

broad assertions which are made without supplying any evidence, such as socialist republicanism's 'disproportionate influence on the Irish political scene in the first decades of independence' or the assertion that in 1934 'most in the Labour Party viewed the [Republican Congress] as a threat' (p.130), when it is not clear what the nature of this threat was (presumably to Labour's popularity) and there is nothing to indicate on what basis this claim is made. Elsewhere we are told that 'the united front strategy had been working quite well' (p.190), a frustratingly vague assertion made without any evidence or reference.

Ultimately, it is a study which is primarily a counter-position to studies of social republicanism by Patterson and Richard English and, as such, the work would be significantly stronger had it been more adequately engaged with the secondary sources which have been published in the intervening twenty years. This situation is not helped by the absence of any substantial literature review at the beginning, with readers being directed to the author's dissertation. Nevertheless, readers will find this an interesting and often provocative book and a welcome addition to studies of this topic.

NIAMH PUIRSÉIL

THE IRISH PARLIAMENTARY PARTY AND THE THIRD HOME RULE CRISIS. By James McConnel. Pp 338. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2013. €55.00.

In this close examination of the Irish Parliamentary Party on the eve of the third Home Rule bill, James McConnel concludes that its sustaining feature was the brokerage function of M.P.s. Far from being moribund the party was a reflection of what Irish constituencies wanted. Critics of the party focused on its alleged corruption but McConnel convincingly demonstrates that the M.P.s, mainly local men themselves, were responsive to the wants of constituents, resulting at times in a tension between the party leaders and localist instincts. In a sense he confirms but extends K. T. Hoppen's well-known thesis on the localism of Irish politics. He additionally re-asserts the ongoing tensions within a movement unsure whether it was the vehicle of a single great cause or a multi-faceted grouping.

Employing a range of tools, the author breaks the study into four broad themes – constituency service, the party and its enemies, life in London and the Home Rule crisis. The first and third are especially interesting. He shows how M.P.s exploited the House of Commons mechanisms by which membership in the party was achieved, the vital part Question Time played in its work and the role of patronage, while in the third section the daily routine of members in London and their lives in the House of Commons is treated. Longer sections on the connections with individual members and Fenianism, the approach to the first Sinn Féin challenge, engagement with cultural nationalism and labour in the Dublin Lockout of 1913 form a useful second section. In the last he considers home rule, the challenge of defining a way acceptable to British and Irish audiences' loyalty to the United Kingdom and Empire, the Ulster crisis and the First World War. Overall, the conclusions are not altogether surprising and reveal no meaningful break in the continuity of the party from its past or indeed with preceding national political groupings in parliament. It is a virtue of the book that it fills an important gap in the history of the party.

McConnel skilfully underscores the vitality of the Irish movement even in possibly its most sensitive and vulnerable phase. A telling conclusion sums up much of the story for pre- and post-1921 Ireland; the essentials of ordinary politics had a notably similar (or foul) flavour. What also comes through in this study is the absence at virtually all levels of the party of a conception of what the dreamed-of self-government would do for Ireland. The idea or perhaps idealised home rule became an end in itself. Reading between the lines of McConnel's chapter on the Ulster crisis (and works by other authors), it can be

seen that an inability to recognise that there was an Ulster dimension that required addressing resulted, in part, from this lack of pragmatism.

There is nothing in the account which might have been omitted but perhaps a number of additional areas would have merited inclusion. The book is really about the party in the pre-war setting; the third home rule episode is skated-over rather lightly. It is not always self-evident where the chronological limits of the study lie. Curiously, the engagement of the party and M.P.s with the hierarchy of the Catholic church and the parochial clergy receives surprisingly small notice. There is little on the personal engagement of members with Irish Unionist and British M.P.s. McConnel's impressive reading regrettably does not include much contextual literature. Only slight comparison with British parties is found here. Long ago when this reviewer examined the Dewsbury constituency held by the prominent Liberal Walter Runciman many of the same elements of local expectations of a member were evident. The author might have looked, if briefly, at the ways the Irish Parliamentary Party replicated ethnic, religious and national parties on the Continent or the strong localism of the American House of Representatives. Also, it is worth mentioning that reference to the considerable literature on political parties and pressure groups would give the study a firmer base and make it attractive to a wider academic readership. Caveats aside, this probably is the most sophisticated single consideration of an Irish party in the House of Commons.

ALAN O'DAY

IRISH-CANADIAN CONFLICT AND THE STRUGGLE FOR IRISH INDEPENDENCE, 1912–1925. By Robert McLaughlin. Pp viii,275. Toronto: Toronto University Press. 2013. CAN\$29.95 paperback. CAN\$65 hardback.

Robert McLaughlin's account of Irish ethnic politics challenges the once common assumption that, in Canada, unlike in the United States, the Irish assimilated quickly into the wider political culture of the host society. Instead, he claims, they maintained an ethnic distinctiveness beyond the late nineteenth century, thus challenging classics of Irish, Catholic and Canadian history, such as Mark McGowan, whose assimilationist *Waning of the green* speaks of all that McLaughlin stands against. On the Ulster loyalist side, he also re-inflates notions of the durability of identity, though he has no sympathy with the anti-nationalist cause they supported or the methods they adopted. For McLaughlin, Carson and Craig headed a movement that acted against the parliamentary will; whereas nationalist freedom fighters deploying violence as a tool are exposed to no similar ire, despite their equally unconstitutional tactics. This is, then, an account of 'Orange' and 'Green' conflict which sides with the latter.

McLaughlin's overarching thesis is correct. Irish Canadians did indeed maintain ethnic attachments to the old country and operationalised them through support for either the nationalist or unionist sides – though not with the intensity of those who earlier had burst onto the political scene as Irish-American dynamite bombers and Fenians. While a majority of Irish people in Canada did not rally to their respective causes with gusto, sufficiently large minorities did so to make the protests, communications, contributions and conflicts impressive. McLaughlin is also correct to argue for the continued importance of Irish Protestants within Canadian Orangeism and to see them as the core of Canadian unionism. Orangeism was a massive, popular organisation in Canada until the inter-war years; and it attracted all types of Protestant members because of the opportunities membership provided. However, it also maintained a resolutely Ulster feel and undoubtedly retained strong interest in the 'Irish Question' and, later, the 'Ulster Question' too. However, McLaughlin makes frustratingly airy comments about the levels of Canadian support for the unionist cause. There is no footnote to the claim that Orange-