birmingham, West (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1912, Con. 1912-1914). Died 1914.

Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. Joseph Austen - Worcestershire, Eastern (LU 1892-1912, Con. 1912-1914); Birmingham, West (Con. 1914-1937). Died 1937.

Chamberlain, Richard - Islington, West (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1899.

Clive, Percy Archer - Herefordshire, Ross (LU 1900-1906 and 1906-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1918.

Clyde, James Avon - Edinburgh, West (LU 1909-1912, Con. 1912-1918); Edinburgh, North (Con. 1918-1920). Died 1944.

Cochrane, Hon. Thomas Horatio Arthur Ernest - Ayrshire, Northern (1892-J. 1910). Created Baron Cochrane of Cults in 1919. Died 1951.

Coghill, Douglas Harry - Newcastle-under-Lyme (1886-1892); Stoke-on-Trent (LU 1895-1896, Con. 1896-1906). Died 1928).

Colefax, Henry Arthur - Manchester, South-West (J. 1910-D. 1910). Died 1936.

Collings, Rt. Hon. Jesse - Ipswich (Lib. 1880-1886); Birmingham, Bordesley (LU 1886-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1920.

Compton, Lord Alwyne Frederick - Bedfordshire, Northern (1895-1906); Middlesex, Brentford (Con. J. 1910-1911). Died 1911.

Cooper, Richard Ashmole - Walsall (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1917, Nat. 1917-1922). Died 1946.

Corbett, Archibald Cameron - Glasgow, Tradeston (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1909, I. Lib 1909-1910, Lib. 1910-1911). Created Baron Rowallon in 1911. Died 1933.

Corbett, John - Droitwich (Lib. 1874-1885), Worcestershire, Droitwich (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1901.

Courtney, Rt. Hon. Leonard Henry - Liskeard (Lib. 1876-1885); Cornwall, Bodmin (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1899, I. Lib (1899-1900). Created 1st Baron Courtney in 1906. Died 1918.

Cox, Robert - Edinburgh, South (1895-1899). Died 1899.

Cross, Alexander - Glasgow, Camlachie (LU 1892-1909, Lib. 1909-J. 1910). Died 1914.

Crossley, Sir Saville Brinton - Suffolk, Lowestoft (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892); Halifax (1900-1906). Created Baron Somerleyton in 1916. Died 1935.

Crossman, Sir William - Portsmouth (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1901.

Currie, Sir Donald - Perthshire (Lib. 1880-1885); Perthshire, Western (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1900). Died 1909.

Darwin, Leonard - Staffordshire, Lichfield (1892-1895). Died 1943.

Dixon, George - Birmingham (Lib. 1867-1876); Birmingham, Edgbaston (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1898). Died 1898

Doughty, Sir George - Great Grimsby (Lib. 1895-1898, LU 1898-J. 1910 and D. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1914). Died 1914.

Duncannon, Vere Brabazon Ponsonby, Viscount - Cheltenham (J. 1910-D. 1910); Dover (Con. 1913-1917, Nat. 1917-1918); Kent, Dover (Con. 1918-1920). Succeeded as Baron Duncannon (U.K.) and Earl of Bessborough (Irish) in 1920. Died 1956.

Durning-Lawrence, Sir Edwin - Cornwall, Truro (1895-1906). Assumed the additional name of Durning in 1898. Died 1914.

Ebrington, Hugh Fortescue, Viscount - Tiverton (Lib. 1881-1885); Devon, Tavistock (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Succeeded as 4th Earl Fortescue in 1905. Died 1932.

Elliot, Hon. Arthur Ralph Douglas - Roxburghshire (Lib. 1880-1886, LU 1886-1892); Durham (LU 1898-1905, FT 1905-1906). Died 1923.

Elliot, Hon. Hugh Frederick Hislop - Ayrshire, Northern (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1932.

Falle, Bertram Godfrey - Portsmouth (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918); Portsmouth, North (Con. 1918-1934). Created Baron Portsea in 1934. Died 1948.

Farquhar, Sir Horace Brand Townsend, Bart. - Marylebone, West (1895-1898). Created Baron Farquhar in 1898, Viscount Farquhar in 1917, and Earl Farquhar in 1922. Died 1923.

Finlay, Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Bannatyne - Inverness (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892 and 1895-1906); Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1916). Created Baron Finlay in 1916 and Viscount Finlay in 1919. Died 1929.

Flannery, Sir James Fortescue - Yorkshire (WR), Shipley (1895-1906); Essex, Maldon (LU, J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1922). Died 1943.

Foster, Sir Michael - London University (LU 1900-1903, Lib. 1903-1906). Died 1907.

Fraser-Mackintosh, Charles - Inverness District (Lib. 1874-1885); Inverness-shire (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1901.

Fry, Lewis - Bristol (Lib. 1878-1885); Bristol, North (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892 and 1895-1900). Died 1921.

Gibbons, John Lloyd - Wolverhampton, South (1898-1900). Died 1919.

Goldman, Charles Sydney - Penryn and Falmouth (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1958.

Goldsmid, Rt. Hon. Sir Julian, Bart. - Honiton (Lib. 1866-1868); Rochester (Lib. 1870-1880); St. Pancras, South (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1896). Died 1896.

Gordon, John - Londonderry, South (LU 1900-1912, Un. 1912-1916). Died 1922.

Goschen, Rt. Hon. George Joachim - City of London (Lib. 1863-1880); Ripon (Lib. 1880-1885); Edinburgh, East (I. Lib. 1885-1886); St. George's, Hanover Square (LU 1887-1893, Con. 1893-1900). Created 1st Viscount Goschen in 1900. Died 1907.

Grove, Sir Thomas Fraser, Bart. - Wiltshire, Southern (Lib. 1865-1874); Wiltshire,

Wilton (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1887, Lib. 1887-1892). Died 1897.

Gull, Sir William Cameron, Bart. - Devon, Barnstaple (1895-1900). Died 1922.

Gurdon, Robert Thornhagh - Norfolk, Southern (Lib. 1880-1885); Norfolk, Mid (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892 and 1895). Created Baron Cranworth in 1899. Died 1902.

Haddock, George Bahr - Lancashire, North Lonsdale (LU 1906-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1930.

Hain, Edward - Cornwall, St. Ives (LU 1900-1904, Lib. 1904-1906). Died 1917.

Hartington, Rt. Hon. Spencer Compton Cavendish, Marquess of - Lancashire, Northern (Lib. 1857-1868); Radnor (Lib. 1869-1880); Lancashire, North-East (Lib. 1880-1885), Lancashire, Rossendale (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1891). Succeeded as 8th Duke of Devonshire in 1891. Died 1908.

Haslam, Sir Alfred Seale - Newcastle-under-Lyme (1900-1906). Died 1927.

Hastings, George Woodyatt - Worcestershire, Eastern (Lib. 1880-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1917.

Havelock-Allan, Sir Henry Marshman, Bart. - Sunderland (Lib. 1874-1881); Durham, South-East (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-189 and 1895-1897). Assumed the additional surname of Allan in 1880. Died 1897.

Henderson, Sir Alexander, Bart. - Staffordshire, Western (1898-1906); St. George's, Hanover Square (Con. 1913-1916). Created Lord Faringdon in 1916. Died 1934.

Heneage, Rt. Hon. Edward - Lincoln (Lib. 1865-1868); Great Grimsby (Lib. 1880-1886, LU 1886-1892 and 1893-1895). Created 1st Baron Heneage in 1896. Died 1922.

Hewins, William Albert Samuel - Hereford (LU 1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1931.

Hillier, Alfred Peter - Hertfordshire, Northern (J. 1910-1911). Died 1911.

Hills, John Waller - Durham (LU 1906-1912, Con. 1912-1918); Durham, Durham (Con. 1918-1922); Yorkshire (WR), Ripon (Con. 1925-1938). Died 1939.

Hingley, Benjamin - Worcestershire, Northern (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892, Lib.

1892-1895). Died 1905.

Hobhouse, Rt. Hon. Henry - Somerset, Eastern (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1906). Died 1937.

Hopkinson, Sir Alfred - Wiltshire, Cricklade (1895-1898); Combined English Universities (Con. 1926-1929). Died 1939.

Horne, William Edgar - Surrey, Guildford (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1922). Died 1941.

Horner, Andrew Long - Tyrone, South (LU J. 1910-1912, Un. 1912-1916). Died 1916.

Hunt, Rowland - Shropshire, Ludlow (LU 1903-1912, Con. 1912-1917, Nat. 1917-1918). Died 1943.

James, Rt. Hon. Sir Henry - Taunton (Lib. 1869-1885); Bury (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1895). Created 1st Baron James of Hereford in 1895. Died 1911.

Jardine, Ernest - Somerset, Eastern (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1947.

Jardine, Sir Robert, Bart. - Ashburton (Lib. 1865-1868); Dumfries District (Lib. 1868-1874); Dumfriesshire (Lib. 1880-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1905.

Jenkins, Sir John James - Carmarthen District (Lib. 1882-1886, LU 1886 and 1895-1900). Created Baron Glantawe in 1906. Died 1915.

Jessel, Herbert Merton - St. Pancras, South (LU 1896-1906 and J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Created 1st Baron Jessel in 1924. Died 1950.

Kemp, George - Lancashire, Heywood (LU, 1895-1896, Con. 1896-1904, Lib. 1904-1906); Manchester, North-West (Lib, J. 1910-1912). Created Baron Rochdale in 1913. Died 1945.

Kenny, William - Dublin, St. Stephen's Green (1892-1897). Died 1921.

Kenrick, William - Birmingham, North (Lib 1885-1886, LU 1886-1899). Died 1919.

Kerr-Smiley, Peter - Antrim, North (LU J. 1910-1912, Un. 1912-1922). Adopted the surname of Kerr-Smiley in lieu of Smiley in 1905. Died 1943.

Kerry, Henry William Edmond Petty-Fitzmaurice, Earl of - Derbyshire, Western (LU 1908-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Succeeded as 6th Marquis of Lansdowne in 1927. Died 1936.

Lambton, Hon. Frederick William - Durham, Southern (Lib. 1880-1885); Durham, South-Eastern (LU 1898-J. 1910). Succeeded as Earl of Durham in 1928. Died 1929.

Lawson, Hon. Harry Lawson Webster - St. Pancras, West (Lib. 1885-1892); Gloucestershire, Eastern (Lib. 1893-1895); Tower Hamlets, Mile End (LU 1905-1905 and J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1916). Succeeded as Baron Burnham in 1916. Created 1st Viscount Burnham in 1919. Died 1933.

Lea, Sir Thomas, Bart. - Kidderminster (Lib. 1868-1874); Donegal (Lib. 1879-1885); Londonderry, South (1886-1900). Died 1902.

Lecky, Rt. Hon. William Edward Hartpole - Dublin University (1895-1903). Died 1903.

Leveson-Gower, Frederick Neville Sutherland - Sutherland (1900-1906). Died 1959.

Liddell, Harry - Down, West (LU 1905, Con. 1906-1907). Died 1931.

Lloyd, George Ambrose - Staffordshire, Western (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918); Sussex, Eastbourne (Con. 1924-1925). Created Baron Lloyd in 1925. Died 1941.

Lorne, the Rt. Hon. John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, Marquess of - Argyllshire (Lib. 1868-1878); Manchester, South (1895-1900). Succeeded as Duke of Argyll in 1900. Died 1914.

Lubbock, Rt. Hon. Sir John, Bart. - Maidstone (Lib. 1870-1880); London University (Lib. 1880-1886; LU 1886-1900). Created Lord Avebury in 1900. Died 1913.

Lymington, Newton Wallop, Viscount - Barnstaple (Lib. 1880-1885); Devon, South Molton (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1891). Succeeded as Earl of Portsmouth in 1891. Died. 1917.

Lyttelton, Rt. Hon. Alfred - Warwick and Leamington (1895-1906); St. George's, Hanover Square (LU 1906-1912, Con. 1912-1913). Died 1913.

Lyttelton, Hon. John Cavendish - Worcestershire, Droitwich (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1916). Succeeded as 9th Viscount Cobham in 1922. Died 1949.

McArthur, Charles - Liverpool, Exchange (1897-1906); Liverpool, Kirkdale (Con. 1907-1910). Died 1910.

McIver, Sir Lewis, Bart. - Devon, Torquay (Lib. 1885-1886); Edinburgh, West (1895-1909). Died 1920.

Mackinder, Halford John - Glasgow, Camlachie (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1922). Died 1947.

Maclean, Francis William - Oxfordshire, Woodstock (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1891). Died 1913.

Macmaster, Donald - Surrey, Chertsey (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1922). Died 1922.

Maconochie, Archibald White - Aberdeenshire, Eastern (1900-1906). Died 1926.

Magnus, Sir Philip - London University (LU 1906-1912, Con. 1912-1922). Died 1933.

Martin, Sir Richard Biddulph, Bart. - Tewkesbury (Lib. 1880-1885); Worcestershire, Droitwich (1892-1906). Died 1916.

Maxwell, William Jardine Herries - Dumfriesshire (1892-1895 and 1900-1906). Died 1933.

Meysey-Thompson, Ernest Claude - Staffordshire, Handsworth (LU 1906-1912, Con. 1912-1918); Birmingham, Handsworth (Con. 1918-1922). Died 1944.

Meysey-Thompson, Sir Henry Meysey, Bart. - Knaresborough (Lib. 1880); Lincolnshire, Brigg (Lib. 1885-1886); Staffordshire, Handsworth (1892-1905). Created Baron Knaresborough in 1905. Died 1929.

Middlemore, John Throgmorton - Birmingham, North (LU 1899-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1925.

Mildmay, Francis Bingam - Devon, Totnes (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1912, Con. 1912-1922). Created Baron Mildmay of Flete in 1922. Died 1947.

Milton, William Charles de Meuron Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, Viscount - Wakefield (1895-1902). Succeeded as Earl Fitzwilliam in 1902. Died 1943.

Molesworth, Sir Lewis William, Bart - Cornwall, Bodmin (1900-1906). Died 1912.

Monk, Charles James - Gloucester (Lib. 1857-1859 and 1865-1885, LU 1895-1900).
Died 1900.

More, Robert Jasper - Shropshire, Southern (Lib. 1865-1868); Shropshire, Ludlow (Lib.
1885-1886, LU 1886-1903). Died 1903.

Morpeth, Charles James Stanley Howard, Viscount - Birmingham, South (1904-1911).
Succeeded as Earl of Carlise in 1911. Died 1912.

Morrison, Walter - Plymouth (Lib. 1861-1874); Yorkshire, Skipton (1886-1892 and
1895-1900). Died 1921.

Morrison-Bell, Ernest Fitzroy - Devon, Ashburton (LU 1908-J. 1910 and D. 1910-1912,
Con. 1912-1918). Died 1960.

Paget, Almeric Hugh - Cambridge (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1917). Created Baron
Queensborough in 1918. Died 1949.

Parkes, Edward Ebenezer - Birmingham, Central (LU 1895-1912, Con. 1912-1918).
Died 1919.

Pease, Arthur - Whitby (Lib. 1880-1885); Darlington (1895-1898). Died 1898.

Pease, Herbert Pike - Darlington (LU 1898-J. 1910 and D. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1923).
Created Baron Daryngton in 1923). Died 1949.

Peel, Rt. Hon. Arthur Wellesley - Warwick (Lib. 1865-1885); Warwick and Leamington
(Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1895). Created Viscount Peel in 1895. Died 1912.

Peel, Hon. William Robert Wellesley - Taunton (1909-1912). Succeeded as 2nd Viscount
Peel in 1912. Advanced to Earldom in 1929. Died 1937.

Pender, Sir John - Totnes (Lib. 1862-1866); Wick District (Lib. 1872-1885, LU 1892-
1896). Died 1896.

Pitt-Lewis, George - Devon, Barnstaple (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Assumed the
additional surname of Pitt in 1876. Died 1906.

Pole-Carew, Sir Reginald - Cornwall, Bodmin (LU D. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1916).
Died 1924.

Pollock, Harry Frederick - Lincolnshire, Spalding (1895-1900). Died 1901.

Purvis, Sir Robert - Peterborough (1895-1906). Died 1920.

Quilter, Sir William Cuthbert, Bart. - Suffolk, Sudbury (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1906).
Died 1911.

Ratcliff, Robert Frederick - Staffordshire, Burton (LU 1900-1912, Con. 1912-1918).
Died 1943.

Rattigan, Sir William Henry - Lanarkshire, North-Eastern (1901-1904). Died 1904.

Richardson, Thomas - The Hartlepoons (Lib. 1874-1875 and 1880-1886, LU 1886-1891).
Died 1891.

Richardson, Sir Thomas - The Hartlepoons (LU 1895-1900). Died 1906.

Rothschild, Baron Ferdinand James de - Buckinghamshire, Aylesbury (Lib. 1885-1886,
LU 1886-1898). Died 1898.

Rothschild, Lionel Nathan de - Buckinghamshire, Aylesbury (LU J. 1910-1912, Con.
1912-1923). Died 1942.

Rothschild, Hon. Lionel Walter - Buckinghamshire, Aylesbury (1899-J. 1910).
Succeeded as 2nd Baron Rothschild in 1915. Died 1937.

Russell, Rt. Hon. Sir Thomas Wallace - Tyrone, South (LU 1886-1904, Rus. 1904-J.
1910); Tyrone, North (Lib. 1911-1918). Died 1920.

Rylands, Peter - Warrington (Lib. 1868-1874); Burnley (Lib. 1876-1886, LU 1886-1887).
Died 1887.

St. Aubyn, Sir John, Bart. - Cornwall, West (Lib. 1858-1885), Cornwall, St. Ives (Lib.
1885-1886, LU 1886-1887). Created Baron St. Levan, 1887. Died 1908.

Seely, Charles - Nottingham (Lib. 1869-1874 and 1880-1885); Nottingham, West (Lib.
1885-1886, LU 1892-1895). Died 1915.

Seely, Charles Hilton - Lincoln (LU 1895-1905, FT 1905-1906); Nottinghamshire,
Mansfield (Lib. 1916-1918). Died 1926.

Sellar, Alexander Craig - Haddington District (Lib. 1882-1885); Lanarkshire, Partick (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1890). Died 1890.

Simeon, Sir John Stephen Barrington, Bart. - Southampton (1895-1906). Died 1909.

Sinclair, William Pirrie - Antrim (Lib. 1885); Falkirk District (1886-1892). Died 1900.

Smith, H. Crawford - Northumberland, Tyneside (1900-1906). Died 1907.

Smith, Rt. Hon. James Parker - Lanarkshire, Partick (1890-1906). Died 1929.

Spear, Sir John Ward - Devon, Tavistock (LU 1900-1906 and D. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1921.

Stanley, Sir Henry Morton - Lambeth, North (1895-1900). Died 1904.

Story-Maskelyne, Mervin Herbert Nevil - Cricklade (Lib. 1880-1885); Wiltshire, Cricklade (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1911.

Strauss, Arthur - Cornwall, Camborne (1895-1900); Paddington, North (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918). Died 1920.

Stroyan, John - Perthshire, Western (1900-1906). Died 1941.

Sutherland, Sir Thomas - Greenock (Lib. 1884-1886, LU 1886-1900). Died 1922.

Taylor, Francis - Norfolk, South (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1898). Died 1915.

Thorburn, Sir Walter - Peebleshire and Selkirkshire (1886-1906). Died 1908.

Verdin, Robert - Cheshire, Northwich (1886-1887). Died 1887.

Vernon, Hon. Greville Richard - Ayrshire, Southern (1886-1892). Died 1909.

Villiers, Rt. Hon. Charles Pelham - Wolverhampton (Lib. 1835-1885); Wolverhampton, South (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1898). Died 1898.

Vivian, Sir Henry Hussey - Truro (Lib. 1852-1857); Glamorganshire (Lib. 1857-1885), Swansea District (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1887, Lib. 1887-1893). Created Lord Swansea in 1893. Died 1894.

Wanklyn, James Leslie - Bradford, Central (1895-1906). Died 1919.

Ward, Arnold Sandwith - Hertfordshire, Watford (LU J. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918).
Died 1950.

Wason, John Cathcart - Orkney and Shetland (LU 1900-1902, Lib. 1902-1921). Died
1921.

Watkin, Sir Edward Wiliam, Bart. - Great Yarmouth (Lib. 1857); Stockport (Lib. 1864-
1868); Hythe (Lib. 1874-1886, LU 1886-1895). Died 1901.

Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, Hon. William Henry - Wicklow (Lib. 1868-1874); Yorkshire
(WR), South (Lib. 1880-1885); Yorkshire (WR), Doncaster (1888-1892). Died
1920.

Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, Hon. William John - Peterborough (Lib. 1878-1886, LU 1886-
1889). Died 1889.

West, William Cornwallis - Denbighshire, Western (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892).
Assumed the additional surname of Cornwallis in 1895. Died 1917.

Wiggin, Henry - Staffordshire, Eastern (Lib. 1880-1885); Staffordshire, Handsworth (Lib.
1885-1886, LU 1886-1892). Died 1905.

Williams, John Charles - Cornwall, Truro (1892-1895). Died 1939.

Williams, Rt. Hon. Joseph Powell - Birmingham, South (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-
1904). Died 1904.

Wills, Sir Frederick, Bart. - Bristol, North (1900-1906). Died. 1909.

Wilson, John - Glasgow, St. Rollox (1900-1906). Died 1928.

Wilson, John William - Worcestershire, Northern (LU 1895-1904, Lib. 1904-1918);
Worcestershire, Stourbridge (Lib. 1918-1922). Died 1932.

Winterbotham, Arthur Brend - Gloucestershire, Cirencester (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-
1887, Lib. 1887-1892). Died 1892.

Wodehouse, Rt. Hon. Edmond Robert - Bath (Lib. 1880-1886, LU 1886-1906). Died
1914.

Wolmer, William Waldegrave Palmer, Viscount - Hampshire, Petersfield (Lib. 1885-1886, LU 1886-1892); Edinburgh, West (1892-1895). Succeeded as 2nd Earl of Selborne in 1895. Died 1942.

Wolmer, Roundell Cecil Palmer, Viscount - Lancashire, Newton (LU D. 1910-1912, Con. 1912-1918); Hampshire, Aldershot (Con. 1918-1940). Elevated as Baron Selborne in 1941. Succeeded as 3rd Earl of Selborne in 1942. Died 1971.

Appendix E: Liberal Unionist Office-Holders in the Unionist Government, 1895-1905

William Anson	Secretary to the Board of Education (1902-1905)
H. T. Anstruther	Lord Commissioner of the Treasury (1895-1903)
H. O. Arnold-Forster	Parliamentary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty (1902-1903) Secretary of State for War (1903-1905)
Lord Belper	Captain of the Gentleman-at-Arms (1895-1905)
Victor Cavendish	Treasurer of the Household (1900-1905) Financial Secretary to the Treasury (1903-1905)
Austen Chamberlain	Civil Lord of the Admiralty (1895-1900) Financial Secretary to the Treasury (1900-1902) Postmaster-General (1902-1903) Chancellor of the Exchequer (1903-1905)
Joseph Chamberlain	Secretary of State for the Colonies (1895-1903)
Earl of Clarendon	Lord in Waiting (1895-1900) Lord Chamberlain (1900-1905)
J. A. Clyde	Solicitor-General for Scotland (1905)
T. H. A. E. Cochrane	Under-Secretary for the Home Department (1902-1905)
Jesse Collings	Under-Secretary for the Home Department (1895-1902)
Sir Saville B. Crossley	Paymaster-General (1902-1905)
Duke of Devonshire	Lord President of the Privy Council (1895-1903) President of the Board of Education (1900-1902)
Arthur Elliot	Financial Secretary to the Treasury (1903)
Earl of Errol	Lord in Waiting (1903-1905)

Robert Finlay	Solicitor-General (1895-1900) Attorney-General (1900-1905)
Lord James of Hereford	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1895-1902)
William Kenny	Solicitor-General for Ireland (1895-1898)
Marquis of Lansdowne	Secretary of State for War (1895-1900) Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1900-1905) Lord President of the Privy Council (1903-1905)
Lord Lawrence	Lord in Waiting (1895-1905)
Alfred Lyttelton	Secretary of State for the Colonies (1903-1905)
T. W. Russell	Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board (1895-1900)
Salveson, E. T.	Solicitor-General for Scotland (1905)
Earl of Selborne	Under-Secretary for the Colonies (1895-1900) First Lord of the Admiralty (1900-1905)
Lord Suffield	Lord in Waiting (1901-1905)
J. Powell Williams	Financial Secretary to the War Office (1895-1900)
Lord Wolverton	Vice-Chamberlain (1902-1905)

Appendix F: Liberal Unionist Whips, House of Commons

The first unofficial whips of the Liberal Unionist party, Henry Brand and W. S. Caine, operated in the weeks leading up to the decisive vote on the Second Reading of the First Home Rule Bill, Brand working with the followers of Hartington and Caine with the followers of Chamberlain.¹ After his defeat in the 1886 general election, a replacement was needed for Brand, and though Arthur Elliot was considered, Lord Edward Cavendish, Hartington's younger brother, was appointed a Liberal Unionist whip in conjunction with Caine on August 6th, 1886.² Ill-health, though, forced Cavendish to resign as whip at the end of 1886, and was replaced by Alexander Craig Sellar.³ However, ill-health would also force Craig Sellar to relinquish the position, handing it over temporarily to Lord Wolmer in August 1887 before Wolmer assumed the position of chief Liberal Unionist whip permanently in 1888.⁴ In addition to his duties in the House of Commons, Wolmer was also responsible for the party's organization outside Parliament. Caine, meanwhile, remained a Liberal Unionist whip until his secession from the party in 1890 over the issue of temperance. After the 1892 general election, Wolmer resigned as chief Liberal Unionist whip, to be replaced by H. T. Anstruther. However, the duties of party management were given instead to J. Powell Williams. Austen Chamberlain was also

¹ Cooke and Vincent, p. 422.

² NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19512, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 24th and Aug. 6th, 1886; BUL, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC 2/1/1, Liberal Unionist Association, Origin and Progress, 1886, p. 37.

³ Times, Jan. 25th, 1887.

⁴ Times, Aug. 11th, 1887; Jenkins, 'Hartington, Chamberlain and the Unionist Alliance,' p. 131.

appointed a junior Liberal Unionist whip.⁵ This arrangement remained in place until the 1895 general election.

With the formation of the coalition Unionist government in 1895, the Conservative and Liberal Unionists whips were joined together, and a single whip would be issued by the government to all Conservative and Liberal Unionist M.P.s.⁶ However, there was always at least one government whip from the Liberal Unionist party from its formation in 1895 to its resignation in 1905. When the government was formed, H. T. Anstruther was appointed second whip. In the reconstruction following Balfour's accession to the premiership in 1902, Anstruther had aspired to a promotion to chief government whip, but his position as a Liberal Unionist ruled him out.⁷ He would subsequently resign his post and seat in October 1903 to become one of the British representatives to the Suez Canal Company. In December 1900 Victor Cavendish was promoted to be a junior whip until he was further promoted to become Financial Secretary to the Treasury in October 1903. In November 1902 Sir Saville Crossley also became a whip, and from October 1903 until December 1905 he was the sole Liberal Unionist whip in the government. However, after Anstruther's resignation the post of second whip went to another Conservative, Ailwyn Fellowes, until March 1905, and subsequently Viscount Valentia.⁸ After the 1906 general election, there was again a

⁵ NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19489, fo. 100-103, Wolmer to Elliot, Aug. 14th, 1892; Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years* (London, UK: Cassell and Company Limited, 1935), p. 76.

⁶ See, for instance, NLS, Arthur Elliot Papers, MS. 19522, Arthur Elliot Diary, July 5th, 1899.

⁷ Fitzroy, Aug. 8th, 1902, p. 97 and Sept. 15th, 1902, p. 105-106.

⁸ John Sainty and Gary W. Cox, 'The Identification of Government Whips in the House of Commons, 1830-1905,' in *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 16, Pt. 3 (1997), p. 355-358.

distinct Liberal Unionist whip, though he worked in close co-operation with the Conservative whips, and the distinction between the work of the Liberal Unionist whip and the Conservative whips was negligible.⁹ From 1906 until fusion in 1912 the post of Liberal Unionist whip was held by Herbert Pike Pease, with the exception of the period between the January and December 1910 general elections, when Lord Morpeth was the Liberal Unionist whip, as a result of Pike's Pease defeat in January.¹⁰

⁹ Philip Williamson, ed., The Modernisation of Conservative Politics: The Diaries and Letters of William Bridgeman, 1904-1935, 1911, p. 41.

¹⁰ Times, Feb. 16th, 1910. On Pike Pease's defeat to the controversial Liberal Ignatius Timothy Trebitsch-Lincoln, who was eventually imprisoned for fraud, see VCH, Durham Vol. IV, p. 103.

Table 2A: The Expansion of Local Liberal Unionist Associations, 1888 to 1891

	Associations	Committees	Total
February 1888	NA	NA	115
March 1889	126	24	150
February 1890	170	25	195
February 1891	194	27	221

Source: Times, Feb. 4th, 1891.

Table 2B: Local Liberal Unionist Organizations by Region, 1903

Region	# of Constit.	Associations	Correspondents	Joint
London	59	53	0	0
South-East	55	14	9	0
East Anglia	24	3	13	2
Central	23	7	7	2
Wessex	18	11	3	0
Bristol	22	9	9	0
Devon/Cornwall	20	6	8	6
West Midlands	47	40	7	0
East Midlands	33	14	2	3
Lancastria	72	54	3	1
Yorkshire	50	27	16	6
North	33	22	5	6
Wales	34	4	10	1
Total	490	274	81	25

Table 2C: Local Liberal Unionist Organizations, Borough vs. County, 1903

	Boroughs	Counties	Total
# of Constituencies	179	252	431
Local or City/County Associations	112	109	221
Correspondents	33	48	81
Joint Associations	6	19	25
Total	151	176	

% of Boroughs/Counties with:	Boroughs	Counties
Local or City/County Associations	62.57%	43.25%
Correspondents	18.44%	19.05%
Joint Associations	3.35%	7.54%
Total	84.36%	69.84%

Table 2D: Local Liberal Unionist Organizations, 1903, and Liberal Unionist Candidacies, 1900

	LU Candidate	No LU Candidate
Total	62	428
Local or City/County Associations	38	236
Correspondents	10	71
Joint Associations	14	11

% of Seats with:	LU Candidate	No LU Candidate
Local or City/County Associations	61.29%	55.14%
Correspondents	16.13%	16.59%
Joint Associations	22.58%	2.57%

Table 2E: Subscriptions Received, East and North of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association, 1886/87 to 1890/91

Fiscal Year	Subscriptions
1886/1887	£692.19.6
1887/1888	£936.17.6
1888/1889	£937.13.6
1889/1890	£910.13.2
1890/1891	£1997.3.6

Source: National Library of Scotland, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/17, E&NSLUA Minute Book, passim.

Table 2F: Subscriptions Received, West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Association, 1891/92 to 1910/11

Fiscal Year	Total	Ordinary	Special	Large
1891/92	£897	£535	£361	
1892/93	£2090	£724	£1370	
1893/94	£2295	£495	£1800	
1894/95	£6315.0.6 ¹	£469	£5875	
1895/96	£519.17.0	£469	£50	
1896/97	£602.18.6			
1897/98	£561.10.6			
1898/99	£2035.2.6	£535.2.6	£1500	
1899/00	£3316.11.6	£551.11.6	£2765	
1900/01	£811.7.0	£561.7.0	£250	
1901/02	£680.1.4			
1902/03	£577.7.0			
1903/04	£2380.10.2 ²	£430.10.2	£750	£1250
1904/05	£960.19.6	£460.19.6	£300	£200
1905/06	£1165.2.0			
1906/07	£1184.4.6	£484.4.6		£700
1907/08	£1000.5.6	£450.5.6		£550
1908/09	£1140.14.6	£440.14.6		£700
1909/10	£2252.7.0	£377.7.0		£1875
1910/11	£4606.9.6	£291.9.6		£4315

Source: National Library of Scotland, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/20, WSLUA Minute

¹ The difference between this value and the sum of Ordinary and Special Subscriptions was due to the collector's commission.

² Sum Error in Original

Book, Analysis of Subscriptions for 5 Years, 1891-1892 to 1895-1896, Feb. 2nd, 1897, p. 300, (Loose Insert); ibid., Acc. 10424/20-22, WSLUA Minute Books, Accounts, passim.

Table 2G: Canvass Returns, West of Scotland, 1893 to 1908

Location	Date Reported	LU	Con	Lib	Doubt	Rem/ Dead	Total ¹	LU%
Bridgeton ²	Nov. 3 rd , 1893	185	342	606	129		1262	14.7
Motherwell	Dec. 1 st , 1893	413	671	1113	95	49	2341	17.6
Paisley: 1 st Ward	Dec. 29 th , 1893	163	271	689			1123	14.5
Paisley: 2 nd Ward	Jan. 12 th , 1894	186	279	676	379	54	1520	12.2
Crosshill	Apr. 19 th , 1895	547	436	496	247	138	1726	31.7
Pollokshaws	Apr. 19 th , 1895	240	660	691	332	129	1923	12.5
Kilmarnock	Apr. 17 th , 1896	488	1037	2020	816		4361	11.2
Maryhill	Jan. 20 th , 1899	846	750	1316			2912	29.1
Govanhill	May 19 th , 1899	232	64	221	250	158	767	30.2
Coatbridge	June 23 rd , 1899	305	850	1217	369	430	2741	11.1
Possilpark	June 23 rd , 1899	182	100	277	39	42	598	30.4
Maryhill ³	June 23 rd , 1899	207	219	328	243	276	997	20.8
Blackfriars and Hutcheson	Sept. 21 st , 1900	588	646	1438	860	934	3502	16.8
Bridgeton	May 2 nd , 1902	280	559	725	173	138	1737	16.1
E. Renfrewshire	June 28 th , 1905	264					2443 ⁴	10.8
College	Mar. 1 st , 1907	159					1769 ⁴	9
Cathcart	Aug. 7 th , 1908	269	265	352	308		1194	22.5

Source: National Library of Scotland, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19-21, WSLUA Minute Books, passim.

¹ Includes Doubtfuls, but not Removed/Dead

² Partial

³ Canvass of New Voters

⁴ Electors Visited. Only LU numbers provided.

Table 2H: Liberal Unionist Divisional and Branch Associations in the West of Scotland, 1893, 1903/04, and 1911/12

	1893		1903/04		1911/12	
Constituency	Division	Branch - LUA/UA	Division	Branch - LUA/UA	Division	Branch - LUA/UA
Glasgow, College	LUA	-	LUA	-	LUA	-
Glasgow, St. Rollox	LUA	-	LUA	-	LUA	-
Glasgow, Tradeston	LUA	-	LUA	-	LUA	-
Glasgow, Blackfriars . .	LUA	-	LUA	-	LUA	-
Glasgow, Bridgeton	LUA	-	LUA	-	LUA	-
Glasgow, Central	LUA	-	LUA	-	LUA	-
Glasgow, Camlachie	LUA	-	LUA	-	LUA	-
Lanarkshire, Govan	LUA	1/0	LUA	1/0	LUA	1/0
Lanarkshire, Partick	LUA	2/1	LUA	4/0	LUA	4/0
Lanarkshire, Mid	LUA	6/1	LUA	3/0	LUA	2/1
Lanarkshire, North-East	LUA	2/2	LUA	5/3	UA	0/28
Lanarkshire, North-West	LUA	1/1	LUA	4/0	LUA	2/1
Lanarkshire, South	LUA	1/1	LUA	1/1	LUA	-
Renfrewshire, East	LUA	0/1	LUA	3/1	LUA	2/2
Renfrewshire, West	LUA	3/0	LUA	5/0	LUA	3/1
Greenock	LUA	-	LUA	-	UA	-
Paisley	LUA	-	LUA	-	UA	
Falkirk Burghs	LUA	4/0	LUA	3/0	LUA	2/1
Dumbartonshire	LUA	3/0	LUA	7/0	UA	1/13
Ayr Burghs	LUA	4/0	LUA	1/1	LUA	0/1
Ayrshire, North	LUA	12/0	LUA	12/0	UA	12/1
Ayrshire, South	LUA	5/0	LUA	6/0	LUA	5/0
Kilmarnock Burghs	LUA	1/0	LUA	2/0	UA	2/0

Argyllshire	LUA	-	LUA	18/0	LUA	14/1
Perthshire, West	LUA	1/0	LUA	2/0	UA	1/0
Kirkcudbrightshire	LUA	-	LUA	-	LUA	-

Note: This only includes constituencies which are listed in all three documents.

Source: National Library of Scotland, SCUA Papers, Acc. 10424/19, WSLUA Minute Book, List of Members, Branches, and Rules, 1893, p. 247; *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/21, WSLUA Minute Book, List of Members, Branches, and Rules, 1903-1904, p. 138; *ibid.*, Acc. 10424/22, WSLUA Minute Book, List of Members, Branches, and Rules, 1911-1912, p. 112.

Table 3A: Seats Contested at Each General Election, by Party, 1886 to December 1910

General Election	Liberal Unionists	Conservatives	Uncontested
1886 ¹	160	403	110
1892	137	472	62
1895	111	478	81
1900	101	467	102
1906	100	458	112
Jan. 1910	101	494	75
Dec. 1910	75	476	119

Source: Calculated from Appendix C.

¹ For the 1886 general election, the three constituencies contested by both Liberal Unionist and Conservative candidates are counted in both the Liberal Unionist and Conservative columns.

Table 4A: Change of Allegiances of Sitting M.P.s (Excluding those Representing Irish Constituencies), 1886 to December 1910

	86-92	92-95	95-00	00-06	06-J10	J10-D10	Total
LU to Lib ¹	7		1	6	2		16
Lib to LU	1	2	1	1	2	1	8
Con to Lib			1	6	1		8
LU to Con		1	3				3
I Lab to L/Lab		2					2
I Lab to ILP		1					1
Lab to L/Lab				1			1
Con to I Con				1			1
Lib to Con				1 ²			1
I Lab to Lab					1		1
I Lib to Lib						1	1
Total	8	6	5	16	6	2	43

I = Independent

Source: Calculated from F. W. S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918 (London, UK: Macmillan, 1974), as amended by Appendix C.

¹ Includes one LU to Independent Lib.

² This was Richard Rigg, who F. W. S. Craig listed as crossing to the Liberal Unionists. However, recent work by A. N. Connell has demonstrated that Rigg in fact joined the Conservative party after leaving the Liberals, and Rigg was considered as the Conservative candidate for Carlisle and Burnley for the 1906 general election, though ultimately he would not stand. See Connell, p. 200-201; Times, June 1st and Oct. 4th, 1905. However, by the end of 1907 Rigg had returned to the Liberal party over Temperance. See Connell, p. 207.

Table 4B: Liberal Unionist Candidates with Prior Experience as Liberal Candidates, 1886 to December 1910

General Election	LU Candidates with Lib. Experience	% of Total LU Candidates
1886	110	68.75%
1892	71 (1) ¹	51.82%
1895	46 (1)	41.44%
1900	25	24.75%
1906	15 (1)	15%
J 1910	13 (3)	12.87%
D 1910	9 (3)	12%

Source: Calculated from F. W. S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918 (London, UK: Macmillan, 1974); *ibid.*, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1832-1885 (London, UK: Macmillan, 1977); Brian M. Walker, Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922 (Dublin, Ireland: Royal Irish Academy, 1978), as amended by Appendix C.

¹ Value in brackets is the number of Liberal Unionist candidates who previously stood as Liberal candidates at the 1886 general election or later.

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9th Duke of Devonshire Papers
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