

Chinese people. The great palace that Marco Polo described was actually a "palace of Chinese design."<sup>11</sup> The Khan's private rooms at the palace were filled with treasures that included "gold, and silver, precious stones and pearls, and his gold and silver vessels."<sup>12</sup> The Great Khan had also adopted the Chinese tradition of sending emissaries to the provinces "to select for him out of the most beautiful maidens, according to the standard of beauty which he lays down for them, some four or five hundred."<sup>13</sup> Unlike the nomads of Genghis Khan's time, the Mongol people under Kubilai Khan were more settled and lived in great cities. There were hotels in the city for merchants, and "every day more than 1,000 cart-loads of silk enter the city."<sup>14</sup> Assimilation into the Chinese culture gave the Mongols the great wealth that Marco Polo saw.

Both the Taoist monk and Marco Polo visited the Mongol court. They each found different objects noteworthy. Their contrasting backgrounds contributed to this. But the main reason that they saw different objects was that they visited the Mongol court at different stages of Mongol rule.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Marco Polo Travels to Kubilai Khan," in Reilly, 290.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 288.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 291.

*History as a discipline revolves around analytical argumentation. Below, two undergraduates, Mr. Choate and Ms. Crawford, resurrect the Irish Home Rule debate. This issue dominated English politics during the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries.*

### *The Irish Problem and Its Best Solution*

*By Lamar Choate*

What was the Irish problem and what was the best solution to it during the nineteenth Century? This paper will try to answer these questions. It is not an easy task, considering the scope of the problem and its many aspects. However, this brief overview be sufficient in its discussion of the problem to present a convincing argument as to which of the solutions to the Irish Home Rule debate was the best. In the end, I can come to no other conclusion than that all of Ireland should have been granted home rule as early as 1886, not only for the good of Ireland, but for the good of the United Kingdom as well.

To begin, we must understand the nature of the problem. Because of its many aspects, Irish Home Rule was a highly controversial issue. It stirred up so much controversy not only because of its many aspects, but also because Home Rule was a part of a larger problem in English politics. Historian Tom Dunne put it this way:

The home-rule debate generated such extraordinary public excitement and reshaped politics precisely because it was the culmination of a major debate on the issues of democratic pressure and imperial control. The crisis of 1885-6 was about ideological conflict at least as much as it was about political tactics.<sup>1</sup>

How to answer questions about Irish Home Rule would lead to the larger questions of empire and ideology. Much was at stake with the Irish question

<sup>1</sup>Tom Dunne, "Response to Gladstonian Home Rule and Land Reform," *Irish Historical Studies* XXV, no. 100 (November, 1987), 434.

and its many different issues. Let us now examine those issues. The first concerns to be dealt with are the cultural/religious issues involved with Irish Home Rule—the actual root of the debate. If Ireland did not have separate cultural and religious origins (more so than the Scots, for example) there never would have been an Irish question, nor would there have been an Irish nationalist movement. Irish nationalists emphasized the differences between themselves and their English counterparts. The history of Ireland involved one group of people with their own distinct customs and traditions: the Celts. The English were a mixed bag of Celts, Iberians, Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. The Irish clung to the religion introduced by St. Patrick. England was, of course, largely Protestant.

The cultural religious differences between Ireland and England are related. When one speaks of the "Anglicization" of Ireland the reference is not just to the church, but to the whole of Irish society. Douglas Hyde was conscious of the fact that Ireland was losing her Irishness. But rather than just blame the English, in a speech from 1892 Hyde chastises the Irish for allowing it to happen :

What the battleaxe of the Dane, the sword of the Norman, the wife of the Saxon were unable to perform, we have accomplished ourselves. We have at last broken the continuity of Irish life...[the Celtic Race] finds itself deprived and stripped of its Celtic characteristics, cut off from the past,...language, traditions, music, genius and ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Hyde's sentiments reflected what many Irish were feeling at the time. Evidence for this can be seen in the fact that his Gaelic League became a huge, influential organization in a very short period of time after this speech. It was this appeal to regain a sense of identity that motivated the Irish national movement. The Irish could only find this identity in their own language, customs, and religion. Thus, Home rule was a step toward retaining a culture that many Irish thought was slipping from them.

Questions of religion in England have had a long standing tie with politics. The religious problems that the kingdom faced in the early 1800s

ended with the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. As a precursor to the Reform Act of 1832, Catholic Emancipation did more than just give Irish Catholics the right to sit in Parliament. It created fury in England (Tory leaders were outraged) and sharpened the contrast between Protestant Ulster and the Catholic majority in the rest of Ireland.

Those in Ulster opposed to Home Rule were afraid of possible persecution and oppression by an Irish parliament. The Tory party in England sympathized with the Ulster Unionist's plight. But it was not just a question of religion, there were economic considerations as well. In a spirited speech of opposition to Home Rule, Sir Edward Carson emphasized the economic value of Belfast citing that for the year of 1892, "the customs and inland revenue returns at Belfast amounted to 3,250,000 pounds," which in his words was, "not a bad contribution to the imperial exchequer."<sup>4</sup> Many who opposed Home Rule felt that England would lose control of the economic blessings it enjoyed from Ireland, especially the highly industrialized Ulster region.

Opposition to Home Rule also argued that if given an inch, Ireland would take a mile. In other words, Home Rule would lead to greater demands and ultimately independence. In his speech to the House of Commons on 9 April 1886, the Marquess of Hartington stated, "[Home Rule] will be the minimum of Irish national demand."<sup>4</sup> Victorian Britain believed in her empire as a foundation of her greatness. Arguments such as this were very persuasive.

The debate over Home Rule (and the equally controversial and related topic of land reform which is too complex to examine in this paper) created a stormy political climate which eventually split the liberal party and brought down the prime minister who first introduced the issue, William Gladstone. Gladstone's Home Rule speech alienated a sizeable number of liberals and strengthened the conservative opposition. But his arguments were sound and his plan was the best solution to the Irish question.

Gladstone recognized the need for Ireland to have domestic rule. He

<sup>3</sup>Sir Edward Carson, "The Case for Ulster," in *The Part Speaker*, ed. Arnstein, 258.

<sup>4</sup>Marquess of Hartington, "The Case Against Home Rule," in *The Part Speaker*, ed. Arnstein, 254.

<sup>3</sup>Douglas Hyde, "On the Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland," in *The Part Speaker: Sources and Problems in British History*, ed. Walter L. Arnstein (Lexington: 1993), 250.

saw this need as not only a solution to the problems of the present, but also as a foundation for a better future and stronger empire. "The concession of local self-government is not the way to sap or impair, but the way to strengthen and consolidate unity."<sup>5</sup> These sentiments echoed those of Gladstone's longtime political opponent, Benjamin Disraeli, who thought self-government to be "part of a great policy of imperial consolidation."<sup>6</sup>

Gladstone's provisions for Home Rule included clear outlines of the duties of an Irish parliament and how much voice Ireland would have in governance of the United Kingdom. I see no reason why this arrangement would not have worked. Hartington, however, objected that the plan would "be the creation of a state of things as absolutely and entirely different from that as it is possible to conceive."<sup>7</sup> But Hartington's argument is shallow at best. Gladstone's plan was well thought out, carefully constructed, and certainly conceivable.

As to the question of Ulster, Gladstone was right when he stated, "I cannot allow it to be said that a Protestant minority in Ulster, or elsewhere, is to rule the question at large for Ireland."<sup>8</sup> Gladstone did not shy away from the question. The threat of civil war in Ireland over this question did not intimidate Gladstone. For this, he deserves credit as a progressive thinker. He had a firm grasp on the situation and I believe that history has proven him correct in his assessment.

The best thing for both Ireland and Great Britain would have been one Home Rule parliament for the whole of Ireland, with no divisions. Some may argue that this would have brought civil war. But a civil war would not have been any worse at that moment in history than what has actually happened since then. Indeed, a decisive civil war would probably have been better for Ireland and England in the long run.

Gladstone laid it out plainly when he discussed Irish nationalism as a force to be taken seriously. His comparisons of Irish local patriotism to that of the Welshman or the Scot were compelling and strengthened his

<sup>5</sup>William Gladstone, "The Case for Home Rule," in *The Peer Speaks*, ed. Armitage, 254.  
<sup>6</sup>Benjamin Disraeli, "The Maintenance of Empire," in *Peer Speaks*, ed. Armitage, 270.  
<sup>7</sup>Hartington, "The Case Against Home Rule," 255.  
<sup>8</sup>Gladstone, "The Case for Home Rule," 252-3.

former assertion that good laws should not only be passed, but "that they should be passed by the proper persons."<sup>9</sup> In saying this, Gladstone echoed the powerful speech of Isaac Butt to the House of Commons twelve years earlier. In that speech, Butt stated the obvious truth of the matter: "the English Parliament undertakes a duty it is unable to perform--namely to manage the Internal affairs of Ireland to the satisfaction of the Irish people."<sup>10</sup>

Gladstone had the most compelling solution to the Home Rule question. Had it been implemented at the time of proposal, many of the future difficulties could have been avoided. In the long run, it would have provided the foundation for a strong Ireland and a stronger United Kingdom.

### Home Rule:

#### *The First Step Toward Disintegration*

by Kristan Crawford

In April of 1886, William Gladstone, the Liberal Prime Minister of England, addressed the House of Commons. He asked that Home Rule be granted to Ireland, thus implying that the Irish be allowed to form their own separate parliament. This parliament that would have the power to determine its own internal legislation while remaining tied to the Imperial Parliament in London through "defence, foreign policy, trade and navigation" laws.<sup>11</sup> Gladstone's support for Irish Home Rule opened a debate in the British Parliament that continued for thirty years. Gladstone's

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 252.

<sup>11</sup>Isaac Butt, "Irish Affairs for an Irish Parliament," *The Peer Speaks*, ed. Armitage, 246.

<sup>12</sup>Teresa O'Donovan, "Ulster and Home Rule for Ireland, To 1914," *Eire-Ireland* (Fall 1983): 7.