

Forsaking their ‘own flesh and blood’? Ulster unionism, Scotland and home rule, 1886–1914

Writing to a ‘Friend in Scotland’, in 1888, the Rev. Hugh Hanna¹ declared: ‘it is the duty of Christian people in these lands to do the best they can for all parts of the United Kingdom’. Having explained why Irish Protestants were opposed to home rule, he then asked how

any section of Scotch Presbyterians should support that policy, and array itself in antagonism to their kinsmen in Ireland? Is it possible that political partisanship can dominate all the considerations of a common lineage and a common faith, and that any part of Scotland would forsake its own flesh and blood to promote the policy and restore the power of a fallen leader ...?²

This article will attempt to answer two questions that relate to Hanna’s letter. Firstly, to what extent did Ulster unionists³ appeal directly to Scotland for support in their struggle against home rule? Secondly, how effective were these efforts in garnering Scottish support? Each will be considered for three periods when this was a particularly contentious political issue: 1886, 1892–5 and 1911–14.

Why these particular questions? A general point is that not enough scholarly effort has been devoted to analysing interactions between societies at the periphery of the United Kingdom during what was an important period in British constitutional history. Given the geographical proximity of Ulster and Scotland, as well as the deep-rooted historical and cultural bonds that connect them, this is, perhaps, surprising, especially as Irish home rule was such a major political issue for both societies. More specifically, this article expands on insights already provided by Graham Walker, an historian who has published extensively on modern connections between Ulster and Scotland.⁴ Walker discerns a marked Ulster unionist

¹ The ‘roaring’ Hugh Hanna was a Belfast-based fundamentalist conservative Presbyterian minister, who was born c. 1821 and died in February 1892; see David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster society, 1740–1890* (London, 1992), pp 124–5, 172–3.

² ‘Scotland, Ulster and home rule for Ireland: a letter addressed to a friend in Scotland’, 1888 (P.R.O.N.I., Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union (hereafter I.L.P.U.) publications, D/989/C/3/12C).

³ The labels ‘Ulster unionist’ and ‘loyalist’ are used interchangeably throughout this article.

⁴ Graham Walker, ‘Empire, religion and nationality in Scotland and Ulster before the first world war’ in Ian S. Wood (ed.), *Scotland and Ulster* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp 97–115; idem, *Intimate strangers: political and cultural interaction between Scotland and Ulster in modern times* (Edinburgh, 1995), pp 17–60; idem, ‘Thomas Sinclair: Presbyterian Liberal Unionist’ in Richard English and Graham Walker (eds), *Unionism in modern Ireland: new perspectives on politics and culture* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp 19–40; idem, ‘Scotland and Ulster: political interactions since the late nineteenth century and possibilities of

reorientation towards Scotland during 1911–14, when loyalists utilised emotive ‘kith and kin’ rhetoric in order to fashion an Ulster Scot ‘ethno-nationalism’.⁵ This served the dual purpose of highlighting Ireland’s cultural and ethnic heterogeneity while also encouraging the Scots to support their cause. Although Walker is careful to present this as an ‘enterprise’, use of the label ethno-nationalism is not uncontroversial given that so much scholarly effort has been expended on formulating an acceptable political ‘category’ for Ulster unionism – to date without reaching consensus.⁶ Indeed, Gary Peatling has even characterised Walker’s research as a ‘schematic’ attempt to emphasise a separate ethnicity for Ulster in support of a partitionist interpretation of Irish history.⁷ While this critique may be valid, it sheds little light on the specific events that Walker describes in his scholarship.

In order to evaluate Ulster unionist appeals to Scotland, this article will, therefore, draw on a range of primary sources concerning the political and religious developments of the period. In his handling of evidence, Walker places considerable emphasis on a flurry of popular Ulster histories published between 1888 and 1914 and which highlighted the Protestant community’s Scottish roots.⁸ He also argues that demonstrations within Ulster such as the Presbyterian Anti-Home Rule Convention and the Solemn Oath and Covenant (both in 1912) were a further indication of a general ‘Presbyterianisation’⁹ of Ulster unionist politics. While these are valuable observations, there has not been sufficient analysis of loyalist

contemporary dialogue’ in J. Erskine and G. Lucy (eds), *Cultural traditions in Northern Ireland: varieties of Scottishness: exploring the Ulster connection* (Belfast, 1997), pp 91–109; idem, ‘The Irish Presbyterian Anti-Home Rule Convention of 1912’ in *Studies*, 86, no. 341 (1997), pp 71–77; idem and David Officer, ‘Scottish Unionism and the Ulster Question’ in Catriona M. M. Macdonald (ed.), *Scottish Unionism, 1800–1997* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp 13–26; David Officer and Graham Walker, ‘Protestant Ulster: ethno-history, memory and contemporary prospects’ in *National Identities*, 2, no. 3 (2000), pp 293–307; Graham Walker, ‘Ulster Unionism and the Scottish dimension’ in William Kelly and John R. Young (eds), *Ulster and Scotland, 1600–2000: history, language and identity* (Dublin, 2004), pp 33–42; idem, *A history of the Ulster Unionist Party: protest, pragmatism and pessimism* (Manchester, 2004), pp 1–53.

⁵ For use of this specific label, see Officer & Walker, ‘Protestant Ulster: ethno-history’, pp 293–4; see also Ian McBride, ‘Ulster and the British Problem’ in English & Walker (eds), *Unionism in modern Ireland*, pp 8–9.

⁶ Peter Gibbon, *The origins of Ulster Unionism: the formation of popular Protestant politics and ideology in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 1975), pp 136–7; David Miller, *Queen’s rebels: Ulster loyalism in historical perspective* (Dublin, 1978), pp 65–80; James Loughlin, *Gladstone, home rule and the Ulster Question* (Dublin, 1986), pp 153–61; Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884–1911* (Oxford, 1987), pp 10–17; Arthur Aughey, *Under siege: Ulster Unionism and the Anglo-Irish Agreement* (Belfast, 1989), pp 16–18.

⁷ G. K. Peatling, ‘The “Irish”, the “Scots-Irish”, and the United States of America in the twentieth century: some patterns of exchange’ in *Études Irlandaises*, xxviii, no. 2 (autumn 2003), pp 83–90; see also idem, ‘Pasts, futures, and connections between Scotland, Ulster and Ireland: a critique of some historiographical tendencies’ in *International Review of Scottish Studies*, 32 (2007), pp 33–54.

⁸ These include J. Harrison, *The Scot in Ulster: a sketch of the history of the Scottish population of Ulster* (Edinburgh & London, 1888); C. Hanna, *The Scotch Irish; or the Scot in north Britain, north Ireland and North America* (New York & London, 1902); J. B. Woodburn, *The Ulster Scot: his history and religion* (London, 1914).

⁹ Walker, *History of the Ulster Unionist Party*, pp 32–3.

efforts ‘on the ground’ in Scotland since the work of Donald Savage and Patrick Buckland.¹⁰ In the drive to garner popular British support, it was understood from the outset that a key component of their strategy would have to be a prolonged and difficult grass-roots political campaign in both Scotland and England. By analysing how the Scottish campaign evolved, this article provides additional context for Walker’s findings, and, in certain instances, alternative interpretations of historical events are advanced. An attempt is made to assess Scottish perceptions of the loyalist campaign by analysing the opinions expressed in newspapers such as *The Scotsman* and the *Glasgow Herald*, both of which were monitored in Ulster. Scottish electoral data is also considered in order to illuminate the broader political landscape. Historians such as James Kellas, John McCaffrey, Iain Hutchison, Michael Fry, Elaine McFarland and Catriona Burness have examined the political consequences of the home rule controversy for Scottish politics and society in considerable detail.¹¹ This article, therefore, does not aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Scottish response to home rule per se; rather, it is focused primarily on the dynamics of Ulster unionist electioneering in Scotland.

I

When William Gladstone introduced the first of his home rule bills in April 1886, Ulster unionists had already been campaigning in Scotland for some months. They recognised that the Union could only be preserved for as long as the legislature was willing to preserve it. This required a parliamentary strategy to influence British M.P.s at Westminster¹² and an extra-parliamentary strategy to foster popular anti-home rule sentiment within British constituencies. In appealing to Scotland, it was primarily the latter approach that was adopted.

In January 1886 the Ulster Loyalist Committee (renamed the Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union at the end of April¹³) was founded at a meeting of the executive committee of the Constitutional Club in Belfast. It was announced that this deeply conservative organisation would take ‘active measures’ towards the ‘formation of a right public opinion in Great Britain’.¹⁴ The earl of Ranfurly was the committee’s president, and James Henderson (proprietor of the *Belfast News-Letter*) was its

¹⁰ D. C. Savage, ‘The origins of the Ulster Unionist Party, 1885–1886’ in *I.H.S.*, xii, no. 47 (Mar. 1961), pp 185–208; Patrick Buckland, *Irish unionism 2: Ulster unionism and the origins of Northern Ireland, 1886 to 1922* (London, 1973).

¹¹ J. G. Kellas, ‘The Liberal Party in Scotland, 1876–1895’ in *Scot. Hist. Rev.*, 137 (Apr. 1965), pp 1–16; John F. McCaffrey, ‘The origins of Liberal unionism in the west of Scotland’ in *ibid.*, 149 (Apr. 1971), pp 47–71; I. G. C. Hutchison, *A political history of Scotland, 1832–1924: parties, elections and issues* (Edinburgh, 1986); Michael Fry, *Patronage and principle: a political history of modern Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1987); Elaine McFarland, *Protestants first! Orangeism in 19th century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990); Catriona Burness, ‘Strange associations’: *the Irish question and the making of Scottish unionism, 1886–1918* (East Linton, 2003).

¹² Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party: Irish unionists in the House of Commons, 1884–1911* (Oxford, 1987); *idem*, *Colonel Edward Saunderson: land and loyalty in Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1995).

¹³ *Belfast News-Letter*, 1 May 1886.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 Jan. 1886.

first treasurer. J. N. Mostyn and Hugh Hanna were tasked with leading propaganda efforts in England and Scotland respectively.¹⁵ Hanna's ability to orchestrate such a campaign was restricted by two issues. Firstly, the committee had very limited access to funds. In April a gift of £100 from an anonymous Edinburgh donor was widely publicised, suggesting that the committee's regular subscription revenues needed to be supplemented by contributions from wealthy sympathisers.¹⁶ Secondly, the Conservative Party organisation in Scotland was weak, and vocal support for Protestant Ulster was initially limited to fringe organisations such as the Scottish Protestant Alliance, an anti-papery organisation only two years old.¹⁷ This body caught the attention of the *News-Letter* when, at one of its meetings in Glasgow, a resolution was passed declaring that 'Scottish Protestants were bound to express their sympathy with their Irish brethren at the present crisis'.¹⁸ Therefore, with few options, Hanna appointed a leading member of this body, the Rev. Moir Porteous, as his campaign agent in Scotland.

The campaign itself consisted of public meetings in Scottish cities at which the unionist case was expounded. The speakers, most of whom were Protestant clergymen (including Hanna himself), were deeply antagonistic towards Irish nationalists, and routinely deployed the kind of sectarian arguments that were rarely heard in mainstream Scottish political discourse.¹⁹ For instance, speaking in Edinburgh on 13 April, Rev. William Verner White caused uproar by asserting that the 'object of Home Rule is the extirpation of the Protestant religion and the expulsion of Protestants'.²⁰ This approach had been justified by Henderson some weeks earlier at a meeting in Newry:

I believe myself that if we can stir up the religious feeling in Scotland we have won the battle. (Cheers) In the past Scotland sent over a large proportion of the hard-headed, hard-working people whose descendants now people Ulster. I attribute principally the comparative prosperity of our province to the hard toil and the great intelligence of the Scotch settlers. Scotland too is the great stronghold of Mr Gladstone; and if we excite this feeling among the Scotch, that they ought not to leave us to be destroyed, it will be one of the most important points in our favour. (Cheers)²¹

Another important development in January 1886 had been the acceptance by a number of prominent Ulstermen of executive positions in the Irish and Loyal Patriotic Union (I.L.P.U.), a non-party organisation founded during the previous year by Southern unionists to fund candidatures and to disseminate anti-home rule propaganda throughout Britain. In parallel with the Loyalist Committee's efforts, the I.L.P.U. also sent a number of speakers to Scotland to put the unionist case to local audiences, notably the future Ulster Liberal Unionist M.P. for South Tyrone, T. W. Russell (a Presbyterian of Scottish descent).²² While stressing his opposition to home rule, Russell was careful to distance himself from Ulster Conservatives. At Grangemouth, he stated that 'I have no connexion whatever with land or the landed interest ... I am not an Orangeman', before going on to argue that

¹⁵ Savage, 'Origins of the Ulster Unionist Party', pp 195–6, 200–1.

¹⁶ *Belfast News-Letter*, 17 Apr. 1886.

¹⁷ Savage, 'Origins of the Ulster Unionist Party', p. 196.

¹⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 19 Jan. 1886.

¹⁹ McFarland, *Protestants first!*, p. 99.

²⁰ *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 Apr. 1886.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1886.

²² I.L.P.U. annual report 1886 (P.R.O.N.I., I.L.P.U. annual reports, 1886–90, D/989/A/7/1).

Three hundred years ago Ulster was peopled by Scotch settlers for State reasons. You are bound to remember this. The men there are bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh. The blood of the Covenanters courses through their veins; they read the same Bible; they sing the same psalms; they have the same Church polity. Nor have they proved altogether unworthy of their ancestry. Two hundred years ago, when the Empire was in peril, the descendants of these Scotch settlers, hunted from post to pillar, remembering that they belonged to an Imperial race, ‘turned desperately to bay’, under the walls of Derry, and left a by no means dishonourable record of their prowess for the historian. The descendants of these men have made Ulster what it is.²³

In Ulster, loyalist expectations of the I.L.P.U. campaign in Britain had initially been high. The *News-Letter* described it as ‘a step in the right direction’, and argued that Scotsmen who were ‘loath to associate in meetings held under the auspices of the Orange Institution’ would be more willing to listen to I.L.P.U. speakers given the ‘political breadth of its membership’.²⁴ This argument was soon put to the test at a meeting in Edinburgh on 17 February, where Russell and Hanna spoke as loyalist representatives. Professor Calderwood, a prominent figure in the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, occupied the chair. The I.L.P.U. evidently wished to create the perception that this meeting was representative of Scottish religious opinion because it subsequently published transcripts of the speeches delivered by the Scottish clergymen.²⁵

However, some days before this meeting, *The Scotsman* had published a letter from a correspondent signed ‘Disgusted’ who was unhappy that religious organisations were being employed to serve ‘political ends’, and who had enclosed Protestant Alliance literature that was being circulated among the Edinburgh clergy, apparently promoting the forthcoming event. *The Scotsman*’s editorial concurred with ‘Disgusted’, and criticised ‘Edinburgh agitators’ for pressing Dr Calderwood into their service and ‘craftily’ laying aside the ‘ordinary methods of political agitation’. The involvement of Moir Porteous was noted, but he was dismissed as a ‘fanatic’ not even worthy of censure whose organisation was ‘deliberately seeking to rekindle the old anti-Catholic passions, which have led to so much injustice in our dealings with Ireland’.²⁶ After the meeting, *The Scotsman* assessed the speeches, contrasting Russell’s recognition that reforms were needed in Ireland, especially regarding the land issue, with Hanna’s more negative emphasis on the criminal tendencies of nationalists. The latter view was criticised on the grounds that the ‘minority’ in Ireland had, ‘during the period of their ascendancy’, made use of ‘power they derived from external sources’. Alluding to the low attendance, it was concluded that the demonstration had only proved that the I.L.P.U.’s ‘notions of loyalty and patriotism command the sympathy and adhesion of a few hundreds out of the entire population of the Scottish capital’.²⁷

Following this initial setback, Hanna’s campaign began in earnest at Falkirk on 10 March. There had been some nervousness about this meeting, but Hanna reported in a letter to the *News-Letter* that he was received more warmly this time by a Liberal audience that included many local clergymen. Nevertheless, he

²³ ‘The case for Irish loyalists’, 1888 (P.R.O.N.I., I.L.P.U. publications, D/989/C/3/12C).

²⁴ *Belfast News-Letter*, 14 Jan. 1886.

²⁵ ‘Speeches delivered at a meeting held in Queen Street Hall, Edinburgh’, 1886 (P.R.O.N.I., I.L.P.U. publications, D/989/C/3/5).

²⁶ *The Scotsman*, 15 Feb. 1886.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 18 Feb. 1886.

stressed the need to work quickly in Scotland where ‘our indolence has brought us to the brink of ruin’.²⁸ By 18 May he was pleased to report that thirty-six public meetings had been held to date, only two of which were poorly attended and only one of which had failed to pass a resolution condemning home rule.²⁹

Scotland was also the focus of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, which, following a ‘special meeting’ in March, appointed a ‘Committee on the State of the Country’ to focus on the home rule threat.³⁰ In early April a deputation of Irish Presbyterians acting under the auspices of this committee arrived at Westminster for an audience with a group of Scottish Liberal M.P.s.³¹ *The Witness* explained that ‘the fate of the bill depends very much on the action of the Scottish members’.³² The deputation’s stated concerns about religious persecution and the likelihood of sectarian education under home rule were widely reported, as was the response of the M.P.s, who pointed out that Parnell was himself a Protestant; indeed, the correspondent of the *Dundee Advertiser* noted that ‘the members present were not greatly impressed with the strength of the Presbyterian objections’.³³ Nevertheless, such efforts were welcomed by Hanna, who consistently drew attention to the actions of the Irish Presbyterian Church in his speeches to Scottish audiences.³⁴ In a letter to the *News-Letter*, he congratulated the Church’s committee for its efforts in London, and implored it to ‘go to work in Scotland as quickly as possible’. Moreover, he argued that if deputations from the (overtly Liberal) Presbyterian Church were sent to the Scottish Churches, ‘the religious principles of Scotland will be roused and called into action’. Hinting at his own difficulties in stirring Scottish opinion, he added that ‘the taint of Toryism, or the bare suspicion of it, would damage even St Paul in Scotland’.³⁵

In May Presbyterian deputations were duly sent to the annual meetings of the three major Scottish Churches to plead Ulster’s case. However, this was an unpropitious moment to be seeking such support given the ferocity of the disestablishment campaign that was being waged against the Church of Scotland during this period. Home rule was evidently viewed as a bargaining chip by the leaders of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church, neither of which would hold a vote on Ireland, professing an ostensible desire to keep out of politics.³⁶ At the United Presbyterian synod, the Irish moderator’s attempt to express his fears regarding Irish Protestant subjugation to ‘the Roman Catholic priesthood’ was actually interrupted by a ‘storm of hisses’.³⁷ Of greater concern were reports that Principal Rainy of the Free Church had appeared alongside Gladstone at an Edinburgh meeting during which a resolution in favour of home rule was passed.

²⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 13 Mar. 1886.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 18 May 1886.

³⁰ Minutes of the proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland (hereafter G.A.P.C.I.), vii, 1886–90, 10 June 1886, pp 104–5; *The Witness*, 16 Apr. 1886.

³¹ *The Witness*, 16 Apr. 1886.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Dundee Advertiser*, 8 Apr. 1886.

³⁴ See Aberdeen speech of 15 April, *Belfast News-Letter*, 19 Apr. 1886.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 13 Apr. 1886.

³⁶ J. G. Kellas, ‘The Liberal Party and the Scottish Church disestablishment crisis’ in *E.H.R.*, 79, no. 310 (Jan. 1964), p. 40.

³⁷ *The Witness*, 14 May 1886; *Belfast News-Letter*, 20 May 1886.

Irish Presbyterians felt especially aggrieved by the perceived lack of Free Church support because they had developed close ties with this Church since the 1843 Disruption. Notably, however, the relationship was already under strain because Free Church scholars were beginning to accept methods of higher biblical criticism whereas Irish Presbyterian scholars still vehemently rejected such theological innovation.³⁸ In a sharply worded editorial directed at Principal Rainy, *The Witness* declared that Irish Presbyterians had been ‘sold’ for disestablishment.³⁹ Even at the Church of Scotland’s General Assembly, the reception was somewhat guarded. When one of the Ulster delegates, Thomas Sinclair, declared his confidence that Irish Presbyterians would not ‘appeal in vain to their Scottish kith and kin’, Lord Balfour of Burleigh responded sympathetically but cautioned that ‘they must not turn that venerable court into a machine for political purposes’.⁴⁰

The rejection of home rule, in June 1886, triggered a general election. Since the bill’s introduction in April, Scottish (and Ulster) Liberal Unionist organisation had taken shape, and Ulster delegates were increasingly welcomed onto Scottish political platforms, particularly in Glasgow, where Hanna was ‘almost as well known ... as he is in Belfast’.⁴¹ Despite Lord Rosebery’s public ridiculing of ‘those bloodthirsty theologians who come forward with their Shorter Catechism in one hand and their revolver in the other’,⁴² Moir Porteous was able to report that, as of 1 July, he had organised ‘some sixty meetings’ in Scotland.⁴³ Around a quarter of these were held during the election campaign, when organisational support was increasingly provided by Liberal Unionists, notably George Trevelyan’s ‘committees’ in the east⁴⁴ and the West of Scotland Liberal Unionist Committee in Glasgow, where the Orange Order had also been very active.⁴⁵ Towards the end of the election, two of the Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union’s Scottish delegates reported having addressed thirty-two meetings in only two weeks, and praised the members of the Ulster Liberal Unionist Council who ‘seemed to be doing the larger portion of the organising work in Scotland’.⁴⁶ In addition, the I.L.P.U. had provided speakers for over 140 meetings, usually in response to requests by unionist candidates or their election agents.⁴⁷

Unionist candidates won twenty-nine of the seventy-two Scottish seats; seventeen of these seats were won by Liberal Unionists.⁴⁸ Ulster unionists were, however, disappointed with the outcome of the election. Reporting back to other members of the Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union in Belfast, Hanna praised the efforts

³⁸ Andrew Holmes, ‘Biblical authority and the impact of higher criticism in Irish Presbyterianism, ca. 1850–1930’ in *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, 75, no. 2 (June 2006), pp 343–73.

³⁹ *The Witness*, 25 June 1886.

⁴⁰ *Belfast News-Letter*, 26 May 1886.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 20 Apr. 1886.

⁴² *Glasgow Herald*, 18 June 1886.

⁴³ *Belfast News-Letter*, 1 July 1886.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10 July 1886.

⁴⁵ McCaffrey, ‘Origins of Liberal unionism’, pp 63–8; Burness, ‘*Strange associations*’, pp 61–2.

⁴⁶ *Belfast News-Letter*, 10 July 1886.

⁴⁷ Annual report 1886 (P.R.O.N.I., I.L.P.U. annual reports, 1886–90, D/989/A/7/1).

⁴⁸ 1886 General Election (Scotland): Liberals (43); Conservatives (12) Liberal Unionists (17). F. W. S. Craig, *British parliamentary election results, 1855–1918* (London, 1974).

of Moir Porteous but lamented the ‘great hold Mr Gladstone had on the Scotch mind’.⁴⁹ In a shift that was representative of Scottish Liberal unionism in general, *The Scotsman* had become increasingly vocal in its support for Ulster unionists, and (rather ironically given its position in February) expressed astonishment that Irish Protestant delegates had failed to ‘obtain a fair hearing in this country’.⁵⁰ Gladstone’s Scottish campaigning in early June, when he addressed audiences in Edinburgh and Glasgow, was thought to have been a decisive factor even though the I.L.P.U. had published a series of pamphlets critiquing his speeches;⁵¹ thus, the *Glasgow Herald* stressed that ‘it is not the measure they [Scottish voters] are fond of, it is the man’, concluding that, as a whole, Scotland had ‘gone to the bad’, with many seduced by Gladstone’s hints about disestablishment.⁵² Loyalists themselves singled out Edinburgh for special criticism following George Goschen’s defeat in the city’s eastern division: the *News-Letter* dismissed it as a ‘city of decay’ suffering from a ‘degeneracy’ that ‘will certainly not be arrested by its mad adherence to the senile babbler’.⁵³ Despite such complaints, unionism had made significant inroads in Scotland, particularly in the west, where links with Ulster were strongest. The Gladstonians could not hold constituencies such as Greenock, a shipbuilding centre with a large Orange working-class element and where anti-Catholic sentiment was intense.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the tone of Hanna’s 1888 letter to his ‘Friend in Scotland’ was indicative of the general sense of loyalist exasperation in the aftermath of this election.

II

The second home rule crisis was more prolonged than the first (from a loyalist perspective), beginning with the Liberal election victory of July 1892 and lasting until August 1895 when the unionists were returned to office under the leadership of Lord Salisbury. In the years after 1886, the Liberals had consolidated their grip on Scotland following the adoption by the Scottish Liberal Association of radical demands such as disestablishment and Scottish home rule.⁵⁵ However, even though Gladstone had been returned to office in 1892, loyalists were reasonably confident that any attempt to introduce home rule would be blocked by the Lords, and, thereby, trigger another election. So they immediately began preparations for another campaign on the assumption that this election would, as in 1886, be fought on the home rule question.

The most prominent organisers in Scotland were now the Ulster Loyalist Union (U.L.U.; formerly the Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union), the Irish Unionist Alliance (I.U.A.; formerly the I.L.P.U.) and the Ulster Liberal Unionist Association (formerly the Ulster Liberal Unionist Council). Significantly, the U.L.U. had established formal links with leading members of the Presbyterian Church, who

⁴⁹ *Belfast News-Letter*, 24 July 1886.

⁵⁰ *The Scotsman*, 12 July 1886.

⁵¹ ‘The fourth Midlothian campaign by an Irish Liberal: parts i–iii’, 1886 (P.R.O.N.I., I.L.P.U. publications, D/989/C/3/5).

⁵² *Glasgow Herald*, 10 July 1886.

⁵³ *Belfast News-Letter*, 7 July 1886.

⁵⁴ Hutchison, *Political history*, p. 164.

⁵⁵ Kellas, ‘Liberal Party in Scotland’, pp 13–15.

were now actively assisting in selecting suitable clergymen for the Scottish campaign.⁵⁶ The decision to support such direct political campaigning evidently reflected ongoing Presbyterian frustration with the Scottish Churches. Despite regular deputations, neither the United Presbyterians nor the Free Church would adopt an unambiguous stance over home rule, so Irish Presbyterians had to settle for declarations of support from individual clergymen and presbyteries. Notably, the supportive stance of Rev. John Kelman and Mr John McCandlish (both members of the Free Church, but acting independently) at the Irish Presbyterian General Assembly in June 1893 was optimistically interpreted by loyalists as being indicative of broader Scottish sympathy. This impression was reinforced by a number of sympathetic resolutions signed by ministers, elders and deacons from various presbyteries in Scotland.⁵⁷

The U.L.U. was essentially an autonomous body, but with subscriptions peaking at only £7,000 in 1893⁵⁸ (and declining significantly in 1894) it became increasingly dependent on the material and organisational support of the better-funded I.U.A. Nevertheless, the organisation of U.L.U. campaigning in Scotland had improved considerably as compared to the efforts of the Ulster Loyalist Anti-Repeal Union in 1886. Activity had been maintained in the years since then, albeit due to the sustenance of Ranfurly's considerable financial support. Having identified marginal seats, speakers were sent to these constituencies to support the unionists' 1892 election campaign. It was conceded that they had been less effective in Gladstonian constituencies, where 'candidates and agents tried to keep the Irish question in abeyance', but it was expected that such obstructive tactics would not work in 'the coming struggle when the election is certain to be fought and decided on the Home Rule proposal'.⁵⁹ The U.L.U. had also continued to organise demonstrations in Scotland: for instance, a large meeting was held in Edinburgh on 23 June 1892 in the hope of capitalising on the high-profile Ulster Unionist Convention held some days earlier. In the first of the Ulster delegates' speeches, Lord Templetown had addressed an enthusiastic audience of local sympathisers, declaring that he came to

... place the cause of Ulster before them in the simplest language that he could command, and he did it with all the greater confidence in Edinburgh, because their beautiful city had ever been the home of liberty – (cheers) – and because a very large proportion of the population of Ulster were co-religionists and were the descendents of Scotsmen.⁶⁰

The U.L.U. subsequently claimed that this meeting secured West Edinburgh for the unionists,⁶¹ but this was a rare gain in an election that saw an overall strengthening of Gladstonian Liberalism in Scotland.⁶² Notably, the Ulster Unionist Convention itself had been conceived as a demonstration of the political breadth of Ulster unionism but it was not at all clear that Scottish Liberal opinion had been swayed

⁵⁶ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism I: the Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, 1885–1922* (Dublin, 1972), p. 20; *Belfast News-Letter*, 24 Jan. 1894.

⁵⁷ *The Witness*, 13 June 1893; "'As in 1893": Scotland and Home Rule', 1910 (P.R.O.N.I., Thomas Sinclair papers, D3002/1).

⁵⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 24 Jan. 1894.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1892.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 11 Jan. 1893.

⁶² 1892 General Election (Scotland): Liberals (50); Conservatives (11); Liberal Unionists (11); see Craig, *Election results*.

by this event. In fact, it had been all too easy for the Liberal *North British Daily Mail* to dismiss it as an ‘Orange Convention’, arguing that ‘it bears such marks of official Tory manufacture that any one can see that the whole affair has been a mere party dodge’.⁶³

In September 1893 Gladstone’s second home rule bill was passed by the Commons but, a week later, was emphatically rejected by the Lords. Loyalist expectations notwithstanding, there was no immediate dissolution of Parliament, and Gladstone did not resign over the defeat.⁶⁴ The U.L.U. together with the I.U.A. had been systematically targeting Scottish by-elections since the 1892 election, and this strategy was maintained whilst the Liberals remained in power. These efforts apparently made the difference in certain marginal unionist victories, especially at Linlithgowshire in June 1893⁶⁵ and at Forfarshire in November 1894⁶⁶ (although it should be noted that, firstly, the Liberals recaptured both seats in the 1895 general election, and, secondly, that of the nineteen by-elections held in Scotland between July 1892 and August 1895, the Liberals won fifteen⁶⁷).

In addition to the provision of speakers, colporteurs were employed to distribute I.U.A. campaign literature. Such literature provides an indication of the range of arguments being employed by loyalists in Scotland at this time. One leaflet simply listed, by denomination, the total number of Protestants living in Ireland, then asked ‘will you suffer these, your loyal Irish friends to be deserted, and the disloyal set over them?’, and implored the reader to ‘vote according to your conscience’.⁶⁸ As usual, the ‘kith and kin’ approach was utilised:

The half million Scottish Presbyterians in Ireland might in the crisis that threatened them – a crisis that has not entirely passed away – expect that appeal to their kinsmen in Scotland would not be in vain – that Scotchmen owning a common ancestry and a common faith would not desert their friends in Ireland in the hour of their need.⁶⁹

Attempts were also made to stoke up Scottish economic fears:

Scotland has a more direct interest in the settlement of the Irish land question than most people imagine. There is Scottish money invested on the security of Irish land both in mortgage and real estate, and it would be a serious loss to many individuals, who are altogether unconnected with the landed interest here, if the value of that security was further undermined or destroyed ... the amounts invested in life assurance companies may be taken as averaging about £500 for each investor, so that the loss of six millions would affect at least 12,000 persons who have insured their lives in these institutions ...⁷⁰

The Catholic Church’s alleged sanctioning of Irish nationalist law-breaking was highlighted in a pamphlet containing an exchange of letters between Lord

⁶³ *North British Daily Mail*, 18 June 1892.

⁶⁴ Gladstone resigned in March 1894 over the issue of naval expenditure. He was succeeded as Prime Minister by Lord Rosebery.

⁶⁵ *Belfast News-Letter*, 24 Jan. 1894.

⁶⁶ ‘Testimonials’, annual report 1894 (P.R.O.N.I., Irish Unionist Alliance (hereafter I.U.A.) annual reports, 1890–1900, D/989/A/7/2).

⁶⁷ Craig, *Election results*.

⁶⁸ ‘Scotsmen! Presbyterians of Scotland!’, 1893 (P.R.O.N.I., I.U.A. publications, D/989/C/3/24).

⁶⁹ ‘Scotland, Ulster and home rule for Ireland’, 1888 (P.R.O.N.I., I.L.P.U. publications, D/989/C/3/12C).

⁷⁰ ‘Scotch insurance and Irish land’, 1889 (P.R.O.N.I., I.L.P.U. publications, D/989/C/3/15A).

Lansdowne's agent and a parish priest. The latter had apparently condoned the boycotting of a local Scottish family for occupying the property of an evicted tenant:

... you inform me that the children who attend Barrowhouse National School, near Athy, will not associate with the children of a caretaker who lives close by upon a farm from which a tenant was evicted ... your letter throws out the suggestion that objection has been taken to these two children by the others because they are Presbyterians, because they are strangers, and because they are of Scotch Parentage. Have you considered how such a disclosure of what Presbyterians, Strangers, Scotchmen have to expect at the hands of those who are under your teaching if ever the day should come that they should be at their mercy, is calculated to alarm and surprise a large number of the inhabitants of Scotland and Ireland?⁷¹

Faced in early 1895 with an imminent dissolution of Parliament, the Joint General Election Committee was formed, largely under the direction of the I.U.A., in order to pool the resources of the various Irish unionist organisations and to oversee a more ambitious British electioneering campaign. Scotland was split into western and eastern 'districts', and twenty-four marginal constituencies were visited in order to categorise voters under the headings 'unionist', 'separatist' or 'doubtful'. The I.U.A. and the U.L.U. worked in tandem to ensure that speakers and workers were sent to these constituencies to canvass the 'doubtfuls'.⁷² A steamer was even chartered to ship loyalist campaigners to the Orkney and Shetland Isles, where Liberal activists published warnings to local electors to ignore these 'Ulster Ravens' and to 'remember Pigott'.⁷³ A series of high-profile meetings in key Scottish cities was also organised by the I.U.A. and the Ulster Convention League in March 1895.⁷⁴ The keynote of this campaign was provided by John Atkinson Q.C., whose speech at Aberdeen was subsequently published in an I.U.A. pamphlet:

The histories of the Irish and Scotch people touch each other at many points. We gave to you a great part of your Highland-Celtic race, and you gave back to us the major portion of those colonists to whom the glory of the struggles I have referred to in the main belongs – the men who have converted from barrenness to fertility the war-wasted and sterile lands of Ulster, and have reared up there a manufacturing industry and prosperity not unworthy of comparison with your own ... The generous instincts of your people have been played upon, their judgment misled, and thus deceived, Scotland and the Scotch people are so much against us.⁷⁵

The subsequent unionist victory was met with euphoria in Ulster, and the gains in Scotland would in the future be recalled especially fondly.⁷⁶ The unionists had

⁷¹ 'How Scottish Presbyterians are dealt with in the south of Ireland', 1889 (P.R.O.N.I., I.L.P.U. publications, D/989/C/3/15A).

⁷² 'Joint general election committee', annual report 1895 (P.R.O.N.I., I.U.A. annual reports, 1890–1900, D/989/A/7/2).

⁷³ *Belfast News-Letter*, 5 Aug. 1895. Richard Piggot was an Irish journalist who sold forged documents to *The Times* in an attempt to smear Charles Stewart Parnell. He was publicly exposed as a forger in 1889.

⁷⁴ 'Demonstrations in Scotland', annual report 1895 (P.R.O.N.I., I.U.A. annual reports, 1890–1900, D/989/A/7/2).

⁷⁵ 'An appeal to Scotland: a speech delivered in Aberdeen by the Right Hon. John Atkinson, Q.C.', 1894 (P.R.O.N.I., I.U.A. publications, D/989/C/3/29).

⁷⁶ '... at the general election of 1895 Scotland did such excellent service in endorsing

won thirty-three Scottish seats, up from twenty-two in 1892.⁷⁷ The *News-Letter* stressed that this result did not even ‘convey a full idea of the change of opinion that Scotland has undergone since 1892’.⁷⁸ Home rule had not, however, been the central issue in this election, let alone Protestant Ulster. Both the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives recognised that the Lords veto had nullified the home rule threat and that disestablishment was losing ground since the government’s abandonment of Charles Cameron’s bill, and had mounted an appeal to the Scottish working and business classes based on imperialism and social reform.⁷⁹ Home rule was still used as a stick to beat the demoralised and badly organised Liberals, which evidently kept loyalist campaigners occupied.⁸⁰ But this election was widely interpreted as an indictment of Liberal ‘faddism’ rather than a judgement on Ireland.

III

Protestant Ulster was absolutely central to the third home rule crisis because of the intransigence of Edward Carson and his followers. Since 1906 the Liberals had been back in government, and in the case of Scotland firmly back in control largely because of their opposition to tariff reform and their perceived commitment to social reform.⁸¹ The image of Irish nationalism was much improved, and a significant groundswell of Scottish support for ‘home rule all round’ had developed, reflecting both the strength of Scottish nationalism and the belief that a federal solution would facilitate greater legislative efficiency.⁸² However, citing the high-profile nature of events such as the Presbyterian Anti-Home Rule Convention (of February 1912) and the Solemn Oath and Covenant (of September 1912), Walker argues that Ulster unionists were increasingly hopeful that Scottish voters, in particular, might be persuaded to reject the government’s Irish proposals.

In considering the convention, it should first be noted that the Ulster Unionist Council (U.U.C.) was not responsible for this demonstration, which suggests that it was not part of a centrally directed strategy. In fact, it was only sanctioned by the General Assembly itself some months after the event.⁸³ It seems that a group of senior Presbyterians – alarmed by Scottish Presbyterian (and English nonconformist) acquiescence in the government’s plans – acted on their own initiative,

the rejection by the House of Lords of Mr Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill of 1893’. ‘“As in 1893”: Scotland and Home Rule’, 1910 (P.R.O.N.I., Thomas Sinclair papers, D3002/1).

⁷⁷ 1895 General Election (Scotland): Liberals (39); Conservatives (19); Liberal Unionists (14); see Craig, *Election results*.

⁷⁸ *Belfast News-Letter*, 1 Aug. 1895.

⁷⁹ Hutchison, *Political history*, pp 201–7; E. H. H. Green, *The crisis of conservatism: the politics, economics, and ideology of the Conservative Party, 1880–1914* (London, 1995), pp 129–30; Paul A. Readman, ‘The 1895 general election and political change in late Victorian Britain’ in *Hist. Jn.*, 42, no. 2 (1999), p. 478.

⁸⁰ Readman, ‘1895 general election’, p. 475.

⁸¹ December 1910 general election (Scotland): Liberals (58); Conservatives (7); Liberal Unionists (4); Labour (3); see Craig, *Election results*; Hutchison, *Political history*, pp 240–1.

⁸² Richard Finlay, *A partnership for good? Scottish politics and the Union since 1880* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 62.

⁸³ Minutes of the proceedings of the G.A.P.C.I., xii (1911–15), 7 June 1912, p. 350.

without the support of many local ministers.⁸⁴ More particularly, the convention was intended to counter nationalist propaganda portraying Irish Presbyterians as home rulers, and, in doing so, garner the support of the Scottish (and English) Churches. Once more, however, priorities in Scotland would conspire to limit the support these Churches could offer. This time it was a preoccupation with an anticipated union between the United Free Church (formed in 1900) and the Church of Scotland – itself stemming from deeper concerns over the diminishing role of religion⁸⁵ – that led to reluctance on the part of these Churches to be drawn into the political controversy over home rule.

More fundamentally, the Scottish Churches were apparently unwilling to incite anti-Catholic sentiment in opposition to this policy. The convention had taken place at a time when sectarian tensions were running particularly high in Ulster. The 1908 papal decree, *Ne Temere*, had ruled that ‘mixed’ marriages were invalid if not performed by a Catholic priest, and that the children of such marriages should be raised as Catholics. The subsequent McCann controversy in late 1910 appeared to reinforce Protestant fears that home rule would mean ‘Rome rule’.⁸⁶ However, loyalists had also recognised that a cause célèbre might bolster their negotiating position: writing in *The Witness*, ‘Southern Presbyterian’ declared that ‘Before I will even listen to Messrs. Redmond and Devlin I demand that they shall redress Mrs McCann’s wrongs. They cannot do it. The Roman Catholic Church blocks the way.’⁸⁷ Much to the frustration of Ulster unionists, Scottish Presbyterians were characteristically wary of judging the decree purely on sectarian grounds. In the aftermath of this controversy, many individual Scottish presbyteries did indeed condemn *Ne Temere*, but this evidently caused some discomfort: writing in *The Scotsman*, ‘A Scottish Presbyterian’ pointed out that ‘All that the Church of Rome has done is to declare the law of marriage, according to which discipline shall be maintained within her communion. It is but a matter which is within the jurisdiction of every Church.’⁸⁸ The rationale advanced for this argument provides an important insight into the contemporary ideals of Scottish Presbyterianism:

In no country have the claims to spiritual independence been pitched higher than by Churches in Scotland; in no country have greater sacrifices been made for its realisation. But the old spirit which claimed freedom for itself and denied it to others is not yet dead. It survives in the action of those who stir up excitement regarding a Church laying down the marriage laws for its own members ... The Protestantism which is continually demonstrating its ‘godly attitude towards the Papacy,’ and continually raising the cry ‘we are betrayed,’ is a Protestantism no longer assured of its own strength.⁸⁹

Thus, at the first general meeting of the United Free Church following the McCann controversy, the decree itself was labelled ‘obnoxious’, but more emollient language was used when referring to the spiritual jurisdiction of the Catholic

⁸⁴ *The Witness*, 9 Feb. 1912.

⁸⁵ John McCaffrey, *Scotland in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 109.

⁸⁶ The McCanns were a Belfast couple who had married in a Protestant church. The husband was Catholic and his wife a Protestant. In 1910 Mr McCann was informed by a Catholic priest that under *Ne Temere* the marriage was void. As a consequence, Mr McCann left his wife, taking their two children with him.

⁸⁷ ‘Southern Presbyterian’, *The Witness*, 29 Sept. 1911.

⁸⁸ ‘Spiritual independence: Scottish Presbyterians and the *Ne Temere* decree’ by ‘A Scottish Presbyterian’, *The Scotsman*, 8 Apr. 1911.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Church: 'We were bound to recognise the right of the Church of Rome to formulate its own terms of communion, and to order its own internal discipline in accordance therewith'.⁹⁰ At the Church of Scotland's General Assembly, concern was expressed about the liberties of Ulster Protestants and about 'priests interfering in families and encouraging feuds'. However, Lord Balfour of Burleigh declared that 'unless the persons complained of broke the law, he did not know what the Committee could do'.⁹¹ In June 1912 a United Free Church delegation to Belfast could only offer its assurance that in the event of a Dublin parliament inflicting any wrongs on Irish Presbyterians, Scottish Presbyterians would be 'at their back'. The caustic response of *The Witness* was indicative of a broader sense of betrayal:

It is like telling us that after a robber has got in and stolen our goods they will assist us to find the robber. It is like the Government telling Mrs McCann, after she has been robbed of her husband, children and her household goods that they will assist her to bring her husband before the courts to do her justice – after they have found that her husband and children are out of their jurisdiction.⁹²

In contrast to the convention, the Solemn Oath and Covenant was very much the work of the U.U.C., and was also clearly conceived with seventeenth-century Scottish precedents in mind – the 1638 National Covenant in particular. Ronald McNeill described an exchange in the Constitutional Club Library during which B. W. D. Montgomery suggested that if James Craig needed a suitable oath for the people at home, he 'couldn't do better' than 'the old Scotch Covenant. It is a fine old document, full of grand phrases, and thoroughly characteristic of the Ulster tone of mind at this day'.⁹³ However, it does not appear that Ulster unionists planned this demonstration specifically as an appeal to Scotland itself (although it is quite possible that Thomas Sinclair, who came up with the final wording of the oath,⁹⁴ did, himself, have Scottish audiences in mind). The only mention of Scotland in the minutes of the Ulster Day Committee is a note stating that 'the signing of the Covenant in England and Scotland was left in the hands of the Secretaries'.⁹⁵ Moreover, the British tour that followed Ulster Day began in Liverpool, where Edward Carson addressed a monster rally of over 100,000 supporters at Sheil Park: 'one of the biggest political meetings in the history of Britain'.⁹⁶ He next travelled north to Glasgow, where he declared to an audience of only 5,000 that it would not be 'characteristic of Scotsmen that on the eve of betrayal they would refuse to help their own kith and kin' after admitting that he had never spoken in Glasgow before 'because he had always been told that there was little use coming to reason with Scotsmen, and that they were conservative in their Liberalism'.⁹⁷

The difference in both the scale and the wider political impact of the two events

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1911.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 31 May 1912.

⁹² *The Witness*, 11 June 1912.

⁹³ Ronald McNeill, *Ulster's stand for union* (London, 1922), pp 101–5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Minutes of the Ulster Day Committee, 10 Sept. 1912 (P.R.O.N.I., Ulster Unionist Council (hereafter U.U.C.) papers, D1327/2/7).

⁹⁶ D. M. Jackson and D. M. MacRaid, 'The conserving crowd: mass unionist demonstrations in Liverpool and Tyneside, 1912–13' in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds), *The Ulster crisis, 1885–1921* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 234.

⁹⁷ *The Scotsman*, 2 Oct. 1912.

was considerable. It is true that in Glasgow the Grand Hall of the St Andrews Halls building was filled to capacity (after the main event, Carson even had to address an overflow meeting in the smaller Berkeley Hall). However, the fact that a larger, outdoor venue was not used suggests, firstly, that loyalists (and Scottish unionists) were not confident of attracting a similar level of support in Scotland, and, secondly, that Scottish audiences were no more strategically important to loyalists than English audiences. Moreover, it quickly became apparent that this evocation of a Scottish tradition only resonated with those already committed to Ulster's cause. For instance, *The Scotsman* proudly declared: 'It is from the example of Scotland, in our own "time of troubles", that the framers of the Ulster Covenant have borrowed the spirit, the language, and the form of their public testimony'.⁹⁸ By contrast, in Glasgow the Liberal *Daily Record and Mail* argued that it was 'unique in all history, having absolutely no identity, whatever Unionists may allege, with the Covenant of Scotland'.⁹⁹ In Edinburgh, local unionists had arranged for a Covenant signing to be held at Greyfriars churchyard; however, only some fifty or sixty people attended, and when attempting to sign the Covenant on the same tombstone used in 1638, they were ordered out of the graveyard because they had not obtained the relevant permit.¹⁰⁰ Having made reference to this debacle, J. M. Hogge, Liberal M.P. for the city's Eastern division, denounced the 'Bogus Covenant', and angrily pointed out that 'Scottish Covenanters signed a Covenant that was to procure for them freedom of conscience in matters of religion', whereas the Ulstermen were fighting only to 'procure that the same arrogant ascendancy and bigotry should obtain in Ulster as had obtained'.¹⁰¹ This mixed response from Scotland was noted by *The Witness*:

We are aware that many Scotch Presbyterians think that we are narrow and prejudiced, that we have read history wrong, that the Church of Rome is not the child of the Inquisition, but the parent of liberty and toleration, and that it is not only our right but our duty to submit ourselves to its decrees and accept its domination ... We ask them to realise that we live in and among the Irish Nationalists and Romanists; that we know them for what they are ...¹⁰²

Given his emphasis on loyalist appeals to Scotland, it is perhaps surprising that Walker overlooks the work of the Joint Committee of the Unionist Associations of Ireland (J.C.U.A.I.), which in 1911 absorbed the U.L.U. and launched an ambitious U.U.C.-funded political campaign in Scotland, lasting until September 1914.¹⁰³ As in previous years, the I.U.A. provided support for such work, but whereas in 1895 it had been the dominant extra-parliamentary organisation, it was now acknowledged that the J.C.U.A.I. was directing proceedings in Britain: 'The greater volume of its [that is, the I.U.A.] work has been necessarily merged in the Irish Unionist Campaign in Great Britain which is being prosecuted by the Joint Committee of the Unionist Associations of Ireland'.¹⁰⁴ J.C.U.A.I. efforts during the December 1910 general election had uncovered what Richard Dawson Bates,

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 Sept. 1912.

⁹⁹ *Daily Record and Mail*, 30 Sept. 1912.

¹⁰⁰ *The Scotsman*, 30 Sept. 1912.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2 Oct. 1912.

¹⁰² *The Witness*, 11 Oct. 1912.

¹⁰³ Minute book of the Joint Committee of the Unionist Associations of Ireland (hereafter J.C.U.A.I.), 27 Apr. 1911 (P.R.O.N.I., U.U.C. papers, D1327/2/1A–B).

¹⁰⁴ Annual report 1911–12 (P.R.O.N.I., I.U.A. annual reports 1911–14, D/989/A/7/4).

secretary of the U.U.C. and joint secretary of the J.C.U.A.I., described as ‘gross incompetence and indifference on the part of many of the English and Scottish agents’, and as an ‘extraordinary ignorance of the Home Rule Question on the part of the electorate’.¹⁰⁵ Subsequently, the U.U.C. had issued a directive to the J.C.U.A.I. to ‘commence Missionary work in Great Britain’, and Bates himself assumed direct responsibility for Scotland.¹⁰⁶

As in previous years, then, loyalist efforts in Scotland were only one facet of a broader British campaign. In fact, the J.C.U.A.I.’s English campaign was much larger than the Scottish campaign, requiring five agencies and the support of the Ulster Defence League.¹⁰⁷ This would also suggest that Scottish voters were of no greater strategic importance than those in England. Further evidence for this assessment is provided by the J.C.U.A.I. speakers’ guide, which contained dozens of stock responses to possible arguments in favour of home rule; this, however, was a generic guide to be used by campaigners in both Scotland and England, and did not contain bespoke arguments for Scottish audiences.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Ulster unionists did continue to employ ‘kith and kin’ rhetoric in their appeals to Scotland. In 1912 the I.U.A. published a collection of essays by high-profile unionist figures, including Thomas Sinclair. In a piece entitled ‘The position of Ulster’, Sinclair argued that the ‘majority’ of settlers in Ulster were ‘Scotch’, and he drew parallels with the Scottish response to past crises in the province:

When, in the midst of the horrors of 1641, the Scotch colony in Ulster was threatened with extermination, it appealed for help to its motherland. It did not appeal in vain. A collection for its benefit was made in the Scottish churches, supplies of food and several regiments of Scottish soldiers were sent to its aid, and its position was saved. We are confident that the descendants of these generous helpers will be no less true to their Ulster kith and kin today.¹⁰⁹

By the end of July 1914, the J.C.U.A.I. had organised 3,843 meetings in Scotland and had canvassed 205,654 ‘doubtful’ electors.¹¹⁰ These statistics indicate the advances made in loyalist organisation compared with the previous home rule crises. As in 1895, western and eastern agencies had been established, but this time a total of forty constituencies were targeted. A range of new campaigning methods had also been adopted: from mid-1913, motor cars were used to transport speakers and canvassers to inaccessible regions in Scotland, seaside resorts were targeted in the summer months, and copies of *The Witness* were distributed to increase awareness of Irish issues.¹¹¹ If the headline Scottish election data is considered without any deeper analysis, it might be concluded that such efforts did not significantly alter the political balance in Scotland. Over the course of the entire campaign, fifteen Scottish by-elections were held, only four of which were won by the unionists – and in three of these contests the unionists had benefited from

¹⁰⁵ Minute book of the J.C.U.A.I., 4 Jan. 1911 (P.R.O.N.I., U.U.C. papers, D1327/2/1A–B).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 18 Jan. 1911, 17 Mar. 1911.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 17 Mar. 1911.

¹⁰⁸ Unionist Associations of Ireland speakers’ guide, 1911 (P.R.O.N.I., I.U.A. papers, D/989/C/1/11A–B).

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Sinclair, ‘The position of Ulster’ in S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Against home rule* (London, 1912), pp 171–2.

¹¹⁰ Minute book of the J.C.U.A.I., 25 July 1914 (P.R.O.N.I., U.U.C. papers, D1327/2/1A–B).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21 May 1913.

splits in the ‘progressive’ vote.¹¹² What these numbers do not reveal, however, is that despite the government’s apparent electoral strength, Liberal majorities were consistently being reduced, and often substantially. For instance, in November 1913 Linlithgowshire was held by the government but its majority was slashed by seventy-five per cent.¹¹³ The J.C.U.A.I. had sent eleven speakers and twenty-six canvassers to the constituency, and James Adam, the chief unionist agent in Scotland, wrote personally to Bates to thank him for ‘the very good work put in by your people’.¹¹⁴ It was widely known that the government had only held the seat because of the votes of 2,000 Irish nationalists. As a result, *The Times* argued that this contest was of ‘exceptional significance’, demonstrating that ‘Liberal prestige is on the wane in Scotland because the Protestants of Scotland are joining hands with their kinsmen in Ulster’.¹¹⁵ Thus, when Bates submitted his final report on the J.C.U.A.I. campaign in July 1914, he struck a decidedly optimistic note:

... reports from all sides go to show that Scotland is thoroughly aroused on the Home Rule question and that when the General Election arrives she will show her utter detestation of the Home Rule policy of the Government. After a careful study of the feeling in each Constituency I predict that we should win at least twelve seats, while nine other victories are possible.¹¹⁶

However, the outbreak of war in August triggered a chain of events that would change British and Irish politics irrevocably. The next election would not be fought on the question of home rule, and Ulster unionists would be forced to accept that concern for their plight had been steadily evaporating across Great Britain.

IV

During each of the home rule crises, loyalist campaigning in Scotland was driven by the fear that Scottish Presbyterians would indeed be willing to forsake their ‘own flesh and blood’. Many months before the introduction of Gladstone’s first home rule bill, Ulster unionists had recognised that they would need to launch a British campaign; the resulting efforts, however, were fragmented, poorly funded and out of tune with Liberal sensibilities in Scotland. The lukewarm response from the Scottish Churches and, in turn, the Scottish electorate caused intense discomfiture. Hugh Hanna’s perplexed reaction to the setbacks he faced in Scotland suggests that Ulster’s expectations were not met. However, loyalist extra-parliamentary organisation was subsequently improved, and by 1895 the joint committee had emerged as the favoured vehicle for pooling Irish unionist resources and providing Scottish unionists with electioneering support. Walker argues that the use of Ulster Scot rhetoric during the third home rule crisis represented a significant loyalist reorientation towards Scotland. Yet it is not clear

¹¹² Mid-Lothian (September 1912), South Lanarkshire (December 1913), Leith Burghs (February 1914); see Craig, *Election results*.

¹¹³ *The Scotsman*, 10 Nov. 1913.

¹¹⁴ James Adam to Richard Dawson Bates, minute book of the J.C.U.A.I., 10 Nov. 1913 (P.R.O.N.I., U.U.C. papers, D1327/2/1A–B).

¹¹⁵ *The Times*, 10 Nov. 1913.

¹¹⁶ Report on work in Scotland for four months ending 25 July 1914 by Richard Dawson Bates, minute book of the J.C.U.A.I. (P.R.O.N.I., U.U.C. papers, D1327/2/1A).

that Scottish popular opinion was of greater strategic importance than before. Loyalists had by then been campaigning doggedly in Scotland for decades, and heavily employing such rhetoric while making their appeals. Certainly, the 1911–14 Scottish campaign was larger and more sophisticated than in previous years, but so was the campaign in England. Moreover, loyalists recognised that Scotland had become an even more unlikely bulwark against home rule given that the fears expressed by Hanna in 1888 were largely borne out by 1911–14. In some marginal Scottish constituencies, the government's Irish proposals were unpopular, particularly as the political situation deteriorated and civil war loomed. However the majority of Scottish electors remained staunchly Liberal. Even in July 1914, when cracks had appeared in the government's Scottish base, the number of seats Richard Dawson Bates hoped to win were fewer than the unionists had won in 1886 when Mr Gladstone had his 'great hold' on the 'Scotch mind'. Paradoxically, then, even though loyalist organisation was at its peak in 1911–14, Scottish opposition to home rule was most unequivocal in 1886, when loyalist organisation was least effective.¹¹⁷

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¹¹⁷ This research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.